

SAYI 36 • 2010

# OSMANLI ARAŐTIRMALARI

THE JOURNAL OF OTTOMAN STUDIES

*Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Ottoman  
and Middle Eastern / North African Studies*

A Tribute to Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj

Misafir Editörler / Guest Editors

Donald Quataert and Baki Tezcan

İSAM 

# Placing the Ottomans in the Mediterranean World: The Question of Notables and Households

*Palmira Brummett\**

*In sum, all a historian does when she or he attempts the reconstruction of the past by writing it down is simply a temporary arresting of the fluidity inherent in the historical process.<sup>1</sup>*

Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj

If there is one quality I associate with Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj, besides his soft, insistent voice and his formidable knowledge of European history, it is his inclination, always and everywhere, to demand a reason. Never content with standard formulae, Rifa‘at wants to know if there is a good reason why we think what we think. And he does not accept easy answers. I am inclined, then, to think that Rifa‘at might still be demanding a reason why, (despite an historiographic process of integrating the Ottomans into the Mediterranean world, and despite Jane Hathaway and other scholars’ considerable work on Ottoman households) there has not been more mo-

\* University of Tennessee.

1 Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj, “A Response to Linda Darling’s Review of *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 173-174, see 174.

vement towards placing the Ottoman household on a par with those of its European counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

It has been over thirty years since Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj drew the Ottomanist gaze to the household as determinative, something beyond the cartoonish representation of the palace, the *kul*, and the Arabian-nights-style vezir. In the early 70s, he identified an idea of the household. He argued for the increasing prominence in the later seventeenth century of the vezir and pasha households as a source for the ruling elite of the empire. And he used the rise to greater prominence of those households to argue for “A decline in the personal rule of the sultans, a trend which had its beginnings in the end of Süleyman Kanuni’s reign.”<sup>3</sup> Additionally, he proposed, the sultan’s “denial of *de jure* and therefore institutional recognition” to the members of the vezir and pasha households kept them in “a precarious position and predisposed the internal political history of the state to potentially violent struggles for ascendancy during political crises.”<sup>4</sup> In this model, the exercise of power had complex motives, and factional politics problematized both loyalty and the chain of command. The edifice of the *askeri*, the Ottoman political institution, no longer looked so monolithic.

This paradigm translates readily across time and space, in terms of the relationships of kings to notables and frontier elites. It conveys a struggle for power and recognition that was immortalized, for example, in the ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, the *Arthasastra*, among other sources.<sup>5</sup>

- 2 See for example, Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Household in Ottoman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, “Safiye’s Household and Venetian Diplomacy,” *Turcica* 32 (2000): 9-32; and on the evolution of the historiography of narrative, Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley: University of California, 2003).
- 3 Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974): 438-447, see 443; and 439-443 for an articulation of the vezir and pasha households; also *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1984), 11-12, *passim*.
- 4 Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households,” 443.
- 5 Kautilīya, *Kautilya ‘a Arthaśāstra* [c. 350-283 B.C.E.?], ed. and trans. R.P. Kangle, 2 vols. (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1969-1972), 6.2.16-18, v. 2, 318, defines the layers of personnel, authority, and insubordination in spatial and relational terms based on proximity to the king. See also, Palmira Brummett, “The Early

The inclinations to engage in violent acts, to test “the monarch’s right to rule,” and to question the loyalty of subordinates are universals, played out in court and on campaign.<sup>6</sup> So too, are the inclinations to display (and spectacle) by which rulers and their subordinates publicly assert their “places,” on the local, regional, imperial, and world stages. Thus the comparison of the Ottoman household to its Florentine, English, Mughul, or Japanese counterparts is not an idle one; and Ottoman behavior is human behavior. Rifa‘at told us to stop obsessing about Ottoman exceptionalism. His characterization of the Ottoman *askeri* household also suggests an elaborate complex of relationships. For example, he listed the demands made by Köprülü Mehmet Pasha before he was willing to take the seal of the grand vezirate in 1656: non-interference with recommendations and nominations to office, denial of permission to criticize his decisions, and denial of meddling in state affairs by former office holders. These are parameters of authority found not only in other kingly households of the early modern era but also in democratic and quasi-democratic state systems of the twenty-first century.

But, Abou-El-Haj’s model of the Ottoman household is not simply a paradigm of power and authority; it is a paradigm of connectivity. Following up on the hoca’s lead, I would suggest that we have to develop the household in terms of the intersections between the military-administrative and the domestic household, with all their attached economic and cultural ramifications. Both are political. That integrated household should then be situated in a trans-imperial, trans-cultural matrix of household relations extending, at least, throughout the Afro-Eurasian oikumene. In this way, the Ottoman household becomes an inherent part of the Mediterranean world. I want the Ottoman Empire to look more like Venice (or Florence), even though one was “big” and one was “little.” Venice is an extreme model but a useful, concentrated one, despite its republican form. Venice,

---

Modern Ottoman Campaign: Containing Violence, Commemorating Allegiance, and Securing Submission,” *Eurasian Studies* III/1 (2004): 69-89.

- 6 Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households,” 443. The campaign, for Abou-El-Haj, is a measure of the sultan’s ability to secure stability and recognition. See also Hakan Karateke, “Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis,” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 13-52, at 17, 20, on habitual and normative legitimacy; and Gottfried Hagen, “Legitimacy and World Order,” in the same volume, 55-83.

like the Ottoman state, managed a complex set of disbursed Mediterranean territories (and their attendant commerce) through an intricate set of administrators, relationships, and forms of communication. I want to know why no Ottoman ruler ever looks quite like Cosimo dei Medici (1519-1574), Duke of Florence from 1537 and Grand Duke of Tuscany (1569-74), in terms of patronage, factionalism, and spectacle – a notable in the broad sense of that term.<sup>7</sup>

We have been using the term “notable” for at least two generations, but how far are we willing to take it?<sup>8</sup> I want the Ottoman “household” to mean more than the *kul* system.<sup>9</sup> I want the Ottoman individual, embedded in his or her household, to loom large. So, the Köprülü notwithstanding, and before the nineteenth century, I want to see members of the askeri class as heads of household first (men [or women] with clients, friends,

7 On Cosimo I, and his predecessor Cosimo (1389-1464), for example, see Dale Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre* (New Haven: Yale, 2000); and Henk Th Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and His Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See also Dorothea Nolde, Elena Svalduz and María José del Rio Barredo, “City courts as places of cultural transfer,” in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, v. 2, *Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700*, eds. Donatella Calabi and Stephen Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 154-85, for one applicable model of patronage and cultural transfer.

8 Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 6, has argued recently that “we are not accustomed to seeing rulers as the heads of extensive households that in their entirety are active in state service.” Faroqhi here is focusing primarily on diplomacy and foreign relations.

9 Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400-1800* (London: Continuum, 2008), 110-139, has addressed the forms of the princely household and the transformations of palace household during an accession and summarized the scale of the broader palace household (141-174). He reveals some of the details of individual action and engagement when he illustrates a dispute between two “military men” in Istanbul, one of whom charged the other with drunkenness, and “gross insult against my religion, my faith, my honour and my spouse (94),” because of an accusation of infidelity; and when he shows us a celebration in honor of those who stacked the winter supply in the palace wood sheds, which the sultan personally inspected (87-88). Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), has elaborated on the harem as an integral not separate part of the palace household.

wives [or husbands], slaves, children, business interests, summer homes, household goods, and patterns of consumption), and “servants of the sultan” second.<sup>10</sup> That household should look and sound normal and familiar, as it does in the nineteenth century when the words “Ottoman family” become a commonplace. Out of that household, one then hopes to tease out the early modern Ottoman individual. That notable individual should meld anthropological and legal identities to biographical, cultural, and literary ones, a complex of identities found more often in scholarship on the modern era individual.<sup>11</sup> What follows, then is a set of thoughts on some

10 This type of household as central is found for example, in Alan Duben and Cem Bahar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and for a somewhat earlier time in Ehud Toledano, “Shemsigul: A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth Century Cairo,” in *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Edmund Burke (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 59-74, at 65-66. Toledano uses police records here to reveal the nature of the harem and the intersections of households. Virginia Aksan, “Turks and Ottomans Among the Empires,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 15.1-2 (2009):103-114, see 113, n. 11, in a recent review of Karen Barkey’s, *Empires of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), cites a set of recent sources dealing with ‘households,’ but most of the works concern the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Donald Quataert, *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 413-415, in a review of the same book, points out (and critiques the conclusions drawn from) Barkey’s description of the “increasingly thick networks of international merchants and of tax-farmers [which] began forming networks of their own, free of state control.” But I would argue that such “thick” networks of merchants and “regional notables” were clearly in evidence before the eighteenth century, a continuation of those found in and extensively documented for the medieval world.

11 Ehud Toledano, “What Ottoman History and Ottomanist Historiography Are – Or, Rather, Are Not,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 38 (2002): 195-207, see 201, review article of Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, argues of the historiographic turn to social anthropology: “This shift precluded the pretense, or ambition, to explain macro systems by focusing on the individual; rather, the latter was seen as complementing the former, adding dimensions that were ignored by Marxian and Marxian-influenced approaches which dealt with institutions, systems, formations, etc. (201).” Toledano also notes the expansion of the field through the use of *sijills* which enable us to flesh out Ottoman systems. Such court records have been usefully employed by scholars like Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Abdul Kerim Rafeq, as a foundation for various works.

of the issues and possibilities involved in crafting a vision of the Ottoman Mediterranean household, notable, and individual.

### **An Ottoman Mediterranean Household**

The historiography of the early modern Ottoman Empire has experienced a Renaissance in the last generation of scholarship, prompted by the demands of world history and by a fruitful process of cross-fertilization between Europeanist and Ottomanist scholarship. The rhetoric of the “Terrible Turk” has been relegated to its place among a complex matrix of representational forms; decline theory has been entombed, despite vampirish tendencies toward resurrection; and the Ottomans have been situated as major players in the trans-imperial spaces of the Mediterranean world. With the Ottomans as primary actors in the reassessment of Mediterranean and Renaissance, the Ottoman household should become a force to be dealt with. The notable (and merchant) household, after all, has been for a long time an elemental piece of Mediterranean historiography, a basic measuring unit by which power, movement, relationship, gender, and consumption have been evaluated.

We have a sense of Ottoman domestic and commercial households. And thanks to the work of scholars like Suraiya Faroqhi, Leslie Peirce, and others, some members of the *reaya* strata of early modern Ottoman society (shopkeepers, artisans and guild members, even housewives) have achieved some of the “normalcy” that should characterize any discussion of Ottoman households.<sup>12</sup> But how exactly do those households figure in the conceptualization of “the Mediterranean,” and its communities as Braudel and others have conceived them? Or is any household with the label “Ottoman” attached to it doomed to an irrevocable sense of separateness; or consigned, at best, to a local or communal identity? Sometimes I get the feeling that the only time the “Ottoman” is truly Mediterranean is when he is a corsair. In short, when we put the terms “Ottoman,” “household,” “early modern” (especially before the eighteenth century), and “Mediterranean” together, what do we get? I would propose, at this point, that what we have is a distorted picture full of select, spatially-separate households, clearly divided by class and by commune. Some are called

---

12 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople under the Ottomans* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

“Ottoman,” most have other, more specific types of designations. Some are gendered, some not. Some extend into the Mediterranean, usually through occupations having to do with international commerce. Overlaying this picture of disparate households and investment in international trade is an often vague sense of cultural transmission – the notion that literary and artistic modes, like people, flow back and forth across the Afro-Eurasian oikumene, and that the Ottoman Empire cannot help but be participant in that flow which was so eloquently suggested in Hodgson’s *Venture of Islam*.<sup>13</sup> But what seldom appears is a complex web of intersecting identities, relationships, and socio-cultural tropes that focus on the household, grant the empire intentionality, extend beyond the local, and are characterized as part of the Mediterranean world.

The Ottoman Empire was clearly Mediterranean, so our task is to see that it appears Mediterranean in the historiography. The heart of the “classical” Mediterranean (Greece, Anatolia, and the archipelago) is the heart of the Ottoman Empire. In the early modern era, the Ottomans “controlled,” as much as any imperial entity could “control,” more of the Mediterranean littoral than its rival imperial powers whose interests and investments spanned the land and sea spaces of Hodgson’s Afro-Eurasian oikumene. The empire of the sultans was integrated into the political, commercial, and religio-cultural networks of that oikumene and its White Sea, serving as a major conduit for the transmission of people, news, goods, knowledge, cultural conventions, and literary tropes. Therein it circulated and managed merchants, pilgrims, scholars, pirates, soldiers, poets, judges, mystics, and administrators. It meditated upon, approached, conspired in, claimed, and acted upon Mediterranean space. So we need a paradigm, based on those commonly employed for the “classical,” medieval, and modern worlds, which takes connectivity for granted and applies it to the Ottoman Empire.

One avenue for advancing our task is to trace the movement of the empire and its citizens throughout the Mediterranean as well as the movement of Mediterranean peoples into the empire. That task can be accomplished without privileging “foreigners,” Franks, or *dhimmis* as those who moved and relegating Muslims or “Turks” to those who remained

13 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History of a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

at home. Nor is our task facilitated by periodizing the early modern in terms of a late sixteenth century ‘rise of the West.’ Despite that “rise,” the Ottomans continued to occupy three sides of the sea. Thus, the Mediterranean might well be considered an Ottoman “*mare nostrum*.”<sup>14</sup> Their possession can be measured in the copper trade, the slave trade, the cloth trade, the wine trade, or the grain trade, among others. But it can also be measured in marriages, friendships, brotherhoods, the extending of loans, and the translatability of custom and consumption across space, ethnicity, and commune.<sup>15</sup>

The captive Albert Bobovi, commenting on seventeenth century Ottoman palace personnel, noted that there were not many “native-speaking Turks in the Palace, because the sultan finds himself more faithfully served by Christian converts who have neither hearth nor home, parents or friends.”<sup>16</sup> But just a few sentences later in his narrative he wrote: “The exclusion of native Turks from service often means that the principal officers of the Palace take the children of their friends and offer them as Christians and tribute children.” Bobovi’s first comment echoes numerous contemporary European Christian narratives, which pointed to the *devşirme* as proof both that Ottoman successes were the result of Christian talent and that the Ottoman state, as a “slave” state, was destined to fail. His second statement clearly suggests the network of Muslim (or cross-communal) “friends” and relationships which extended well beyond the palace walls. Taking Bobovi’s account as a starting point, one could begin to imagine the Ottoman system as a Mediterranean one, with the Ottomans functioning as householders in a trans-Mediterranean network of friends and associates.

---

14 Palmira Brummett, “Visions of the Mediterranean,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007): 9-56, see 46. Note that several (Vitkus, Wilson, Davis) of the articles in this special issue of JMEMS help root the Ottomans in the Mediterranean.

15 On loans, see Ronald Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571-1640* (New York: NYU Press, 1993). Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), like Jennings, elaborates on some of the specifics of connectivity for the early period.

16 C. G. Fisher and A. W. Fisher, “Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi’s Descriptions,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 10 (1985-1987): 30. Bobovi (Bobowski) was a musician in the palace for many years and wrote an elaborate description.

It also functioned as a Mediterranean slave society (equivalent to those of its European Christian counterparts) which transcended both the *devşirme* on the one hand and the ravages of “Turk” pirates and seizers of Christian women (immortalized in European captivity literature) on the other. Both friendship and slavery are important pieces of the historiographic household puzzle.

Rather than isolating the Ottoman empire as an Oriental and extraordinary “slave-state,” great profit can be derived from applying the paradigms developed for notable households in places like Venice or Florence to Ottoman households, to see how they worked, what were their tastes, modes of operation, and matrices of relationships and clientage.<sup>17</sup> While Venice and the Ottoman Empire have often been treated in tandem, because of their competition for control of Mediterranean bases and commerce, Venice tends not to be employed as a model for how Ottoman notables might function.<sup>18</sup> It should be. Each polity possessed a military administrative class that consumed mightily and engaged in literary production. Just as Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese competed for commissions in mid-sixteenth century Venice; and as Venetian patricians competed for bragging rights in the form of conspicuous public consumption (sumptuary laws notwithstanding), so too we can look at the equivalent phenomena in artistic, literary, and public competitions among the notables of Istanbul. A focus on patronage and consumption can lead us to an evolved vision of the Ottoman household, one which addresses its “styles” and rhetorics of patronage. What would it look like, for example, if we developed patronage chains for members of the Ottoman literati like those elaborated,

---

17 On connoisseurship, Frank Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Social Status and Material Culture in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), stands as a remarkable model, even if there are not equivalent manuals of taste in the Ottoman context.

18 See Palmira Brummett, “The Ottoman Empire, Venice, and the Question of Enduring Rivalries,” in *The Evolution of Great Power Rivalries*, ed. William Thompson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 225-53, on rivalries. And see Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); and Cemal Kafadar, “A Death in Venice (1575): Anatolian Muslim Merchants Trading in the Serenissima,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 191-218, who have looked at some of the personnel moving back and forth between Ottoman and Venetian space.

for example, for the English travel compiler, Richard Hakluyt (b. 1552)?<sup>19</sup> Such a comparison can also provide links between the “middle age” of the empire and its later periods, when the overlap between the military-administrative class and the literary class is more often taken for granted.

One of the problems of conceiving the empire in terms of networked households is the tendency to maintain too rigid a separation in our evaluation of different types of “notables:” *askeri*, religious authorities, and literati, as (mostly) separate realms for consideration.<sup>20</sup> This division of notable spheres impedes our fulfilling Abou-El-Haj’s imperative in the sense that the ways in which households interact and function across occupational roles has been insufficiently explored. That deficiency is changing, in part through the work of art and architectural historians who are examining the forms and mechanisms of patronage across status and gender lines. Emine Fetvacı for example, has illuminated the details of notables’ interventions in the production of texts; and Lucienne Thys-Senocak has examined the physical and rhetorical forms of elite harem architectural patronage.<sup>21</sup> On another front, Baki Tezcan’s work on the Ottoman judge, Mullah Ali, takes an intimate look at the intersections of patronage, race, identity, and literary production in early seventeenth century Istanbul.<sup>22</sup> He shows us a

19 See for example, Anthony Payne, “‘Strange, remote, and farre distant countreys’: the travel books of Richard Hakluyt,” in *Journeys through the Market: Travel, Travellers, and the Book Trade*, eds. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Newcastle: Oak Knoll Press, 1999), 1-38, at 3-11. Such patronage chains could take their style from a combination of biographical dictionary and Europeanist biographical secondary literature. They would include all the available associations of educational, literary, and economic patronage, along with cultural associations.

20 Here again the model of the Italian city state, where the intersections of secular and clerical notables are taken for granted, is instructive.

21 Emine Fetvacı, “The Production of the Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân,” *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 263-315, has shown us the Istanbul pasha, concerned for his reputation and that of his master, and perhaps an aficionado of art, carefully supervising the production of an illustrated manuscript in the palace atelier. See also, Lucienne Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Houndmills: Ashgate, 2007); and Serpil Bağcı, “From Translated Word to Translated Image: The Illustrated Şehnâme-i Türkî Copies,” *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 162-176, on the porous boundaries of the Mediterranean world for image circulation.

22 Baki Tezcan, “Dispelling the Darkness: the Politics of ‘Race’ in the Early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire in the Light of the Life and Work of Mullah Ali,”

judge, who is of African origin, resident in the Edirne courthouse, enforcing a recall of coinage, enduring the insults of a crowd that then attacks his residence and steals his wife's jewelry, and also enduring the ensuing editorializing on this "disgrace" of a black man. Later Tezcan shows us Mullah Ali, as a teacher at the Süleymaniye, writing an Islamic treatise in defense of blackness.<sup>23</sup> Mullah Ali thus becomes a three-dimensional figure merging domestic, scholarly, literary, religious, and political roles. He accepts the patronage of others and transgresses genre norms in order to express an identity which is both individual and communal.

### **Model of the Ottoman Mediterranean Household**

What, then, would a model of the Ottoman Mediterranean household look like? It would include Ottoman households in multiple "ranks," broadly construed to include an extended family of relatives and clients; and explained as a gendered political, cultural, social, and economic unit.<sup>24</sup> Such a model would provide the opportunity to see the Ottomans as families rather than historical "figures," class types, or allegorical "portraits." It could provide us with the social Ottoman, or the Shakespearean Ottoman

---

in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, eds. Baki Tezcan and Karl Barbir (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 73-95. Mullah Ali joined the imperial council in 1621.

23 Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness: the Politics of 'Race'," 80, 85.

24 This would include the type of "family politics," treated by Suraiya Faroqhi, "Pious Foundations in the Ottoman Society of Anatolia and Rumelia," in *Stiftungen in Christentum, Judentum und Islam vor der Moderne*, eds. Michael Borgolte and Tillmann Lohse (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 226-56. Faroqhi notes that the "relatives of tax farmers and tax collectors on behalf of absent governors (*muhassıl*), who became prominent in the Anatolian and Rumelian provinces from the late seventeenth century onwards, were able to maintain themselves in power through judicious marriage alliances and other types of 'family politics,' acting much more openly than most of their sixteenth-century predecessors had dared to do. In this context, pious foundations were an important political tool (239)." These foundations provided employment "to provincial scholars," legitimacy to the endowers; and "the notables and magnates who had established these institutions could maintain a hold over the town in which they had officiated even if, as was quite often the case, the head of the family ultimately was executed upon the sultan's orders (238-239)."

(a la Evliya), a person with relationships, a personality, emotions, virtues, and vices.

It could provide us with sultans, vezirs, and concubines who evolve and change their minds – that is authority figures whose behavior is explainable in terms other than those of order, loyalty, and discipline, on the one hand, or passion, serendipity, and whim on the other. The Ottoman, that is, would begin to look like the Florentine, the Venetian, or the Roman (all of whom are considered opportunistic, flamboyant, resistant to “the state,” and idiosyncratic according to their city of residence).

The Ottoman socio-economic mind and military mind must now also be complemented by the Ottoman cultural mind in the form of Ottoman participation in a Republic of Letters that links the sorts of commercial writings represented, for example, in the Geniza, to the correspondence of literary and patronage communities.<sup>25</sup> Ottomans may be envisioned as people who corresponded with each other, rather than simply as people who produced documents in the interests of the state. Joel Kraemer, in one possible example, has used the later Geniza documents to illustrate the intersections of family, literacy, emigration, conversion and commerce for Jewish women along an axis reaching from Spain to Cairo.<sup>26</sup> In effect he has documented gendered family networks through correspondence which addresses topics well beyond commercial exchange and religious hierarchy. Ottoman women also moved, voluntarily and involuntarily, as wives and pilgrims.<sup>27</sup> We need to explore how those movements were re-

---

25 For pioneering works, see Robert Lopez and Irving Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955); and S.D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), and his other work on the Geniza. Halil İnalçık, “Bursa Kadı Sicillerinden Seçmeler,” *Belgeler* X.14 (1980-81), 64-91, writing on the trade of Bursa as illustrated in court records, provides a comparable starting point by addressing silk, copper, pepper, and, for example, the estate of one Davud Çelebi in Iznik which went to the mint (135).

26 Joel Kraemer, “Spanish Ladies from the Cairo Geniza,” in *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World after 1492*, ed. Alisa Meyuhas Ginio (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 237-67, esp. 245-6. I find Kraemer’s conclusions too simple, but he provides a useful model especially for the extension of the family network to other associates.

27 Kraemer’s treatment of women refusing to convert can be compared to Tijana Krstić, “Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate:

corded and commemorated. The Ottomans, after all, had a relatively large literate population that spanned the military-administrative, clerical, scribal, and commercial classes. Our Republic of Letters would thus transcend the realms of belles lettres and commercial transaction to include the whole complex of correspondence to which the early modern world was inclined. An excellent contribution in this regard is the work of Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, who, in the *Age of Beloveds*, draw a Mediterranean characterized by literary and sexualized households whose work and ethos circulated unimpeded by the boundaries of empire, ethnicity, and faith.<sup>28</sup> For the authors, poetry becomes biography. Thus, while it is true that we do not have the kinds of biographical information in many cases that we would like, we probably have more than we think, as Cornell Fleisher has demonstrated and as Suraiya Faroqhi has suggested in her many works.<sup>29</sup>

---

Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009): 35-63, on conversion literature in the Balkans; and Natalie Rothman, *Trans-Imperial Subjects: Boundary Markers of the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming), on refugees from Ottoman territories to Venice.

- 28 Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Leslie Peirce, “Writing Histories of Sexuality in the Middle East,” *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1325-1339, has provided a partial bibliography and comment on the state of the art in the broader field. She refers to the “human landscape” of the Middle East zone, reminding us that we need a human landscape of the Ottoman Empire (1326).
- 29 It was Cornell Fleischer’s pioneering volume on Mustafa Ali, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: the Historian Mustafa Ali, 1541-1600* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), that shone a spotlight on questions of Ottoman biography both within and outside the Ottomanist field. Fleischer took an individual member of the *askeri* and examined his place in systems of Ottoman patronage and literature. Gottfried Hagen has illustrated the fact that other types of Ottomans could speak in first person narrative, as did Mehmed Aşık (b. 1555 in Trabzon) a scribe at the court of Erzurum (later in the divan at Manisa), and a traveler who apparently kept a diary of his travels; see Gottfried Hagen, “The Traveller Mehmed Aşık,” *Essays on Ottoman Civilization: Proceedings of the XI-Ith Congress of the Comité International d’Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes* (Praha: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 1998), 145-154. Mehmed Aşık’s travels are reflected in his cosmography *Menâzırü’l-’avâlim*, completed in Damascus in 1598 (145).

We need the best possible sense of what the Ottoman Republic of Letters looked like. And another way to get at this matrix of connectivity, familiarity, and characterization is through the correspondence of those who observed the Ottomans. That is an old procedure, the examination of “representations of the Turk.” But the “Turk” as object, also reveals the “Turk” as friend, partner, associate, and correspondent. Thus the *relazioni* of the Venetian baili, for example, paint a picture of friendship and association as well as one of competition and hostility.<sup>30</sup> One must then apply such notions of “friendship” and association to the Ottoman world, whether that association is commercial, sexual, literary, scholarly, familial, or otherwise. Various types of diplomatic and commercial contact are valuable in this regard. Merlijn Olon tells us that the Dutch envoy, Justinus Colyer (1668 – 1682), characterized Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha (c. 1635 – 1683) as: “A most agreeable and pleasant creature.”<sup>31</sup> We need to take that description, pick it apart, and see where it leads. The personal cannot be separated from the political in official relationships; thus the pursuit of official objectives did not prevent the development of more expansive relationships fueled by food, drink, and conversation, situated within the context of Ottoman “client-patronage relations and household politics.”<sup>32</sup> Olon’s essay fits squarely within the paradigms proposed

---

30 Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*.

31 Merlijn Olon, “‘A Most Agreeable and Pleasant Creature’? Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa in the Correspondence of Justinus Colyer (1668-1682),” *Oriente Moderno* XXII (LXXXIII) n.s. 3 (2003): 649-669. Olon suggests that the reader must go beyond the rhetorics of vehement denunciation of the vezir so common in European sources. Such rhetorics, after all, as various scholars of Ottoman and European narratives have shown, often threw a bone to communal identity at the beginning and end of the narrative while illustrating the complexity of relationships in between. The author also notes that the envoy’s relations with the grand vezir ultimately deteriorated after starting out on a cordial footing. Colyer was envoy to Istanbul from 1668-1682.

32 *Ibid.*, 653. The notion of a Mediterranean network of relationships and households can also be extended to those who have no direct voice but whose movements and behaviors are charted (by outsiders) in however fragmentary a form. The encounter of the European (Christian) traveler with the peoples of the empire has traditionally been divided into one between the powerful classes and negligible classes, the askeri on one hand and the shopkeepers, camel renters, bandits and beggars on the other: the people who can make things happen and the people who either get in the way or act as “helpers.” This hierarchical paradigm of encounter

by Abou-El-Haj in terms of households, the dynamics of power, and the “place” of the “state.” It also suggests a way in which the Mediterranean sociability proposed in Andrews’ and Kalpaklı’s work can be extended to a wider network of relationships.

The representatives of Christian kings, especially those who remained for years in Istanbul, were, of necessity, drawn in to Ottoman relations and politics. Remarkable in the case of Kara Mustafa is his tenure as grand admiral (December 1661 – February 1666) during the war for Candia, a position that made him a subject of particular interest to foreign representatives. The *kapudan*, because of the scope and location of his “fief,” was directly approximated to Mediterranean affairs in ways that other civil servants were not.<sup>33</sup> Later, as grand vezir, Kara Mustafa issued a *ferman* (c. January 1678) “ordering all European ambassadors to hand over to a specially commissioned kadi a list of the merchants who had married Ottoman wives, as well as of their dragomans and indigenous servants.”<sup>34</sup> In sum, he wanted to see their households. The “household,” and the intersections of “foreigner” and “indigene,” thus transcended class and space, formally structuring relationships. The Ottoman government’s attempt to control agents, intermediaries, and brokers of trade is not very different from those of the Venetian Republic which was constantly struggling with its own subjects who were anxious to profit from trade and were thus chronically violating official laws and classifications.

---

can be exploited simply by taking into account the narrative modes and details by which outsider travelers (or insider travelers) describe the social encounter. Our attention can shift from the attitudes of narrator to the objects of narration.

33 See, for example, Feridun Emecen, “Some Notes on Defters of the Kaptan Pasha Eyaleti,” in *The Kapudan Pasha, His Office and His Domain*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 2002), 253-61. Svetlana Ivanova, “Ali Pasha: Sketches from the life of a *Kapudan* Pasha on the Danube,” in a short piece in the same volume, and relying on the kadi sicills of Rusçuk, has presented a “sketch” of Ali, kapudan pasha of the Danube in the late seventeenth century, a sketch which illustrates the ways in which such an officer functioned and was marked in the documentation of the Ottoman system.

34 Olnon, “A Most Agreeable and Pleasant Creature,” 662. Olnon discusses this system of connections as a “protection system (663).” The grand vezir threatened to subject those who had married indigenous women to the *haraç* tax (663-667).

One of the important contributors to this transimperial sense of household is the Venetian scholar, Maria Pia Pedani. Pedani has pointed out that commercial entrepreneurship went well beyond grudging cooperation across communal boundaries. She notes that Ottoman merchants “insured themselves with Venetian companies,” suggesting a very high level of integration of commercial households.<sup>35</sup> And she has traced the extension of the Ottoman kul/palace system across the archipelago through the movement of Venetian women to Istanbul to capitalize upon the status and influence of their kul sons.<sup>36</sup>

Another scholar, Pam Ballinger, an anthropologist working on the Adriatic for the more modern period has advanced two concepts that might prove useful for our understanding of the Ottoman household in the early modern Mediterranean world. One is the “commodity chain” and its associated “human chains.” That concept resonates with the kinds of relationships found in Pedani’s work; and it transcends categories of class. I would add to that model the notion of “cultural chains.” Ballinger’s second concept is what she calls an “alternative map,” an “archipelago” (playing off of Pococke) of territories lost (and found) which is “at once a physical space; a cartography constituted of movement, connection, rupture, and relinkage; and an imaginary defined by loss, longing and nostalgia.”<sup>37</sup> That alternative map could easily be applied to Ottoman expatriates and migrants, and to the memory of territory and peoples gained and lost in the Mediterranean world. The household, after all, is intimately associated with webs of (and changes in) identity. One could also argue that in their idea of an “age of beloveds,” Andrews and Kalpaklı too have created a different type of alternative (Mediterranean) map of “loss, longing, and nostalgia.”

---

35 Maria Pia Pedani, “Ottoman Merchants in the Adriatic, Trade and Smuggling,” *Acta Histriae* 16.1-2 (2008):155-172, see 155. Pedani notes the joint buying of a ship in 1636 by Hasan Çelebi and Pietro Bevilacqua (164). One might ask in what other ways their households were connected.

36 Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, “Safiye’s Household and Venetian Diplomacy,” *Turcica* 32 (2000): 9-32; and *Dalla frontiera al confine, Quaderni di Studi Arabi, Studie e testi* 5 (Rome: Herder Editrice, 2002).

37 Pam Ballinger, “Navigating Home: Remapping the Adriatic in the Archipelago of Italy’s ‘Lost Territories,’” paper delivered at the conference of the American Historical Association, Jan. 2010, mss. pages 9, 16-17.

## Two Possible Case Studies of the Household

Both narrative and documentary sources can be deployed to reveal the embeddedness of the Ottoman household in trans-Mediterranean systems of patronage, consumption, and communication. Evliya Çelebi is a useful, if unique, source for the study of Ottoman households because he has what we might call a “Mediterranean mentality,” along with being emblematic, as Robert Dankoff shows us, of an “Ottoman Mentality.”<sup>38</sup> Evliya suggests, for example, the connectivity of Ottoman elites to foreigners, merchant households, and religious personnel. He is preoccupied with sociability, patronage, and faction. He is also most conscious of the distinctions between the Istanbulu and those diverse “others” who occupy Ottoman space but engage in alternative cultural practices and are clearly not his “type.” An examination of Evliya’s “biography” of his patron Melek Ahmed Pasha (and of his various Iago figures) provides a sense of the web of Ottoman notables, henchmen, servants, and messengers.<sup>39</sup> Indeed the “message,” written communications exchanged among the various protagonists (male and female) in Evliya’s account, is an important element of his story, thus invoking an Ottoman “republic of letters.” And then there are Melek’s wives, dynamic figures in his presentation of household, who seem never to have heard of the distinction between public and domestic spheres.<sup>40</sup> Fatma Sultan, in Evliya’s telling, is the “state elephant,” a wielder of budgets, “lord” of an enormous household, and a woman on the lookout to seize her husband’s property. Kaya Sultan, Melek’s beloved, tore her

---

38 Gottfried Hagen, “Afterword: Ottoman Understandings of the World in the Seventeenth Century,” in Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 215-56, at 253-4, counts Evliya as among the authors who “only in the seventeenth century find their own voice.” That is part of a seventeenth century phenomenon in which “secularist and modernist tendencies” emerged from a “new stratum of ‘middle class intellectuals’,” and in which “authors, [like Katib Çelebi] far away from the court, set out to compile chronicles of the Ottoman Empire, or of the world.” While Evliya’s *Seyahatname* is indeed a unique source, I agree with Dankoff that we should exploit his wealth of details rather than dismiss him as a teller of tales.

39 Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682), *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Ahmed Paşa (1588-1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi’s Book of Travels*, ed. and trans. Robert Dankoff, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

40 See, for instance, Evliya Çelebi, *The Intimate Life*, 91, 157, 211-213, 218 259-261.

husband's beard and refused him sex because she was fearful of dream portents, something apparently well known throughout Melek's household. But beyond that realm of intimate relations, Kaya acted as an aggressive "hustler" when it came to manipulating clients, advancing her husband's career, and tending to affairs when he was absent by using intermediaries to keep in close contact. Fatma and Kaya were both well connected Ottoman notables; both were also Mediterranean "types." And Melek's "household," cast in Evliya's words, serves as a model for the commingling of the "military" and the "domestic," in a far-reaching web of relationships and patronage.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, another case study allows us to imagine a set of elite, middling and low Ottoman, Mediterranean households, taking as its starting point a short piece by Gilles Veinstein using the *mektup* of the kapudan pasha and his deputies found in the archives of Patmos.<sup>42</sup> Veinstein's primary concern in this article is the commingling of tones of command and courtesy. But the letters, their authors, and their addressees suggest something more, a realm of Ottoman authority and sociability that is scripted and expansive. The letters illustrate a complex interplay of relations, and they suggest the possibilities for our imagined households.<sup>43</sup> Veinstein charts the designations of a web of personnel of the kapudan pasha to whom signatory power and tax collection duties are delegated in the early seventeenth century. The kapudan pasha or his deputies make an annual circuit to administer the collection of taxes and other affairs. In 1664-65 Ali Turak Bey collected the *cizye* of Patmos, functioning as *vekil* of Ali Pasha, who in turn was functioning as *vekil* of the kapudan pasha, Mustafa.<sup>44</sup> Other officials involved in this exchange include a *voyvoda* of the islands (*atarlar voyvodası*) and a secretary of the poll tax (*katib-i cizye*).<sup>45</sup> And sometimes

---

41 Just as Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, has demonstrated.

42 Gilles Veinstein, "Les documents émis par le kapudan paşa dans le fonds ottoman de Patmos," *Les archives de l'insularité ottomane / Documents de travail de CETOBAC* 1 (January 2010): 13-19, see 15, 19. Patmos is off the Anatolian coast between the island of Naxos and Kuşadası (south of Izmir). The two types of sources he employs are, "*les attestations [affidavit] (temessük et tezkere) et les lettres (mektûb)* (13)." "Letters" is, of course, a broad category and need not presume a high literary tone.

43 *Ibid.*, 18.

44 *Ibid.*, 14.

45 *Ibid.*

the collection of taxes from the island was delegated to the *sancakbey* of Rhodes. Designations varied. In 1636, for example, a certain Zulfikar Aga was designated voyvoda of the islands and also *kapıcı başı* of the kapudan. A common designation for signers of these documents is simply “ağa” of the kapudan pasha, for example, “Ömer Ağa bin Abdullah.” But it is not so much designations here that concern me. Rather, I am interested in the fact that this diverse set of men was in regular communication, across a transimperial, transcultural seascape. What were their career paths, their domestic arrangements, and the commercial associations to which their positions gave them special access? Who were their servants, agents, and friends as they moved between official and unofficial spheres of interaction? Who did they meet, what did they buy, and how did they entertain as they traversed their annual or biannual circuits of operation? In other words, what were their associated “commodity chains” and “human chains,” as Ballinger would put it? If we view this web of personnel as a set of interlinked Mediterranean households (presumably conversant with and participant in the commerce of the Levant), that spanned a range of class, occupational, cultural, and religious categories, we can begin to extend the household paradigms of Italy across the archipelago into the Ottoman Empire proper. And the extended household of the kapudan pasha seems like a good place to start.

Taking seriously such a thick complex of relationships means we feel no surprise when Ottoman households are intimately associated with Venetian ones. Maria Pia Pedani shows us that fiscal exemptions were routinely given by Venice to do favors for “important” persons, including Ottoman persons.<sup>46</sup> The Signoria suspended export prohibitions in 1564 in order to sell “Ali, kapudan of Alexandria,” materials to be used in the building of a small war galley (*baştarda*). This is the next best thing to state sponsored smuggling. And smuggling, which was endemic in the Mediterranean world, demanded household relations, intermediaries, and the participation of a variety of personnel on both sides.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, once we acknowledge that the Ottomans had an ethos of the sea, that identity can be

46 Maria Pia Pedani, “Ottoman Merchants in the Adriatic,” 164.

47 Some of these relationships have been elegantly illustrated by Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550-1650* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1990); and *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642-1660* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998).

combined with a notion of the entrepreneurial spirit to make the Ottoman household a Mediterranean one. Veinstein's kapudan pasha "household" can then be linked to the type of relationships expressed in an article, entitled "Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic," by Frederic C. Lane, the historian of Venice and the sea.<sup>48</sup> The Ottomans were highly invested in the same trade, stretching from the Levant to Spain and England, that Lane treats in this essay; and their empire became a "world market" for people, ideas, information, and goods, on a grander scale than did that of Venice.<sup>49</sup> Thus we need to explore the extent to which Ottoman family partnerships and joint ventures mirrored those of their Venetian counterparts. So if we lend our imagination to Veinstein's group of document signers, and think of them as less exceptional and more like Lane's Venetians and their associates, in terms of patronage, entrepreneurship, marriage relations, and correspondence, we can begin to speak of the Ottoman Mediterranean household.

---

48 Frederic C. Lane, "Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic," *Journal of Economic History* 4 (1944): 178-196. Many more recent studies have been written on this topic but Lane is still a master of the field; and this short essay addresses business, friendship, marriage, patronage, and shipping across the Mediterranean.

49 *Ibid.*, 195.