Annex III: A letter from Emperor Menelik II to Sultan Abdülhamid II July 3, 1907.

(Source: Yusuf Sarinay, *Ottoman Archives and the Ethio-Ottoman Relations* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001), 46.)

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Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Kütüphanesi İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi

Mahremiyet ve Kazanç Arasında Osmanlı Kadını

OTTOMAN WOMEN BETWEEN PRIVACY AND PROFIT

ARİF BİLGİN*

ÖZ

Bu makale, seçkinler dışındaki Osmanlı kadınlarının modern dönem öncesinde iktisadi faaliyetlere ne düzeyde katıldıklarını ve bunun nedenlerini araştırmaktadır. Çalışmada Osmanlı kadınlarının ekonomik faaliyetlerde bizzat yer almalarının sınırlı kalmasının, vekil kullanmayı ya da yeterli düzeyde sermayeye sahip olsalar da ekonomik aktivitelerden uzak durmayı tercih etmelerinin, ihtiyaç durumları ve mahremiyet algılarına bağlı olarak oluştuğu iddia edilmektedir. Osmanlı kadınının ihtiyaç ve özellikle de mahremiyet algısının yöreden yöreye değişmesi, bu algının oluşumunda örfün önemli bir yer tuttuğunu göstermektedir. Söz konusu iddiaları sınamak ve ilgili bulguları elde etmek için mevcut literatür yanında Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi ve çok sayıda mahkeme kaydı kullanılmıştır. Bu kaynaklardaki veriler hem Osmanlı kadınlarının mahremiyet algısını kapsamlı bir şekilde tespit etmeye hem de çeşitli yollardan edindikleri para ve mal birikimini nasıl kullandıklarını belirlemeye imkân vermektedir. Bu çerçevede Osmanlı kadınlarının edindikleri malları genellikle satma eğiliminde oldukları, nakit paraları ise kocalarına verdikleri veya ev eşyası ya da mücevher alımında kullandıkları anlaşılmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, kimi kadınların sınai üretim süreçlerine katılarak veya pazarda satış yaparak aile ekonomisine katkıda bulunmaktan geri durmadıkları tespit edilmiştir. Çalışan kadınların büyük kısmının ise ev içi hizmetlerde istihdam edilmesi, Osmanlı kadınının mahremiyet ve kazanç çizgisinde birincisine yakın durduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Kadını, Kadın Çalışmaları, Muhaddere, Miras Hukuku, Mahremiyet, Vekil, Ev İçi Hizmetler.

ABSTRACT

This article investigates non-elite Ottoman women and the degree of and reasons for their participation in economic activities before the modern period. It argues that Ottoman women mostly chose to act by deputies or stayed away from the market even if they had financial resources and this limited participation into economic activities can be explained by two main factors: financial necessities and privacy. While the perceptions of necessity and privacy changed from region to region, local customs played an essential role in developing these concepts. In order to check these arguments and collect data, we used the travel book of Evliya Çelebi, and numerous court records in addition to secondary literature. These sources offer ways to comprehensively understand Ottoman women's perception of privacy and pinpoint how they used their money and wealth acquired through various means. Thus, the study establishes that Ottoman women tended to sell their possessions and whenever they had cash, they usually gave it to their spouses or bought houseware or jewelry. Still, some women supported their households by manufacturing or selling products in markets. The fact that most of the working women were primarily employed in household services shows that for Ottoman women privacy outweighed profit.

Keywords: Ottoman Women, Women's Studies, Virtuous Lady (*muhaddere*), Inheritance Law, Deputy, Privacy, Housework.

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Exaltation of Women in the Chapter on Muḥammad in Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*

Ismail Lala

ABSTRACT
Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) is arguably the most influential Ṣūfī in Islam. Of his vast *oeuvre*, no work has attracted more attention than *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. In the most important chapter of this work – on Muḥammad – Ibn ʿArabī writes of the true significance of women, showing the exceptionally high regard in which he holds them. Ibn ʿArabī is keen to underscore that it is the metaphysical significance of women, and *not* their physical form, that was made beloved to Muḥammad. This was due to the complementarity of their respective essences, which are the passive receptacles of the divine creative breath. This passivity is then transformed into activity when both actively transmit the divine breath in their own creative capacities and their manifestation of the divine Names. It is this amalgamation of feminine passivity and activity – reflected in Muḥammad's own passivity and activity – that establishes an ontological connection between them. This study explores these aspects of women's metaphysical significance in the chapter on Muḥammad as presented by Ibn ʿArabī and promulgated by the most prominent exegetes of the *Fuṣūṣ*.

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Women; feminine; Ibn ʿArabī; *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; Muḥammad

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Introduction

Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) is arguably the foremost Ṣūfī theorist in Islam and his works have exerted a powerful influence on the Muslim tradition for centuries; it is an influence that shows no signs of abating.[1] The positive image of women in his works, his notable female influences and numerous female followers, and his lack of opposition to female imamate, amongst other contributions have been observed by other scholars.[2]

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[1]The staggering influence of Ibn ʿArabī can be seen in the numerous works dedicated to him from Western Europe to America, and from Turkey and Iran to Indonesia. A deeper engagement with his thought can be found in Abu'l-ʿAlā' ʿAfīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyīd'Dīn Ibnul-ʿArabī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939); Rom Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn ʿArabī* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New-York Press, 1993); Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Henri Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ʿArabī* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); *idem*, *Alone with the Alone*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge, 2008); Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); William Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī's Own Summary of the Fuṣūṣ: The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom'", *Journal of the Muhyiddin ibn ʿArabi Society* 1 (1982): 30–93.

[2]Sa'diyyah Shaikh notes Ibn ʿArabī's many female influences and followers, and his gender-balanced views in *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ʿArabī, Gender and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Jonathan Brown draws attention to Ibn ʿArabī's support for female imamate on the basis that the textual evidence adduced in opposition to it is, in the opinion of the Ṣūfī, very weak (see Brown, *Misquoting Muḥammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* [London: Oneworld, 2015], p. 190). The concept of imamate in more general terms and its association with Ibn ʿArabī's philosophy is explored by ʿAbd Al-Hakeem Carney in "Imamate and Love: The Discourse of the Divine in Islamic Mysticism", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73/1 (2005): 705–30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139917 (accessed 19 October 2021).

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This article makes a unique contribution to this corpus by interrogating possibly Ibn ʿArabī's most daring and laudatory assessment of women in his well-known work, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[3] It will also engage with notable commentaries of the *Fuṣūṣ* in order to understand how Ibn ʿArabī's assessment of women was interpreted and promulgated by the best-known exegetes of the Akbarian order.

Seen by many as a distillation of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, albeit a highly arcane one, the *Fuṣūṣ* brings together major facets of the mystic's metaphysical *Weltanschauung*. Each chapter of the work addresses the wisdom associated with one prophet mentioned in the Qur'ān.[4] It is in the final and most important chapter of this work – the chapter on Muḥammad – that the Ṣūfī divulges the true significance of women.[5] The fact that Ibn ʿArabī should reserve exploration of the feminine principle for the most important chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* has not been lost on other scholars,[6] and it is an explicit declaration of the exceptionally high regard in which he holds women.

The whole chapter on Muḥammad has correctly been deemed to be an exegesis of a short Prophetic tradition.[7] In this tradition the Prophet declares, "Three things from this world of yours were made beloved to me"; he then mentioned women and perfume, and that his delight (*qurrat ʿaynī*) was in prayer (*ṣalāh*).[8] In this lesser-known version that includes the word "three (*thalāth*)", the inclusion of "three" is particularly significant for the Ṣūfī, although this word does not appear in any of the well-known compilations of Ḥadīth.[9] It may be argued that, despite not mentioning the number, the Prophet does mention three things, but the masculine form of the number – which signifies that what he is counting is feminine since there is numerical gender reversal in Arabic for numbers three to ten – is itself especially significant for the Ṣūfī and its omission, therefore, necessarily affects his interpretation.[10]

[3]Of all of Ibn ʿArabī's works, none has captured the imagination of scholars quite like the *Fuṣūṣ*, as attested by the plethora of commentaries on it and works about it. Notable contributions on this work include: Ronald Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003); Ismail Lala, *Qur'anic Knowledge and Akbarian Wisdom: Ibn ʿArabī's Daring Hermeneutics in Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; *idem*, "Contradiction and Paradox in the Mystical Hermeneutics of Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*", *Maghreb Review* 46/3 (2021): 291–313.

[4]The only exception to this is the penultimate chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, which deals with Khālid ibn Sinān. Khālid is not mentioned in the Qur'ān, but he is referred to as a prophet by Muḥammad in a Ḥadīth (see Abū Bakr al-Bazzār, *Musnad*, volumes I–18 [Madīnah: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1988–2009], XI: 293).

[5]Huda Lutfi makes some preliminary observations on this issue in an article that focusses on the emergence of the cosmos as a conjugal union of the masculine divine command, which is active, and the feminine passive nature of the phenomenal world. The world, according to this interpretation, is therefore a "dynamic trio-reality: male and female united by Love" (Huda Lutfi, "The Feminine Element in Ibn ʿArabī's Mystical Philosophy", *Journal of Comparative Poetics* 5 (1985): 7–19, p. 16, doi:10.2307/521749). This article takes a more forensic look at the role of women in manifesting the divine Names as well as their role in reflecting the divine creative breath in their own creative capacity.

[6]*Ibid.*, 15.

[7]Ralph Austin, *Ibn al-ʿArabi: The Bezels of Wisdom* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 269.

[8]Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Abul-ʿAlā' ʿAfīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 2002), p. 214.

[9]Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014) mentions that this tradition meets the criteria for inclusion in Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj's (d. 261/875) celebrated *Ṣaḥīḥ*, though he did not include it (Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *Al-mustadrak ʿala-l-Ṣaḥīhayn*, volumes I–4 [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990], II:174). Other compilations that include it, all without the word "three", are: Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-sunan al-kubrā* volumes I–10 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), VII: 124; Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nasā'ī, *Al-sunan al-ṣughrā*, volumes I–9 (Aleppo: Maktab al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyya, 1986), VII: 61; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, volumes I–45 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2001) XIX: 305; Ya'qūb ibn Isḥāq Abū ʿAwāna, *Mustakhraj*, volumes I–5 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1998), III: 14; Abū l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-mu'jam al-awsaṭ*, volumes I–10 (Cairo: Dār Ḥaramayn, n.d.), V: 241; al-Bazzār, *Musnad*, XIII: 296; Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī Abū Ya'lā, *Musnad Abū Ya'lā*, volumes I–13 (Damascus: Dār al-Ma'mūn li-l-Turāth, 1984), VI: 199.

[10]See below.

A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul

Edited by

Shirine Hamadeh
Çiğdem Kafescioğlu

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CHAPTER 4

Women in the City

Lucienne Thys-Şenocak

Understanding the relationship between Istanbul and women in the early modern era has never been a simple task, and it has certainly become more complicated, and more interesting, in the past three decades. Since the 1980s, several landmark studies on women in the Ottoman Empire have challenged many of the traditional beliefs about how women negotiated agency, presence, and access in the early modern urban environment of Istanbul, and have added to a rapidly growing body of research which addresses various issues of gender in the Ottoman world. Defining women by a singular and static gender, and dichotomizing Istanbul's myriad spaces into binary categories of public/private, with men prevalent in the former and women in the latter, is no longer tenable. The research of Joan Scott, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Thompson, Thomas Laqueur, and many others working in women's studies, gender, masculinity, and queer studies has firmly established that gender identity is a social construct, and therefore never fixed or stable. The invention of a "third-sex" category to accommodate persons of indeterminate sexualities, such as eunuchs and hermaphrodites, has also failed to account for the nuances of gender that existed in the Ottoman world.[1]

Interpreting the diverse nature of women's lives in Istanbul now calls for a rereading of many archival sources in which women are a focus, from court cases, inheritance registers, foundation registers, and chroniclers' accounts, to poetry, letters, and illustrated manuscripts. Sources which are intangible or less textual, such as architecture, objects, scents, and sounds, are also being mined for information about the past experiences of Istanbulite women, and are contributing to an awareness that their lives were far more dynamic and complex than previously imagined. While the majority of research on women and Istanbul in the early modern era is still rooted in history departments, the methodologies used by newer disciplines such as cultural geography, urban, gender, and queer studies, and performative and sensory studies are bringing new insights to and questions about these residents of the empire's capital.

My focus here is on 16th- and 17th-century Istanbul, although brief mention is made about some of the changes that impacted women's lives in the following century. After establishing who in early modern Istanbul was included in

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1 Thys-Şenocak, "The Gendered City", 878.

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