

## Down and out on the quays of İzmir: ‘European’ musicians, innkeepers, and prostitutes in the Ottoman port-cities

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One of the factors that contributed to the late nineteenth-century Europeanization of Ottoman urban society was the entertainment sector, in particular bars, music halls and brothels. In the big cities of Rumelia and western Anatolia, a relevant number of the workforce in this sector originated from countries such as Austria-Hungary, Germany, Italy or France; they exposed local society to new forms of sociability. This article is intended as an initial step in assessing the impact of coastal popular culture in shaping Hamidian port-city society. It tackles the question of whether it is possible to write such a history with a perspective of agency, by focusing on the people on stage or behind the bar, their migratory background, life-stories, and worldviews. It distinguishes between three milieus: musicians organized in orchestras; individual singers, dancers, bar or pension owners; and prostitutes and pimps or traffickers. All three seem to have retained a liminal lifestyle, with one foot in their place of origin and the other in the region they operated in. Despite their constant interaction with customers or audiences, integration into local society was not the rule, but an exception. The respective milieu of persons engaged in similar semi-itinerant entertainment work was the predominant group of social organization.

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Here [on Smyrna’s Quay], everything is modern, ‘European’ . . . . In the extension of the Quay towards the southwest, directly behind the steamers’ pier, the international character of the port-city goes hand-in-hand with that of the metropolis: sailors’ bars of the most suspect kind with exuberant names, ‘birrorias’, kitchens, cafés, third- or fourth-rate hotels, all hodgepodge intertwined and filled with the indefinable smell of tar and fish, which has greeted us from the start – this is the favourite promenade of the Smyrniotes . . . . As a maritime city, Smyrna of course witnesses a constant influx of female singers, Bohemian Ladies’ Orchestras, etc. The latter dominate here, as they animate all the quays from Smyrna to Alexandria and Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

In the Hamidian era, Western travellers arriving in the major Ottoman ports often did not find the expected Orientalist panorama to welcome them, as the port-cities were engaged in a process of transition that has variously been described as modernization, Westernization, or Europeanization. In effect, this process changed the way both locals and visitors perceived and experienced the cities in question. The transformation under way was prompted by the steady flow of people, goods and ideas between these cities and other parts of Europe. While attempts have been made to delineate this flow for the sectors

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of urban planning, economics, society and administration, few proper enquiries have so far been made into the entertainment sector.<sup>2</sup> While there have been a certain number of studies on the introduction of theatre and film culture in the Levant,<sup>3</sup> the branches of public entertainment such as those cited in the introductory quotation above have mostly received fleeting mentions that are more atmospheric than analytical, and provide scant real detail.<sup>4</sup> This is regrettable, because the music halls, birahanes, cafés, and also the brothels, were among the first institutions where, potentially, a considerable proportion of the city public were confronted with ‘Europe’, not in its abstract form as principles of governance and politics, but as an everyday culture that the population could personally experience and consume, and shape according to their own needs and desires. Ports in the age of imperialism served as relay stations between global flows and the local reality; this mediation can best be described as ‘the combining and overlapping of transoceanic, littoral and interior flows in the mediation of culture on the one hand, and to people’s appropriation and blending of diverse cross-bordering cultural elements on the other’.<sup>5</sup> Bars, brothels and cafés and the people frequenting them certainly provided important hubs for an entire species of intercultural encounter that has largely escaped academic attention.

That said, the present article is only intended as an initial step in assessing the impact of coastal popular culture in shaping Hamidian port-city society. It tackles the question of whether it is possible to write such a history from the perspective of agency, by focusing on the people on stage or behind the bar, their migratory background, life-stories, and worldviews. Caution is necessary, not only because there has been little preliminary research on this topic, but also because the assumptions and terminology it can draw upon have yet to be ascertained with regard to the Ottoman Empire of the belle époque.

As Donald Quataert has stated, historians of the Ottoman Empire have with more obstinacy than in other areas of study avoided covering non-elitist history, such as a history of labour, the peasantry, the urban poor, slaves or the marginalized. This is due less to the existing difficulties involved in such an undertaking, than to the fund of possibilities and challenges still awaiting those who choose to investigate the Ottoman state and its constituent elements, allowing for reconceptualizations of statehood altogether.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding, in recent years historians have begun to push for a non-elitist history in the Ottoman sphere, especially with regard to its Middle Eastern and North African territories and, foremost, Egypt.<sup>7</sup> However, much of this new research, although groundbreaking, appears to be ignorant or dismissive of the long and often painful debates over ‘history from below’, ‘subaltern studies’, and studies of marginality in the history of other regions, such as Western and Central Europe and South Asia, which have led to the refinement of analytical approaches along with the rejection of some of its more illusory intentions.<sup>8</sup> This is of course not the place to review these discussions, but I wish to mention in passing some of their characteristic points. Following E.P. Thompson’s work on how to read underclass collective action as text, and thus construct its ‘moral economy’,<sup>9</sup> he was criticized because of the near wanton interpretative licence such an approach confers on the historian claiming to speak on behalf of the silent participants of history, in fact attributing to them statements that they never uttered.<sup>10</sup> Also, historians grew more cautious about claims to identify a silenced majority in the ‘lost pages’ of history, and even more wary of claims that this silent majority could have, or may have, radically changed the course of history.<sup>11</sup> Subaltern studies, history from below, Alltagsgeschichte and other varieties of non-elite history, all took a decisive discursive turn, focusing less on acts of mass resistance and more on the power relationship between the rulers and the ruled.<sup>12</sup> By extension, research into silenced majorities gave way to the

search for silenced minorities, in the belief that these marginalized characters served important functions within inner-societal power relations, and that to study them could help illustrate the mechanisms of power.

At first glance, it would seem that marginality in the sense indicated above is the most apt term for the foreign employees and entrepreneurs of the port entertainment sector who are the subject of this study. Also, authors focusing on marginality in this Foucauldian sense have already considerably contributed to rewriting and reconceptualizing the largely uncharted history of non-elites in the (post-)Ottoman sphere.<sup>13</sup> However, the opposition between a uniform society at the centre and its counterparts on the margins – questionable as it may seem even for less diversified settings – is highly problematic for the Empire under Abdülhamid II. Late Ottoman society was not always a unitary experience for all its nominal members; nor did these members necessarily develop a system of norms of universal applicability for every subject in a given locality. Among the many ideologies and uncounted regional and local identities vying for the loyalties of the Ottoman population, or parts of it, were young Ottomanists, conservatives, separatists, imperialist activists and a dozen denominations. How such heterogeneity affects the present study becomes apparent with a sample case such as that of Samuel Cohen. Sent to Constantinople (İstanbul/Carigrad) in 1914 by the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, Cohen felt that the city's Muslim men exercised double standards: while being overtly protective of their own community's women, they showed few qualms about tolerating or making use of the Austrian prostitutes' services, because these women were governed by foreign laws and religious codes;<sup>14</sup> While it is not incorrect to label both the attitude of the city's Muslim men towards the foreign and local prostitutes as marginalization, it is questionable what the term denotes where it is applied to describe two completely different reactions, depending on ethnicity – liberality for the one, and intolerance for the other. Thus, I prefer to designate the foreign entertainers and sex-workers as liminal rather than marginal, as this describes more aptly their in-between position in a plural sense: in between well- and ill-reputed professions, in between different ethnicities, in between their places of origin and places of residence, and in between the empires they originate from and the one they live in.<sup>15</sup>

The Ottoman port-cities offered a variety of competing socially normative orders, and characters such as the entertainment workers were particularly exposed, because by profession they communicated with various strata of urban society, and were constantly moving across social borders and transgressing against one set of norms while embracing another. The fluctuation back and forth across these different multiple borders is best described as a series of transgressions and repentance, of revoking and reconfirming loyalties.

Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis and Oliver Schmitt have claimed that the loyalty of many foreign passport-holders to their respective consulates was exercised as part of a rational choice, a calculated means to an end, in exchange for a foreign passport or protection, or for economic and social standing.<sup>16</sup> It needs to be seen whether this is also applicable to the foreign entertainment and sex workers.

Below, I will try to assess what can be found out about the entertainers, keeping in mind the problems established in the debates about non-elitist history, especially whether the historian can legitimately make these actors speak. As we shall see by consulting the documents the German and Austro-Hungarian consulates had on file about these subjects, the sources highlight their relationship with the socio-political order on the basis of their places of origin, and I will possibly downplay their other more local or regional affiliations. However, the richness of these sources occasionally affords glimpses of more.

## Evidence, but no voice: the Bohemian orchestras

The entertainment sector employees and entrepreneurs were highly visible to the general public. Austrians and Germans figured prominently in this field. Their repute, both with the public and with the consular bureaucracy, makes a fairly detailed description possible, especially for the so-called Bohemian orchestras. Travelogues and newspapers of the day mention their presence in Levantine towns almost everywhere,<sup>17</sup> playing on the streets along the quay, but also in the main restaurants and cafés. Their repertoire focused on internationally well-known operetta and waltz pieces.

The institution of Bohemian orchestras originated from the Erzgebirge (Krušné Hory) region in northwestern Bohemia, where ensembles had formed part of the representation, entertainment and bonding framework of the local mines. When the traditional mining sites declined and unemployment grew, more miners started joining the bands, and these in turn looked for engagements further afield, particularly to neighbouring Saxony and more northerly destinations. Audiences were impressed by their apparent exoticness, but also by their ability to swiftly adopt popular tunes.<sup>18</sup> By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the typical Bohemian orchestra had evolved into a somewhat different institution. Whereas before they had been an exclusively male formation of miners and their sons, now they were mostly made up of women players, and in one recorded case there were ten women to five men.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the women in these groups were strikingly young – between 16 and 25, some travelling with their young children. Usually the bandmaster was an older man, and the group was named after him. While some bands centred on families, they were not exclusively clan ventures, but enlisted members from different backgrounds, while some musicians moved about alone or in smaller groups, seeking to join a band. In the Levant, such musicians formed an important part of the entertainment culture. A typical tour would run from Salonica (Selânik/Thessaloniki/Solun), past Constantinople, Smyrna (İzmir), Beirut (Beyrouth), Alexandria (al-Iskanderiya), and Cairo (al-Qâhira) back to Trieste (Trst), but would also include smaller towns. A tour would last for five years or more, as the bands generally stayed several months or even years in one city. As they travelled with valid papers, their movements are recorded in the consular registers. While the Salonician Habsburg consulate's 1863 passport register makes no mention of travelling musicians, soon afterward the 1872 register numbers one group of six on their way to Volos, and another group of 13 on their way to Constantinople, as well as several musicians travelling individually or in smaller groups. While all of the 1872 travelling musicians are listed as coming from the classical hometowns of such bands in the Erzgebirge, by the turn of the century their numbers and places of origin had changed notably. Other formations of players defining themselves as 'Bohemian orchestras' came from northeastern Bohemia, and a large number from the Far East of the Monarchy, from Galicia and Bukovina, in particular from Czernowitz (Černovci/Cernăuți). With the rise of railway and steamer travel, their radius of operation had expanded to global dimensions: they were reported in India and beyond. Bands usually had a clear either Bohemian or Eastern predominance, but some records list musicians from other backgrounds. The names of musicians from Bohemia were predominantly Christian German, whereas those from Galicia, increasingly more common after the turn of the century, carried German Jewish names. The passport register for 1906 shows three big orchestras quitting Salonica, each bound for a different destination. The Rosenkranz Orchestra, a Czernowitz-based formation, recorded as having already played in the Grand Bretagne theatre in Salonica in 1904, was moving up country to Monastir (Bitola/Manastir), where they stayed for the following months. Likewise, the Ehrlich Orchestra from Stanislav

(modern Ivano-Frankovsk) left Salonica for Ūšküp (Skopje/Shkup) for an extended engagement. A third group based in Czernowitz left Macedonia altogether for Smyrna.<sup>20</sup>

The individual band members did not earn much or carry many possessions, despite performing at major venues such as the Grand Bretagne, the Olympia, and the Teatro Opera Italiana, with performances starting at four in the afternoon and continuing until late at night. When the musician Rudolf Mareček killed a fellow Austrian in a quarrel by hitting him on the head with a chair, and was due to be escorted to his hometown to be tried there, the consular official found among his personal belongings only three or four changes of clothes (albeit elegant, as they were intended for the stage), a box with postcards, letters, assorted photographs, a picture of Jerusalem, a silver watch and a paraffin stove.<sup>21</sup>

A group that included several very young and poor women, headed by male players and performing in public until the early morning, seems prone to prompt questions about morality and the safeguarding of minors' rights, and allegations of prostitution. One anonymous petitioner writing under the pseudonym of 'Philanthropist' and identifying himself as a Habsburg subject and long-term resident in the Ottoman Empire, drew such conclusions and tried to draw the diplomats' attention to them. Accusing the Liebermann Orchestra in particular, the man calculated that the musicians could not possibly live off what they earned on stage, yet were wearing expensive jewellery; the bandmaster in particular was living a life of luxury, which would only be feasible if he occasionally sold some of the female musicians to a harem, or into prostitution. Furthermore, the young girls were playing before an audience of lusty, drunken Turkish men, and were expected to fraternize with the customers in between pieces, according to the 'Philanthropist'.

Interestingly enough, the consul defended Moses Liebermann against these unfounded charges. The Liebermann Orchestra, he countered, was not playing in a den of Muslim drunkards, but in front of a predominantly European audience in the best house in town. According to the consul, as with all the truly Bohemian orchestras, the members of this band had never given cause for moral concern, unlike certain others from Galicia or Bukovina (a hint at Habsburg internal Orientalism).<sup>22</sup> Official discourse thus left the Bohemian and pseudo-Bohemian musicians in a liminal space. They were deemed essentially of good moral conduct, and therefore did not warrant intense concern or intervention on the part of the diplomats (although in 1906 the governor of Prague/Praha warned that minors were being forced to play in these bands, and sought their return).<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the musicians were considered an inferior element of Central European culture, and were thus not integrated into the Habsburg state's self-representation.

Touring in the Levant was not an adventure, but a business trip that followed routes and venues established by other orchestras from the same towns. Some practices were handed on from generation to generation, as children often took up the same occupation as their parents. While on tour, the orchestras – at least their male leaders – were often in close contact with each other. They would frequent the same bakkal (grocery store), have a glass of mastika (raki/ouzo) together, discuss business, and possibly have disagreements – as testified by a charge of slander filed in 1880.<sup>24</sup> Not all musicians returned home from the tour, nor were they kept completely segregated from Muslim men. Martha Fehnl from the Erzgebirge for example, a member of an established musicians' family, had begun playing tours in the German and Habsburg territories at the age of 15, though these tours usually followed much shorter circuits. At the age of 24, she embarked with her group on a tour of the Levant, first to Salonica, then Monastir, and four years later to Constantinople. There in 1904 at the age of 29 she met the army major İsmail Hakkı Effendi; subsequently, the Ottoman officer and the blonde, blue-eyed Austrian woman married in accordance with Muslim ritual and Ottoman legislation, whereby she consciously forfeited her rights

to Austrian nationality. Even in 1904, marrying a Muslim was tantamount to treason in the minds of high-ranking Habsburg officials, who largely clung to a conservative interpretation of Catholicism (unlike their German counterparts, whose growing Turkophilia led them to look favourably on Turko-German liaisons).<sup>25</sup> Another case of possible 'defection' from a band was filed as a case of prostitution. In 1885, the parents of Marie Reichmann from Sonnenberg (Výsluní), hometown of several 'true' Bohemian musicians touring the East, requested that she be forcibly returned home. The Habsburg consulate in Bucharest (București/Bükreş) despatched on the case found her in Galați, living out of wedlock with a Romanian journalist.<sup>26</sup>

But although these comparatively detailed descriptions allow us to reconstruct the movements, material assets and some of the networks of the Bohemian orchestras, the lack of first-hand accounts makes it impossible to say anything substantial about the musicians' subjective view of their situation. Should we subscribe to the self-declared Philanthropist's view that the institution of touring orchestras was akin to modern slavery, with young girls being dragged off against their will to perform in foreign lands? There is no direct information on the degree of constraint exercised within the orchestras, and the fact that the 'Philanthropist's' claims stand alone and are not corroborated by any reports of 'desertion' in official documentation – even though the bands did not always travel as one compact group – would seem sufficient argument against indicting Bohemian orchestras as a form of forced labour; indeed, individual musicians invariably joined bands of their own accord. But, more to the point, this discussion leads us to the classical dilemma of migration studies. Can those involved in this form of lower-class mobility be termed 'happy' or 'sad' about their life abroad? Should we stress the economic depression of life in rural or small town Bohemia – and especially in the eastern Habsburg domains – as an inevitable push factor forcing the musicians to search for employment far from home, notwithstanding the limited earnings to be had in Ottoman music halls (and, as this narrative implies, despite a 'natural' desire to stay at home)? Or should we follow the opposite narrative which underlines the pull factor, the attractions of mobility and the chance to escape from the tight social constraints of rural Austria into the more multifaceted Ottoman towns, along with the thrill of performing on stage and the social recognition of the audience? Were the Bohemian orchestras a poor woman's opportunity to escape the moral constraints and hardships of rural life? Or are they more a tale of suffering and impositions? There is ample evidence for both interpretations. Without the necessary first-hand sources, however, we can only guess at how the musicians themselves viewed their situation. Interestingly, the inconclusive result of this study of the orchestras is mirrored by contemporary observations. Misled by their names into believing the musicians were from Germany, Vitalis Cohen, correspondent for the *Journal de Salonique*, describes a concert given at the Olympia Theatre, possibly by the Liebermann Orchestra. Far from being seductive, as the 'Philanthropist's' petitioner claims, or morally impeccable as the consul describes them, the young musicians seemed to Cohen just plain tired and indifferent to their surroundings. Without further explanation, Cohen interprets its cause as the 'sad' type of migration, and homesickness,

*Le supplice de la musique cesse, celui de la quête commence. L'assiette tendue d'un geste automatique et fatigué, de la même allure nonchalante, et déséquilibrée, le regard terne et sans expression, la quêteuse déambule devant les consommateurs. Et les metalliks s'engouffrent sous la serviette discrètement repliée que cette pâle enfant de la Germanie a savamment arrangée sur l'assiette. Chaque metallik représente 5 pfennigs de son nébuleux pays. ... La quête finie, son visage revêt son ordinaire placidité, et, du même geste fatigué, la même allure nonchalante, elle regagne l'estrade où ses compagnes qui s'ennuient sont en train de bâiller*

avec un ensemble parfait. À quoi rêvent ces jeunes filles? Probablement aux Werthers et aux Fritzs laissés là-bas. ... Elles ne sont jolies quoique blondes.<sup>27</sup>

### Single women in testimony and in private: divergent lifestyles?

The elements that are absent from our evidence of the Bohemian orchestras and which could possibly shed light on the grey areas are testimony and the personal. Testimony takes on a narrative character, and seeks to explain a presumed reality, thus combining the reconstruction of a historical scenario with background information. In testimony, we find a dialogue between ‘master’ and ‘servant’: there is an element of transgression against the norms set by the ‘master’, who may be framed as God and the Church, the rightful ruler and his loyal servants, society and the common good, the class and the party, etc. The ‘servants’, those involved in, or having witnessed, the transgression, are compelled in the dialogue to frame the transgression, explain how it came about. The narrative is chosen to convince the master, and as such, will vary according to what is considered a successful discursive strategy in a given place and time; for nineteenth-century Europe, such narratives often move within the framework of the current bourgeois morality (which was not yet intimately intertwined with psychology, as it is today).<sup>28</sup>

Such a confession is provided in the memoirs of Anna Forneris née Hafner, born 1789. Forneris wrote her memoirs in 1849, having returned from the Levant and Persia, where she had been living and travelling since adolescence. By her own account, she was lured from her home in rural Carinthia (Kärnten) by the attractions of the world outside, and found initial fulfilment in the night-life of Trieste, before setting out for the Levant and eventually marrying the owner of a hotel in Smyrna. Forneris soon realized that her husband of Venetian origin was an alcoholic and enjoyed brawling, but after her son’s birth she stayed on until her husband died of a wound inflicted by a customer. As a widow at the age of 30, she tried to resettle on the Habsburg coast, but, following a series of disappointments, set out once more four years later for the Ottoman shore. She opened an inn in the Constantinople suburb Pera (now Beyoğlu), catering mainly to Germans and Italians. The successful business ended when the fire of 1829 destroyed the inn, and Forneris resettled in Persia as a trader. Several years later, she returned to Constantinople with her new Sardinian husband to open a bar serving beer brewed on the premises. Following a series of arbitrary evictions by the police and sundry court actions – as well as several cases of European clients with unsettled bills disappearing overseas – they established themselves once more in Persia.<sup>29</sup>

Forneris writes at the age of 60 with a vein of bitterness about the countless employments, businesses, friendships and loves in her life that each time ended in disappointment. Accordingly, she does not dwell long on her original intentions or her attitudes regarding her life in the East, but more on the disappointments that forced her to move on and finally return. Furthermore, the genre she chose to recount her adventures – the travelogue – was originally devised by upper-class male travellers who claimed to give an objective portrayal of the strange ways and strange people they had encountered, not to describe how they themselves had been affected by what they had observed. Forneris struggles to adhere to this ‘objective’ approach, although it becomes evident that this type of presumed detachment does not suit the narrative she is attempting to create. But more importantly, she writes after having returned from the Orient to her native Carinthia, where she was trying to re-establish her respectability in the eyes of a conservative Catholic community that frowned on independent, lower-class female agency. In a postscript, however, she unexpectedly adds that she feels unaccepted in her

hometown because of her ‘oriental ways’, and hopes to set out for Persia once again, leaving the reader puzzled by this sudden change of heart, after chapters of derision about the ‘immoral Levant’ and praise for rural Austria. Whatever positive emotions Forneris entertained for the Orient, the confessional tone of her memoirs deprives us of any clear insights into how she really felt.

Returning to the Hamidian era, the consular files offer testimony of a more immediate sort. Adele Feuer ran a coffeehouse in the Salonica district of Bara, though she herself lived in Çayır. We know of her from a lawsuit for the payment of rent arrears. Note that the court scenario is one of the historian’s favourite arenas, as it combines a ‘snapshot’ effect together with the need for testimony,<sup>30</sup> making it possible to study what a given group of people was doing at a particular moment in time, and why they were doing it.

The Hellenic citizen and house-owner Zafiriou Markandonaki claimed that Feuer had not paid the rent for the coffeehouse, and wanted to evict her. Feuer produced two witnesses to her consignment of the rent to Zafiriou’s husband. Necep bin Ali, a 30-year-old brakeman on the Salonica – Dedeğaç railway line, had come to the coffeehouse for a beer when Feuer asked him to count a large amount of cash set aside for the rent she owed. The brakeman obliged, then left. When the landlady’s husband, Theodoros Markandonaki, entered some time later, Feuer handed over the previously counted sum, and this was witnessed by one Ahmed Hasan, a 22-year-old kahveci. Although Feuer was a single woman, she not only ran a coffeehouse attracting lower-class Muslim customers, but also enjoyed a certain familiarity with her customers, entrusting her money to them, and at times involving them in her business transactions. Thus the case could potentially have aroused some class or cultural reservations in the Austrian consular court, but there is no trace of this in the relative documents.<sup>31</sup>

When studying what is written to or dictated to the protocol in the consular offices, the historian must remain alert to the fact that the consulate is an agency of power, a power seeking to assume the role of unquestioned ‘master’, whereas the petitioner, the plaintiff, and the defendant wish to harness it for their own purposes. We must also be aware of possible alternative ties of power and loyalty that could be obscured by our choice of sources. However, one should not engage in a quest to unearth the authentic, hidden voice free of all hegemonic distortions either. It is not helpful to assume that exchanges with the authorities in some way conceal the real object of our enquiry. Human actions are created in social practice that inevitably varies from the private to the public, from the coffeehouse to the courthouse, but neither is more real than the other. They are simply different arenas between which an individual might choose to substantially alter his or her behaviour, so as to better comply with the expectations raised by a given circumstance.

In one particular case, we are offered an account of everyday life that was produced spontaneously without the presence of the authorities. Amanda Lüttgens, known to her audience as Aimée Lorraine, a native of Alsace, died unexpectedly of peritonitis in a Salonica pension in 1910. She left behind an impressive wardrobe, abundant jewellery, and bonds issued by the Cairo branch of *Crédit Lyonnais*, altogether worth about 1,500 German marks. This sum clearly shows that Lüttgens lived a much more affluent life than the Bohemian musicians. However, compared with that of a Salonica railway employee, for example, her estate was not large and would not have provided sufficient security against sickness or for her old age. She had lost some of her assets as a result of a theft in Trieste. Like the Bohemians, her touring activity revolved around the cities of the Levant.

Personal letters from her mother enclosed in the woman’s file reveal a network of communication, including professional and personal ties with other performers and café owners throughout Europe. Amanda had grown up in a family of stage performers that was

composed of women only: Amanda's mother Anna Lüttgens had never married, but had raised her daughter with the aid of several aunts, and headed an 'English song and dance quintet' performing mostly in German music halls. Like her daughter, Anna lived a life on the road. Amanda's aunt, Louise Donaty, was in Bucharest at the time of Amanda's death. Besides Germany, Austria-Hungary, Romania, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, both mother and daughter apparently had ties with Italy and to a number of performers with Italian names. The gossip contained in the letters revolves around new love affairs and prospects of marriage and, while the writers show low esteem for contemporary morals in sexual relations, they seem completely unbiased with regard to ethnicity, to judge from the mix of names mentioned. They thus offer a stark contrast to Foneris' tirade 50 years earlier regarding the vice, deceit and isolation she imputed to the Europeans and locals in the entertainment sector in the Levant. What emerges is a self-confident subculture operating outside society's boundaries of decency, in a zone where transgression was permitted. The reason that such subjects tend not to figure prominently in official documents is that they were fairly affluent, and rarely needed the consulate's assistance except for the occasional passport extension.

However, in the case of the Lüttgens, both mother and daughter were apparently deeply concerned about how to make a living once their stage life was over. During an extensive stay in Cairo, Amanda had considered settling there, but then entertained the idea of taking over a pension run by a woman, apparently of German origin, in Salonica, where she had been staying and performing as a singer and artist for several months. She had felt happy in Salonica, believing herself to be among good people. She was suffering from bulimia and taking diet pills to keep in shape.

But while the letters give us a deeper insight into this milieu, Amanda's mother neither denies nor distances herself from the world of performers and entertainers when communicating with someone of conservative views such as the consul. Quite spontaneously she informs him of having borne and raised her daughter out of wedlock, and of having seen to her upbringing within a framework of female relatives. The woman's letters to the consul make no bid to conceal her world, though their length suggests a need to communicate her feelings about the death of her daughter, a need not fulfilled elsewhere; or perhaps they show a suppressed desire for acceptance or absolution from the dominant culture for her unorthodox lifestyle, and thus to some extent the letters comply with the narrative of testimony.<sup>32</sup>

### Coercion and willingness? Habsburg prostitution on the Levantine shores

The two professions we shall consider last are those that take up the largest space in the archives, but are also in many ways very difficult to frame. They are those of the prostitute and the pimp, or procurer. The unnamed 'Philanthropist's' series of letters to the Minister of Foreign Affairs were aimed at alerting the diplomatic authorities to the large number of Habsburg subjects involved in what he considered was forced prostitution in the Ottoman territories, supposedly more than 300 in Constantinople alone.<sup>33</sup> The main place of origin for the women working in this profession was the same as the band musicians: the eastern sector of the Habsburg Empire, Galicia and Bukovina. The names that figure prominently in the Foreign Ministry's dossiers are both German Jewish and Slavonic. A much smaller but nevertheless prominent group includes women from southern Hungary, predominantly with Slavonic names.<sup>34</sup> Generally, these subjects came from families living in conditions of acute poverty, although the road to prostitution itself could take different forms. Some had already started sex-work in Austria; others had run away from home and, while on the

road, had been contacted by human traffickers who promised employment as waitresses or stage performers. Several such routes led to Constantinople. For those who had strayed from home, the initial step was often crossing the border – from Neusatz (Novi Sad/Uj Vidék) to Belgrade (Beograd), from Transylvania to Romania. For those who had already met a trafficker in the home states, the path led directly to the steamers leaving Trieste (but sometimes included detours to Italy). In the Ottoman capital, the greater part of new arrivals were escorted to the local houses in Galata and Pera.<sup>35</sup> The traffickers operated on their own initiative, and were contacted on arrival by intermediaries, or made their way independently to bars that served as ‘marketplaces’.<sup>36</sup> The brothels were divided according to price range – and supposedly beauty – between uptown and downtown, Pera and Galata. Women who had not accepted prostitution were abused here until they gave in. To perpetuate their dependency, they were presented with inflated bills for transport and clothes that had to be paid off.<sup>37</sup>

Austro-Hungarian prostitution and human trafficking in the Ottoman sphere were at times considered a highly political question: the Dual Monarchy was keen to safeguard its position as a member of the Great Powers, whose interests would have to be respected in discussions on the Eastern Question. An empire that was apparently incapable of stopping severe crimes perpetrated by its subjects abroad would hardly seem qualified to create order in the Ottoman sphere. More importantly, the subjugation of women’s sexuality could be seen to symbolize the subjugation of Austria-Hungary,<sup>38</sup> and therefore, in order to defend their empire’s reputation, diplomats abroad were obliged to clamp down hard on their compatriots’ activities. According to a memorandum of 1911, it had been the policy to seize and repatriate without appeal all minors (i.e., those under the age of 21) caught prostituting themselves, along with any adult prostitutes who chose to end their employment; debts to pimps were ignored, and instead the same were usually obligated to cover the expenses of repatriation. Furthermore, there were sporadic deportations of pimps (almost exclusively German Jewish from Galicia or Bukovina), and in case of sufficient evidence, they were brought to trial in the Monarchy.<sup>39</sup> After the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution and the Habsburg declaration of annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Habsburg efforts proved fruitless. The Ottoman police, so the consulate claimed, had not only denied requests for assistance, but had actually hindered the kavas (consulate officials) from carrying out independent actions.

In reaction, the procurers quickly managed to obtain Ottoman passports for themselves and for the women in their charge. If the Ottoman authorities found their papers to be valid, they could be saved from extradition, and, because of the disintegrating relations between the two states, even exempted from prosecution altogether. It is beyond the scope of this article to trace the diplomatic scuffles between the two sides. At any event, things did not return to normal once the annexation crisis had passed. Instead, relations deteriorated further, and one account of 1913 sees consulate employees and policemen engaged in fisticuffs in the streets of Galata, after a Galician pimp being escorted by the consulate employees appealed to bystanders to intervene on account of his supposed Ottoman nationality.<sup>40</sup>

With local help, the Galician procurers started to beat the consulates at their own game. While claiming to protect the rights of their subjects, the foreign consulates attempted to have a say in Ottoman affairs, thus giving their subjects a strong resource to call on in their social interactions in the Ottoman sphere. However, when the actions of Habsburg subjects were clearly detrimental to the Dual Monarchy’s image, these subjects managed to escape persecution by defecting to the enemy camp, namely, by procuring Ottoman nationality. Owing to the mixture of corruption among lower-level policemen and immigration

officers, the stalemate of the two authorities trying to assert their executive power against each other – and a certain local glee at seeing the foreign authorities helpless to stop their pimps from walking freely through the streets of Constantinople, or to save their women from being bought and sold in the local brothels – the Austrian pimps could operate on the shores of the Bosphorus with little or no restraints.

The logic of the pimps' and the traffickers' loyalties shows a keen sense of practicality. They turned to the authority that served them best in continuing their business without harassment. To make the best of Ottoman nationality and to successfully exercise their profession, however, required considerable expertise in intercultural communication. To this end they managed to cultivate extensive relations with people of other national backgrounds – other traffickers, customers, police officers, immigration officials, and so forth. Consequently, their business networks were remarkably versatile. At the time, Constantinople was a hub for human trafficking. Not only did Galicians negotiate the recruitment for Latin-American brothels from here;<sup>41</sup> their reach and business journeys also extended eastwards, from the Bosphorus to Alexandria, and they even supplied Bombay and Calcutta with 'white' sex-workers.<sup>42</sup>

But even in the brothel, where 'master' and 'servant' relationships might normally be considered set and predefined, the question of agency and loyalties is not easily resolved. A study of the contemporary public debate on prostitution in the Dual Monarchy postulates: 'If the prostitutes had dared to speak, who would have listened to them or taken them seriously?'<sup>43</sup> In fact they did speak, and a number of state officials actually listened. The predominant contemporary and historical narratives label the pimp and the trafficker as the oppressor, and the prostitute as the victim of forced labour, defencelessly awaiting liberation through the intervention of family, philanthropists or the state. Actually, not all the said victims were happy to be liberated; indeed, a number of prostitutes protested against being seized and sent back to their homeland. The most extensive such complaint recorded is the one lodged by one Sara Friedmann, who was seized in the brothel and taken by force to the Habsburg consulate in Pera in December 1895. To secure her own release she showed her Ottoman papers, under the name of 'Sury Fischel'. Her Austrian nationality had actually expired, so the Ottoman police at first declined to turn Sara over to the Habsburg consul, and intended to release her. In response, the Embassy applied political pressure, and when she was delivered to the Austro-Hungarian authorities, Sara railed at an astonished consul and insisted upon her release. A letter, apparently written in her name to her mother complaining about ill-treatment that had caused the consulate to take action, was a fake, she claimed. Subsequently, the consul believed her, but since she was still a minor, the wishes of her mother to have her repatriated were given precedence, and she was extradited to Cieszanów forthwith, where again she sought out the authorities, giving a long statement in Polish which was subsequently translated to German and sent to Vienna. Sara Friedmann was raised by a widow burdened with six young children. Six years earlier, Sara had left home to work as a prostitute in various small towns in Galicia. One day she was approached by a certain N. Goldstaub, who offered her employment in Constantinople. She followed him there of her own free will, and was turned over to Moishe Gottmann. Friedmann considered her life with Gottmann luxurious when she contrasted it to the misery she had known when living with her mother. She received good clothes and her own money. The trafficker Goldstaub, not content with his initial payment, continuously pressured her for more money and when refused, sent a forged letter to Sara's mother begging for her liberation. Friedmann ended her testimony by declaring that she would at the first opportunity leave Galicia to take up her employment in Constantinople again.<sup>44</sup>

In her statement, Friedmann goes out of her way to stress that she chose her path consciously and had no illusions about the trade, and that she at all times believed this choice to be a good one, for material reasons. She effectively and confidently inverts the narrative of testimony, so that it is not she who must justify herself for her shortcomings, but the state, for intervening in her life. No one had offered her the means to escape her miserable living conditions, nor had she asked for help to do so. She avoids speaking of the work itself, thus depriving the authorities of an opening for the inevitable moral condemnation and justification. In effect, she renounces her loyalty to the Monarchy, and demands to be set free of any further ties.

Cases like Friedmann's, which involved liberating a woman from the impositions of pimps and the police – to then discover that she did not desire her liberty – made the consulate officials directly concerned with such cases despair, as one official comment on the Friedmann affair testifies: 'The tales of slavery and the dark cellar belong to the realm of legends'.<sup>45</sup> Sumanta Banerjee has remarked on nineteenth-century prostitution in Bengal,

Today, looking back at the dilemma, we feel the need to break up the binary thought pattern and to break out of the oppositional concept of volition/coercion that shaped the thinking and behaviour of the male liberal intellectuals. We should recognize the fluidity and complexity in the mentalities of the prostitutes who were coping with, and manoeuvring in, extremely complicated working and living conditions. The same prostitute who might have been compelled to join the profession under socio-economic pressures, could have – after a certain period – developed the free will to prefer it to the unknown evil of domesticity in a bhadralok home.<sup>46</sup>

In particular, the Friedmann case shows the limits of an approach to marginal studies into the voices of the oppressed on their path to emancipation, voices that will only appear once the historian has cut through the layers of misrepresentation and 'silencing' on the part of authorities and academics, as they produce their master narratives. However, while Banerjee's argument would seem to be borne out by the material described above, the concept of 'free will' is in itself problematic, especially in the present context. Free will here is evidently not an absolute, but a negotiated category. The brothel should be seen as a total institution which conditions its inmates to limit their worldview to its doorstep. Unlike Friedmann, other prostitutes had willingly accepted or sought their release from the system (although many expressed the desire not to be returned in disgrace to their families). Friedmann's statement was issued three months after her release; the brothel must therefore not be regarded as a place of short-term brainwashing, but rather like other total institutions of the nineteenth century, such as the army, school, or religious orders. Such institutions lead those who have experienced them to later condemn, glorify, and/or recreate the conditions imposed therein. With her limited experience of 'life outside' – epitomized by her comparison between her poor beginnings and the luxurious brothel – Friedmann could not imagine she had anything else to sell than her body, nor expect more from life than fair treatment from her procurer, and the material assets she had enjoyed in Constantinople.

## Conclusion

This preliminary study shows that, while it is possible to get a glimpse of the lives of German and Austrian entertainers and sex-workers in the Levant, it is far from straightforward to assess them correctly. It appears that Bohemian orchestras, independent entrepreneurs such as singer/stage performers, barkeepers and pension owners, and not least pimps and prostitutes, formed three distinct milieus which did not normally overlap. They differed from each other in their degree of internal hierarchy,

male domination, wealth and social acceptance. While the brothels were definitely the most authoritarian of the three types of institution, the orchestras also involved a certain degree of hierarchy, compared to the self-reliant stage performers and entertainment entrepreneurs, who also appear to have been the most affluent category and the one in which women predominated. In comparison, the prostitutes acquired limited material assets and were in most cases under the rule of men; whereas the orchestras were invariably headed by men, and were the poorest category of European entertainers. While something of the material and organizational aspects of the three different milieus has come to light, the subjective aspects remain largely hidden, despite the fairly high quality of the documentation available. Least of all is known about the Bohemian musicians, who failed to leave any articulate voice among the consular files. The prostitutes, on the other hand, are reasonably well documented, but here the difficulty is how to combine the conflicting statements of consular officials, petitioners and foreign aid societies with those of the prostitutes emerging from the total institution of the brothel. For our own purposes, clearly the most free-minded views are those expressed by Amanda Lüttgens and her network of independent singers and stage performers. Unfortunately, though, they remain fairly isolated cases and cannot be connected with other individual records to establish a more substantial description. While for each category the respective professional milieu seems to have been the most important focus of social relations, in general all entertainers also interacted extensively with their customers. In particular, the pimps, bandmasters, bar owners and independent performers also had to navigate the organizational, bureaucratic and legal matters that their activities entailed.

The affiliation to their respective state of origin – and in some cases religion – seems more a matter of practicality than a matter of the heart. When Martha Fehnl found a husband of Ottoman citizenship, she did not bother to renew her passport; likewise, when the pimps or prostitutes wished to rid themselves of their consulate's pressure, they simply took on Ottoman nationality. Nor did the international stage performers care to forgo their particular world of trans-European and trans-Mediterranean relations for the sake of national loyalty. Forneris's memoirs are the only documents so far to betray any nostalgia for rural Austria, along with derogatory remarks on the Italians, Levantines, Turks, and so forth. The entertainers and sex workers kept a distance from their countries' communities and respective religious congregations residing in the Levantine port-cities. Indeed, in general the German and Austrian residents earnestly wished to safeguard the respectability of their local communities; thus the director of the German School in Salonica was censured merely for having been seen in a music hall in the company of a singer. Meanwhile, the German clergy preached against the immorality of the port-side cafés, and the Ashkenazi community of Galata condemned the Jewish sex-workers operating in the adjacent brothels as a stain on the community's reputation.<sup>47</sup>

It cannot be said that the consulates pursued a special policy for their subjects engaged in the entertainment sector. At times the official attitude tended towards defending their subjects' respectability against claims to the contrary, while at other times, the consulates showed disdain and disrespect for them – or resignation. It was not until the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, with the climate of anxiety that ensued, that the consulates began to intervene on a massive scale against the 'immoral lifestyles' of their national subjects.

All three milieus appear to have retained a liminal lifestyle, tied both to their place of origin and to the region they operated in. Their ties with home were usually restricted to a limited number of personal and professional contacts, while the prostitutes (but not the traffickers) tended to sever even these ties. Despite their constant interaction with customers or audiences, social integration into the local milieu was not the rule, but the

exception, as in the case of Martha Fehnl. The respective milieu of persons engaged in similar semi-itinerant entertainment work was the predominant group of social organization.

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### Notes

1. Barth, *Unter südlichem Himmel*, 5, 6, 76.
2. The literature on the period of the Europeanization of the Levant is voluminous. To name just a few relevant works: on urban planning, see Yerolympos, *Urban Transformations*; on the economy, see Keyder, Özveren and Quataert, 'Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean'; on society, see Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie*; for administration and intellectual thought, see Kürsat, *Der Verwestlichungsprozeß des Osmanischen Reichs*.
3. Sevinçli, *İzmir'de tiyatro*; Makal, 'İzmir Sinemaları', 90, 391.
4. This superficiality is criticized by Eldem, 'Ottoman Galata and Pera', 19–36.
5. Reinwald, *Space on the Move*, 14. In different terminology, such cultures have been labelled as 'hybrid' or 'cosmopolitan', but as both terms are linked to discussions of an overtly normative and contemporary nature, this article avoids them and adopts less loaded terms.
6. Donald Quataert on the other hand blames 'the tendency to uncritically use the major source of documentation available, the Prime Ministry Archives of the Ottoman State in Istanbul. While stupefyingly rich, they are the creation of bureaucratic and military officials who wrote about what concerned them and their state. ... Also, the sheer quantity of central Ottoman archive documents often entrapped scholars, causing them to ignore relevant evidence located elsewhere, for example, in provincial locations, Europe, and the United States' (Quataert, 'Labor History and the Ottoman Empire', 98).
7. For Egyptian history from below, see especially the works of Elsayed Mohammad Achmawi, Mohammad Sabri Al-Dali, and Nasra Abd Elmotagaly Ibrahim Aly. For a brief discussion of this field, see Lafi, 'New Trends in Egyptian Historiography'.
8. Stephanie Cronin dismisses all theoretical discussion, opting instead for a 'purist' orientation based on the founding fathers of non-elitist history, namely Edward P. Thompson and Ranajit Guha (Cronin, *Introduction to Subalterns and Social Protest*, 2); Milen V. Petrov claims as a new discovery phenomena that have been discussed at length by the adherents of *Alltagsgeschichte* (history of everyday life) (see Petrov 'Everyday Forms of Compliance', 730–59, in comparison with Lüdtkke, *Eigen-Sinn*). While containing several interesting contributions on social topics, the recently published *The State and the Subaltern* edited by Touraj Atabaki, seems a misnomer, only sporadically touching on subaltern matters.
9. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', 76–136, developed in more detail by Farge and Revel, *Logiques de la foule*.
10. Bohstedt, 'The Moral Economy and the Discipline of Historical Context'.
11. Sarkar, 'The Decline of the Subaltern', 300–23.
12. Lüdtkke, *Introduction to Herrschaft*, 9–63.
13. Studies focusing on marginalization in Egypt and the Middle East have shown that the instruments used by Muhammad Ali Pasha and his successors initially failed to produce the *gouvernementalité* and marginalizations they had hoped to create (Peters, 'Prisons and Marginalisation', 31–52; see also other essays in Rogan, *Outside In*). Foucauldian approaches to the (post-)Ottoman realm are of course not new. Already in 1988, Timothy Mitchell had delineated some of the new techniques of domination introduced under Muhammad Ali and the British occupation to Egypt (Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*; see also Mitchell, *The Rule of Experts*). But, as is common for pioneering work, its limitations become visible once the field it urges should be explored has been more thoroughly charted – in Mitchell's case, criticism aimed at the eclectic construction of the essence of pre-modern Egyptian society, as well as the silence of the addressees of novel power techniques (Conrad and Randeria, 'Einleitung').
14. Samuel Cohen, quoted in Bali, *Devlet*'in Yahudileri, 336–7.

15. This usage of 'liminality' derives loosely from the definition by Turner in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 231.
16. Schmitt, *Levantiner*, especially 340–400; Smyrnelis, *Une société hors de soi*; Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient*, 270–80.
17. Anastassiadiou, *Salonique*, 190; Barth, *Unter südlichem Himmel*, 76; Fröbel, *Ein Lebenslauf*, 2: 617, 618.
18. Müns, 'Migrationsstrategien der böhmischen Musikanten', 63–80.
19. Archives of the House, Court and State, Vienna (HHStA) Administrative Registratur (Adm. Reg.) F 52–46 (Prostitution Türkei): 'Menschenfreund' to Foreign Ministry, 20 May 1896.
20. HHStA Consulate General Salonica (GK Sal) 108, 117: Paßprotokoll 1863, 1872, 1906; Political Archives of the Foreign Office, Berlin (PA-AA) GK Sal 22, Auskunftsgesuche, 253: Paula Stark to Consulate Salonica, 16 April 1904.
21. HHStA GK Sal 433: Strafsache Rudolf Marecek.
22. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46 (Prostitution Türkei): 'Menschenfreund' to Foreign Ministry, 20 May 1896; Consulate General to Foreign Ministry, 17 June 1896.
23. HHStA Embassy Consulate, Constantinople (BK Kpl) 107: Müller (Foreign Ministry, MdA) to Calice, 19 July 1906; F 52–46 (Prostitution): Ministry of Interior to Foreign Ministry, Vienna 2 August 1886; Consul Galați to Foreign Ministry, Galați, 13 August 1886.
24. HHStA GK Sal 420: Strafprozeß Josef Bach vs. Josef Tauber.
25. HHStA BK Kpl 115: Martha Fehnl, Heirath mit einem Mohamedaner. 'Marrying a Muslim' is the heading of the file, which should ordinarily indicate whether it refers to a criminal offense, a law suit, or a bureaucratic act. For the German discourse, see Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient*, 363, 364.
26. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Sicherheit/Prostitution, 1) Maria Reichmann, Consulate General to Foreign Ministry, Bucharest, 13 June 1885. As Reichmann had not broken the law, the Romanian authorities refused to extradite her.
27. Quoted from Anastassiadiou, *Salonique*, 190.
28. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 46.
29. Forneris, *Schicksale und Erlebnisse*.
30. The applicability of this approach is limited, however, if one tries to apply it to Ottoman courts. Petrov points out that, due to their different procedural objectives, the Sharia courts do not pursue testimony of this type. The Nizami courts newly established in Tanzimat, however, did (Petrov, 'Everyday Forms of Compliance', 733–40).
31. HHStA GK Sal 433: Zafiriou Marcandonaki /Adele Feuer. The contract was however ended.
32. PA-AA GK Sal 32: Nachlaß Lüttgens.
33. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Sicherheit/Prostitution, 4) Türkei: 'Menschenfreund', Constantinople, 19 December 1896. Constantinople was however exceptional, as sources relating to the city far outweigh all other recorded sites of Habsburg subjects practising prostitution in the Ottoman Empire or vicinity.
34. See for example the list of deported prostitutes in HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Sicherheit/Prostitution, 2) 15/23 December 1913.
35. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Sicherheit/Prostitution, div.
36. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Sicherheit/Prostitution, 4) Osmanische Post, n.d. (before December 28, 1896.)
37. HHStA BK Kpl 107: Guido Panfili (Consul) to Embassy, Constantinople, 2 February 1911.
38. Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 39–67.
39. HHStA BK Kpl 107: Guido Panfili (Consul) to Embassy, Constantinople, 2 February 1911. The Habsburg consulate had actually never been so determined and unyielding in their fight against prostitution, and had often spent long periods ignoring or downplaying the problem, and the Ottoman authorities had not been nearly as obliging as the memorandum, written in a mode of nostalgia for Hamidian rule, portrayed them. In retrospect, though, the common combat against vice seemed harmonious, compared with what followed after 1908 (see Fuhrmann, 'Vagrants, Prostitutes, and Bosnians').
40. HHStA BK Kpl 107: Consul to Embassy, Constantinople, 13 December 1913.
41. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Sicherheit/Prostitution, div.
42. Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, 173–5; Chandavakar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, 195, 196.
43. Jušek, *Auf der Suche nach der Verlorenen*, 17.

44. HHStA Adm. Reg. F 52–46: Min. of Interior to Min. of the House, Vienna, 29 March 1896, and Transcript, 18 February 1895 (German translation).
45. HHStA Adm. Reg. F52–46: Maryáuki to Embassy, Constantinople, 23 December 1895.
46. Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, 189; bhadrakol ¼ Indian compradore bourgeoisie.
47. Evangelical Central Archives, Berlin (ezab) 5/1960, Götz, *Annual Report 1888(/89)*, Smyrna, 31 October 1889, Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient*, 366; Aron Halevi, 3 January 1890, quoted in Bali, *Devlet'in Yahudileri*, 341–2.

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# The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoglu (1875–1915)

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This study examines the development and nature of the regulation of prostitution in Beyoglu during the late Ottoman Empire with special emphasis on the way the regulationist regime reinforced existing patterns of class and gender domination. The regulation of prostitution became a matter of urgency in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Istanbul, particularly in Beyoglu, the cosmopolitan centre of the city.<sup>1</sup> The first attempt began with the introduction of the Venereal Disease Ordinance in 1884 and continued with efforts for a more effective control of prostitution by administrative and spatial supervision.<sup>2</sup> Through this process, the protests of the local residents of the area regarding the proliferation of prostitution in their neighbourhoods played a crucial role in prompting the governmental authorities to increase regulation.

The Ottoman Empire was not the only country that showed a governmental concern in the regulation of prostitution in that period. Throughout the nineteenth century, ‘regulationism’ – the policy by which the prostitutes were registered and compelled to undergo medical and administrative surveillance and spatial control – was a common characteristic of many cities and regions throughout the world. In various settings from industrialized European metropolises to colonial cities, governments gave up the policy of toleration and legalized prostitution by allowing brothels legal or quasi-legal status and prostitutes special licences. These policies of legalization were justified as pragmatic responses to the threat of venereal diseases and the problems of security and social order.

The regulationist regimes targeted prostitutes, not their clients, as the primary conduits of venereal disease within a gender-biased discourse of social hygiene. The existence of prostitution was accepted as a ‘necessary evil’ that should be tolerated as toleration allowed the state stricter control of prostitutes in order to protect public health and social order.<sup>3</sup> Many feminist researchers, working within different historical contexts, have revealed that both the making of laws concerning the regulation of prostitution and the interpretation and application of these laws have been class, gender, and racially biased.<sup>4</sup> For industrialized European countries, the typical argument is that the regulation of prostitution was part of the bourgeois response that attempted to oversee and control the working classes and the so-called ‘dangerous classes’ in growing urban centres.<sup>5</sup>

Although there was no significant industrialization in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire, the commercialization of the economy under the effect of world

capitalist development and the population movements towards Istanbul brought about significant demographic, social and economic transformations in the Ottoman capital. The population of the city increased from 359,000 in 1829 to 895,000 in 1884 and to 1,116,000 in 1914.<sup>6</sup> This dramatic increase was due primarily to two reasons: the refugee floods from the Balkans and the Caucasus and immigration from the interior to the urban centres.<sup>7</sup>

Particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, the increased trade and expanded economic opportunities that followed the Crimean War of 1853–56 and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 transformed the city into an entrepreneurial centre for both Ottomans and Europeans. Within this process, the poor and peasants from the interior and rural areas of the Empire were lured to Istanbul by the new job opportunities offered in the capital.<sup>8</sup> This mass of immigrants from rural areas mixed with refugees who had been dispossessed by the conflicts and wars in the Balkans and the Caucasus and they were transformed into the urban poor, threatening enough to create fears and anxieties among the middle and upper class residents and the ruling elites.<sup>9</sup>

As one might expect, a portion of the urban poor was composed of women.<sup>10</sup> In the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, lower class women on their own, such as female refugees unattended by male relatives, female domestic servants who were usually brought to Istanbul from the rural areas of the empire at a very young age, and foreign women seeking jobs in the Ottoman capital became more visible. Their 'unattended' existence in public spaces and uncontrolled sexual and other kind of relations with men made them targets of anxiety and concern.<sup>11</sup>

An article in *Sabah* on the issue of the treatment of female domestic servants sheds some light on the anxieties caused by the 'unguarded' existence of runaway female servants in the city. The author of the article advocated the fair treatment of female domestic servants and claimed that the girls who were treated badly in the houses where they worked ran away at some point and led a corrupt life on the streets of the city. He claimed this situation to be a moral and social threat to every resident.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, one can find examples which neatly demonstrate the relation of regulating prostitution to the control of lower class urban women within the elite perception.<sup>13</sup> In an article published in *Sabah*, the author divided beggars into four subcategories, one of which was 'the children, young girls and unattended women'. He claimed that as young beggar girls frequently concealed their illicit activities behind begging, they should be treated as prostitutes and be subject to the laws on prostitution. According to the author, these beggar girls were extremely harmful to the morality of society as well as public health.<sup>14</sup> This example indicates how the regulation of prostitution could be employed for the control of lower class women, particularly those visible in public spaces.<sup>15</sup>

As the ever-growing cosmopolitan part of the Ottoman capital, Beyoglu was the centre of the socio-economic transformations that Istanbul underwent, the epitome of the modernization of the city and the hub of the above-mentioned elite anxieties that constantly increased with the ongoing transformations. The headquarters of trade houses and banks, foreign embassies, diplomatic missions, shops, modern schools and some military installations all assembled in Beyoglu and its vicinity. It was also a residential area which in the second half of the century consisted mostly of non-Muslim Ottomans and foreigners.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as a precursor to the modern

urban life emerging in the area, a leisure economy was anchored in the taverns, music halls, theatres, hotels, and streets of Beyoglu.<sup>17</sup>

The sex industry had long existed alongside the leisure economy in the area. A document dating back to 1878 reflects the governmental authorities' concerns regarding the order and security of the area and especially prostitution as one of the targets of anxiety, concern and surveillance: 'Since many foreigners and various kinds of men are residing in the quarter and also the people in pursuit of all kinds of extremes live there', it was suggested that the order and security of Beyoglu required special attention. Particularly places like brothels, drinking houses, gambling houses and the people working in these places should be subject to strict supervision to limit the harm they caused.<sup>18</sup>

With these characteristics, the area had always foiled special concern and legislation. For example, the first modern municipal organization in Istanbul, the Municipality of the Sixth District, was in Beyoglu. The name, Sixth District, referred to the Sixième Arrondissement of Paris, an ideal of urban wealth and modern order.<sup>19</sup> The initiator and first authority of the regulationist regime in Istanbul was the Municipality of the Sixth District.<sup>20</sup>

The first efforts for the compulsory medical examination of prostitutes in Istanbul started within the borders of the Sixth District Municipality of Pera and Galata (Beyoglu) in the late 1870s. In 1878, work began for the employment of a medical commission to be responsible for sanitary control of the brothels and the establishment of a hospital for the treatment of prostitutes infected with venereal disease under the authority of the Municipality of the Sixth District. After several years, in 1884, the Council of State issued the Ordinance for the Sanitary Inspection of the Brothels within the Borders of the Municipality of the Sixth District.<sup>21</sup>

According to the ordinance, a specific commission in charge of supervising the brothels in order to prevent the spread of venereal disease was to be established under the authority of the Municipality of the Sixth District. The primary task of the commission would be to license the brothels and register the prostitutes working in them. The registration list would include the prostitute's name, pseudonym, age, nationality and address. Each prostitute would be provided a licence with a photograph, on which the dates and results of the medical examinations she underwent should appear. The prostitutes would be obliged to undergo weekly medical examinations in clinics that would be established by the commission. After the examination, the doctor in charge would record the date of the examination and the state of health of the prostitute on the prostitute's licence card and report it to the commission. Were a prostitute found to be infected, she would be incarcerated in the venereal disease hospital. To start with, the municipality would establish two special clinics for medical examination of the prostitutes and a hospital for the treatment of the infected ones.

To supervise the process, the commission would employ medical inspectors to scrutinize the medical reports submitted by the doctors and check the licences of the prostitutes in order to ensure the proper functioning of the medical examinations. The inspectors would also be responsible for inspecting the clinics and the hospital. In addition, the municipal guards, who would be answerable to the medical

commission, were to conduct raids on the brothels to check if every woman working in the establishments was registered and her medical examinations had been conducted in timely fashion. Both the inspectors and the guards would be in charge of reporting any problems that they observed on the part of the brothel keepers, prostitutes or doctors. All the expenses and payments of the health regulation practice would be taken from the revenues provided by the examinations.<sup>22</sup>

However, as many worldwide case studies have demonstrated, the regulationist ideal of absolute control over a clearly delineated group of prostitutes was unattainable.<sup>23</sup> These historical studies illustrate that the lives of individual prostitutes in general were more varied and the prostitution network was more complex than the legislation anticipated. As regards the health regulation and the control of prostitutes, Beyoglu was no exception. As in many other cases, locating all the prostitutes in Beyoglu for registration and controlling all the places where prostitution was practised proved beyond the reach of the authorities. Although no statistical data are available about the limits and extent of legal and illegal prostitution in Beyoglu, below is a case about the threat of unlicensed brothels and clandestine prostitutes in the Beyoglu area nearly ten years after the proclamation of the ordinance.

In 1895, a syphilis epidemic broke out among the crew of a Russian embassy ferry anchored in the port of Fındıklı, threatening the crews of other embassy ferries. The prostitutes working in the Galata quarter were suspected of having transmitted the disease to the sailors. Doctor Karakoniski, the representative of the Russian Embassy on the Council of Health, requested that the Ministry of Health establish a special commission to investigate the sanitary conditions in the Galata brothels and take any necessary measures concerning the prostitutes. The establishment of the commission on the request of Doctor Karakoniski was followed by official correspondence between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior and the Istanbul municipality. Finally, the Ministry of the Interior issued an order to the municipality. The order stated that as it was claimed that the prostitutes working in the Galata brothels had already been targeted for periodical medical examinations the more likely source of the epidemic were the unregistered brothels and clandestine prostitutes working in the area. Under these circumstances, the municipality was ordered to investigate the infected sailors and find the women who were the source of the disease and to do what was necessary to prevent them spreading it.<sup>24</sup> The gender bias inherent in the regulationist policy is clearly observed through this set of documents as the prostitutes and not the sailors were considered to be the conduits of the disease. Accordingly, plans were made to incarcerate the diseased prostitutes, while the diseased soldiers would only be investigated in 'an appropriate manner'.

On the other hand, the official claim conveyed in the abovementioned document that the medical examinations in the licensed brothels of the area were properly conducted is highly questionable. The application of the health measures proposed in the ordinance brought some apparently deserved criticism of disorder and corruption. In 1902, Doctor Celal Muhtar Bey, who was then working for the Municipality of the Sixth District, submitted a complaint in which he claimed the venereal disease ordinance had not been properly applied. Afterwards, he was ordered to report the problems he observed in detail.<sup>25</sup> Doctor Celal Muhtar's warning has special significance, because he was one of two military doctors who had

been sent to Paris by the government in 1889 in order to receive a scientific education on dermatology and syphilis.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, Celal Muhtar's report is inaccessible. However, another report on the issue sheds some light on the state of the health measures taken by the municipality. The hospital for the treatment of the infected prostitutes that was proposed in the ordinance had been established in the late 1880s.<sup>27</sup> However, more than ten years later it still resembled a disorderly profit-making organization rather than a municipal institution aimed at the protection of public health. In 1902, a commission was launched to investigate the charges of failure in the management of affairs and the deplorable conditions in the hospital. After an investigation of the documents and conditions in the hospital was complete, the commission reported that the hospital had been established and was operated in a disorderly manner by Doctor Morinio. Although the place was misleadingly named the Syphilis Hospital, conditions were so deplorable that it was impossible to describe it as a sanitary institution. Finally, the hospital was declared harmful to public health, as it was claimed to facilitate the spread of venereal diseases rather than inhibiting them. After the report was issued, the Ministry of Health decided to close the place and ordered the Municipality of the Sixth District to establish a new hospital under its own authority.<sup>28</sup> Despite some efforts, conditions in the venereal disease hospital remained miserable for many years. There is no evidence that the proposed clinics for the periodic examination of prostitutes were ever established.<sup>29</sup>

One may suggest that the first experiments with medical examinations failed in their mission to control the prostitutes. Nevertheless, sanitary control remained one of the main purposes of the regulations. There was always concern to reform the system of medical examinations and extend them beyond the borders of Beyoglu.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, whether the health regulations were effectively enforced or not, they were far from being a satisfactory solution to the problem of controlling prostitution. In various historical settings, administrative and spatial regulations accompanied or followed health regulations. The general scheme of the regulations required registered prostitutes to ply their trade in the brothels, preferably within certain parts of the cities. The main goal was to circumscribe a female population perceived as potentially dangerous and contaminating in clearly limited spaces under the constant surveillance of the police.<sup>31</sup>

Although the main authority for the regulation of prostitution was the municipality, a series of police documents from the early years of the twentieth century, summarized below, show a growing desire on the part of the police to intervene in the regulation of prostitution in Beyoglu for better control of prostitution in the area.

On 14 May 1906, the Ministry of Police sent an order to the Beyoglu police to prepare a complete list of the brothels and other places related to prostitution in and around the Galata district. It was noted that there had been several reports concerning the coercion of Muslim children as young as 13 and 14 years into prostitution in some of the hotels in the Galata Quarter. Moreover, it was declared that the abundance of complaints concerning prostitution in the area, and the increase in the number of the petty criminal and criminal incidents encountered by the police, indicated an unacceptable explosion of prostitution in the area. The list

was expected to be of use in setting up the necessary actions for the wellbeing of the area and preventing the spread of venereal diseases. Through the preparation of the list, it was recommended that the Beyoglu police conduct their own investigations and demand information from the Istanbul municipality as it was in charge of registering the brothels in Beyoglu district.<sup>32</sup>

Just five days later, on 19 May 1906, the Ministry of Police issued a subsequent order to the Beyoglu police that started with a description of the state of prostitution in Galata. The descriptions in the second order differed slightly from those in the first order: The employment of orphaned children, both Muslim and Christian, in prostitution in the brothels that operated under the guise of hotels and the molestation of the passers-by were noted as major problems caused by the proliferation of prostitution in the area. This time, the Beyoglu police were ordered to investigate and take action.<sup>33</sup>

On 20 June, the Ministry of Police sent a warning to the municipality. In the order, the brothels in Galata were noted as the main source of trouble in the area. It was added that as there were around 100 brothels in the area and this threatened the security and order of the area as well as public health, the municipality was asked to take the necessary actions to restrict the number of brothels in the area.<sup>34</sup> The implied criticism in this warning that the measures already taken by the municipality on the issue were not sufficient was repeated in a subsequent document.

On 30 June, the warning that there were around 100 brothels in the area, and that this threatened public health, was repeated, and the municipality was criticized for not taking the necessary measures. An example of the incidents that created alarm among the police was conveyed. In June 1906, Joseph Mariyani, a soldier on the French embassy ferry, fired his gun and wounded an Austrian prostitute and a Russian man in a brothel operated by Madam Augustine, a Romanian woman. Subsequently, the soldier was arrested by the Beyoglu police and submitted to the French embassy.<sup>35</sup>

In another document, the Ministry of Police requested that the Istanbul municipality make a count of the brothels in the area, determine how many of them were already licensed and conduct the necessary operations in order to register the ones that were not already licensed.<sup>36</sup>

A paper forwarded from the Ministry of Police to the Beyoglu police linked the troubles and annoyance caused by foreign soldiers around the Galata district to the excessive and ever-increasing number of brothels and places of entertainment in the area. The ministry asked the Beyoglu police if it was possible to close some of these and limit their numbers.<sup>37</sup> In some cases, the ministry was more determined to close down a brothel and gave the order directly. For example, on 23 February 1907 the ministry sent an order to the Beyoglu police to immediately close the brothel at number three Ak Street that was licensed to Despina, but operated by Mico. The reason why the ministry gave this order was not explained.<sup>38</sup>

The police regulation of prostitution was already on the agenda of state officials as early as 1906 in response to the increasing urban disorder that was considered to be a consequence of the proliferating prostitution in the area. However, the police had neither the legal authority nor the practical power to supervise and regulate prostitution. Consequently, police intervention was often irregular and patchy and, as a result, tended to be inadequate.

Neither the sporadic medical examinations conducted under the authority of the municipality nor the patchy intervention of the police was sufficient for a precise control of prostitution. Prostitution flourished outside the official world of regulation, spreading through all the neighbourhoods of Beyoglu in an uncontrolled manner. The proliferation of prostitution within the complex social geography and narrow and congested physical geography of the area prompted conflicts over space.

Through numerous petitions submitted to the police, the residents of Beyoglu complained about noise, nuisance and harassment, as well as the influx of strangers into the area, which they claimed was a result of the brothels. While articulating their complaints, the petitioners employed social and moral discourses to enforce their claims on space. They imposed particular notions of gender and sexual normality and tried to inscribe these notions on the geography of the area in order to shape the space for their own ends.

On 27 September 1906, the Ministry of Police sent an order to the Beyoglu police concerning a petition submitted by some of the residents of Gylavanni Street in Tepebası. The petitioners complained that the tenants of numbers seven, eight, nine, ten and twelve on their street were operating brothels illegally and requested their closure. The ministry ordered the Beyoglu police to take the necessary measures.<sup>39</sup>

In a similar example, six residents from two streets, Pasabakkal and Koprubası, in Tarlabası district submitted a petition to the Ministry of Police concerning the brothels established on their streets in August 1907. The petitioners complained about the men hanging around their neighbourhood all day and night, and claimed that these people were involved in many outrageous and disgraceful incidents and fired guns in the vicinity of their houses. Because of this, they were unable to leave their houses. They requested the closure of these places.<sup>40</sup> The Ministry of Police forwarded the petition to the Beyoglu police and ordered them to solve the problem. In response, the Council of Police in Beyoglu declared that these brothels had been operating in the named streets for a period of nearly ten years and they were licensed by the municipality. The police council suggested the best solution to the problem would be to move these brothels to a particular district that would be arranged by the municipality. They claimed that if these places were closed down without providing an alternative place they would spread to other streets inhabited by decent people and this would only lead to an increase in the number of complaints.<sup>41</sup>

Following the proclamation of the Second Constitution in July 1908, the Ministry of Police was abolished and replaced by the Department of Public Security under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior in 1909.<sup>42</sup> Hence, new petitions, some of which were marked by references to the rights of citizenship and expectations from the new government, were sent to this new police department.

On 17 August 1910, 32 local residents of Gylavanni Street again submitted a petition to the Department of Public Security regarding the brothels on their street. Among the petitioning residents of Gylavanni were six tailors, a shoemaker, three barbers, two coffeehouse keepers, three cooks, two restaurant holders, a baker, a tobacco seller, two doctors, a dentist and a merchant. The petition began as follows: 'In the blessed period of the Constitution, the efforts for ensuring the comfort and improving the morals of the people are well-known and appreciated by all. Hence, we dare to articulate a repulsive situation that is opposed to the measures taken by the government in this respect.' According to the petition, three adjacent properties

on the street had been rented by three women, an Armenian and two Romanians, and turned into brothels, although the women themselves claimed that they were hotels. A number of complaints were stated: the prostitutes working in the identified houses solicited men in the street, swore, threw soiled items out of the windows, took in and let out their clients carelessly, openly indulged in all kinds of vice and insulted their neighbours. The petitioners requested that the brothels in Gylavanni be closed down and the establishment of any new brothels on the street be banned.<sup>43</sup>

In a similar case, nine residents of Serkiz Street in Kalyoncu Kollugu submitted a petition to the Beyoglu police asking for the expulsion of Irmiya, the female tenant of house number two. The petitioners claimed that the Ottoman citizen Irmiya, or Eleni as she was also known, was operating a brothel in the house to the annoyance of the neighbours. They complained about naked women sitting at the door and windows of Eleni's house, the daily and nightly parade of Laz, Greeks, Kurds and suspicious men on their street, and the non-stop, loud music and noise coming from the house. It was stated that this situation was inconvenient for children, the sick and the aged and families in general. Moreover, it deprived the residents of peace and sleep. They underlined that all these disgraceful events occurred in front of their daughters and wives. The existence of this place in a neighbourhood populated by respectable people was intolerable.<sup>44</sup>

The petition of the residents of Serkiz Street was transmitted to the Kalyoncu police station from the Beyoglu police with a brief order to investigate the claims made in the petition. The investigative report prepared on this order verified the petitioners' claims: although the music and scandalous behaviour in Eleni's house had previously been banned, it was found that the troubles continued. Eleni, the other women in the house and their clients behaved disgracefully while keeping the windows and curtains open. Eleni's brothel faced the houses of respectable families. The situation was insulting to men of honour and it was particularly improper for such activities to occur in front of young women and girls. It was also noted that although there were no other brothels on Serkiz Street, there were four brothels on the neighbouring Daracık Street that also faced the houses in Serkiz Street.<sup>45</sup>

On another occasion, seven residents of Fırın Street in Feridiye district made a submission to the Beyoglu police asking for the brothel on their street to be closed down. The petitioners complained that the female tenant of number thirteen used her house as a brothel. The woman's presence among the respectable families in the street was claimed to be intolerable. It was stressed that the situation was particularly harmful to the children and young people. The petitioners also complained about the noise coming from the house.<sup>46</sup>

Another order of investigation forwarded to the Kalyoncu police station from the Beyoglu police involved the complaints of some of the residents of Tiris Street concerning the brothel of Evrenya and Eliza. The petitioners complained about the music and noise coming from the house and that all of the disgraceful behaviour in the house could be seen from the street through the net curtains. During the investigation it was discovered that Evrenya had moved her brothel to another street; therefore, the brothel under question was not hers, but that of another brothel keeper who had moved to number nine Cukur Street. This annoyed the residents of Tiris Street, because the back windows of the house faced, and were very close to, the

windows of some houses in Tiris Street and there were no curtains on the windows. Under these circumstances all the activities of the people in the brothel were visible from the neighbouring windows.<sup>47</sup>

In all the petitions summarized above, the main references of the petitioners, while articulating their complaints, are to sets of polarizations such as normal and deviant, moral and immoral, respectful and disrespectful, honourable and dishonourable that led to the social, moral and spatial stigmatization of prostitutes.<sup>48</sup> The petitioners mainly enforced their claims of possession of the street by inscribing these differences in space. They demanded that the 'deviant and immoral' existence and activities of the prostitutes be kept away from 'their streets' and closeted away from their respectable gaze, particularly that of their wives and daughters.<sup>49</sup>

The moral discourse effectively implemented by the Beyoglu residents to enforce their claims over space was marked by a definite double standard: What was found unacceptable was not the existence of prostitution, but its social visibility to respectable people, particularly wives and daughters. However, these community protests were effective in prompting governmental efforts at the spatial regulation of prostitution. In parallel to the discourse and expectation of the community protesters, the governmental authorities never intended to completely ban prostitution. Rather, they aimed to introduce regulations that would serve to spatially circumscribe prostitution and render it invisible to and separate it from decent society.<sup>50</sup>

As observed in the response of the police to the petition by the residents of Pasabakkal and Koprubasi, the mobilization of a spatial regulation was on the agenda of governmental officials as early as 1907. The documents examined below indicate that the issue continued to be debated among different governmental offices.

A paper from the Department of Public Security to the municipality in December 1909 referred to a proposal presented by a member of the General City Assembly. The reporter pointed to the necessity of establishing a zoned area for the brothels scattered around the neighbourhoods of Beyoglu, emphasizing the inconvenience and harm caused by brothels in residential areas to public health and morals. He appreciated the attention paid to the problem by the police; nevertheless he claimed that police actions could never be sufficient unless the municipality appropriated a zoned area for the brothels.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, inspectors of the Ministry of the Interior prepared another report in which they criticized the Beyoglu police for not taking the necessary measures that they had formerly been ordered to take. After highlighting the nuisance and complaints provoked by the brothels scattered throughout Beyoglu, the inspectors stated that to prevent these problems, the City Council had formerly ordered the Beyoglu police to close down the brothels in the residential areas and move them to a designated area. However, the report stated, nothing had been done in this respect. Under these circumstances, the inspectors suggested the government take a new and pressing decision on the issue. This critical report was forwarded to the Istanbul Police Department from the Ministry of the Interior for the attention of the Beyoglu police chief. The police chief pointed out the existence of numerous brothels scattered around the various neighbourhoods not only in Beyoglu, but also in Uskudar and Surici, signified the sheer size of the problem and the difficulty of its

solution. He stated that he had already sent three papers to the governor requesting a plan for the accomplishment of the task, but had not received an answer. He added that the completion of the task demanded of them was impossible unless the government scheduled a long-term plan. He suggested that various measures be taken immediately, such as finding a suitable area to move the brothels to and the opening of vocational schools for poor girls.<sup>52</sup>

The police were unable to enforce the proposed measures effectively. Particular cases also illustrate this fact. In the case of Gylavanni Street, the petition initially submitted to the Department of Public Security was later forwarded to the Istanbul Police Department for the necessary inquiries and action. In response, the Director of the Istanbul Police Department submitted a short report that highlighted some of the difficulties of the problem and the inability of the police to solve it alone. He declared that the police were well aware of the existence of many brothels scattered around the neighbourhoods of Beyoglu as they received numerous complaints on the issue. However, he added, although they did their best to minimize the nuisance caused by the brothels, their actions could not achieve lasting solutions under the current legislation. He stated that the police could neither enter the brothels nor close any of them down, and this situation constrained their ability to intervene. The constant warnings by the police to those creating the disturbances almost never worked as these warnings carried no sanctions. According to the police, a lasting solution could be achieved only if the municipality arranged a zoned area into which to move the brothels scattered throughout Beyoglu.<sup>53</sup>

This summarized report of the Director of Istanbul Police Department was based on information gathered from the Beyoglu police station. The Beyoglu police reported that the issue of the brothels in the area was a real headache for them as the residents and merchants in Beyoglu constantly complained about it to the Beyoglu police. However, the report continued, the police were not authorized to take any effective action under the current legislation. The report also included a confession that is worthy of note: there were even brothels near the barracks where the employees of the Galatasaray police station slept and this led to the corruption of the police. The police emphasized that for an effective solution, all the brothels in Beyoglu needed to be grouped in a zoned area. However, it was noted, the municipality had taken no measures, although the issue had previously been debated in several meetings.<sup>54</sup> In this short report, the police chief admitted the inability of the police to find a long-term solution to the problem under the current legislation and pointed to the necessity of a new spatial regulation that would be handled by the municipality.

As indicated above, according to the police, who were often criticized for being inefficient in solving the problem, the key was spatial regulation. They also complained that their lack of authority was a major obstacle to an effective solution. Accordingly, the police requested that legal authority for the control of prostitution be handed over to them.

At one point, the Beyoglu police applied to the Beyoglu public prosecutor to authorize the police to intervene in the operation of the brothels in the area. Two petitions expressing the nuisance caused by the brothels were attached to the request.

In the request, the police stated that, as shown by the attached petitions, the prostitutes in brothels operating in the area annoyed the Beyoglu residents with their wanton and corrupt behaviour. Although the police did not hesitate to warn the prosecutors of such behaviour, the warnings often did not lead to effective solutions. Unfortunately the police were not authorized to take further action. The police based their legal authority on the issue of establishing the peace and security of the Beyoglu residents and requested the necessary permission from the public prosecutor.<sup>55</sup>

On various occasions, this issue continued to be debated among different governmental departments. In 1911, the Director of Police prepared a draft for an additional penal code article about the punishments that would be imposed on individuals who prevented or resisted the police who were trying to protect residents from the harmful effects of the brothels. The draft proposed that

those who prevent the police while taking the necessary measures to protect the morality of the people, guarantee the security and order of the neighbourhoods and avoid the dissemination of venereal diseases and those who do not heed the warnings of the police in this respect are to be imprisoned from twenty-four hours to ten days and will pay a specified amount of cash.<sup>56</sup>

However, this article that aimed to give authority to the police was never fully put into practice.

Finally, in 1913 it was on the agenda of the Council of State to transfer authority on the regulation of prostitution from the municipality to the police. In April 1913, the Ministry of the Interior delivered a note to the Istanbul municipality. The note stated that as the commands of the Venereal Disease Ordinance had not been properly observed by the municipality, the Council of State was currently debating whether to issue a new sanitary ordinance. The note also warned the municipality that while the medical examinations of the prostitutes and control of the brothels had been entrusted to the police, this new ordinance became effective on the suggestion of the Department of Public Health. This measure was found necessary in order to protect the health and security of the people in a way that was appropriate for a civilized country. The municipality was asked to adapt to this new situation.<sup>57</sup>

The draft for the new sanitary ordinance debated in the Council of State was prepared by the Department of Public Health, the director of which at the time was a well-known authority on public health, Besim Omer Pasha.<sup>58</sup> Besim Omer Pasha also prepared a report that criticized the municipality for not implementing the commands of the venereal disease ordinance. It was he who suggested in the same report the entrustment of the medical examination of prostitutes and the control of brothels to the police until the new ordinance became effective.<sup>59</sup>

Whatever the different government offices claimed, the early efforts at regulation of prostitution failed to control prostitutes as the policies were never effectively enforced. Despite the many attempts of the police to contain them, prostitutes remained ubiquitous. For example, in 1913 the Ministry of Education sent a note to the Ministry of the Interior complaining of naked prostitutes behaving disgracefully on the balconies of houses facing the classrooms of the Mekteb-i Sultani. The note declared this situation unacceptable as it corrupted the morals of the hundreds of

innocent students in those classrooms. It was also pointed out that although the closure of these houses was requested of the Beyoglu police, no measures had been taken and hence the Ministry of Education once again requested the Ministry of the Interior to order the Beyoglu police to take the necessary action.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, in October 1915 a new Venereal Disease Ordinance that would be valid throughout the Empire was issued.<sup>61</sup> This ordinance entrusted the regulation of prostitution to the Department of Public Security in Istanbul and to the local governors in the provinces. It was much more detailed than the first one that had been issued in 1884 and included issues such as age limitations for prostitutes, their attitudes during medical examinations, criminal reports and the duties of brothel keepers, the classification of brothels and places where a brothel could or could not be established along with rules about the medical examinations of prostitutes. In this respect, this new ordinance deserves careful analysis as a discursive text. On the other hand, the period in which this ordinance was in force was marked by important international and internal events such as the First World War, the post-war armistice, the 1917 Soviet Revolution and the later influx of immigrants to the Ottoman capital. All these events led to new social atmosphere and made the enforcement of the new ordinance highly problematic.<sup>62</sup> A social history of prostitution in this period is a promising subject waiting to be written in works to come.

## Notes

1. For the first studies on this subject, see Z. Toprak, 'İstanbul'da Fuhus ve Zuhrevi Hastalıklar, 1914–1933', *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol.7, No.39 (1987), pp.31–40; Z. Toprak, 'Fuhus-Osmanlı Donemi', in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1993–95), pp.342–5; Z. Toprak, 'Genelevler', in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1993–95), pp. 392–3. See also R.N. Bali (ed.), *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854–1922* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2008).
2. O.N. Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umur-ı Belediye*, 9 vols. (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995), Vol.6, pp.3296–314.
3. C. Quétel, *History of Syphilis* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1990); T.O. Ranger and P. Slack, *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); K. Oldenburg, "'All the Prostitutes may be Made Subject to Supervision and the Spread of Disease Infinitely Reduced': Implications of Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet and William Acton's Regulatory Proposals' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University (Canada), 2006).
4. For studies on regulation, see C. Henriot, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History 1849–1949*, trans. C. Henriot (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); L. Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters: Prostitutes and Their Regulation in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); M. Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy 1860–1915* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press 1999); P. Howell, 'Race, Space and the Regulation of Prostitution in Colonial Hong Kong', *Urban History*, Vol.31, No.2 (2004, pp.229–48). V.M. Johnson, 'Defining "Social Evil": Moral Citizenship and Governance in New York City, 1890–1920' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New School University, 2003); P. Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
5. For example, see Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Paris*.
6. K. Karpat, 'The Population and the Social and Economic Transformation of İstanbul: The Ottoman Microcosm', in *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p.104. See also Z. Toprak, 'Tarihsel Nufusbilim Açısından İstanbul'un Nufusu ve Toplumsal Topografyası', *Dünü ve Bugünüyle Toplum ve Ekonomi*, Vol.3 (1992), pp.109–20.

7. D. Quataert, 'The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914', in H. Inalcık and D. Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.759–943.
8. Karpas, 'The Population and the Social and Economic Transformation of İstanbul', p.86. For a discussion of the elite perception and governmental treatment of the urban.
9. For discussions of the elite perception and governmental treatment of the urban poor in the late Ottoman Empire, see M. Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and The Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); F. Ergut, 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.38, No.2 (2002), pp.149–64; N. Ozbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruyet (1876–1914)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002).
10. No statistical data is available on the population of single women in the late Ottoman Empire. For the estimates of the female population in İstanbul, see Karpas, 'The Population and the Social and Economic Transformation of İstanbul'.
11. For a similar discussion see J.M. Fregulia, 'Making Their Own Way: Women of Means in Late Renaissance Milan' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 2007).
12. 'Hizmetçi Kızlar', *Sabah*, No.4935, 3 July 1903.
13. This example from the daily newspaper *Sabah* is provided by Nadir Ozbek through his discussion of the control of the urban poor in Ozbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet*, pp.82–84.
14. *Ibid.*
15. For discussions on the control of lower classes and lower class women, see S. Schafer, *Children in Moral Danger and the Problem of Government in Third Republic France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); R.G. Fuchs, *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); R. Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris: Strategies for Survival in the Nineteenth Century* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
16. Karpas, 'The Population and the Social and Economic Transformation of İstanbul'.
17. N. Akın, *19. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Galata ve Pera* (İstanbul: Literatür Yayıncılık, 1998).
18. BOA, A.MKT.MHM, 482/24, 1294.Zilhicce.21 (2 Jan. 1878).
19. O.N. Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, 9 vols., vol. 3 (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995), 1307–43, Akın, *19. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Galata ve Pera*, pp.102–26.
20. Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, Vol.6, p.3296.
21. *Ibid.*, p.3301.
22. For the full text of the ordinance see 'Altıncı Daire-i Belediyye Dahilinde Bulunan Ba'zı Hususi Hanelerin Hıdmat-ı Sıhhiyesine Dair Ta'limatname', in *ibid.*, pp.3303–6.
23. See note 6.
24. BOA, DH.MKT, 350/71, 1312.06.N (3 March 1895).
25. BOA, DH.MKT, 577/16, 1320.08.Cemazeyilahir (12 Sept. 1902).
26. BOA, DH.MKT, 1637/32, 1306.15.Zilkadde (15 July 1889).
27. Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, Vol.6, p.3428.
28. BOA, DH.MKT, 577/16, 1320.08.Cemazeyilahir (12 Sept. 1902).
29. Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, Vol.6, p.3300.
30. H. Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta: Tarihi Gelişim ve Bugünkü Durum* (Ankara: İçişleri Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1947), pp.570–86.
31. See note 6.
32. BOA, ZB, 385/136, 1322.01.Mayıs (1 May 1906).
33. BOA, ZB, 385/146, 1322.06.Mayıs (19 May 1906).
34. BOA, ZB, 373/98, 1322.07.Haziran (20 June 1906).
35. BOA, ZB, 373/107, 1322.17.Haziran (30 June 1906).
36. BOA, ZB, 374/34, 1322.26.Temmuz (08 Nov. 1906).
37. BOA, ZB, 389/163, 1322.15.Subat (28 Feb. 1907).
38. BOA, ZB, 389/155, 1322.10.Subat (23 Feb. 1907).
39. BOA, ZB, 387/146, 1322.14.Eylül (27 Sept. 1906).
40. BOA, ZB, 390/36, 1323.18.Ağustos (31 Aug. 1907).
41. BOA, ZB, 73/55, 1323.11.Eylül (24 Sept. 1907).
42. Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta*, pp.488–9.
43. BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 46/25, 1328.15.Saban (22 Aug. 1910).

44. BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 47/36, 1328.21.Saban (28 Aug. 1910).
45. BOA, ibid.
46. BOA, ibid.
47. BOA, ibid.
48. For an elaboration of the stigmatization of the prostitutes see G. Pheterson, *Prostitution Prism* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996).
49. P. Hubbard and T. Sanders, 'Making Space for Sex Work: Female Street Prostitution and the Production of Urban Space', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol.27, No.1 (2003), pp.75–89.
50. For discussions on construction of zoning areas for prostitution see A. Hart, '(Re)Constructing a Spanish Red-Light District: Prostitution, Space and Power', in D. Bell and G. Valentine (eds.), *Mapping Desires* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.214–28, P. Hubbard, 'Sexuality, Immorality and the City : Red-light Districts and the Marginalisation of Female Street Prostitutes', *Gender, Place and Culture*, Vol.5, No.1 (1998), pp.55–72, P. Hubbard, 'Sex Zones: Intimacy, Citizenship and Public Space', *Sexualities*, Vol.4, No.1 (2001), pp.51–71.
51. BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 20/26, 1327.21.Zilkadde (4 Dec. 1909).
52. BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 33/41, 1328.07.Cemazeyilevvel (17 May 1910).
53. BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 46/25, 1328.15.Saban (22 Aug. 1910)
54. Ibid.
55. BOA, DH.EUM.THR, 47/36, 1328.21.Saban (28 Aug. 1910).
56. BOA, DH.EUM.KADL, 7/15, 1329.Safer.8 (8 Feb. 1911).
57. BOA, DH.ID, 46/82, 1331.16.Cemazeyilevvel (23 April 1913).
58. S. Unver, Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa'nın Hizmetleri, *Tıp Tarihimiz Yıllığı (İstanbul: İ.U. Tıp Fakültesi Tıp Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1966)*.
59. BOA, DH.ID, 46/82, 1331.16.Cemazeyilevvel (23 April 1913).
60. BOA, DH.ID, 65/42, 1331.Zilhicce.26 (26 Nov. 1913).
61. 'Zuhrevi Hastalıkların Sirayetinin Men'i Hakkında Nizamname', in Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta*, pp.570–86.
62. See Toprak, 'İstanbul'da Fuhus ve Zuhrevi Hastalıklar, 1914–1933'.