



**Women *and* the City, Women *in* the City:  
A Gendered Perspective for Ottoman Urban History**

27 - 28 May 2010, Berlin

Venue: Ballhaus Naunynstraße (Naunynstraße 27, 10997 Berlin)

convened by

**Nazan Maksudyan**

(Fellow of EUME 2009/2010)

Regarding the traditional and well-established gendered participation and representation in the public sphere, urban history, in parallel with many other subfields of history, might tend to focus more on *his* story rather than *her* stories. However, growing and expanding scholarship on the history of women of the last few decades demonstrated the importance of recognizing the agency of women, and thus, the necessity of introducing their roles as relevant into the larger picture. Historians started to acknowledge women as manipulating, if not shaping, urban space. Women did more than react to alterations in urban space: They actively participated in changing the *map* of the city and in redefining its essence.

It is true that diverse groups of women approached the city from different angles, with distinct intents, and with unequal pace. The relationship between women and the public space was an intricate one, defined along the lines of class, ethnic and religious identity, age, and historical moment. Heterogeneous everyday experiences and domestic spaces of women determined their relation to and presence in public arenas. For that matter, women from different class, religious, ethnic or immigrant backgrounds also had manifold linkages within themselves and with the urban space. Furthermore, the city was more than its economic and ethnic geography; urban sexual geography crosscut them, in both ideological and physical terms. For instance, the presence of elite women in working-class neighborhoods would be a breach of proper sexual geography, since only working women and prostitutes (having a thin line in-between) were allowed there. Thus, definitions of class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality were all intermixed in the urban geography.

However, women from diverse backgrounds succeeded in challenging and negotiating the over-imbued sexual division of urban space. Both through rivalries and alliances amongst themselves, they formed new urban relations and spaces and empowered themselves to have a say in changing the urban structure regarding neighborhoods, streets, schools, workplaces, legal regulations, and public spaces.

In that respect, the workshop attempts to reveal, recover and reconsider the roles, positions, and actions of women in the midst of altered, or redefined economic, social, political, and cultural contexts of the late- and post-Ottoman cities. It reconsiders the negotiations, alliances, and agency of women in asserting themselves in the public domain, in which even today they are

faced with obstacles and resistance as legitimate actors. In cities, neither designed for nor controlled by women, women had to reimagine and reconceive the city before they would create female-controlled public and semipublic spaces.

**27 May, 2010**

**Opening** (10.00 – 11.00)

**Ulrike Freitag** (Director of the ZMO) – “Welcome”

**Nazan Maksudyan** (Fellow of EUME 2009/2010) – “Women in the City, the City of Women”

Coffee Break (11.00 – 11.30)

**Session 1. Women and the City: Reorganization of Urban Life Late Ottoman Empire**

Part 1. (11.30 – 13.00)

Chair: Dyala Hamzah (ZMO)

**Iris Agmon** (Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva) – “Women in Late-Ottoman Palestinian Cities and the Unresolved Question of Mute Historical Voices”

**Nora Lafi** (ZMO) - “Late Ottoman and Early Republican Visions of North African Women: Between Ottomanity and a New Turkish Orientalism”

Lunch Break (13.00 – 14.30)

Part 2. (14.30 – 16.00)

Chair: Marc Baer (California, Irvine/ZMO)

**Gülhan Balsoy** (Işık University, Istanbul) – “Gendering the Urban Transformation in the Late Nineteenth Century Istanbul: The Case of *Haseki* Women’s Hospital and Maternity Clinic (*Viladethane*)”

**Nil Birol** (Central European University, Budapest) – “‘What is the Imperial End to Us?’: A Gendered Perspective from the Russian Tatar Women to the Ottoman Elite Women in 1910s Istanbul”

**Keynote Speech** (18.00 – 19.00)

**Leyla Neyzi** (Sabancı University, Istanbul) – “Teşvikiye: The Making of an Elite Neighborhood and Narratives of Nostalgia in Istanbul”

**Film-screening and discussion** (19.00 – 20.00)

Remembering and Forgetting in the City: *Finding Zabel Yesayan* (directed by Talin Suciyan & Lara Aharonian)

**28 May, 2010**

**Session 2. Women in the City: Redefinition of Gender in Post-Ottoman Cities**

Part 1. (09.30 – 11.00)

Chair: Munir Fakher Eldin (Fellow of EUME 2009/2010)

**Sevgi Adak** (Leiden University, Amsterdam) – “Women and Unveiling in the Post-Ottoman Public Sphere: Secularist Reforms and Women’s Agency in Early Republican Turkey”

**Ellinor Morack** (FU Berlin) – “Challenging Established Concepts of Identity and Belonging: Population Exchange and Intercommunal Marriages in Izmir”

Coffee Break (11.00 – 11.30)

Part 2. (11.30 – 13.00)

Chair: Nazan Maksudyan (Fellow of EUME 2009/2010)

**On Barak** (Princeton University) – “When Voices Could Leave Bodies: Egyptian Women, Telephones, and the Boundaries They Crossed”

**Vahé Tachjian** (ZfL Berlin) – “Mixed Marriage, Prostitution, Survival: Reintegrating Armenian Women in Post-Ottoman Aleppo”

**Ulrike Freitag** (Director of the ZMO) – “The Merry Women of Jeddah – The Festival of al-Qays”

Lunch Break (13.00 – 14.30)

**Session 3. Gendered Reinscription of the City: Women and Literature** (14.30 – 16.30)

Chair: Kirsten Scheid (American University in Beirut; Fellow of EUME 2009/2010)

**Haytham Bahooora** (University of Colorado; Fellow of EUME 2009/2010) – “Prostitution in Twentieth Century Iraqi Literature”

**Christoph Herzog** (Bamberg University) – “The Urban Experience in Ottoman /Turkish Womens’ Memoirs”