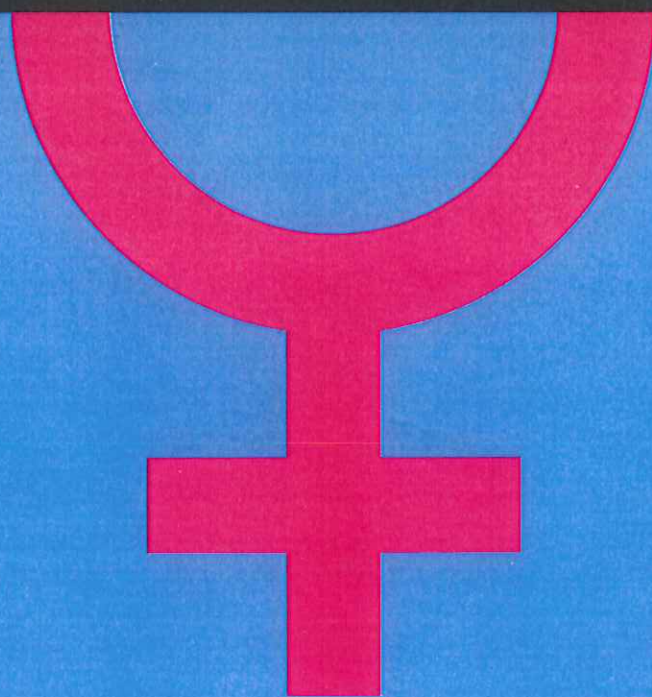


MEDIA, RELIGION AND GENDER IN EUROPE

Miriam Díez Bosch, Jordi Sánchez Torrents (eds.)



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Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna
Universitat Ramon Llull
Barcelona, 2015

With the support
of the Culture Programme
of the European Union



Culture

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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de Comunicació
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Primera edició: maig 2015

Drets d'edició: Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions
Internacionals Blanquerna. Universitat Ramon Llull
ISBN: 978-84-941193-4-7
Dipòsit Legal: B.19.238-2015

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Preface

Dealing with religion, gender is not often the first question that appears; identity is. Religion does not move easily between liquidity and transmodernity, and it is not a secret that resistance to new dynamic concepts affect the vast majority of religious denominations. Nevertheless, religion is defined by its ability to make connections between different entities and also to adapt to different cultures and social trends. In recent years, we have seen a proliferation of new concepts that challenge religious values. And gender is certainly one of the most complex and urgent ones.

The gender question is more and more at the core of internal religious debates. It is not only about Femen demonstrations, feminist religious historical reviews or internal feminist demands within religious organizations. It is about how religions picture themselves in an evolving landscape where gender is not merely an appendix.

According to Liikkanen, gender is constructed in and through every space in society, including the institutional spaces of public domain. But do religious traditions really accept gender as a construct?

The main preoccupation of religions has not been the construction of the self. Religions have a strong bond with salvation and also with self-realization. So, the question of gender cannot be avoided.

Lipovetsky defines Western society as hypermodern, a society of excess and the surpassing of all kinds of limits. Gender also questions the limits. And by questioning that, it calls into question the idea of the body as well, and the whole idea of the self.

For some religious leaders, gender is not even a concept; they are reluctant to use the word, and if they use it, it is with negative connotations. Gender seems to be more the fruit of atheistic worldviews than a question that affects religions.

Many of the most profound discussions on gender and religion focus on the question of change, free will and natural acceptance. Is gender a given, or is gender a dynamic entity that could evolve according to personal will or collective legitimation? In this very complex, very difficult, very risky, very dangerous world, to put it in Bauman's words, both religion and gender become very complex, very difficult, very risky and even very dangerous concepts to deal with.

Gender carries resonances of a broader and much more complex aspect: identity. It is not surprising that for some religious traditions, gender is not an easy question to tackle. Expressions like "gender ideology" or "gender deviance" are never far from certain current religious discourses. Gender is troubling precisely because it deals with identity; and identity has to do with power.

In this book we aim to hear a range of voices that reflect the diverse and reflect the great plurality of cultural views on those aspects that lie at the crossroad be-

The Multiethnic Slavery Institution through the Eyes of Western Women and 'the real position of women in the religious system of Islam'

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INTRODUCTION

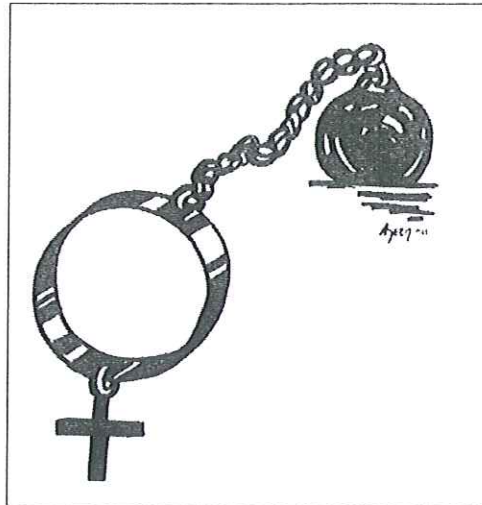
'Perhaps the sight of European women does them more harm than good' (Emily Beaufort 1861)

Through the eyes of western women of the 18th and 19th centuries, this paper discusses the Ottoman slavery institution and 'the real position of women in the religious system of Islam' (Garnett 1895: 61). Focusing on primary sources, first-hand accounts of European women travel writers, authors and journalists in Ottoman territories and principally in Asia Minor (Turkey), this article confirms that all the harem inmates were women of different nations and races: Islamized slaves, liberated slaves and descendants of slaves. Western women, in their intimate contacts with the harem inmates—free and slave—discuss the Ottoman dynasty's reproductive politics, forced abortion, marriage, divorce, *veiling* or Muslim women's attire, slave rights and social mobility, including requirements for slave liberation. This researcher concludes that the Multiethnic-Multiracial Harem Slavery Institution was the collective segregation, confinement or enslavement of the female gender in *one specific space* (household/harem), as *one collective identity* since all the women—slave and free—shared or legally belonged to *one man or master*: sultan, grand vizier, vizier, pacha, etc.

1. 'THE HAREM SYSTEM IS BASED ON SLAVERY.' (BLUNT 1878)

Women travel writers, authors, journalists and intellectuals from Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Austria, including harem inmates like Melek Hanum (1872) and Adalet (1890, 1892) repeatedly confirm that an Ottoman harem was made up of women from different nations (Kamberidou 2015). In reexamining the writings of 18th and 19th century western women travellers in Ottoman territories, this paper contributes additional evidence on the multiethnic harem slavery institution, which distinguished Ottoman (Osmanli) society, so as to provide a bigger picture and inspire new discussions. It spotlights the female

accounts that are illustrative of the multiethnic-multiracial synthesis of the Ottoman household: harem and selemlik (men's quarters), primarily in Asia Minor (Turkey).



Slavedom by
Areti Kamperidis¹

This article focuses chiefly on the female accounts of the 19th century that examine the social position of women in Ottoman society, which western women describe as 'the real position of women in the religious system of Islam' (Garnett 1895: 61); 'Slavedom' (Beaufort 1861: 399); 'the yoke of slavery' (Celine 1849: 34] and the 'yoke of the Harem' (Lott 1866: 296).

In re-consulting the first-hand accounts of European women who entered into a patriarchal system's domestic-social reality (the harem) that was founded on the institution of slavery (Kamberidou 2015), this article examines the writings of western women who were official guests, intimate friends or employees in harems that corresponded to all the Ottoman social classes, such as Lady Mary Montagu (1718), Lady Elizabeth Craven (1789), Louise Demont (1821a,b), Julia Pardoe (1837), Princess Celine (1849), Christine Trivulce de Belgiojoso (1855), Dora d'Istria (1859), Emmeline Lott (1866), Mary Adelaide Walker (1886), Fanny Janet Blunt (1878) and Lucy Garnett (1891, 1895). According to their accounts, an Ottoman harem was made up of Islamized slaves, liberated slaves and descendants of slaves, the prototype being the imperial harem, namely the sultan's harem.

Certainly, one could question the reliability of the female writings, if we take into consideration that these women, as their male counterparts, carried with them to that region their western values and social prejudices. A plethora of studies have extensively explored the *western gaze*: western men's and women's experience of imperialism, their observations on the *subordinate cultural Other*, the inferiority of the oriental ways of being and the superiority of the West, namely the *Orientalist gaze* and fantasizing about polygamy and the exotic Orient, including the differences between the male and female accounts² (Said 1986, Pratt 1992, Mills 1993, Melman 1995, Lewis 1996, Mohammad 1999).

Unquestionably, like their male counterparts, women also carried with them, to that region, their western or colonial gaze. However, in contrast to the male accounts and observations, the female ones are not based on second or third-hand information. Regardless of how they interpret what they observe, the fact is that they actually observed it. Their gender allowed them to become *experts* in areas where men had no access! Women's daily life and social gatherings. By actually entering the harems, for

various reasons, and participating in harem life they demystify their subjects, namely they do not eroticize or *exoticize* them in the same manner or level as their male counterparts (Sarris 1994).

Accordingly, my focus is on the first-hand accounts of women who claim to be participant observers of the female microcosmos (private and public space) of Ottoman society. Such an example is Fanny Janet Blunt (1878 vol. 1: 250), who spoke the Turkish language fluently, and argues that: "The Harem system is based on slavery", on the enslavement of women and girls of different races, who she actually saw in the harems. Regardless of her own personal views on slavery, Blunt (1878) upholds, as did many before and after her, that the Ottoman social system (family, state, etc), in order to survive and reproduce itself, required the institution of slavery.

Blunt, formerly Sandison—daughter of the English Ambassador in Constantinople and wife of the English Ambassador in Thessaloniki—having lived for nearly 50 years (1848-1899) in different Ottoman territories, frequently visited the imperial harems: the Seraglio or serail (sultan's harem), the harems of the princesses (daughters and sisters of sultans), of the Grand Vezir's first wife, and many others. Being a consul's daughter and a consul's wife, she usually received *red carpet treatment* and welcomed into all female private and social spaces. In her accounts on the imperial harem, Blunt (1878) provides detailed descriptions of the Seraglio women and children, their nationalities, ranks, training and duties, stressing that they never lost their accent which usually revealed their country of origin.

2. 'WITHOUT EXCEPTION, OF SLAVE EXTRACTION' (BLUNT 1878)

The 19th century female accounts confirm that the population of the sultan's harem in Constantinople was made up of thousands of women and children from Circassia, Georgia, Greece, Africa, Arabia and Europe. All these women and children belonged to one man or master, the sultan. This was the basic model for the harems of all the so-called Ottoman social classes (Demont 1821a, Pardoe 1837, Celine 1849, Belgiojoso 1855, d'Istria 1859, Lott 1866, Walker 1886, Blunt 1878, Garnett 1891, 1895).



In the yoke of the harem,
sexual slavery by Areti

Western women use terms such as the harems of 'the bourgeois' (Belgiojoso 1855: 1039), those of 'the wealthy classes', 'the middle class' (Walker 1886, vol. 1: 205), 'the labouring classes' and 'the Turkish peasant' (Garnett 1895: 62). The majority, however, concentrate on the harems of the Ottoman elite, or as Melek Hanum (1872) describes them, the harems of 'the well-to-do middle-class man' (1872: 279), 'the rich Pasha with three tails', 'the minister with a portfolio' (1872: 280) and 'the Turkish grandees' (1872: 296). According to Adalet (1892), a Turkish author from Ankara, an average harem in Ankara was made up of approximately 100 women, of whom 97 were slaves and only three were born free Muslims.

All these harems had as a model or prototype the Seraglio, the imperial harem (the sultan's harem). For example, Blunt (1878, vol. 1: 250) informs us that the sultan's harem contained 1,500 women and girls "*without exception, of slave extraction* originating from the cargoes of slaves that yearly find their way to Turkey from Circassia, Georgia, Abyssinia, and Arabia, in spite of the prohibition of the slave trade. These slaves are sold in their native land by unnatural relations, or torn from their homes by hostile tribes to be handed over to slave dealers, and brought by them into the capital [Constantinople] and other large towns".

She also points out that the new women and girls that were "drawn into the seraglio by chains of bondage" were called Adjemis (rustics) and were assigned to different harem departments in order to be trained for their future roles:

Their training in the Seraglio received depends upon the career to which their age, personal attractions, and colour entitle them [...] the young and beautiful odalisk [concubine] receive a veneer composed of the formalities of Turkish etiquette, elegance of deportment, the art of beautifying the person, dancing, singing, or playing on some musical instrument. To the young and willing, instruction in the rudiments of the Turkish language are given; also initiated in the simpler forms of Mohammedanism. (Blunt 1878, vol. 1: 251)

The black slaves from Africa and Arabia and the white slaves of different nations who were considered unattractive or lacking in beauty, according to the criteria of the time, were never included in the harem's elite slavery system, that is to say they were never trained to become concubines, dancers, musicians or singers. They were usually assigned to the harem's lower pyramidal hierarchy or ranks and trained to become domestic servants. Their duties included cooking, laundry, ironing, scrubbing floors and services at the baths. This was also the case in the non-royal harems (Vivanti 1865, Blunt 1876, Walker 1886, Garnett 1895).

Regarding the training of children, namely child slavery, indeed women travellers are shocked by the socialization processes they witness in what they call 'le harem en miniature' (Belgiojoso, 1855: 1043). The children's harem was the Ottoman system's primary socialization agent. In the harems—western women describe *children's harem* or *the miniature harem* (Pardoe 1837 vol. 1., Lott 1866, Walker 1886, vol. 2). In other words they observe slave girls and boys (the children of non-Muslim populations) together with the children of their owners (little pachas and hanums, princes and princesses) interacting and being trained for their future roles and duties.

The children of non-Muslims, usually acquired as infants or between the ages of three to nine, were always preferred as slaves because their training process was easier and their loyalty and devotion assured. Their social integration into Ottoman society was absolute, in contrast to that of adult male and female slaves. Boys and girls—the playmates and *toys* of free Muslim children—were trained to serve and obey. The little female slaves that showed no promise of future beauty, according to the criteria of the time, were trained to become domestic servants. Those that were considered pretty or promised future beauty entered the harem's elite slavery system and were trained to become concubines, entertainers, dancers, musicians, singers etc.

Many western women visited the harems of free Muslim women (former slaves) who bought and trained female slaves, including slave children and infants of both genders, in order to re-sell them later for a profit or offer them as gifts to the sultan and other powerful state officials. The little slaves were taught to play musical instruments such as the def, the harp, the oboe, the flute, the lute, drums, the violin, the zebec and the kanun, described as a musical instrument which resembled the harp (Walker 1886, Montagu 1718, Vivanti 1865).

The English artist Mary Adelaide Walker, who worked and resided in the Ottoman territories for about 40 years (1857-1897), reports that these slaves were:

Usually bought very young, at three or four years of age and taught some music, dancing and a little French. These accomplishments increase their value considerably, and it becomes with some people a matter of revolting speculation to educate batches of little Circassians, as you may fatten rabbits for market, buying them cheap in their infancy and native dirt, and selling them a few years later, with all their acquired graces, at a high price. The value of a halaik begins at about 80 or 100 (English pounds); an accomplished musician or dancer may bring her owner nearly ten times as much. (Walker 1886: 62-63)

Walker (1886: 35), who was employed as an artist in the harem of Princess Zeineb, the favourite daughter of Sultan Abdul Medjid (1839-1861), observes that a Jewish teacher had been hired to teach acrobatics to the very young children. In another *classroom*, little slave girls were given pantomime lessons, while in another area there was a dance class where the little slaves were being taught Turkish and French dances.

Fanny Janet Blunt informs us that "An ex-serail [concubine of the imperial harem] of my acquaintance had herself undertaken this task and had offered as many as fourteen young girls to the Seraglio of [sultan] Abdul Aziz ... and at the same time had a fresh batch of slaves in hand to train ... the youngest was eight years old" (Blunt 1878, vol. 1: 252-253).

Western women—beginning with Lady Montagu (1718), the wife of the English Ambassador in Constantinople, and ending with Lucy Garnett (1895), who had also been living in Ottoman territories a number of years and spoke the Turkish and Greek languages—argue that Islamic Law recognized as legal property only the non-Muslims who fell into the hands of the True Faithful as spoils of war from conquered races or expansionist raids. The Ottomans also acquired slaves from the pirates and corsairs who attacked European ships, from abductions, slave-markets, private sales and as gifts exchanged between the wealthier classes.

3. SEXUAL SLAVERY: THE MULTIETHNIC SLAVERY INSTITUTION

Slavery was vital for the Ottoman Empire's economy and social system and it certainly included the male population. The demand for slaves corresponded to the economic and socio-political needs of the period and political control involved sexuality and the control of sexuality (Sarris 1994).

Sexual slavery was a central part of the slave system and sexuality was linked to power. In Ottoman society a female slave was considered an *odalisques* (a concubine) and a male slave, respectively, an *oglan*. In the Ottoman patriarchal and phalocratic society male and female slaves were not considered communicative beings (*mal-I natik*), but sexual objects that represented a political meaning or political control, specifically that of sovereignty and subjugation (Sarris 1994: 333-334).

In other words, the Ottoman dynasty controlled the reproductive activity of an individual (male or female) by restraining it, delaying it or preventing it. To illustrate, in the 16th century the sons of sultans (princes) were secluded and no longer allowed to father children, their pregnant concubines were either executed or subjected to artificial abortion. Only after the sultan's death, the prince elevated to the position of sultan could produce heirs. Great care was also taken in the marriages arranged for the princesses (daughters of sultans), for if all the sultan's male children were assassinated—through the power struggles in the imperial harem and the Porte—then the surviving son of a princess (daughter or sister of a sultan) would become the next sultan. As a result, when a princess bore a son he was usually murdered. So princesses who had sons took great care to protect their infants from the frequent assassination attempts (Kamberidou 2014b).

The primary purpose of the imperial harem was to secure the male line, the birth of heirs for the throne. Sexuality being linked to power, concubinage became the matrix of the dynasty's reproductive politics. In other words, slave concubinage was inevitable, as interdynastic marriages had provided pretexts for political interventions by the relatives of royal wives, which included rights or entitlement to the throne. Consequently, Ottoman reproductive politics required severe limitations, controls or constraints on the rights of mothers. Such a constraint was the strict policy and custom of *one son per concubine mother*. Namely, a sultan's concubine could only produce one son (one prince and heir to the throne), although there were exceptions to this rule (eg. Alexandra or Hurrem Sultan). This meant that a woman's right to children was curtailed and her sexual needs disregarded after the birth of her son. One need add here that, as opposed to slave concubine mothers, legal wives (free Muslim women) had a right to children or as many children (male heirs) as they desired, the right to refuse certain forms of birth control and to expected sexual satisfaction, among other things (Kamberidou 2014b, Sarris 1994).

The patriarchal nature of political power, emphasized in the Islamic tradition, relied mainly on female slave reproduction (childbearing). As a result, women from Christian territories were enslaved, converted to Islam, became concubine mothers and eventually gained power. Having produced an heir to the throne, they were in a position to claim a share in the exercise of power and they usually took the necessary measures to preserve their sovereign authority. They played active roles in preparing their sons to receive power, to become sultans. They controlled his

sexual activity, that is to say they chose and trained his concubines, ensured that the dynasty reproduced itself and imposed abortions when necessary.

For example, Blunt (1878 vol.1) repeatedly observes that since the offspring of all the sultan's female slaves were considered legitimate—from the scullery maid (the lowest ranks) to the fair and delicate beauty purchased to be trained as his concubine—many *valide sultans* (mothers of sultans) plotted to eliminate their rivals and their offspring, such as the mother of Sultan Abdul-Aziz (1861-1876), Pertevniyal Sultan. To reduce the number of future heirs to her son's throne and secure her powerful position as valide sultan, Pertevniyal brought forward an old palace regulation, according to which every seraglio woman found pregnant would be subjected to the operation of artificial abortion, with the exception of her son's first four slave concubines, which she had personally chosen, trained and controlled. In Ottoman society, as previously mentioned, political control involved sexuality and the control of sexuality (Kamberidou 2015).

In contrast to western societies, in Ottoman society slave offspring were considered legitimate and held the legal status of a free Muslim. In fact, all the Ottoman Sultans and princes (sons of sultans) from the 14th to the 20th century were the sons of female slaves (concubine mothers), women from different nations and races. Practically all the male and female offspring of the sultans—after the generations of Osman and Orhan—were born of slave concubine mothers.

To illustrate, the French traveler Mme de la Ferte-Meun (1822) observes that Sultan Mahmoud's mother—Aimee Dubucq de Rivery, known as Naksh-i-Dil sultan—was originally French of American origin, born at Nantes. Her parents set out for America when she was two and were captured by corsairs. They were taken to Alger where they perished and the child was bought by a slave merchant. At the age of 14 she was sold to the Bey of Algiers and later sent to Constantinople as gift for the Sultan (Meun 1822).

Not only the *royal* family, the sultan's wives and mothers, but the majority of the Ottoman Empire's state officials, since the 14th century, usually came from non-Muslim populations.³ They too were Islamized slaves or liberated slaves, such as the grand viziers (prime ministers), the viziers (ministers) and the janissaries who were soldiers, an elite infantry taken during childhood from Christian populations. Male slaves achieved high status, especially after their training in palace schools like the Enderun, which prepared them for their future roles (Kamberidou 2015).

Slaves of both genders were easily integrated into Ottoman society, eventually becoming free Muslims: liberated through marriage, procreation-reproduction, adoption, military service or public service. An example of a male slave's social integration and rise to power in Ottoman society is that of Ismael Pacha, the Governor-General of the island of Crete who was a former slave from the Greek island of Chios. Ismael Pacha had been abducted and enslaved as a child, converted to Islam, sent to Europe and educated as a physician, becoming the Sultan's physician before his appointment as general governor.

Slavery provided a means of *social mobility* and formed an essential part of the patronage networks (Sarris 1994). It led to social status and political power. Western women like Lady Montagu (1718), Julia Pardoe (1837), Fanny Janet Blunt (1878) and Mary A. Walker (1886) observe that slaves were treated with respect and kindness in Turkish homes, as opposed to the treatment of the

African slaves in America and Europe, who could never aspire to be *elevated* to an official or public position. Moreover, how many western slave-owners or European prime ministers liberated and married their slaves or recognized their slave offspring?

Turkish slavery is not so bad as it might be: the system is softened by many humane laws, and is marked by a kindly paternal character. Yet it is a blot on the country, and so soon as the harem system and polygamy can be got rid of, it too must go. (Blunt 1878, vol. 1: 126)

Worth mentioning here is that the American practice of breeding among slaves was never practiced in Ottoman society, so new slaves were always in demand with preference to children who were raised and trained in the harems and easily integrated into Ottoman society. The harem slavery institution was the Ottoman system's primary *socialization agent*, an indispensable part of its self-reproduction. It is important to reiterate here that many women travellers were shocked by the socialization processes they witness in the harems. As previously cited, they observe slave girls and boys, together with the children of their owners being trained for their future roles, duties and services (Pardoe 1837, vol. 1, Belgiojoso 1855, Lott 1866, Walker 1886, vol. 2).

The institution of slavery being indispensable to the social system of the Osmanlis, its total abolition would involve the abolition of the harem, a revolution for which they are as yet by no means prepared. (Garnett 1891: 382)

As a result, the slave trade continued to flourish until the beginning of the 20th century, despite the pressures exercised on Turkey by Europe. Mary Frances Felicia Skene (1847), Fanny Janet Blunt (1878) and Mary Walker (1886) repeatedly observe that the sultan's laws abolishing slavery were openly violated since the institution of slavery was necessary for the Ottoman social system to survive. The slave trade continued to flourish, despite Sultan Abdul Medjid's successive firmans (laws, sultanic decisions) abolishing the slave trade in 1846, those prohibiting the slave traffic of Georgian and Circassian slaves in 1854, and the firman of 1857 prohibiting the sale and exportation of 'negroes':

Slavery in Turkey now reduced mainly to one sex. Male slaves, except in the capacity of eunuchs, are now rare, though every now and then a cargo of them is smuggled into some port and privately disposed of, since the Government professes to share the anti-slavery views of England. But female slavery is a necessary part of the seraglio, and of the Turkish harem system. (Blunt 1878, vol. 1: 126)

The harem slavery population—a central feature of the Ottoman dynasty's reproductive politics—also included the eunuchs, castrated boys and men, usually from Africa or Arabia. According to the Chesson (1877) report on Turkey, the Muslim elite's great demand for human merchandise has led to the desolation, devastation and destruction of Africa. Africans were preferred as eunuchs as the mortality rate/death rate of the white boys castrated was much higher. African children, between the ages of five and eleven were abducted from their families and tribes, castrated

on the road (one in three died). Those that survived the painful surgery were sold to the Ottoman elite.

Many western women meet the Islamized eunuchs in the harems of the Ottoman elite. Some refer to the eunuchs as *misogynists* (Lott 1866) and others as *friends* (Melek Hanum 1872). They describe their pyramidal hierarchy or ranks, discuss their relationships with the harem women and describe their social roles and duties: eg. guards, body-guards, companions, messengers, advisors, babysitters, professional assassins, accomplices, state officials, musicians and poets. Their duties also included locking and unlocking harem doors, surveillance or watching who enters and who leaves the harem and being the master's confidant. All the eunuchs circulated freely in the harems and in the selamlıks (men's apartments). The one and only *topos* where the eunuchs were not allowed to accompany the women, were in the public hammams/bathhouses (Kamberidou 2014b).

Lucy Garnett (1891) also confirms that the slave trade prohibitions had increased the horrors of slave trafficking:

Although the Porte, in deference to European opinion, has closed the slave-market at Constantinople, and formally prohibited the slave-trade, no material change, so far as slave women are concerned, has in reality taken place in this respect. [...] The demand for slave women being thus undiminished, the only consequence of the enactment against slavery has been enormously to *increase the horrors of the traffic in its initial stage* by increasing the difficulties under which it is carried on. Those brought from Africa are now obliged to be shipped at out-of-the-way parts of the coast, confined under hatches in order to escape the vigilance of European cruisers; and, by being kept beating about at sea until an opportunity offers for landing them safe from Consular knowledge, the sufferings of the human cargoes are increased tenfold. (Garnett, 1891: 382-383)

Slaves, male and female, came from outside the Islamic lands. They were generally taken as war booty or purchased from slave traders, converted to Islam and integrated into Ottoman society (Peirce 1993, Sarris 1994). On the other hand, if an individual had converted to Islam before his/her capture he/she could not become a slave. If converted after enslavement he/she did not have the right to be freed. Moreover, according to Islamic law a slave of a Muslim was any non-Muslim, who had not gone to his "*door*" to ask for his protection or mercy prior to enslavement (Sarris 1994: 334).

Many western women argue that the enslavement of Muslims was forbidden in the Koran, however Blunt (1878) and Garnett (1891) repeatedly meet Muslim women and children of Circassian descent who were being sold to various harems due to the great demand for new slaves:

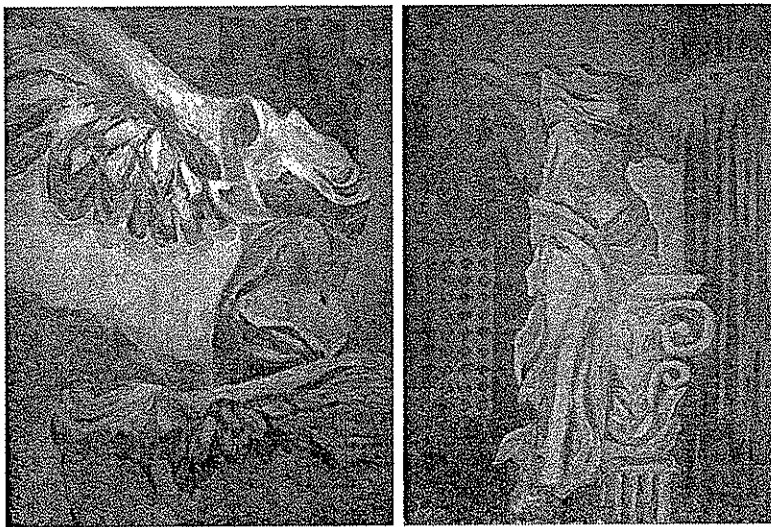
Slavery, as now practiced in Turkey, is in direct contravention of the law of Islam, which only recognises as legitimate property non-Moslems who have fallen into the power of the True Believers during war. The vast majority of the slaves brought to Turkey at the present day [1891] are drawn from the Circassian race, who profess the creed of Islam; and their purchase and sale are consequently illegal acts which the Sheikh-ul-Islam himself would have some difficulty in justifying. The Turks, however, get over this difficulty by asking no questions concerning the origin of the women and children presented for sale by the slave-dealers. (Garnett 1891: 382-383)

In contrast to European demands regarding the immediate abolition of slavery, Adalet (1892) proposes the *gradual* abolition of slavery in Ottoman society, arguing that this would inevitably lead to the end of the multiethnic harem slavery system. In her article she appeals to her countrymen to no longer take Islamized slaves as their legal wives, but prefer to marry free Muslim women, Turkish girls who at least receive some education and are women they can respect, as opposed to the uneducated slaves they normally abuse.

She also claims that Turkish women are ashamed of being the daughters and grand-daughters of former slaves. Adalet (1892) argues that she is in favor of the abolition of slavery but feels the process must provide time for adaptation. She advises free Muslim men and women to stop buying new female and male slaves, stressing that they should, however, take care of the ones they already own and not throw them out into the street. She also insists on the immediate removal of all male children from the 'impure and degrading environment of the harems' while highlighting the necessity of promoting female education in order to save their race. The promotion of female education, she argues, would raise the level of the men in Ottoman society: 'there is no hope for the Turk if women remain what they are and the social system continues to destroy the moral force of women and as a result that of the men' (Adalet 1892, 130).

The slave trade continued openly until the 20th century, although the Turkish government professed to share the anti-slavery views of England. The harem slavery institution was abolished in 1922 with Kemal Atatürk and the abolition of the Sultanate and *polygyny* was abolished in Turkey in 1926, with the adoption of Swiss Law (Kamberidou 2015).

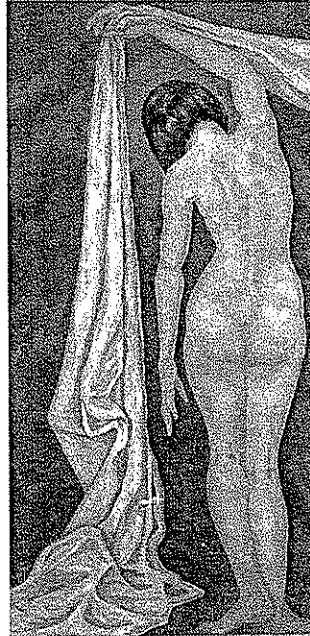
4. 'THE YOKE OF SLAVERY': GREEK SLAVES



Hellenism by Areti

Western women who visited, resided or worked in the Ottoman harems observed their multiethnic synthesis using terms such as "slaves of all nations" (Celine 1849: 90-91), "women of different nations" and "unfortunate slaves" (Demont 1821b: 403).

Swiss traveler Louise Demont also refers to the harem inmates as women “buried alive” and “hapless victims” (1821a: 17-18). English governess Emmeline Lott (1866)—employed by the Viceroy of Egypt, Ismael Pacha, for his son and heir to the throne Ibrahim Pacha—having experienced harem life in Egypt and Constantinople also describes the women of different races and their daily life in the three royal harems using phrases like: ‘melancholy madness’ and ‘the female mind immured’ in the yoke of the harem’ (Lott 1866 vol. 2, 289: 296).



Wo-manity in the Harem
by Areti

In expressing their solidarity, sympathy and understanding western women invent concepts or terms like ‘Wo-manity’ (Harvey 1871, 71) and ‘the yoke of slavery’ (Celine 1849: 34), and in their writings repeatedly use terms such as woman-kind, liberty, freedom, emancipation and womanhood (Montagu 1718, Craven 1789, Lott 1866).

They also buy and liberate slaves. Celine (1849) and Louise Demont (1821a,b)—who accompanied Princess Caroline, then the future Queen of Great Britain in all her travels in 1814 -1820—both describe her custom or pattern of buying slaves, liberating them and providing them with the funds to return to their homelands. In 1816, at the slave market in Tunis, Princess Caroline bought and liberated 100 slaves, in Cairo she bought six female slaves and in Athens she bought three.

Regarding Greek slaves, Lady Montagu (1718) refers to the thousands that were taken from the Morea (Peloponnese) and Ann Vivanti (1865) to the thousands taken from the island of Scio (or Chio). During her visit to the island Vivanti observes:

Ah! beautiful, unhappy Chio, so cruelly oppressed by the Turks, who fear the bold and daring spirit of its inhabitants, which has manifested itself so often in rebellion, and for which they have suffered so terribly. From the consequences of the massacre in 1822, when many thousands were killed, sold as slaves, or fled the country, it has not yet entirely recovered. (Vivanti 1865: 29-30)

Celine (1849) repeatedly expresses her gratitude to Caroline, the Princess of Wales, who saved her from slavery by adopting her ‘on the 8th of December, 1814’, otherwise her fate would have been that of the inhabitants of the Greek island of

Scio (Chio), who were massacred by the Turks in 1822 and thousands enslaved and sent to the Seraglio. When Celine visited the island after the massacre she remarked:

Alas! Ill-fated country! [...] thou wert destined to fall under the barbarous scymitar of the Turk, whilst the powers of Europe looked on unmoved. Thou wert coolly sacrificed to the question of political equilibrium, and left to perish in spite of the noble patriotism of thy heroic sons. Islamism, that anomaly in the civilization of modern times, is implacable, and its leaden sceptre represses the genius of the noblest nation of the earth. Fallen Greece has become inured to the yoke of slavery, and her recent emancipation will not, for long lapse of years, restore her to the condition in which she was previously to the barbarous domination of the Turks. When I re-visited the land of my birth, unfortunate Scio was still bleeding from the wounds inflicted by her cruel oppressors. (Celine 1849: 34-35)

Emily Beaufort (1861) refers to the 2000 Greek women that were sold into slavery after the Turkish massacre on the Greek island of Kasos (or Caxo), stressing that the population which had been about 13,000 souls in 1820 was reduced to 3.000 and the island is only now, in 1859, beginning to recover from its losses.

5. THE CRYPTO-CHRISTIAN PACHA: SLAVE INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

One need reiterate here that slaves of both genders were socially integrated and assimilated into Ottoman society, eventually becoming free Muslims. For example, Anna Vivanti (1865), who was a guest in the harem of Ismael Pacha, the Governor-General of the island of Crete, informs us that he was a former slave of Greek descent, from the island of Chios (Scio) and she describes his rise to power from slave, to sultan's physician to Governor.

In examining Vivanti's detailed account, this researcher argues that there are reasons to believe that Ismael Pacha was a *crypto-Christian*.

Specifically, we can make this hypothesis for the following reasons: firstly, if we take into account that the wife of Ismael Pacha was also of Greek descent, as were his father-in-law and his mother-in law; secondly, if we consider that he had not taken a second wife or a slave concubine; thirdly, he had no eunuchs in his harem as did all those of the Ottoman elite; fourthly, he was determined to find a husband for his daughter that would not take a second wife, perhaps another *crypto-Christian*.

One need also take into consideration that Ismael Pacha asked his daughter Leilla to play the piano and to sing some English and Greek songs as a special honour to his English guest, Anna Vivanti (1865). Additionally, his daughter's teacher and companion was an educated young Greek women, known as Elizabeth of Crete who is described as 'a warm patriot' who frequently advised the governor on political matters, specifically on measures or reforms he considered introducing. Moreover, as Vivanti (1865: 52) points out:

He is respected and loved by all well disposed people. He encourages agriculture, makes roads, punishes crime, and judges justly. Under his mild and firm rule, the Greek inhabitants

have almost become reconciled to the hated dominion of the Turks; and have petitioned the Sublime Porte to prolong his Pashalik.

It is also important to also mention here that Leilla's teacher Elizabeth possessed several books, among which Vivanti noticed a Bible in Turkish and *Paul et Virginie*, a novel by Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint Pierre who argues for the emancipation of slaves, attacked social divides and presents an Enlightenment view of religion.

Exceptionally illustrative of the *social mobility* of male slaves is Vivanti's account on the 'Governor-General of Crete':

The history of this remarkable man is singular and romantic. He was born at Chio, of Greek parents, made a slave by the Turks when a boy of eleven years of age, and sold to a Turkish doctor in Constantinople. [...] When Ismael had grown to be a young man, he showed so much talent and ability, that his master most justly thought his young assistant might, if he received an European education, become a competition of the French, German, and Italian doctors in Constantinople, who were more frequently consulted, and better paid by the wealthy Turks, than the practitioners of their own nation. He therefore sent the young man to Paris where he studied for five years. When he returned to Constantinople, he far surpassed his master's most sanguine expectations; and his great ability and success were soon generally acknowledged, and he rose in a short time to the dignity of physician to the late Sultan; and afterwards, when it was seen that his talents in other directions were equally remarkable, he became Governor of Provinces. (Vivanti 1865: 51-52)

On the other hand, on the topic of the *social mobility* of female slaves, the certain road to liberation was marriage. Ottoman Turks of different socioeconomic classes preferred to marry their Islamized slaves rather than women who were born free Muslims—as did all the sultan's from the 14th to the 20th centuries—for the following reasons: slaves had no families or relatives to interfere in family matters, protect their legal rights and social privileges or intervene in matters of the state when politically powerful families or dynasties were involved. Slaves had no demands or ambitions since they were trained in the harems to be obedient, submissive and servile. Marriages with slaves were much less expensive, as was divorce. It was less costly to divorce a wife who used to be a slave and did not have a family to protect her interests or legal rights.

6. SLAVE RIGHTS: 'THE HUMANITY OF THE TURKS'

I know you will expect I should say something particular of the slaves; and you will imagine me half a Turk when I do not speak of it with the same horror other Christians have done before me. But I cannot forbear applauding *the humanity of the Turks* to these creatures; they are never ill-used, and their slavery is, in my opinion, no worse than servitude all over the world". (Lady Craven 1789)

Women travelers claim Ottoman slaves had rights: the right to be elevated; to change owners; to receive salaries or compensation; to be freed, etc. According to the female accounts slaves *enjoyed* the following rights or social privileges:

The right to change owner

Harem slaves, who were not pleased with their condition, had the right to demand to be resold and, when possible, to choose their new owners, although this right was not exercised regularly (Pardoe 1837, Walker 1886, Blunt 1878).

Slaves entitled to 'monthly salaries'

All harem inmates, in accordance with their master's or mistresses social class as well as their specific rank in the harem's hierarchy, received regular compensation: money, backsheesh, bribes, rewards, gratuities, tips, gifts, beautiful clothing and expensive jewelry. They also accumulated backsheeshes and gifts from the female guests and visitors. Mary Adelaide Walker who lived over 40 years in the Ottoman territories claims they received 'monthly salaries' and 'bonuses', according to their position in the harem's pyramidal hierarchy (Walker 1886, vol. 2:64-65).

Slaves of the Ottoman elite accumulated great wealth from the regular "backsheesh" (Lott 1866, vol. 1: 66) and their *monthly salaries*, however they could not invest their money in land or property. The law specifically prohibited a slave from the right of ownership (Walker 1886, vol. 2). A slave could not legally bequeath her accumulated wealth to heirs, as an inheritance, unless her owners allowed it, or unless she gave everything away before her death. So what usually happened to her fortune? We can assume it went back to the master/mistress of the harem, if we consider Harvey's (1871) and Garnett's (1891) accounts regarding the imperial harem, according to which the accumulated fortunes of slaves, upon their death, went to the Seraglio.

Slave liberation

A slave, according to custom, had the right to demand her freedom after seven years of loyal service, and she usually got it, along with a marriage dowry and a husband (Blunt 1878, Walker 1886, Garnett 1891).

Slave manumission—formal emancipation from slavery, the act of slave owner freeing his/her slave—after seven years of service was a socio-religious custom which was not enforced by law. A prerequisite for liberation was conversion to Islam, including blind obedience, loyalty and marriage to a free Muslim.

There is no account about a slave being manumitted to marry a Christian or a non-Muslim or to return to her homeland. In fact, there is no account about a harem slave having maintained her religion, her national identity and her original name. The women who were freed were given dowries and married off to one of their owner's friends or family protégées, never losing touch with their former owners (patronage system and network). Moreover, no woman traveller or harem inmate refers to a slave buying her liberty, although the Koran allows slaves to buy their freedom.

A slave is entitled to her liberty after seven years of bondage, and she generally gets it, and is dowered and married to a freeman, though sometimes a bad master will evade the law by selling her before the seven years have quite expired. But this case is a rare case, and the slave system in Turkey is, as a whole a widely different thing from American slavery. The only class who suffer much are the negresses. This is not the case with the Abyssinians or

the half-castes, who rank higher ... But the negresses are hardly worse off than the disabled slaves. (Blunt 1878, vol. 1: 126)

Children and especially slaves acquired at infancy, were not considered useful or productive until a later age. They had to be raised, trained and serve much longer before they were given 'their papers of freedom' (Blunt 1878, Garnett 1895). However, not all slave-owners respected this social custom. Many would sell their slaves in order not to lose their money and avoid marriage expenses. Slave-children were resold before the completion of their seven-year service.

Adoption, "a sacred duty"

The Turks believed that adoption was a sacred duty and many western women and harem inmates applauded and described this widespread custom, such as Montagu (1718), Pardoe (1837) Brassey (1880) Melek Hanum (1872), Lott (1866), Blunt (1878) and Garnett (1891).

Adopted slave children and infants were considered extremely fortunate, since they had become free Muslims, enjoying the legal rights, social status and privileges of their adopted parents. Western women meet many women in the harems of the Ottoman elite, who had been adopted. However, the most certain and prevalent means to liberation was not adoption, but marriage.

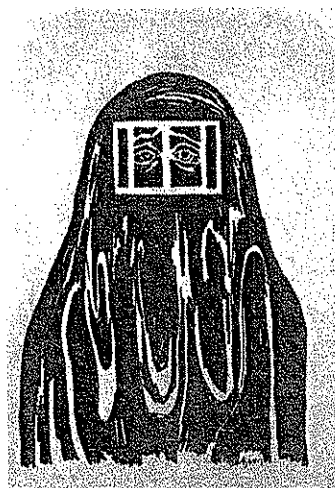
The certain road to liberation: marriage

Many Turks, indeed, prefer to take a slave as a wife, as, in such case, there is no need to dread fathers, mothers, or brothers-in-law, and other undesirable relations. (Melek Hanum 1872: 160)

Marriages with Islamized slaves were socially and religiously acceptable in contrast to marriages with 'Christian dogs' or 'infidels' (Lott 1866: 150, Vivanti 1865: 53). Female Islamized slaves were 'generally given by fathers to their sons, to avoid the expense of marriage' (Blunt, 1878 vol. 1: 125), and not only.

Turkish author Adalet (1891) informs us that many Turkish families preferred marrying their daughters to liberated male slaves instead of Muslim men of a higher social rank. Why? When a family wanted to secure their daughter's social superiority, including her legal rights and social privileges, they chose a husband for her that use to be a slave so as to ensure he would respect her, not dare take a second wife, divorce her or abuse her.

The accounts reveal that Turkish men usually married slave concubines and not free Muslim women of their own social class. When a man married a free Muslim woman, he not only had to maintain her in the lifestyle she had been accustomed to before the marriage, but he had no idea what he was getting into. He could not see her face or converse with her until after the marriage. No wonder he preferred to liberate and marry his own slave concubine, having already *sampled the merchandise* (Kamberidou 2015).



Veiling by Areti

Walker (1886 vol. 2) argues that a Muslim wife had the legal right to ask for a divorce if her husband was unable to maintain her in the lifestyle she had been accustomed to before her marriage, whereas a former slave, having come from a much humbler social environment had no such rights. Harvey (1871) claims that the financial maintenance of a legal wife, even in Constantinople, was an expensive luxury. A legal wife had to be provided for in accordance to her socioeconomic status—with a separate dwelling or apartments, servants, slaves, coaches, money etc. (Harvey 1871).

As regards marriage, it is important to mention here that the European *institution of the old maid* was something absolutely unknown in Turkey, since an unmarried woman was severely stigmatized and girls were daily told that their sole purpose in life was marriage and childbearing. Parents encouraged the custom of early marriages, for both their sons and daughters, and in particular, placed greater pressure on girls to marry (Adalet 1892).

The Turks generally marry early, from seventeen for the men, and from eleven for the girls—who all marry, so that an old maid like many other European institutions, is absolutely unknown in Turkey. This custom of early marriages is encouraged by parents as a check upon their sons contracting wild habits. (Blunt 1878, vol. 1: 79-81)

7. 'SLAVEDOM', 'EXTREME OF LUXURY' AND 'HAPPY IGNORANCE'

"Perhaps the sight of European women does them more harm than good", argues Emily Beaufort (1861: 400) and advises against western women's interventions in the harems. In her description of Turkish women in Constantinople and referring to the harems of the Ottoman elite, she argues that the harem inmates are better off being left in their 'happy ignorance' (Beaufort 1861: 401), adding:

Until the ideas of Turkish husbands and fathers are changed and elevated into something better for themselves and their families—until the whole corrupted system becomes healthier and sounder, we had better let alone the attempt to teach their women, with the conviction that their accustomed aimless and useless lives are far preferable in their unhappy case to greater knowledge, since, if they are ever so simple and silly there is at least a chance of their being more innocent. (Beaufort 1861: 401)

Emily Beaufort claims that many slave women, especially those of the Sultan's harem 'are petted up almost as much as their mistresses, and their Slavedom is sometimes the extreme of luxury' (Beaufort 1861: 399). In fact many western women claimed that the slaves were dressed so luxuriously and extravagantly that you could hardly ever distinguish who was the slave and who the mistress. Here, Beaufort (1861), with her play on words between *slavery* and *freedom* (slavedom), suggests that the harem inmates are better off in their *happy ignorance* rather than succumbing to western women's immorality:

There is scarcely a hareem belonging to a tolerably rich person, where the ladies do not read French and play on the pianoforte, besides occupying themselves with many kinds of embroidery, and some even sing and draw...But these accomplishments are all learned from *French governesses* and *femmes de chambre*, with whom they are liberally supplied: and with these accomplishments they learn also the morals, or rather the *immorals*, of their teachers, who are invariably of a very disreputable class; 'progress' has indeed begun even in the Turkish hareems, but it is the *progress of vice* only; formerly they had not intelligence enough to be useful and good, they were at least in *happy ignorance* of many of the vices to which they are now addicted. (Beaufort 1861: 400-401)

8. RAPE AND ABORTION

When a Muslim husband had sexual relations with a slave that belonged to his wife, as her legal property, the wife had the right to divorce him. In most cases however, instead of divorcing her husband, the wife preferred to get rid of her slave: sell her to another harem or give her away as gift. What was considered an even worse punishment, according to (Harvey 1871), was to be given away as a gift to a harem of a lower social class.

Emmeline Lott (1866: 297) argues that free Muslim women—in particular those that were socially superior to their husbands—could kill their slaves as did one princess who had her slave's head served on a platter to her husband for dinner, as a punishment for his having sexual relations with her slave.

If a husband had sexual relations with a slave that belonged to his wife, it was the slave that was usually punished and not the husband! When a new slave entered a harem she was usually "taken advantage of by force", argues Melek Hanum (1872), the first wife of the Grand Vezier of Turkey. If the slave belonged to the mistress of the harem than her position was frightful.

It is significant to reiterate here that in Ottoman society, when a slave was "taken advantage of by force" it was not considered *rape*, an illegal act of violence or sexual assault, since a female slave was considered an *odalisques* (a concubine) and a male slave, respectively, an *oglan*: sexual objects that represented a political meaning or political control, specifically that of sovereignty and subjugation (Sarris 1994).

Nevertheless, if a husband had sexual relations with a slave that was his wife's legal property, as a rule the slave was punished. If impregnated, according to Melek Hanum (1872:163), the wife usually arranged to terminate the pregnancy before selling her: 'her mistress, therefore, takes her to a mid-wife, in order to procure abortion.'

This was done in order to avoid future complications, viz. the husband recognizing the slave offspring. In Ottoman society slave offspring were considered legitimate, held the legal status of a free Muslim and inherited their father's property in equal shares with the children of his four legal wives of which the Koran allows four. A slave that had conceived her master's offspring could not be resold. He was not obliged to take her as one of his legal wives, however, if he decided to keep her he had to provide her with certain social privileges, *elevating* her in the harem hierarchy. In general, when a slave conceived her master's offspring, he either liberated her by taking her as one of his legal wives or giving her away in marriage to a free Muslim (Blunt 1878, Walker 1886, Harvey 1871, Adalet 1890, Garnett 1895).

Childbearing was extremely important in Ottoman society. It provided social status, social mobility and political power when dynasties were involved (Kamberidou 2014b). Women enjoyed status and respect according to the number of children they had produced. A slave could not be resold even if her child died before she was favoured with a higher rank in the harem (Walker 1886, Garnett 1895).

Such a slave, although legally remaining in the status of slavery, had gained a social position because she had once been a mother, regardless of her child's death. She was distinguished with the honourable title of the 'mother of a bey' or 'mother of a hanum', (Walker 1886, vol.2: 72). According to custom, and not law, these slaves were usually provided with dowries and married off to free Muslim men.

Socially stigmatized and treated with disrespect were the women that had never conceived. As Lady Montagu (1718) aptly points out, in a Letter from Peran dated Jan. 4, 1716:

In this country it is more despicable to be married and not fruitful, than it is with us to be fruitful before marriage [...] Without any exaggeration all the women of my acquaintance have twelve or thirteen children; and the old boast of having five-and-twenty or thirty a piece, and are respected according to the number they have produced.

9. PROTECTION AGAINST DIVORCE: THE NEKYAH

The legal position of free Muslim women—as opposed to that of Islamized slaves or slave concubines—was far superior to that of the women of Europe. The female accounts repeatedly observe that free Muslim women, *as far as the written law* was concerned, enjoyed greater legal rights than their European counterparts (Montagu 1718, Craven 1789, Pardoe 1837, Walker 1886, Blunt 1878, Adalet 1890, 1892).

Lucy Garnett (1895) argues that in the Islamic world, a (free) woman had the right to own, inherit and control property, to dispose of it as she wished and to plead her case in court. If her husband decided to divorce her, he had no rights to her property, wealth or belongings and was obliged to provide her with compensation (*nekya* and *nafaka*). Indeed, for all the aforementioned reasons men preferred to liberate and marry slave concubines who had no families to protect their legal rights.

European women claim that the legal rights of Muslim women were far superior to those of the Christian women of Europe, especially with regard to the laws concerning inheritance, marriage, divorce, alimony and property rights. In European societies,

it was not until the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century that social movements emerged demanding legal rights for women, like the right to divorce, own property and receive alimony. Consequently, a number of western women seem to envy Muslim women's legal rights concerning marriage and divorce. For example, Lady Craven (1789), who began her travels in 1786, after her divorce from William Craven, attacks abusive and tyrannical husbands in her introduction, as her husband had left her with no financial support and deprived her of her seven children!

Lady Craven claims that the behaviour of the Turks towards women is an example for all nations! As did Lady Montagu (1718) before her, Lady Craven argues that the legal position of Muslim wives is much superior to that of their western sisters, especially with regard to divorce and financial compensation. Lady Craven (1789) maintains that no woman enjoys so much 'Liberty' and security as does a Turkish wife, stressing that when a Turk is beheaded and his property confiscated, they never touch his wife's wealth, since the harem is considered a sacred place. She also observes that the Turkish lady has so much 'Liberty' that she is the happiest creature on earth:

I think I never saw a country where women may enjoy so much Liberty, and free from all reproach as in Turkey. (Craven 1789: 205)

The legal position of free Muslim women was the same as it had been for the last thirteen hundred years, argues Lucy Garnett in her discussion on 'the real position of women in the religious system of Islam' (1895: 61), specifically on the rights of free Muslim women:

As a daughter, she was entitled, on the decease of her father, to inherit his property in common with her brothers, in a proportion determined by law according to the number of his children. As a wife, she had the uncontrolled possession and disposal both of the wealth, which was hers before marriage, and of that, which may have subsequently been accrued to her. She could inherit property without the intervention of trustees, and dispose of it, as she pleased during her lifetime or at her death. [...] A husband is legally bound to support his wife, and her slaves or servants, according to her rank and his means, and to furnish her with a suitable residence. To quote from the *Hedaya* (or *Guide*, a commentary on Muslim law): 'It is incumbent on the husband to provide a separate apartment for his wife's habitation, to be solely and exclusively appropriated by her, because this is essentially necessary to her, and is therefore her due, the same as her maintenance. (Garnett 1895: 60-62).

The female accounts corroborate that a Muslim wife had to be provided for according to her socioeconomic status—with separate dwellings or apartments, servants, slaves, coaches, money, and not only! She had the legal right to ask for a divorce if her husband was unable to maintain her according to her rank, or in the lifestyle she had been accustomed to before the marriage. A serious obstacle to a man's facility to divorce, other than religious and social restrictions, including public opinion, was the custom of the *nekyah* (Harvey 1871, Melek Hanum 1873, Blunt 1878 vol. 1, Walker 1886, vol.2).

The *nekyah* was a marriage contract agreed upon before the marriage, during the betrothal ceremony, where they appointed a sum of money to be paid to the

wife in case of divorce. Without the payment of this money, a divorce could not be had legally. This contract protected a woman by maintaining her in the position of legal wife, for if her husband decided to divorce her, he would be obliged by law to pay her the nekyah settlement as well as the nafakah, which was a three-month alimony payment, a sum determined according to social class. It was the 'husband's marriage present' (Melek Hanum 1872: 372) for the woman's maintenance during the three months following the divorce.

In her article entitled *Turkish Marriages viewed from a Harem*, Adalet (1892) argues that women who are divorced are not socially stigmatized in Turkey:

In Turkey a divorce has not all the weight attached to it by Europeans. A woman divorced from her husband is not treated with contumely, even in the highest classes, and often marries again, this being caused by the facility with which a man may divorce his wife. There is no court to go to, and no trial to ensue.[...] I know a lady who was divorced from five husbands, and is now living with her sixth, without having incurred any worse censure than that which an unaccommodating temper must bring to all who indulge in it. (Adalet 1892: 136-137)

As for the much-discussed question of the custody of children, Adalet (1892) stresses that this was settled for Muslims at the outset by Mohammed, who decreed that a son must remain with his mother so long as he requires her care and a daughter until she is of a marriageable age. If a child was born to a couple after their separation, and the mother nursed it, the father was required to pay her for doing so; and, if wealthy, he was required to spend proportionately for the maintenance of the mother and nurse out of his plenty.

Not all western women were envious of Muslim women's legal rights. Many were shocked by the facility with which a Muslim husband could capriciously divorce his wife three times by simply just pronouncing a few words, even in her absence and if he changed his mind he could reclaim her again with the same ease. On the other hand the wife had to have a legal reason to ask for a divorce, otherwise she would forfeit her right to any provision for her future maintenance (Melek Hanum 1873, Blunt 1878). If a husband divorced his wife a third time, he could not re-claim her with the same ease.

A man simply states to his wife that he has divorced her, on which she will go away, and the man having repeated the same to the cadi [judge] will have an act of divorce written, which he will send to her. If it is the first or second time that this occurs he may take her back again without any formality ensuing, and it will be only after the third that she will be lost to him forever. Seeing the ease with which this may be done, it is not surprising if men abuse it and divorce their wives for a fault which is hardly worthy of a harsh word [...] for a badly cooked dinner or an unsewed button, knowing very well that if he repents of it he may have her back before evening. (Adalet 1892: 136-137)

How did men get around this obstacle? According to Blunt (1878 vol. 2: 83), when a husband divorced his wife a third consecutive time, with the third degree or 'formula' of divorce stigmatized in the Koran as *Telakisalisseh*, in order to reclaim her, she had to marry another man, who would divorce her immediately after the marriage, after having spent the night with her. Only then could she

remarry her first husband. As a result, men who abused the divorce law would select discreet friends or hire poor men to marry their former wives and divorce them the next day, after the first wedding night.

Melek Hanum (1873), speaking from her own personal experience, claims that marriage and divorce were striking illustrations of the demoralizing tendency of Turkish institutions. She argues that violations of women's rights were daily phenomena.

After her divorce, her husband the Grand Vezir of Turkey, Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha, deprived her of all her legal rights: her nekya money, her nafaka, her property, her private fortune and her trousseau, and sent her into exile in the depths of Asia Minor:

In Turkey, as in every other country where the arbitrator takes the place of the law, society is at the mercy of the powerful and of the greedy. In such countries everything is permitted to those who have power. The divine law, public opinion, all are nil; the only recognized law is the caprice of those who govern. (Melek Hanum 1872: 372)

Despite the written law protecting women's rights, the privileges of divorce so indulgently permitted to a man, were in reality entirely beyond the reach of a woman, whom no human power could release from her nehkyah vows without her husband's free consent. Not only did a wife need her husband's consent or approval to get a divorce, but she was required to state a reason, in contrast to the men who needed no excuse and could divorce their wives even in their absence by simply announcing it in public or before a witness, as did Melek Hanum's husband.

Women were forced to stay in their marriages as it was 'preferable for a wife to live unhappily with her husband rather than to leave him and starve,' argues Adalet (1892: 136-137). Women knew that if they were the ones to initiate the divorce they would lose their nekyah money/settlement/dowry which was necessary for their maintenance, their three-month compensation (the nafakah), their private fortunes and their trousseau (Melek Hanum 1873, Blunt 1878 vol. 2).

It appears that women's rights are better established under the Mussulman than under the European law [...] But if from the written law we turn to the living one, from theory to practice, it is there one sees of what little use for the woman are her pretended rights. (Melek Hanum 1872: 352)

After thirty years of harem life, Melek Hanum (1872) escapes from Turkey with her daughter Aisheh Hanum, whose husband had also divorced her and deprived her of her legal rights. Both women, escaped from their harem, in December 1865, concealed under the cloaks and veils of their servants, what Melek Hanum calls a *Turkish woman's dress* or the *yasmak* and *feredje* (veil and coat). In this case, the veil, a metaphor for women's subjection is now reversed to stand for freedom. As soon as the two women went on board 'the America', the ship leaving Constantinople for Athens, according to Melek Hanum's account, they relieved themselves of their *oppressive coverings* and rejoiced that they were finally free from this restriction on the human body, finally free to breathe the air, free to look at the sky and the sun, free to move around without the suffocating coverings, free to admire the beauties of nature, stressing that this was an oppressive custom and Mohammed

made a great mistake, forbidding women appear unveiled in front of the opposite sex (Melek Hanum 1872: 5-7).

10. VEILING : 'FINALLY FREE TO BREATHE THE AIR! (MELEK HANUM 1872)



Finally Free
to breath
by Areti

The female accounts repeatedly confirm that no Muslim man had the right to look upon the unveiled face of a woman that belonged to his faith, whether free or slave, other than his own mother, his wives, his slaves, his daughters, his sisters, his nieces and in some instances, if permitted, his sister-in-laws (Demont 1821a, Meun 1822, Blunt, 1878, Garnett 1891, Adalet 1895).

Only one account, so far, upholds that the one and only Muslim woman in the Ottoman Empire allowed to be seen in public unveiled was the Valide Sultan, the mother of the reigning sultan, and this during the sultans procession to the mosque. According to Lady Brassey, as a son was allowed to see the face of his mother, the people were allowed to look upon the face of their 'General Mother' (Brassey 1880: 104).

Many western women took advantage of this covering of the female face and body to circulate freely and avoid harassment. They 'masquerade' as Muslim women in order to visit the mosques, wearing what they call a *Turkish woman's dress* or the *yasmak* and *feredje* (veil and coat), associated here to spatial relations as it enabled them to integrate into Ottoman society, increasing their mobility in public and social spaces beyond the home or the harem, i.e. sacred space (Kamberidou 2015). For example, late in the evening during the Ramadan English author and artist Julia Pardoe (1837), disguised as a Turkish woman, visited two mosques in Constantinople, despite the warnings of her Turkish host that if she were discovered 'she would be dismembered' (Pardoe 1837: 377).

Fanny Janet Blunt (1878) frequently dressed as a Turkish woman during her twenty year residency in Ottoman territories in order to visit the mosques, avoid harassment and circulate freely, as did Lady Craven (1789) and Lady Montagu (1718) before her. This 'Turkish costume' (Montagu 1718) which made a woman look like 'a package' (Belgiojoso 1855: 1043), 'a walking mummy' (Craven 1879) or a 'live mummy' (Skene 1847: 119) also provided women with protections and anonymity.

Western women describe the yasmak or yashmak as a veil, hood or face covering that concealed the nose, the mouth and the chin. The feridjee, which they also call feradjah, feridjes or ferigee, they describe as a sort of cape, coat, cloak or folding mantle that covered a woman's body entirely. Some claim that women used this attire as 'a disguise' and 'a masquerade' to meet their lovers, beginning with Lady Montagu (1718) who describes it as a 'perpetual masquerade', a symbol of sexual liberty enabling women, through anonymity, to follow their inclinations:

They have more Liberty than we have... It is impossible for a jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her; and no man dare touch or follow a woman in the street. This perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery. The most usual method of intrigue is, to send an appointment to the lover to meet the lady at a Jew's shop, which are as notoriously convenient as our Indian houses... Upon all I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire. (Montagu 1718)

Montagu (1718) enjoyed veiling herself, since paradoxically the yashmak enabled her a freedom of movement denied to unveiled Christian females of Ottoman society. In her letters we learn that even the Christian female subjects of the Port had to cover their faces in order to avoid being molested, insulted or offended. According to Montagu (1718), in order for non-Muslim women to walk about freely in Peran, the Frank (European) district of Constantinople, they had to wear this 'Turkish costume', something they resented. Many European female residents in Peran had never really ever seen it, such as the wife of the French Ambassador who was returning to France.

Lady Craven (1789) continues this allegory or symbolism of the veil, claiming, that it not only allowed women sexual freedom and opportunities to meet their lovers, but it also provided a means for their lovers to enter the harems disguised as women:

As to women, as many if not more than men, are to be seen in the streets—but they look like *Walking Mummies*. A large loose robe of dark green cloth covers them from the neck to the ground, over that a large piece of muslin, which wraps the shoulders and the arms, another which goes over the head and eyes; judge, Sir, if all these coverings do not confound all shape or air so much, that men or women, princesses and slaves, may be concealed under them. I think I never saw a country where women may enjoy so much Liberty, and free from all reproach as in Turkey. (Craven, 1789: 205)

Lucy Garnett (1895: 67) argues that this 'disguise' enables a woman to go abroad freely and incognita while keeping her safe from insult or molestation, 'whether on foot in the streets, in train or tram, or on the deck of a Bosphorus steamboat':

The unveiled Christian women and girls of the cities are, however, on the other hand, even when escorted by duenna or servant, exposed not only to impertinent remarks, but often to grave-insult. (Garnett 1895: 67)

The female accounts also reveal that harem inmates—risking death—used this dress (the veil and cape) to escape from the harems and from Turkey, as did Melek Hanum (1878) and her daughter Aisheh Hanum. Mary Frances Felicia Skene (1847)

also describes the adventure of a former Greek slave, who escaped with her baby from the harem of Muhtar Pacha, the son of Ali Pacha of Ioannina, after being accused of conspiring to assassinate Muhtar. She initially went to Alexandria, and after the death of Ali Pacha and his two sons, she returned to Greece and was employed by Felicia Skene's family in Athens from 1838 to 1845.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has shown that the multiethnic harem slavery institution was the Ottoman system's primary *socialization agent* and an indispensable part of its self-reproduction. It has contributed to the discourse on sexual slavery, primarily through the first-hand accounts of western women and harem inmates of the 19th century. It has shown that multiethnic-multiracial slavery was vital for the Ottoman economy and social system and provided a means of social integration-assimilation and social mobility: status and political power. Sexual slavery was a central part of the slave system and slaves of both genders were easily integrated into Ottoman society, eventually becoming free Muslims.

Mainly *through the eyes* of western women and harem inmates of the 19th century, corroborating that the harem system was based on slavery, this article has contributed additional evidence confirming that: firstly, the expansionist views of Islam and the institution of slavery resulted in the multiethnic composition of the Ottoman households: harems and selemliks. Secondly, an Ottoman harem—especially that of the elite and so-called middle-class—was made up of women and children from different nations: Islamized slaves, liberated slaves and descendants of slaves, including islamized eunuchs. Thirdly, the Ottoman elite was responsible for the preservation of slavery until the early 20th century and, as a result, the prolongation of polygyny and the large-scale castration of African boys, which was another dehumanizing aspect of the Ottoman slavery institution.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the Greek artist Areti Kamperidis for her magnificent artwork, including her exceptional paintings, inspired by the female accounts and illustrated in this article.

Notes

1 The Greek artist Areti Kamperidis, born in Toronto Canada and raised in Boston, MA., has been living in Athens, Greece since 1980. She studied Fine Arts at Southeastern College and Sociology at Deree College, the American College of Greece. Email: areti.art@hotmail.com

2 The Orient, originally referring to Egypt and the Levant, has changed in scope several times. It included a vast region with a multitude of social structures, cultures and coun-

tries (Middle East, Asia etc.), especially during the Ottoman Empire when it included the Mediterranean region as well (Sarris 1994).

3 The multiethnic and multilingual Ottoman Empire, with Constantinople as its capital since 1453, for six centuries controlled vast lands in the Mediterranean region. In the 16th and 17th centuries it controlled much of Southeast Europe, Western Asia, the Caucasus, the Horn of Africa, North Africa, and so forth (Sarris 1994, Peirce 1993).

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MEDIA, RELIGION AND GENDER IN EUROPE

The gender question is more and more at the core of internal religious debates. It is not only about Femen demonstrations, feminist religious historical reviews or internal feminist demands within religious organizations. It is about how religions picture themselves in an evolving landscape where gender is not merely an appendix.

Gender carries resonances of a broader and much more complex aspect: identity. It is not surprising that for some religious traditions, gender is not an easy question to tackle. Expressions like "gender ideology" or "gender deviance" are never far from certain current religious discourses. Gender is troubling precisely because it deals with identity; and identity has to do with power.

In this book we aim to hear a range of voices that reflect the diverse and reflect the great plurality of cultural views on those aspects that lie at the crossroad between media, religion and gender.

ISBN: 978-84-941193-4-7



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