

AN ARCHIVAL SOURCE FOR LOCATING WOMEN IN MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY:
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN INHERITANCE REGISTERS

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In 1731, when Lady Montagu, the wife of the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, described the women of the Islamic Middle East she had met as¹ "freer than any Ladys [sic] in the universe, and the only women in the world that lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure, exempt from cares, their whole time being spent in visiting, bathing, or the agreeable Amusement of spending Money and inventing new fashions," she was presenting the West with a new image of Middle Eastern women. Her account is significant on several levels; until then, Western male travelers had composed the accounts on Middle Eastern women. In these compositions, they compared women in Middle Eastern societies with their own to the advantage of the latter -- Islamic religion was often cited as the reason for the disparity in women's position. They also portrayed the confinement of Middle Eastern Islamic women to the private sphere as an indication of subjugation, of powerlessness.

Lady Montagu's account was based on first-hand observation, not hearsay; she was able to dispel the gender bias of the preceding observations. Even though she also compared what she saw with her own society, she did so to the advantage of the former; Middle Eastern Islamic women were content in their presumably subjugated position. The main problem with Lady Montagu's account, however, was the generalization of her specific observations on one stratum of upper-class Ottoman women to all Middle Eastern women -- a weakness common to all traveler's accounts.

Lady Montagu's observations, which form the basis of the portrayal of women in Ottoman history, alert us to the larger issue of the use of sources in locating women in history. This article presents another historical source, inheritance registers, that overcome the weaknesses of traveler's accounts. It attempts to demonstrate how these registers portray women's position in Middle Eastern history more fully than other sources by using, as a case study, a random sample of eighteenth-century Ottoman inheritance registers.

PROBLEMS IN LOCATING WOMEN IN HISTORY

Locating women in history encounters theoretical and methodological problems which originate in the current theoretical preoccupation with public institutions in societal analysis. Women, who do not participate in these institutions, become marginal to theoretical discourse. The methodological problem is related to the theoretical one: scholars, who regard the historical data generated by institutions as constructs for social reality, reify the absence of women from history by doing so. In the current institutional approach, which is based on the inherent difference between men and women in public participation, male-dominated institutions make up social reality and women who have different participation patterns do not appear as contributing to it. This current bias on gender difference extends to historical analysis.

Because most analysis centers around institutions, it becomes analytically difficult to study the economic and social reality within which women are embedded and particularly to distinguish women's location in production from that of reproduction. In production, women's labor is not as visible as men's because it often does not reach the marketplace. Social reproduction, which entails procreation as well as the formation of networks of kin, friendship, and marriage, is difficult to document. Historical sources which often center around the male-dominated activities of public institutions infer that women rarely appear in "history," and if they do, only in conjunction with other events. This construction of history is a consequence of the conceptual framework which is utilized in interpreting the past; the questions it asks and the historical data it studies are pre-structured by the gender difference.

Given this conceptual gender bias, how can one study women in history? The existing studies suggest several courses; one is in-depth studies of the variation in women's complex links with society, combining biology, sexuality, social, political, and economic relations across time and social group². Other studies range in scope from case studies to large interpretive attempts³. Some debate the nature of women's relations in society, others contest the route by which to best assess and improve the

contemporary image of women. There is not yet a common theoretical focus because these studies have not yet questioned the main theoretical problem of the inherent emphasis on institutions which indirectly marginalizes women. In addition to women, peasants, ethnic and religious minorities also fail to appear in this framework -- except through the institutional prescriptions about these social groups, or through observational data such as travelers' accounts. One alternative theoretical framework which has attempted to overcome the gender bias articulates the relations among individuals and their significance in structuring and restructuring society. Such a relational approach which includes network analysis, exchange theory, and symbolic interactionism overcomes the theoretical bias against nonparticipatory social groups; it penetrates into society to study the participation of women. Still, this approach fails to locate the position within society of these social groups in relation to others. These problems get expounded when analysis extends beyond the Western experience to the Middle East. The "differentness" of women in coupled with the differentness of Middle Eastern societies from the West, particularly around its dominant religion, Islam.

PROBLEMS IN LOCATING WOMEN IN MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY

In most travelers' accounts and historical treatises of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Middle East has been portrayed as "the other;" the characteristics that separate it from the West have been studied to the detriment of the similarities. Hence the problem of selectivity of the analyses and sources which comprise the gender bias gets magnified to include the problem of the Western bias. The analyses contained inherent comparisons between the Western world and the others, categorizing the others as "different;" in the case of the Middle East, this difference centered around the most visible institutional variation, that between Christianity and Islam. The Islamic Middle East thus becomes what Christian Europe was not or what Christian Middle East used to be. The Middle East as the Biblical reference is the other image in Western travelers' minds; as Christians, Western travelers seek out the historical lands

and people cited in the Bible. They see their own religious past in the Middle Eastern people they encounter in their travels⁴. To Western travelers, Middle Eastern people appear to be pure, naive and unspoiled by civilization; they are the remnants of an earlier stage of human development.

In the case of Middle Eastern Islamic women, in addition to the problems cited above, there is the further value judgement of public-private separation and the victimization of women, their subordination and total control in society by men. This is a consequence of the inherent comparison of Middle Eastern women with European ones. Studies on Middle Eastern women focus on the religious institution of Islam to the exclusion of other factors in explaining women's position in Middle Eastern history. They state that⁵ Islam draws the definitive boundary which encircles and restricts women's participation in society. Religious texts, predominantly the Qur'an, is used to define and document women's position. The Qur'an's depiction of women's position in society is contradictory; although women are stated to be equal to men in their beliefs (3:195; 4:124; 66:9-12), their position in society are slightly below that of men in marriage (2:229), divorce (2:229), and inheritance rights (4:35). Unlike men, women are also recommended to cover themselves (24:32, 33:54, 60). The transition from women's ideal location in society presented in these religious texts to her real location embedded in empirical research has just started. Some⁶ study the origins of women's position in Islam through researching the era of the prophet Mohammed: they reveal how the Qur'an came into being -- how the laws concerning women were formed in the course of Mohammed's lifetime. Yet the location of the real position of women in society as opposed to the ideal prescription⁷ in the Qur'an still needs to be developed.

The Western images of Middle Eastern women has been mostly shaped through European travel accounts⁸ which portray these women as confined to and inactive within the private sphere.⁹ Two interrelated inaccuracies in perceptions of Western travelers account for the formation of this image. One derives from culture: these travelers used their own frame of reference, the position of women of

comparable status within their own societies, to define Middle Eastern women. They thus demarcate the position of women through inference as a negative case, as that which European women are not. The image of Middle Eastern women is thus historically constructed on the European case; it is not objectively based. The other related inaccuracy in Western perception is contextual; the inaccessibility of Middle Eastern women lead travelers to categorize what they could not observe as inactive and therefore insignificant. This categorization also enhances the perception that Middle Eastern women are different from the European women. Western travelers could not question their constructed image of Ottoman women with or against objective reality.

However, a few Western women travelers visit and observe their Middle Eastern counterparts, such as Lady Montagu with whose accounts we started this article. Lady Montagu, associating exclusively with high-status Ottoman women, does not observe and describe the variations in wealth, status, and religion among Ottoman women; many other observers of Ottoman society follow her example. The constant interest in the wealthiest, most powerful women who participate in politics and philanthropic activities often overshadow the lives of all other Middle Eastern women of more meager means and status. Many travelers write about these few women to the exclusion of the rest of society, failing to capture the variation among women along lines of religion, race, social status and wealth.

WOMEN IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN INHERITANCE REGISTERS

The analysis of women in the history of the Middle East needs to search for and locate alternate historical sources that overcome the three biases, of gender, religion and the West; this article argues that inheritance registers present such a source. Unlike most archival documents which focus on state correspondence, on institutional information where women's participation was very limited, or on tax registers, women should occur but often do not, inheritance registers cross gender and religious boundaries to provide information on all members of society.

This article analyzes a stratified random sample¹⁰ of 124 Ottoman inheritance registers¹¹ of both men and women recorded between 1702 and 1809 and drawn from three archives¹² in Istanbul. The sample comes from three different social groups within Ottoman society; one social group is made of top-level Ottoman administrators and their households, the second group consists of the middle and low-level military-administrators and their households, and the third group comprises the urban populace of Constantinople. The distinction between the first two groups and the populace reflects the fundamental stratification in Ottoman society between the rulers and the ruled, based on employment by the state.¹³ Women as a social group permeate all three groups.

Inheritance Registers as a Historical Source on Women Inheritance registers reveal women's location within society because of the spectrum of individuals they cover. Although these registers were often drawn up by the Ottoman religious court upon the request of the inheritors, the court intervened in the inheritance distribution on behalf of orphans and missing persons in order to protect their rights, and on behalf of minors in order to assign them legal guardians. The inheritances of those who died without leaving heirs also needed to be registered by the court before reverting to the state treasury; creditors who had problems collecting their debts from the inheritance and inheritors who disputed the inheritance distribution asked the court to intervene on their behalf as well. The Ottoman religious court was frequently requested to draw up inheritance registers because it guaranteed a fair distribution in accordance with Islamic laws of inheritance. The fairness of the distribution may account for the fact that many non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman empire used these Islamic courts. This spectrum of people who had their inheritances drawn captured the Ottoman variation in terms of wealth, property, and status. Women's inheritance registers therefore capture the variation within the position of women in Ottoman society. Women's position can then be assessed not only in relation to other women but to men as women's registers are analyzed together with the men's.

There are two main problems in using inheritance registers as a historical source in this context, however; these center around the question of selectivity, specifically the selectivity of the sample and of the life-course. It is difficult to assess how representative the registers are of the total Ottoman population since these registers mostly belong to those who had access to the court, the urban-dwellers; peasants or nomads, which made up large portions of Ottoman population, are not included. This excludes a substantial proportion of women. Even among the urban dwellers, those who had no legal problems in dividing up the inheritance did not come to the court. Urban communities of non-Muslims who had recourse to their own courts are also under-represented in Islamic court records. Hence women whose inheritances were distributed without legal problems and non-Moslem women are not sufficiently represented. It is hard to know how much insight these registers, drawn upon death, can provide about the life-course of the deceased; the registers document the life of the deceased at one particular instance which may or may not be representative of the preceding lifestyle of the deceased. Inheritance registers only contain those items the individual had in her possession upon death -- one cannot find out about her family life, acquisition patterns of goods, or items traded before death. Even the items present in the inheritance might not reflect total wealth: close family or friends could have hidden or stolen goods from the estate, the deceased herself could have given goods away to her favorite companions. The debt avowals in the register could also be false, added specifically to increase the legal share of a favored heir. Ottoman inheritance registers fail to include all women and all aspects of women's participation in society.

Inheritance registers are nevertheless a significant source of information on Ottoman women; one example reveals the wealth of information contained in them¹⁴. The inheritance register starts with the name of the deceased and her father's name¹⁵, in this case Ümmügülsüm hatun daughter of Bektaş. The description of the place of death and place of residence follows: Ümmügülsüm hatun¹⁶ died in Istanbul proper, in the quarter of İbni Müderris. This information helps locate the social position of women within Ottoman society; the name and the father's name reveal religious affiliation¹⁷ and the living quarters

identify the location of the deceased within the city. The register then states the name of the inheritors, their place of residence if different from the deceased, and their relationship to the deceased. The legal inheritors of Ümmügülsüm hatun are her husband, Hüseyin Reis son of Ahmed, her niece Emine hatun daughter of Mehmed, and her nephew, Ismail efendi son of Mehmed. One learns about the family network through the inheritors; their places of residence may also reveal patterns of geographic proximity. The last entry in the introduction contains the date when the register was drawn; hers is drawn at the beginning of the month of Muharrem, in 1178 (1764 A.D.)

The next section records every asset owned by the deceased upon death and its value; this gives information on the economic resources of the woman right before death. Ümmügülsüm hatun owns assets valued at 16,860 silver coins. Her two most valuable assets are copper coins worth 4080 silver coins and an ermine fur coat valued at 1800 silver coins. From the sum of assets, the court charges its standard duty of 25 silver coins for every 1000, i.e., 2.5 percent. The court also settles the debits and credits of the deceased; Ümmügülsüm Hatun does not have such transactions. Had she had such transactions, the amounts of debts or credits, interest rates, nature of the transaction, names of the individuals involved in the transaction would have been listed. Such information reveals women's use of their economic resources, and, through the descriptions of the other parties in the transaction, women's economic (and possibly social) networks in Ottoman society. The register concludes with the distribution of the inheritance among the heirs; Ümmügülsüm hatun's husband, Hüseyin Reis receives half the inheritance while her niece collects one-sixth and her nephew receives one-third, twice as much as the niece. Inheritance law helps families transmit their economic resources across generations¹⁸. The shares of all inheritors were calculated according to the intricate fractions entailed in the Qur'an.

Existing Research on Women in Ottoman Inheritance Registers Although Ottoman inheritance registers have been used to explore a range of questions in Ottoman history,¹⁹ mainly three studies have focused exclusively on Ottoman women. These studies present Ottoman women as active participants in

society; these women managed their own assets, took part in commercial transactions, and appeared in court to pursue their grievances.

Jennings²⁰ used over 1800 Kayseri religious court cases from the years 1600-1625 in which women were involved as litigants; women brought cases to court for the settlement of estates, property transfers, and disputes arising from marriage and divorce. They were also fully liable to be sued and, when accused in court, had the same obligation as men to defend themselves. The one large legal disadvantage women faced in court, deriving from Islamic law, was the inability to initiate divorce on their own. Gender difference existed in economic and social participation; women were excluded from office at every level of government and did not take part in economic production in shops, crafts, or guilds of the city -- their economic participation was limited to land-holding and money-lending. Gerber's study²¹ of 123 inheritance registers of women during 1600-1700 in Bursa indicated that the women of Bursa used the courts as actively as the Kayseri women did. In addition, women participated more actively in the economic life of the city: they sold, bought, and leased urban and village real estate. They also owned shops, workshops, and agricultural land; some were involved in credit transactions, taking loans and giving credit on a semi-professional basis. Some even spun and wove silk, made silk cords, and sold these in the market²². The difference in women's economic participation in Bursa and Kayseri could be due to the state of production and supply in these two cities; Bursa, as the trade center of Anatolia, offered more chances for women to participate in economic life than Kayseri²³.

Faroghi²⁴ made an in-depth comparison of the inheritance registers of two Anatolian women who lived, respectively, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to reveal similarities and differences in property ownership. Their commercial property included windmills, olive and fruit trees, vineyards, and farms; they also engaged in money-lending. The composition of their personal property revealed differences: one owned large amounts of personal clothing and jewelry, whereas the other did not. Faroghi's discussion of these two women mostly confirmed Jennings's and Gerber's findings, that

Ottoman women owned property and participated in economic life -- though not as actively as men. These studies provide valuable information on women in Ottoman history yet do not fully locate them in Ottoman society in relation to men.

Locating Women in the Sample of Eighteenth-century Ottoman Inheritance Registers The mode of analysis of inheritance registers need to take into account the location of women in relation to men to overcome the gender bias, and in relation to the activities women engage in to overcome the biases of religion and the West. In an attempt to overcome the institutional bias that obfuscate the societal participation of women and to emphasize the relational approach which gives agency to women, the article analyzes women's activities in three categories, formation of economic and social resources, organization of labor, and acquisition of skills. These categories demonstrate the complexity of women's participation in history.

This framework sets the boundaries of the analysis of the sample. Of the 124 inheritance registers in the sample, twenty-nine belong to women.

SEE TABLE I

Of these twenty-nine, twelve are in the military-administrative category and the rest are among the populace, the subjects. Women are absent from the first sample of top-level administrators. Ottoman women, as in most other historical societies, can not and do not hold office in society -- they are therefore separated from the main source of control in Ottoman society. There do not seem to be any specified reason for this restriction, except the general perception of women within the context of the family. How do women appear in the eighteenth-century Ottoman inheritance registers of men and women?

i. Economic and Social Resources Women's relation to economic and social resources can be captured through their location in the Ottoman stratification system. The most significant difference among the women in the sample is due to religion. The sample contains many Christians in addition to

Moslems,²⁵ although these Christians come from one specific social group, the populace. Moslems prevail among the administrator category; eleven out of the twelve women in the ruler-administrator category are Moslems, while only one is a wealthy Christian woman. Christians predominate among the populace; fourteen out of the seventeen women in this category are Christians, mostly Armenians, while the three others are poor Moslem women. This could be due to the fact that the distinction between the ruler-administrators and subject-populace, based on service within society, evolves into a Moslem/non-Moslem distinction in the eighteenth-century. Or alternatively, poor Moslem women could be less likely to have their inheritance drawn than poor Christian women. The Moslem women in the two categories reveal an additional distinction in status. The Moslem women in the military-administrative category (mostly through being daughters of or married to men in this category) are referred to with the honorific "lady" whereas the Moslem women in the latter category and all the Christian women regardless of their category, have no titles after their names. This stratification by religion and status does not extend to wealth, however.

The Christian women in both groups are slightly wealthier than the Moslem ones. The top third of Christian women have assets of more than 100,000 silver coins; among these, Zümürd daughter of Haçad, has a total worth of 160,720 silver coins and Anna daughter of Aleks, is worth almost the same amount. There are two Moslem women who are richer; Havva hatun daughter of Said is worth 200,203 silver coins; the assets of Ayşe hatun daughter of Ahmed Ağa, is double that amount. The difference in wealth between the Muslim and Christian women increases to the advantage of the Christians down the spectrum. One-third of the Christian women have assets between 50,000 and 100 000 and the other third have assets between 10,000 and 50,000 silver coins. In contrast, the assets of half the Moslem women are worth between 10,000 and 50,000 silver coins.

The composition of the goods of the Moslem and Christian women reveal similarities. The two most valuable items of the women of Constantinople are jewelry and clothing. Gold bracelets studded

with diamonds, earrings with emeralds and pear-shaped diamonds, gold and diamond necklaces, gold belt inlaid with diamonds and pearls abound. Fur coats predominate among the valuable items of clothing; there is, for example, the squirrel fur coat lined with camlet, the ermine fur coat, and the Tartar fox coat lined with red broadcloth. Pearls are used as ornaments in the impressive cloth coats and dresses: a caftan inlaid with pearls has a matching dress, the collar of a long velvet robe is embroidered with pearls and diamonds. After gold coins which rank as the third most frequent asset of Ottoman women, items of jewelry, dresses, house furnishings such as pillows, curtains, quilts, and housewares such as pots and pans follow. Women must have used these valuable items as a social resource in gift exchange or in ascertaining their status in society.

An important valuable asset of most Moslem women is the indirect dowry paid by the husband to be used in case of widowhood²⁶. This indirect dowry, which makes up an important portion of the poor Moslem women's assets, does not contribute much to those of wealthy Moslem women. In the case of Esba daughter of Mustafa, the indirect dowry is 8,000 silver coins, about half of her assets of 15,823. The indirect dowry of Ayşe hatun daughter of Ahmed ağa is 30,000, a small part of her wealth of 463,479 silver coins. This difference in indirect dowry among Moslem women may connote women's economic position prior to marriage; the indirect dowry appears insignificant in relation to the assets of those Moslem women who bring large personal fortunes into their marriages.

Real estate and debit/credit listings in inheritance registers depict women's economic resources. Only two inheritance registers refer to real-estate owned by women; Ayşe daughter of Hasan owns a house and Havva hatun daughter of Said a Jewish boarding-house in Hasköy. The amounts men owe other women document the extent of women's contribution to the economic life of Constantinople. Although the loans in the sample indicate the interest rate charged or provide clues as to whether these women are money-lenders or just giving loans to friends and kin, the diverse nature of the transactions suggest the former to be the case. The size of the loans vary -- although Havva Hatun's²⁷ loan of 420

is small (.006%), one man's²⁸ debts to his wife of 40 gold coins (480 silver coins) comprise 12% of his inheritance. A debtor man owes 554,000 silver coins, which comprises 50% of his total inheritance, to Safiye Hatun²⁹ who must have been a wealthy woman active in credit transactions. Habibe and Nefise Hatuns stand to collect 36,000 (1% of inheritance) and 6,000 (.002%) from another man³⁰.

Six inheritance registers of Ottoman men³¹ which contain references to money they owed to women reveal that status and economic indebtedness are not related; men vary in status from a fief-holder to a grocer. Religion also does not make a difference in debt patterns; a Greek Orthodox man³² borrows 67,200 silver coins (29% of his total inheritance value) from a Moslem woman, Ayşe Hatun, and a Moslem man³³, in addition to having a debt of 6,000 (1.2% of inheritance) to his sister Fatma Hatun, owes 2,160 silver coins to a Christian woman named Gari. The subordination of women into the private sphere does not seem to extend to all economic transactions.

Women also incur debts to men or other women. Out of the twenty-nine, six³⁴ (20%) have debts; of the thirteen creditors involved in these cases, seven are women and six men. Havva Hatun, who is also one of the richest women in the sample, owes four men, Ibrahim 30,000 silver coins (15% of inheritance), Süleyman 24,000 (12%), Ahmed Ağa 4,320 (2.2%), and another Ahmed Ağa 1,650 (.8%); these debts do not make up a significant proportion of her inheritance. In the two inheritance registers of Ottoman Armenian women, Karuşend and Biricik owe money to their co-religionists: Karuşend has a debt of 18,000 to Biricik, daughter of Manuk (23.8%), and Biricik owes 6,720 (5.4%) to her sister. Moslem women also transact with each other; Sakine Hatun owes 720 (1%) silver coins to Ayşe Hatun. There are four women and two men among the creditors of the other two women; Azize Hatun owes 1,800 (19%) to Rukiye Hatun and another 720 (7.6%) to an artisan Şahbaz. In the other case, Hatice Hatun has a debt of 420 silver coins (1.1%) to another artisan, a scarf-maker, in addition to her debts to three women, Hatice 2280 (6.1%), Fatma, 1530 (4.1%) and Semiha Hatun 5580 (15%). These debts of women to artisans possibly indicate items they bought but did not pay for due to the intervention of death.

This data indicate that the position of Ottoman women within economic life was complex, including commercial transactions along the lines of gender and religion as well as outside of them. Women contributed to Ottoman economic life within the boundaries of household and beyond.

ii. Organization of Labor. The organization of labor in pre-industrial societies occurred within the context of households. Women's presence in these households followed two patterns, as relatives or as slaves. The list of legal inheritors of Ottoman women is longer for Christian women than Moslem women. Could this indicate a difference in family size or kin networks? Christian women seem to have larger families; mother, father, brothers and sisters are often present along with the husband and children. The family of Christian Kadyana daughter of Sarabyon consists, for example, of her mother Serpuhi, brother Asadur, sister Sultana, along with her husband Seradyan, and daughter Tercik. Christian women also have more and younger children. In contrast, Moslem women have immediate families, consisting of the husband, sometimes the children, and rarely relatives.

Slaves, in this case female slaves, reproduced social and economic resources, helped maintain the organization of the household, and acquired skills that increase their economic worth. Yet they were socially disadvantaged by the inability to acquire or inherit property, and to form social networks independently of those prescribed by their owners. Female slaves reveal one of the positions women occupy in Ottoman society, as commodities. In the sample of women, two Moslem women own female slaves; the female slave of Ayşe Hatun daughter of Ahmed Ağa is valued at 60,000 silver coins and Havva hatun daughter of Said owns a Circassian slave worth 24,000. Christian women legally could not, and do not, own slaves in the sample. One persistent feature of the inheritance registers of high-level Ottoman administrators is the number of female slaves contained in them: There are thirty-nine female slaves listed in twelve registers³⁵ out of 124, about 10% of the registers contain female slaves.³⁶

The information on these female slaves vary; some inventories list their names, others place of origin, still others their price. In the sample, six slaves are from Georgia³⁷, three from Russia³⁸, two

Arabia³⁹, one Abyssinia⁴⁰, and one Wallachia⁴¹. Five black female slaves listed separately⁴² slaves were purchased in such distant places as Northeast Anatolia, Trabzon, Erzurum, Chios on the Aegean Sea, and East Anatolia. Among these, three of the Georgian slaves are specifically listed as being "virgins." As there unfortunately are no prices listed for these, the economic value of virginity in Ottoman society can not be surmised. Some female slaves are listed as being pregnant or with children; one slave, the Abyssinian, is pregnant and one Georgian has two slave sons aged five and ten. Names of the slaves range from proper Islamic ones such as Ayşe, Safiye, Zeyneb to ones reflecting physical descriptions and qualities such as "Rosebud," "Rosewhite," "Rose-bodied," "Cute," and "Beautiful-lipped"⁴³. The prices of the slaves vary as well as indicated by the percentage of the slave's price within the total inheritance, in addition to the price of the slave. The Arab slave Esma⁴⁴ is priced at 18,000 silver coins, making up 10% of the total inheritance of her master. One Russian slave and her young daughter⁴⁵ are valued at 48,000 silver coins and the Wallachian slave in the same inheritance is worth 24,000 (7% of inheritance value). The Black Ayşe⁴⁶ is valued at 84,000 silver coins (4.9%). An Arabian slave in another inheritance⁴⁷ has a price of 200 gold coins⁴⁸ (1%). Prices are sometimes assigned in a lump-sum; two black and three white slaves are worth 370 gold coins together (6.6% of inheritance value)⁴⁹.

iii. Acquisition of skills. The inheritance registers reveal one type of industry that requires special skill, weaving. Two inheritance inventories list looms among the inventoried items, possibly indicating that two Moslem women contributed to their family income by engaging in handicrafts. Zeyneb hatun daughter of Abdullah, and Azize hatun daughter of Abdullah have spinning wheels, embroidery frames and a loom. Although women undoubtedly have other skills which they use to produce and maintain social goods, these are not reflected in inheritance registers.

CONCLUSION

Women's inheritance registers portray one aspect of Ottoman historical reality -- as it pertains to women -- and reveal the differences among Ottoman women as a social group. The difference in status between Moslem and non-Moslem women in favor of the Moslems do not extend to wealth and the composition of women's estates in eighteenth-century Ottoman society. Women's position in Ottoman society emerges fully only after the inclusion of men's inheritance registers. Women interact with men in commercial transactions just as frequently as with women; the female commercial networks evident in lending activities are not as predominant as would be expected in a sex-segregated society.

This analysis indicates that the results attained from an analysis of women in history do not derive solely from the nature of the sources but the nature of the investigation as well. The multi-layered approach based on differences in gender, religion and geographical location obscures the analysis of Middle Eastern women in history; instead, a critical approach overriding these differences reveals the complexity of women's position in history. As the study of inheritance registers indicates, Ottoman women to participate in society; they appropriate economic resources through inheritance or market participation, and acquire skills in textiles. Their laborpower is organized within the household as slaves or as kin. Hence the analysis helps locate women in Middle Eastern history where they belong -- within society rather than on its fringes.

TABLE I. THE LIST OF THE 29 INHERITANCE REGISTERS BELONGING TO WOMEN

<u>NAME</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>REFERENCE NUMBER*</u>
Ayşe daughter of Hasan	1702	IM, B 31/48
Esba daughter of Mustafa	1703	IM, B 31/106
Christian woman Sema	1709	IM, B 35/70
Fatma daughter of Abdullah	1717	IM, B 40/37
Amine Hatun daughter of Abdullah	1734	IM, A 70/46
Christian Izvora daughter of Petros	1745	IM, B 56/70
Christian Şirin daughter of Hacadur	1748	IM, B 60/72
Christian Zümrüd Daughter of Haçad	1750	IM, B 62/129
Christian Kadyana daughter of Sarabyon	1753	IM, B 64/106
Christian Antadun daughter of Kirkor	1753	IM, B 65/13
Christian Askuhi daughter of Panos	1755	IM, B 69/33
Christian Mariam daughter of Arityun	1757	IM, B 70/58
Havva Hatun daughter of Said	1758	IM, A 190/73
Ümmügülsüm Hatun daughter of Bektaş	1764	IM, A 252/62
Havva Hatun daughter of Abdullah	1765	IM, A 276/11
Christian Tamara daughter of Katandi	1765	IM, B 77/93
Sakine Hatun daughter of Abdullah	1767	IM, A 297/56
Zeyneb Hatun daughter of Abdullah	1770	IM, A 338/27
Christian Duruhas daughter of Mardiros	1770	IM, B 84/69
Christian Elziran daughter of Zeker	1771	IM, B 86/29
Black Zeyneb Hatun daughter of Abdullah	1773	IM, A 155/69
Christian Karuşend daughter of Aşlud	1774	IM, B 90/52
Azize Hatun daughter of Abdullah	1775	IM, A 390/70
Christian Biricik daughter of Kirkor	1777	IM, B 92/65
Christian Pirayon daughter of Ovanes	1782	IM, B 92/89
Ayşe Hatun daughter of Ahmed Ağa	1784	IM, A 523/6
Christian Anna daughter of Aleks	1789	IM, A 586/15
Hatice Hatun daughter of Ibrahim	1795	IM, A 660/72
Emine Hatun daughter of Halil	1796	IM, A 691/60

* The reference number indicates the location of register: IM stands for Istanbul Müftülüğü, the Office of the Islamic Religious Opinion where the religious court archives are located; A or B which represent Askeri or Beledi reflect the social group of the deceased, a member of the military group or the populace; and the number which is the volume number/page number.

ENDNOTES

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1. See R. Halsband, ed. The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (Oxford, England, 1965), vol. I, p. 406.

2. Some new analyses have made empirical starts on overcoming these difficulties: they define women's non-market activities such as housework, care of children and elderly as labor; and they use women's domestic networks to redefine women's power in society. See, for example, Micaela di Leonardo, "The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship," Signs 12(1987), 440-53.

3. See, for example, the survey articles of Joan Scott, "Women in History: the Modern Period," Past and Present 101(1983), 141-157; Oliven Hufton, "Women in History: the Early Modern Period," Past and Present 101(1983), 125-140 for a thorough review of such studies. The review essay by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Culture and Consciousness in the Intellectual History of European Women," Signs 12(1987), 529-547, brings the survey of the literature up to the present.

4. See, for example, references in Jean Andre Peyssonnel, A.J.C.A. Dureau de la Malle, ed., Voyages dans les Regences de Tunis et d'Alger (Paris 1838).

5. For analyses of women in Islamic societies, see, for example, E. W. Fernea and B. Q. Bezirgan, eds., Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak (Texas, 1977), L. Beck and N. Keddie, eds., Women in the Muslim World (Massachusetts, 1978), Jane I. Smith, ed., Women in Contemporary Muslim Societies (New Jersey, 1980), Bo Utas, ed., Women in Islamic Societies (London, 1983), and Freda Hussain, ed., Muslim Women (New York, 1984). The diversity and specificity of women's experiences in Islamic societies have often been noted, as by Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," Feminist Studies 13(1987), 317-338.

6. See particularly Leila Ahmed, "Women and the Advent of Islam," Signs 11(1986), 665-91. A special issue of Women's Studies International Forum (volume V Number 2) is on "Women and Islam."

7. One exception is the recent work of Judith Tucker, Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt (Cambridge, England, 1985), which uses court records to investigate the position of lower class and peasant women in Egyptian society.

8. See S. Weber, Voyages and Travels in Greece, Near East and Adjacent Regions volume I: prior to 1801, and volume II: during the nineteenth century (London, 1958, 1959), and N. Iorga, Les Voyageurs Francais dans l'Orient Europeen (Paris, 1928) for more information on Western traveler accounts to the Middle East.

9. The limitations of these accounts are now being studied in depth. For a review of the extent of Western misperceptions, see Leila Ahmed, "Western ethnocentrism and perceptions of the Harem," Feminist Studies 8(1982), 521-34; Mary Harper, "Recovering the other: Women and the Orient in

Writings of Early Nineteenth Century France," Critical Matrix 1(1985), 1-31; Malek Alloula, The Colonial Harem (Minnesota, 1986); Rana Kabbani, Europe's Myths of Orient (Indiana, 1986); and Margot Badran's review of the last two, "Beyond the Mirage," Women's Review 4(1987), 7-9.

10. The most significant contribution of using a random sample in historical research is that the inherent methodological bias of selectivity is normally distributed. It is the richness of Ottoman archives which makes such a sampling scheme possible -- there is a population of hundreds of thousands of inheritance registers from which to draw a sample.

11. Inheritance registers are the inventories of all the movable and immovable property and goods, receipts, debts and wills of the deceased.

12. These archives are the Prime Minister's Archives (hereafter PMA) and Topkapi Palace Archives (hereafter TPA) which contain the inheritance registers of top-level Ottoman administrators, and the archives of the Istanbul Office of the Islamic Religious Opinion (Istanbul Müftülüğü) (hereafter IM) which contain the inheritance registers of the military-administrative group and the urban populace of Constantinople.

The two classification systems within PMA are Cevdet Maliye (hereafter CM) and Maliyeden Müdevver (hereafter MM); within TPA, documents are categorized into volume (Defter -- hereafter D) or document (prefix E -- for Evrak). The categorization system in IM is into the "military partitioner" (Askeri Kassam -- hereafter A) and the "partitioner for the populace" (Beledi Kassam -- hereafter B).

13. Ruler-administrators had special legal rights, tax privileges and access to economic and social resources; the category comprised members of the military establishment, including retired or unemployed members, their wives, children and manumitted slaves, the families of religious office holders, and those who attained special status through imperial decrees, such as miners. Urban populace comprised all urban residents who were not military-administrative members.

14. Document Askeri Kassam (hereafter A) 252/62 in the Istanbul Müftülüğü (hereafter IM).

15. In the case of the registers of non-Moslem women, the title "Christian" is added.

16. Hatun is an honorific term meaning 'lady'; it is only used for Moslem women.

17. Registers of religious minorities have the term 'Christian' (Nasraniye in Ottoman) precede the name of the deceased. Armenians or Greeks are not differentiated from one another. The father's name can help identify the specific religious affiliation. Jews are often specified separately by the term Yahudi.

18. Islamic laws of inheritance have been defined in the Qur'an in detail, in one section in particular which specifies the shares of inheritors (Nisa, IV: 11-12). Women are disadvantaged in the transfer of economic resources as they can only inherit one-half of what men do.

19. Among the numerous inheritance registers of central Ottoman lands, Bursa, Edirne, Ankara, and Kayseri records, for example, have been studied in depth. Halil İnalçık, "Onbeşinci asır Türkiye İktisadi ve İctimai Tarihi Kaynakları," İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası 11(1953-54), 51-75, worked on the Bursa inheritance registers of 1467 and 1487 as a source for Ottoman social and economic history; K. Liebe-Harkort, Bietrage zur sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Lage Bursas am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts (Hamburg, 1970) studied Bursa registers from the sixteenth century for the same purpose.

Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Edirne Askeri Kassamına ait Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)," Belgeler 3(1966), 1-479, used Edirne registers of the years 1545 to 1659 to analyze Ottoman wealth-distribution patterns. The Ankara registers of the years 1583-1584 and 1588-1590 were transcribed and published by Halit Ongan, Ankara'nın Bir Numaralı Şer'iyeye Sicili (Ankara, 1958) and Ankara'nın İki Numaralı Şer'iyeye Sicili (Ankara, 1974)) as a general source-book for Ottoman history. L. Fekete, "XVI. yüzyılda Taşralı bir Türk Efendisinin Evi," Bellekten 116(1965), 615-638, demonstrated the wealth of information contained in inheritance registers by reconstructing the daily life of a provincial Ottoman official through an inheritance register of 1588.

20. R.C. Jennings, "Women in early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Judicial Records: the Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 28(1975), 53-114.

21. H. Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa 1600-1700," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 12(1980), 231-244.

22. Silk is generally considered to be a female (and child) industry; women's participation in Bursa may thus be a consequence of this nature of the industry.

23. Yet it could also be that women's labor, and the household industry reaches the market more in one city than in the other one.

24. S. Faroqhi, "Two Women of Substance," Working Paper, 1987.

25. This might be due to their over-representation in the neighborhood under the jurisdiction of this specific religious court. It might also reflect the high proportion of religious minorities in eighteenth-century Constantinople.

26. The Ottoman term is mehr-i müeccel. There are three basic types of marriage transactions: i. from the groom's family to the bride's family, termed 'brideprice or bridewealth'; ii. from the bride's family to the bride, termed 'dowry', where the bride is claiming her share of inheritance before the parent's death; and iii. from the groom's kin to the bride, termed 'indirect dowry', combining the two above, where a brideprice transaction is followed by a dowry transaction. For further information, see Jack Goody and S.J. Tambiah, Bridewealth and Dowry (Cambridge, England, 1973).

27. The inheritance register of Havva Hatun is drawn after her death upon her return from the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1757 (IM, A 190/73).

28. He is the caretaker of a religious foundation, Ömer Efendi (IM, A 820/66).

29. Fief-holder Mahmud Ağa (IM, A 127/73) owes this amount to a Moslem woman.

30. Fief-holder Ahmed Ağa (IM, A 170/102) owes these amounts.

31. These inheritance registers are that of Mehmed Ağa son of Seyfullah in 1709 (IM, A 44/44), Greek grocer Tanaki son of Panayot in 1738 (IM, B 52/29), fief-holder Ahmed Ağa son of Abdullah in 1755 (IM, A 170/102), fief-holder Mahmud Ağa son of Halil in 1750 (IM, A 127/73), water-carrier Andon son of Bedros in 1779 (IM, A 458/14), caretaker of a religious foundation Ömer Efendi son of Abdullah in 1806 (IM, A 820/66).

32. IM, B 52/29.

33. IM, A 44/131.

34. These women are Havva Hatun daughter of Said in 1758 (IM, A 190/73), Christian Karuşend daughter of Aşlud in 1774 (IM, B 90/52), Sakine Hatun daughter of Abdullah in 1767 (IM, A 297/56), Azize Hatun daughter of Abdullah in 1775 (IM, A 390/70), Christian Biricik daughter of Kirkor in 1777 (IM, B 92/65), and Hatice Hatun daughter of Ibrahim in 1795 (IM, A 660/72).

35. These registers belong to the governor of Diyarbekir Ibrahim Paşa in 1715 (PMA, CM 15643), administrator Selim Bey in 1715 (PMA, CM 27577), the sultan's official in charge of submitting him summaries of reports, Mehmed Ağa, in 1746 (IM, A 94/16), Hüseyin Efendi son of Hasan in 1755 (IM, A 179/34), Havva Hatun daughter of Said in 1758 (IM, A 190/73), Ayşe Hatun daughter of Said in 1784 (IM, A 523/6), Lesbos island superintendent Ömer Ağa in 1788 (PMA, MM 9719/103-4), Abdullah Paşa, governor of Erzurum in 1791 (PMA, MM 9720/206-9), Müftü Abdülhakim, notable of Ayaş in 1795 (PMA, CM 12065), Hüseyin Paşa in 1800 (PMA, CM 25525), Abdi Paşa, governor of Diyarbekir in 1807 (TPA, D 6499), and deputy-judge of Dimetoka, Mehmed Efendi in 1808 (IM, A 856/146).

36. The figure does not contain the male slaves listed in the inheritance registers or those slaves that were manumitted upon the death of the master, in accordance with his will.

37. Four Georgian slaves are in register (PMA, MM 9720/206-9); two in (PMA, CM 27577).

38. Two slaves of Russian origin are in (PMA, CM 27577); the third in (IM, A 94/16).

39. One is in register (IM, A 179/34), the other in register (PMA, CM 12065).

40. PMA, CM 25525.

41. IM, A 94/16.

42. These slaves are in registers (IM, A 856/146), (IM, A 179/34), two black slaves in the register (TPA, D 6499), and the register (PMA, CM 25525).

43. These latter names describe body characteristics but do not necessarily connote the existence of a sexual relationship with the master.

44. IM, A 179/34.

45. IM, A 94/16.

46. IM, A 856/146.

47. PMA, CM 12065.

48. The exchange rate between gold and silver coins in eighteenth-century Ottoman society was 120 silver coins to one gold coin.

49. TPA, D 6499.