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Contending Sovereigns, Contentious Spaces: Illicit Migration and Urban Governance in the Late Ottoman Empire

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Ayşe Polat is a first year PhD student at the History Faculty at the University of Cambridge. She holds a BA in Political Science and Sociology (Double Major) from the University of Bogazici in Istanbul. Her dissertation inquires into the networks of illicit migration - i.e. 'people smuggling', 'white slave trade', 'human trafficking' - engendered by non-elite migration into and through Beirut and Alexandria in late 19th century. She intends to account for the transformation of labour regimes - in domestic, manual, and sex work - in fin de siècle Eastern Mediterranean, within which both the middlemen and the migrants were embedded.

The spatial turn in social sciences have aptly demonstrated that the economic globalisation of the 19th century and the global spread of modern statecraft had happened through, rather than to the people who had begun to move *en masse*. With an epochal rise in the circulation of people, objects and practices during the late 19th century, the imperial powers that inhabited the eastern Mediterranean would begin to deploy a variety of spatial techniques on vagabonds, prostitutes, and orphans at the face of their penetration into the city. The new underclass of *les Échelles du Levant* had transformed their adopted cities, for having provoked the imperial statesmen to adopt modern techniques of urban governance in regulating their circulation within and without the Ottoman Empire. In this research paper, I will present the Ottoman Empire's interventions into the global economy of sex work, of which *fin-de-siècle* Istanbul had become a nodal city. The administrative practices surrounding the - categorically migrant - body of the prostitute went into circulation after and owing to the way their trans-regional migration and trans-local connections transformed the urban landscape. I shall try to demonstrate how the imperial state tried to intervene and control their illicit circulation on two levels, within the spatial politics of urban governance (1) and through the imperial contestations in the field of international law (2). Corroborating the heterogeneity of the coloniser and the colonised, there is an evident affinity between the scope of such transnational historiography and the aspirations of postcolonial theory. I aim to situate my subject of research accordingly, to show how the colonial and imperial statesmen cohered together at the face of an increasingly mobile and heterogeneous world of women.

Introduction

An official decree in the year of 1789, proclaimed in the name of Abdulhamit I, had addressed the occasion in which a couple of marines¹, were caught in their

¹ Their position in the chain of command was of the lowest order similar to that of a Private (Pvt). They were called *Kalyoncu* - the main corps of Galleon ships that comprised the Ottoman fleet before the advent of the steam ship.

lodgings with prostitutes. They were inhabiting the ‘bachelor’s inns’ along the *Balaban* port of Constantinople, which was to act as a public provision for single men (predominantly migrants and singularly lower-class) who were carrying a travelling permit for *tezkiye*², but were not deemed trustworthy enough to inhabit the same spaces as those of respectable residents of *mahalles*.³ Such quarters were deemed to be disreputable spaces by the Sublime Porte⁴, as the breeding ground of “vices” and “delinquency” threatening the public order and the respectable and/or long-term residents of the capital.⁵ A dalliance with the prostitutes was then considered as an “act of indecency” meriting the Porte’s punishment - that of the immediate installation of the marines to their assigned barracks.⁶

The edict that ruled for the spatial re-arrangement of the marines reflected two concerns: about where does illicit sex take place, and with whom. The very location of the “indecent act”, the bachelors’ quarters, were by their nature the domain of the sovereign, as they did not have the same respectability and protection ascribed to that of the patriarchal space of *mahrem* (i.e. the familial, intimate space). What went on in their quarters was a matter of *public* indecency, and as such comprised an urban frontier where the police could regularly, and arbitrarily, evict and punish the residents.⁷ While the vagabonds and prostitutes of Constantinople were routinely subjected to exile during that pivotal year of 1789⁸, the *re*-location of the marines to their barracks reflected the difference of their relation to the seat of the sovereign. With the military reformation of the Ottoman Empire on the horizon, the sexual health and productivity of the ordinary soldier and sailor was becoming a central concern for all the governors and bureaucrats of the Empire.⁹

Throughout the following century, the Sublime Porte would continue to employ a variety of spatial practices in re-settling the vagabonds, prostitutes, and orphans as they “invaded” the Ottoman capital. With an exceptional rise in the circulation of people during the late 19th century, the Porte could no longer simply exile or deny entrance to migrants coming from the east or west of Constantinople. The new underclass of *les Échelles du Levant*¹⁰ were to transform their adopted cities,

² Internal passports.

³ Smallest administrative/residential unit in the imperial capital by the turn of 19th century; was organized on the basis of a network crosscutting sectarian and professional differences.

⁴ The seat of the Sovereign, and the center of Ottoman government – the usage is similar to that of *Westminster* to denote the British government.

⁵ Isil Cokugras, “Osmanlı İstanbul’unda Bekâr Odaları,” *Mimarist* 47 (2013), 29-35.

⁶ BOA, HAT, 19/911, 1203/Z/29.

⁷ Nicholas K Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁸ BOA, HAT, 11/431, 29/Z/1202; BOA, HAT, 189/9014, 29/Z/1203.

⁹ On the historical connections between the army and state-making in 19th century Ottoman Middle East, see Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 78-90.

¹⁰ The ports of call across the Ottoman Empire. Throughout the early Modern period, the Ottoman Empire had granted certain juridical and economic entitlements - capitulations – to first the French and then nearly all European subjects. For the transformation of Ottoman capitulatory privileges into tools of imperial expansion and financial gain, see Turan Kayaoğlu,

by provoking the Sublime Porte to adopt modern techniques of governance to regulate their circulation within and without the Empire.¹¹ The migration which could not be prevented was to be monopolized.

In the following paper, I will present the Porte's attempts at monopolizing the global economy of sex work with a specific focus on fin de siècle Istanbul. I will make my arguments based on the juxtaposition of two documents; an imperial decree of Abdulhamit II justifying his policing of (non-Muslim) women, to a petition sent to the Ministry of Police asking for the re-patriation of a Muslim prostitute. I will demonstrate how the imperial state tried to control and intervene into the illicit circulation of women, within the jurisdictional domain of urban governance vis-à-vis that of nascent domain of international law¹², as its territorial claims to national jurisdiction was challenged by the increasing number of migrant subjects.¹³ I will also attempt to explain how the recognition of Ottoman Sovereignty during the 19th century was affected and shaped by the cultural and legal confrontations that took place through its migrant subjects.

Historiography of Migration and the Empire

Within the legal framework of the *tanzimāt* reforms, the Ottoman Empire had to assert its rule over its trespassing subjects – in the making of a liberal-imperial

Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

¹¹ Regarding the structural changes to predominant social and political institutions, I use the concept of modernization in a Weberian sense, as denoting the twin processes of rationalization and differentiation in social organizations. Modernization of the Ottoman state as such entails the reformation of governmental structures, and the rationalization of legal and administrative institutions. Regarding the micro-practices adopted by the Empire, I ascribe the adjective “modern” to any administrative practices or policies that operate on the basis of what Foucault calls the principles of normalization; to individualize, categorize, and discipline the subject (Rabinow, 18-20). Both Weberian and Foucauldian analyses of modernity have in common a shared concern for the role of “modern rationality”, on the formation of *social organizations* and *subjectivity* (Rabinow, 27). As such, I consider Weber the authority on the analyses of the former, and Foucault of the latter, see: Paul Rabinow, “Introduction” in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1991)

¹² Taking after Benton (2002), I define the field of international law as operating on the basis of (1) mutual recognition among states of one other's sovereignty, through which (2) law and legality helped to “tie disparate parts of empires and to lay the basis for exchanges... between politically and culturally separate imperial and colonial powers”(2). I have to add that Benton's definition of what constitutes political recognition and cultural exchange is of much wider in scope. For the purposes of this research, I will focus on the recognition of “sovereign will” as the basis on which the tradition of “positivist jurisprudence...reconstructed international law” in the 19th century, see: Anton Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 33.

¹³ Nora Lafi, “Mediterranean Connections: The Circulation of Municipal Knowledge and Practices at the Time of the Ottoman Reforms, c. 1830-1910.” in *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Moment, 1850–2000*, ed. P. Saunier (Luxembourg: Springer, 2007).

state.¹⁴ I intend look at the adoption of legal-administrative techniques targeting the illicit migration of women into the imperial capital and within the imperial frontier.¹⁵ Through the exploration of the gendered practices shaping the history of modern human trafficking, I will demonstrate how the economic globalization of the 19th century and the universalization of international law¹⁶ occurred *through* -rather than *to*- the people who had begun to move *en masse* across the globe.¹⁷

I will be relying on Torpey's recent uptake on the definition of a modern state, as having a "monopoly over the legitimate means of movement".¹⁸ The processes of state making in the Ottoman Empire were contingent on the challenge posed by unprecedented levels of migration into the peripheries of the European capitalist system, which had vitalized the port cities of Levant and turned them into sites of encounters and contestations between a number of imperial contenders.¹⁹ Using the perspective of the "diasporic" experiences of 19th century globalization²⁰ offers much to understand the workings and emergence of both spatial and discursive governance on a global scale. It helps us to capture the travails and tactics²¹ of the migrants that began populating the Ottoman cities, and to see how the contentious politics of urban space could cause imperial contestations in the international arena.

¹⁴ Ruth Austin Miller, *Legislating Authority: Sin and Crime in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁵ I rely on Blomley's (2003) conception of the term 'frontier', who's figurative, temporal or spatial inscription is essential to the constitution of modern law. Frontier is to denote a space where "law's violence" is distinguished from the "violent world of non-law" (124), see: Nicholas Blomley, "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93 (1) (2003): 121–41.

¹⁶ Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and International Law*, 32.

¹⁷ Michael Samers, "The Socio-Territoriality of Cities: A Framework for Understanding the Incorporation of Migrants in Urban Labor Markets," in *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*, ed. Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Simsek-Caglar. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 7.

¹⁸ John Torpey, "Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate 'Means of Movement'," *Sociological Theory* 16 (3) (1998), doi:10.1111/0735-2751.00055, 239-40.

¹⁹ Melanie Fessel, "The Extraterritoriality Nexus: Manifestation of Extraterritoriality as Natural Phenomenon in Urban Context." *Consilience: The Journal of Sustainable Development* 9 (2012), 123–31; Malte Fuhrmann, "'I Would Rather Be in the Orient': European Lower Class Immigrants into the Ottoman Lands," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Malte Fuhrmann (London: Routledge, 2011), 228-241.

²⁰ Andrew Arsan et al. "Editorial Foreword: On Forgotten Shores: Migration in Middle Eastern Studies, and Middle East in Migration Studies", *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Migration Studies*, 1 (2013), 1-7, 5.

²¹ Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets," 328. Grallert relies on a distinction made by Lefebvre (1974), between the *strategies* of the ruling strata that produce urban space and that of the *tactics* of subaltern classes to reclaim their own place within the city. Grallert places contention and confrontation at the heart of the modern Ottoman city, and I aim to show both the global and local scope of these confrontations.

On the one hand, the rationale of urban governance oversaw the objectification of the *fāhişe*²² discursively (1) as belonging to a distinct profession, and spatially (2) by her social exclusion in the state controlled brothel, hospital and even within the factory.²³ A *fāhişe* was to be distinct from the domestic slave, the entertainer, or the chanteuse.²⁴ The discursive differentiation of sex work resulted in estrangement: segregation of the said women from the variety of urban spaces they had hitherto inhabited. The circulation of the Napoleonic registration system, the “normalization” of the brothel as the only site for sexual transactions and the state monopolization of sex workers had all shaped the spatial and gendered regulation of sex work in the global cities of 19th century.²⁵ However, the very heterogeneity of sex workers – in terms of their ethnic, religious or geographic belongings – politicized the criminalization of sex workers within the port cities of the Ottoman Empire. That was where a number of sovereign states could stake their claim on the said women, based on the extraterritorial privileges accorded to each imperial power. As subjects of international private law, they became a point of contention between contesting imperial sovereigns.

On the other hand, the imperial politics of state making oversaw the *subjectification* of women, whose moral standing and free will had become a cause for diplomatic controversy as well as a conduit for identity-making.²⁶ In what comprised the urban frontiers of the Ottoman state, a sex worker was on par with the vagabond and the orphan as a threat to public order and morality, *regardless* of whether she freely chose to sell her body or not. On the other hand, this prostitute/slave now comprised the ever-expanding imperial frontier from the Americas to India as a potential protégée of the state.²⁷ Whether or not the sex worker “will-

²² A female sex worker. The term used in the legal documents to denote women engaged in illegal sexual intercourse, *fuhş*, regardless of whether it is in exchange of money, goods, of favors. I use the term interchangeably with the English term, *Prostitute*, as they are both charged with moral and legal connotations.

²³ Yavuz Selim Karakisla, “Arşivden Bir Belge(49): Yoksulluktan Fuhuş Yapanların Islahı (1910): Askeri Dikimevlerinde İşeAlınan Müslüman Fahişeler,” in *Toplumsal Tarih* 10 (2003): 98-101, 98-101.

²⁴ Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 116.

²⁵ Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); on how such “forms of institutionalization” work to objectify the subject see: Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4) (1982): 777–95, 792.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 780-1. Foucault analyses the processes of subjectification through how the subject is made to speak, to affirm, and acknowledge the “law of truth” that is imposed upon her. What I mean by the subjectification of a Prostitute is how she is made to conform to the moral limitations of a legal, individualistic discourse within which she can only ‘speak’ as a victim, or as a delinquent. With regards to how her labour is disciplined and her body objectified by the (1) institutionalization of the brothel, (2) medical knowledge and regulations produced on venereal diseases, I rely on Foucault’s analyses of modern techniques of governance, more specifically that of spatial containment and scientific knowledge.

²⁷ Regarding the scope of these illicit networks, I have relied on the archives of the Ministry of Public Order (Zabtiye Nazareti) and Interior Affairs (Dahiliye Nazareti). On the North Af-

ingly” sold her body could mark the extent to which she was objectified by the juridical-medical policies of her country of reception²⁸, and whether she would be subjectified as a protégée and representative of her country of origin.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction, initially a tool of extending imperial influence²⁹, also gave leverage to the migrant women of the Mediterranean to help them navigate their way in and out of their illicit networks. In inhabiting these “jurisdictional borderlands” – i.e. the port cities of Ottoman Empire -, urban migrants were uniquely situated as “legal chameleons” who could profit from the legal and moral contentions existing within a system of legal pluralism.³⁰ They could claim subjecthood and protection from more than one entity – e.g. the British, the French, or the Ottoman Empire itself. The prostitute could -ideally- navigate her way in and out of her trade, by engaging with the moral and legal discourses that either saw her as an “innocent victim” or a “dangerous dreg”.³¹ Her success depended on whether or how well she played the imperial hierarchies and moral contentions between her country of origin and reception.³²

The history of the global economy of sex work is important to account for the transformation of gendered forms of labour throughout the period of state-making and of imperial expansion at the turn of the century. Governmental practices such as the registration system for prostitutes, normalization of the brothel, and the concurrent “war on pimps” had perfected the art of “colonial regulation of sex”, whose global spread was instigated by the British Empire and the desire of imperial expansion.³³ The women of the Ottoman world experienced the implementation of such colonial practices in the anxieties surrounding willing or forced sex work. The actions taken against the illicit migration of women – as slaves, concubines, or as prostitutes and entertainers - essentially brought about the “international traffic in prostitution policy”, which had effectively become a lesson in

rican – South Asian connections, see: BOA, ZB. 603/84, 1325/H/3. On the Latin American connection, see: BOA, ZB. 407/84, 1318/Ke/1, BOA, DH.MKT, 831/45, 1322/M/1.

²⁸ Ziad Fahmy, “Jurisdictional Borderlands: Extraterritoriality and ‘Legal Chameleons’ in Pre-colonial Alexandria, 1840–1870,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55 (2) (2013), doi: 10.1017/S0010417513000042, 77-80.

²⁹ Turan Kayaoğlu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁰ Sakis Gekas, “Colonial Migrants and the Making of a British Mediterranean,” *European Review of History* 19 (2012), doi:10.1080/13507486.2012.643611, 305-7.

³¹ Malte Fuhrmann, “‘Western Perversions’ at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870–1915),” *History and Anthropology* 21 (2) (2010), doi: 10.1080/02757201003796617, 159-172. Francesca Biancani, “International Migration and Sex Work in Early Twentieth Century Cairo,” in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880-1940*, ed. by Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer (London: Tauris, 2015): 109–33; Patricia O’Brian, “Michel Foucault’s History of Culture.” in *The New Cultural History: Essays*, ed. Aletta Biersack and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 111.

³² Fuhrmann, “I Would Rather Be in the Orient.”

³³ Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 23; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

“running a modern empire”³⁴. I aspire to show that this was a reciprocal learning process, where the colonial agents of Britain or France were peers and partners with the Ottoman statesmen.

Contentious Spaces: Policing the Urban Front

In the urban frontiers of early modern Constantinople; the bachelors’ inns, the coffeehouses, and spaces of public entertainment comprised an urban frontier which was routinely encroached upon by the local authorities to reinstate order and protect the honour of the capital’s citizens. What was at stake was the prevention of their intrusion into the *mahalles*, of urban networks comprising the established and respectable inhabitants of Constantinople.³⁵ The denizens of the imperial capital, on the other hand, could easily be subjected to the punishment of exile lest they were found without a *tezkiye*, or were found to be disrupting the order, as in causing havoc or dallying with a prostitute in public. The differentiation of migration within and without the capital was thus gendered and class-based³⁶, as the ideological stance of the Empire was based on a particular conception of justice in maintaining order and protecting the sexual honour of its deserving subjects.³⁷ As denoting illicit, unlawful intercourse, *fuhş*, was thus a trope in maintaining the public order, generally punished along the lines of exile on the part of the *custom*. The disciplinary practices regarding this old *fuhş* was thus a far cry from its subsequently feminized and spatialized form.

As the state began its project of reforming its governing structures and modernizing its administrative practices³⁸, the Porte’s disregard for the urban underclass was to change. The demographics of urban migration had overwhelmed the capi-

³⁴ Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 22.

³⁵ I rely on a description made by Cem Behar in a podcast interview from the Ottoman History Podcast collective (2014), and conceptualize *mahalle* as a social network, whose form is that of a self-regulating, relatively self-sufficient residential community. It is important to note that 19th century *mahalle* was the embodiment of a respectable, urban community – which policed its own residents, rather than relying on the state to enforce order and security. Police intrusion and interference on the lives of *mahalle* residents was few and far in between, and was contingent on the demand of the *mahalle* preacher or chief – i.e. the *imām* and the *muhtar*, see: Cem Behar, *Bir İstanbul Mahallesinin Doğumu ve Ölümü (1494-2008)* (Georgetown University: Ottoman History Podcast, 2014), 167, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2014/07/bir-mahallenin-dogumu-ve-olumu-1494.html>.

³⁶ Christoph Herzog, “Migration and the State: On Ottoman Regulations Concerning Migration since the Age of Mahmut II,” in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag (London: Routledge 2011), 119. Nazan Maksudyan, “Introduction,” in *Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective on Ottoman Urban History*, ed. Nazan Maksudyan (Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 4.

³⁷ Başak Tuğ, “Gendered Subjects in Ottoman Constitutional Agreements, ca. 1740-1860,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* 18 (2014), 119.

³⁸ Broadly, I take the reformation and rationalization of administrative practices towards (itinerant) populations and (common) property, intensification of codification movements, and bureaucratization of governmental offices that took place during the *Tanzimat* period to comprise the modernization of the Ottoman imperial state.

tal as the new cosmopolitan frontier of the imperial capital, Beyoğlu, had become a notorious site of human trafficking of women.³⁹ The capitalist expansion into the Mediterranean as well as proxy wars around Europe's periphery had engendered two distinct waves of illicit migration into and through the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ Sources mainly indicate that the first "feminized" wave of migration began after the Crimean war and vitalized trade in -non Muslim- prostitutes and -Muslim-slaves.⁴¹ The second were to occur during the late colonial period as both the Eastern Europe and Southern Anatolia began to witness ethnic and religious strife, the former reputedly affecting Jews⁴², the latter the Armenians.⁴³

Eldem argues that such non-elite migration into the Empire had created a culture of cosmopolitanism, especially concentrated in the district of Beyoğlu, as a distinctly subaltern form of urbanity that in no way corresponded to the "impressioned visions of the cosmopolitan city."⁴⁴ In its essence cosmopolitanism was a frontier phenomena - not characterizing the whole of a city stuck between "east and the west"⁴⁵, but rather straddling the boundary of respective urbanities.⁴⁶ It was this cosmopolitan frontier, Beyoğlu that was to become a site of governmental experimentation in late 1850s and exhibit the clearest expression of Ottoman municipal reforms in the second half of 19th century.⁴⁷

As the practice of exile became demographically untenable in the second half of 19th century, locating and governing the bodies of sex workers became a matter of public order⁴⁸, social hygiene⁴⁹ and later, I argue, of self-representation.⁵⁰

³⁹ Rifat Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople, 1854-1922*. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010)

⁴⁰ Nora Lafi, "The Ottoman Urban Governance of Migrations and the Stakes of Modernity," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag (London: Routledge, 2011), 6.

⁴¹ Hasan Kanbolat and Erol Taymaz, "Kafkas-Osmanlı İlişkileri ve Kole Ticareti," *Tarih ve Toplum* XIV (79) (n.d.): 35-44.

⁴² Bali, *Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople*.

⁴³ Florian Riedler, "Armenian Labor Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Malte Fuhrmann, (London: Routledge, 2011), 170-174.

⁴⁴ Edhem Eldem, "Ottoman Galata and Pera between Myth and Reality," in *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, ed. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Edhem Eldem, "The Undesirables of Smyrna, 1926," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24 (2) (2009), doi: 10.1080/09518960903562545, 223-227.

⁴⁷ Lafi, *Mediterranean Connections*.

⁴⁸ Jens Hanssen, "Public Morality and Marginality in Fin de Siècle Beirut," in *Outside in: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene L. Rogan (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 183-190.

⁴⁹ Khaled Fahmy, "Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," in *Outside in: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene L. Rogan (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 77-78.

⁵⁰ Abdulhamit II would, more often than not, inquire into the miserable conditions that Ottoman migrants faced on their way *out* through the ports of Marseilles or Barcelona, to the cities of North America. His consular inquiries and political interventions is generally seen as expressing a concern over the representation of the Ottoman Empire, about whether the

Inquiring into the history of Municipal Regulations, it is possible to trace gradual adoption of spatial and scientific practices through the gendering of syphilis epidemics, up until Smyrna in 1889 to Constantinople in 1894⁵¹ The registration and identification of women suspected of carrying venereal diseases, compulsory medical examinations in lock hospitals, and sanitary inspection of the brothels⁵² all came together to create a self-contained and self-sufficient institutional infrastructure for commercial sex.⁵³

In order to achieve that, the first challenge to the Beyoğlu municipality was to make sex work that occurred in public subject to policing and medical regulation. As the Municipal police tried to conduct routine medical controls and began to register the prostitute into the *vesika* system⁵⁴, clandestine, *invisible* sex work became a matter of anxiety for the municipal authorities. In *Cerrahpaşa* 1898(1316), a *mahalle* resident himself complained of a *Diyarbakırlı İbrahim* and police sergeant *Hakkı Efendiler*, because they had intruded upon his home and took his son away in searching for a prostitute, *without* the presence of prominent *mahalle* members i.e. the *imām* and the *muhtar*.⁵⁵ By 1903, the municipal police had had the government-sanctioned means of intruding upon *anywhere* suspect of “a dalliance with prostitutes” and to keep those men, who have conducted this transaction in private, jailed from 24 hours to a month.⁵⁶ Before this slow intrusion of the modern state, it had been the prerogative of *mahalle* residents to voice their complaints against local delinquents, whereas by turn of the century the police had appropriated the right to encroach upon this previously un-penetrable communal space, without the consent or the consensus of the urban networks comprising the city.

The objectification of the prostitute as a ‘toxic asset’ precluded her violent extraction from the urban spaces that she had hitherto inhabited. When taken into the domain of state sovereignty, she became subjected to a perpetual state of exile or “monetary retribution”⁵⁷ up until she took residence within a brothel. With

misery and delinquency associated with the Ottoman migrants would perpetuate the idea that the Ottoman Empire was now in decay. For more on this subject, see: Andrew Arsan, *Ottoman Migrants from the Eastern Mediterranean* (Georgetown University: Ottoman History Podcast 2012), 52, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2012/04/ottoman-migrations-from-eastern.html>.

⁵¹ BOA, DH.MKT.1689/118, 1307/CA/22.

⁵² Nazam Maksudyan, “Foster-Daughter or Servant, Charity or Abuse: Beslemes in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21 (4) (2008), doi:10.1111/j.1467-6443.2008.00347, x, 488-9; Müge Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (4) (2010), doi:10.1080/00263206.2010.492991, 555-568.

⁵³ BOA, A.} MKT.MHM., 502/23, 1308/Z/26.

⁵⁴ Regarding the crooks and nooks of the *vesika* system, see Zafer Toprak, “İstanbul’da Fuhuş ve Zührevi Hastalıklar 1914-1933,” in *Tarih ve toplum: aylık ansiklopedik dergi* (1987), 31–40.

⁵⁵ The preacher and the local administrator, respectively. BOA, DH.MKT., 2147/106, 1316/B/29.

⁵⁶ BOA, DH. MKT, 749/4, 1321/CA/14.

⁵⁷ BOA, ZB, 478/65, 1323/A/28.

the professionalization of prostitution, the very location of the brothels was now subject to a series of negotiations between urban residents and the municipality. In 1907, Galata residents in Beyoğlu had complained of an increase in sexual assaults and unlawful intrusions by foreign soldiers, and demanded the closure of all brothels whose very existence had been to blame for the assaults.⁵⁸ Another complaint that came from Galata's *Galavani Street* three years later had provoked the Beyoğlu police to demand a venue from the *Şehremāneti*, which would be used to bring together the existing brothels and contain the illicit circulation of women.⁵⁹ Their wish was granted soon enough, which enabled the municipal police to expand their domain of intervention, beginning in the *istibdād*⁶⁰ era and lasting to the very end of the second constitutional regime.⁶¹

Just as the search for an appropriate location for the state-brothels had begun, the 'informalized' brothels were subject to relocation and/or eviction by the police based on any complaint of their impingement on and threat to public hygiene and morality. Beyoğlu continued to be a site for spatial contention, as a petition to the municipality in early 1914(1332) demanded the closure of the brothels near *Mekteb-i sultânî*⁶², out of concern for the local students' moral well-being.⁶³ The venues of symbolic importance had provoked another mechanism of social exclusion as separate from that of the *mahalle*, as the school, the mosque and even the cemetery needed to be separated from the "moral degradation" implied by the existence of the brothel.⁶⁴ While witnessing the spatial differentiation of the urban landscape, the brothels had acquired a symbolic status in line with being a physical threat to the society. Eventually, even being in the close quarters of a cemetery could justify closure and relocation.⁶⁵

Spatial exclusion of prostitutes occurred not just at the level of the city, but also within the very disciplinary institutions that had developed to provide welfare and order in Constantinople. A separate hospital for venereal diseases had already overseen the gendering of the disease – whose cause was to be the sex worker but never the men soliciting them. As such, the public health policies targeted and aimed to register the prostitute, rather than regular customers. However, soon enough there were attempts to open a hospital specifically catering to the prosti-

⁵⁸ BOA, ZB, 389/163, 1322/SU/15.

⁵⁹ BOA, DH.EUM.THR., 46/25, 1328/S/10.

⁶⁰ The dictatorial one-man regime that characterized the rule of Abdulhamit II between 1876 and 1908.

⁶¹ Noémi Lévy-Aksu, "19. Yuzyilda Osmanli'da Kamu Duzeni Konusunda Calismak: Bibliografya Uzerine Bir Degerlendirme," in *Jandarma ve Polis: Franzis ve Osmanli Tarihçiliğine Çapraz Bakışlar*, ed. Noémi Lévy-Aksu, Nadir Özbek, and Alexandre Toumarkine, 1. ed. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1987), 63.

⁶² Today's *Galatasaray* High School, standing at the heart of Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

⁶³ BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 77/25, 1332/B/08. For an earlier case in Sisli; BOA, DH. ID., 65/33, 1331/CA/22.

⁶⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.AYS., 42/4, 1338/L/04.

⁶⁵ BOA, DH.ID., 65/23, 1330/L/18.

tute. The homeless and sick prostitutes that were found on the streets in 1910 had not been allowed in to the *Dârü'l-aceze*⁶⁶, even when they were not afflicted with a venereal disease, and whose only other option was to be jailed in a women's *tevkif-hâne*.⁶⁷ In Smyrna, the need to ensure the perfect enclosure of the prostitutes had created a self-enclosed and self-sufficient institutional infrastructure, as it was decreed by the Ministry of Interior Affairs that the spending of the hospitals were to be provided by the money coming from the brothels themselves.⁶⁸ Even within the already miserable conditions and limited resources of the Ottoman prisons, the prostitute was treated as a separate category to be spatially excluded from the other criminals.⁶⁹

As women entered the “field of visibility” and circulated within domain of self-representation in the public space⁷⁰, prostitutes comprised a “stain” on the Porte's reputation and self-image, not just as a problem of public hygiene but also of public image. Their presence implied public debauchery and degeneration of the imperial capital. It was no longer just a question of to whom did her body belong, but also whom she represented. Concerns over self-image and representation also shaped the criteria on which a sex worker may claim Ottoman subjecthood and protection. This symbolic importance caused the ethic, religious and political belongings of the prostitute to become subject to scrutiny and categorization. During the rule of Abdulhamit II, it was the geographical and religious belongings that formed the two basis of Ottoman subjecthood, with the latter becoming increasingly more politicized. There was already a legal precedent to the politicization of the prostitute's religious belongings. Unlike that of non-Muslim women, Muslim women's entrance into the trade was *de jure* prohibited.

A score of previous records do show a number of cases involving specifically *Muslim* prostitutes, but mostly taking place across a variety of urban spaces not exclusive to commercial sex. The rational, that is, strictly-business organization of the brothel was a far cry from the previous loci of the trade - taverns and coffeehouses - in which the rules of conduct were ambiguous and the contracting parties unknown.⁷¹ The adoption of modern administrative practices aimed to create the state-run brothel as a site of economic transaction, rather than a space of sociability. What it created was a work space in which each employee was regis-

⁶⁶ It refers to the welfare and healthcare complex, inaugurated by Abdulhamit II in Okmeydani, Istanbul, in 1895.

⁶⁷ 19th century Ottoman Turkish term for Jail. BOA, DH.MKT, 2695/3, 1326/Z/05.

⁶⁸ BOA, A.} MKT.MHM., 502/23, 1308/Z/26.

⁶⁹ Kent F. Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire: Microcosms of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 125-126.

⁷⁰ Maksudyan, *Women and the City*, 6.

⁷¹ I underline the rational organization of the brothel as well as its spatial differentiation, to denote its emergence as a modern form of organizing sex work. Thus, it is not the ‘commercial’, but the strictly sexual and spatially differentiated form is modern. Ideally, state run brothels in Turkey -until today- work to make sure that brothels are not turned into spaces of sociability.

tered, monitored, and physically contained. The spatial differentiation of the city had limited the options of a woman aiming to enter into a sexual transaction. As prostitution *came into* the public space as a threat to be contained in the name of public health and morality, the Muslim prostitute posed a problem of (self) representation for the Ottoman state, which dealt with the problem on two accounts: first by subjecting the Muslim women to the “protection” of patriarchal family; and then, by “protecting” the Muslim family from physical and moral contamination that might come from non-Muslim women.

The response of the municipal governments across the Empire was to ‘send them back’ to the domain of their fathers - their *mahrem* - and take them out of this field of visibility. *Seen as* an act of philanthropy, the stakes of representation was enough to send *Jeddahian Ayse*, who had been practicing prostitution in Constantinople, back to her parents in the Arab provinces.⁷² Following her repatriation, three Muslim girls caught ‘dallying’ with a soldier in *Sirkeci* were all delivered to their parents instead of taken to a hospital for a medical check, or registration.⁷³ The relegation of responsibility to the family was thus one way in which Muslim women were immediately taken out of their trade, in the name of preventing their circulation and visibility in public.

The circulation of non-Muslim women within the *private* sphere was another source of anxiety, as they could be potential non-registered sex workers conducting their trade under the guise of a variety of other professions. Just as taverns had previously been ambiguous spaces of sociability, prostitution had not been a distinct profession that warranted specialization.⁷⁴ With its intimate link to the entertainment industry, it was thus not a surprise when the Edirne police had confronted a number of foreign *chanteuses* and charged them with prostitution. What is remarkable, however, is that the police refused to let them enter their *private* property, and kept them in the streets for days on an end, rather than keeping them out of sight in jail.⁷⁵ This reflects a concern to draw a distinction between *spaces* as well as the *subjects* that were to be seen and scrutinized by the police, the protectors of public order.

An imperial decree proclaimed by Abdulhamit II in 1901 on the issue of foreign governesses and servants took on a much more complex and insidious character, as he posits the figure of the prostitute not only between professions but also between spaces, sexes, and “civilizations”.⁷⁶ Proclaimed by the sultan’s seat in Yildiz

⁷² BOA, DH.EUM.THR., 50/61,1328/N/17.

⁷³ BOA, DH.EUM.KDL., 20/16,1329/M/13.

⁷⁴ Hershatler, *Dangerous Pleasures*, 116.

⁷⁵ BOA, DH.EUM. THR., 33/41, 1328/CA/07.

⁷⁶ I am not referring to a certain definition of civilization, but the very discourses on civilization that posited a difference through the binaries of Modern/Tradition, or West/East, which was shared and appropriated by the Ottoman Elites and bureaucrats themselves. I engaged less with what the concept actually *meant* to the Ottoman Elite than I did with what the concept of civilizational difference *did* by positing such binaries. I think such fundamental difference

Palace, the decree is a tacit intervention into the international trade in women that had flourished in Constantinople through service agencies claiming to procure western chefs and drivers on one hand, and governesses, servants, and nannies on the other.⁷⁷ While the subject matter of the decree is the urban governance of non-Ottoman subjects, it is a text produced by diplomatic concerns addressing the “western” gaze, while the person of Abdulhamit II presents his authoritarian state in all its moral righteousness regarding the harsh policing of such “dangerous women”. Legitimizing the intrusions made upon the lives and property of the non-Ottoman subjects, Abdulhamit II denotes the corrupting influence of a *western* underclass that threatens the moral purity and physical well-being of his caliphate.⁷⁸ It is Abdulhamit’s use of the concept of civilization that warrants our attention. In his discourse, the difference in “Ottoman” and “Western” civilizations is that of different moralities. Using the prostitute/governess as the single point of reference, the decree effectively posits a distinction between the two civilizations while placing the Ottoman Empire on par with the “highest democracy” of the Western Civilization, the USA, to justify protecting the religious freedom and purity of Ottoman Subjects – that is, the Muslim ones. While the circulation of prostitutes under the guise of governesses, and their influence over the general Muslim population is debatable, Abdulhamit II had effectively normalized the cosmopolitan nature of sex work.

Neither the ego of Abdulhamit II nor the cunning and creativity of the western subaltern⁷⁹ explains why the migrant sex worker became such a pervasive and powerful figure in fin-de-siècle Ottoman Empire. An aversion to diplomatic crises had already affected the legal and administrative treatment of non-Muslim women as potential causes for diplomatic intervention.⁸⁰ Their very request for Ottoman subjecthood was met with an adverse reaction. The harsh stance of the state regarding the problem of subjecthood was evidenced by the case of Rabbi Arslan, who had helped to procure citizenship in the name of a “brothel asset” by the name of Mirilam.⁸¹ His was neither the first nor the only case of an official aiding a foreign woman in the quest for Ottoman subjecthood, as fake or de jure marriage was to become a common trope in the acquisition of the rights and privileges given to Ottoman subjects. Within the incipient politics of citizenship,

posited through a civilizational discourse adds a global dimension to the regulation of sex work in Ottoman Empire..

⁷⁷ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Eski Hayatlar Eski Hatıralar: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Belgelerle Gündelik Hayat (1760-1923)* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015), 351.

⁷⁸ BOA, Y. MTV., 48/48, 1308/B/14.

⁷⁹ Fuhrmann, “Western Perversions”, 160-1. By the western subaltern, I mean the migrant sex workers of European origin that formed an active and widespread network of sex trafficking and white slave trade (or Mädchenhandel) that extended from within Eastern Europe and converged in fin de siècle Istanbul.

⁸⁰ Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5, 111.

⁸¹ BOA, DH.MKT., 818/62, 1321/ZA/20.

the non-Muslim prostitute was kept in the urban frontier of the imperial capital as forever subjected to policing and eviction threats, while being denied the rights and privileges accorded to Ottoman subjects.⁸²

Contending Sovereigns: Claiming the Imperial Front

Aside from intervening into the international circulation of women within its borders and policing the foreign subjects that lived and worked in Constantinople, the reign of Abdulhamit II oversaw attempts to extend the state's protection and influence over its subjects far into the imperial frontiers of capitalist expansion. Constituting a contested domain of influence, the Ottoman subjects that were dispersed across the world could gain a symbolic importance as a mean of asserting Ottoman sovereignty in the international arena, and as a potential means of expanding its influence across the known world. The political scope of Ottoman imperialism was thus overlapped with the geographical range of illicit networks crisscrossing the Mediterranean, from Egypt, to Sudan, to even Chile.

Scholarly debates of imperialism and Ottoman imperialism in particular, seem to converge on the problem of *non-invasive* colonialism. The question is whether the existence of an imperialist discourse reflected a desire to conquer and dominate the lands, races, and the women of the "other".⁸³ Alison Johnson has shown that the maritime policies of the Habsburg Empire during early 19th century could be considered as constituting imperialism without territorial expansion.⁸⁴

In addition, recent scholarship also provides a line of inquiry into modern state building as *internal* colonialism, showing how the very process of state building had engendered a need to encroach upon the lands, trades and lives that were ruled, yet not adequately governed by the state. More contemporary studies on urban governance also show that the use of colonial techniques of governance is intrinsic to the workings of the modern state even today.⁸⁵ I thus situate Ottoman imperialism, as having existed and adopted colonial policies without -achieving-territorial expansion.

For the purposes of my subject at hand, international sex work, I would like to return to the most "succinct" definition of imperialism as described by Selim De-

⁸² Giorgio Agamben, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Homo Sacer* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6-9.

⁸³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁸⁴ Alison Frank, "The Children of the Desert and the Laws of the Sea: Austria, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mediterranean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 117 (2) (2012), doi:10.1086/ahr.117.2.410, 410-444.

⁸⁵ Oren Yiftachel, "Critical Theory and 'Gray Space': Mobilisation of the Colonised," in *Cities for People, not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, ed. Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse, and Margit Mayer (London: Routledge, 2012), 121.

ringil, the “monopoly stage of capitalism”.⁸⁶ It is in the monopoly stage of capitalism where control over the circulation of commodities matters as much as of ideas and people. As such, imperialism is a mechanism of expansion *within* and/or *without* a given territory, through the extension of state sovereignty *over* or *through* its subjects. Going back to Torpey’s definition of the state as having monopoly over the means of movement, I would like to argue that an incipient politics of national citizenship was written into the *tezkire*, to *vesika*, and to the passport⁸⁷, as they reflected the legal status of a sex worker – and became the means of controlling and regulating her movements.

The symbolic status of the prostitute emerged at the convergence between the urban and the imperial frontier, where the assertion of sovereignty in the international arena corresponded to its extension into the lives and activities of women in the imperial capital. She had become a boundary marker signifying and gendering the power relations among the cohort of empires. In this global, legal *space* structured by British hegemony, the destitute prostitute was either a matter of humanitarian efforts for the abolition of sexual “slavery”⁸⁸, or of colonial domination through regulationist policies targeting “sex work”.⁸⁹

Having taken its place in this international cohort of sovereign states thanks to the Treaty of Paris in 1856 -if not before-, the nascent field of international law had given the Ottoman empire a space for visibility and assertion of its “sovereign will” by participating in the legal debates and institutions aiming to “re-construct...international law”.⁹⁰ However, visibility did not necessarily confer respect or power, as the imperial bureaucrats and Ottoman intellectuals were to find

⁸⁶ Yiftachel, “Critical Theory and ‘Gray Space’”, 312; Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism; a Popular Outline* (New York: International Publishers, 1939 [1917]).

⁸⁷ Christoph Herzog, “Migration and the State: On Ottoman Regulations Concerning Migration since the Age of Mahmut II,” in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. by Ulrike Freitag, (London: Routledge, 2011), 119; Andrew Kerim Arsan, “Failing to Stem the Tide: Lebanese Migration to French West Africa and the Competing Prerogatives of the Imperial State,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (3) (2011), doi:10.1017/S0010417511000211, 469-478.

⁸⁸ For the British efforts against and condemning concubinage within the Ottoman Empire, see Diane Liga Robinson-Dunn, *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture: Anglo-Muslim Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century. Studies in Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

⁸⁹ Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ Anghie, *Imperialism, Hegemony, and International Law*, 33-4; also, regarding the diplomatic and legal implications of the Treaty of Paris, see Mustafa Serdar Palabiyik. “The Emergence of the Idea of ‘International Law’ in the Ottoman Empire before the Treaty of Paris (1856),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 50 (2) (2014), doi:10.1080/00263206.2013.870890, 233-51. The Treaty took place after the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War, with Russia having to give concessions to the Ottoman Empire along with other European signatory states. Generally, the 1856 Treaty is considered to be the first international convention to which Ottoman Empire was a party. There are yet disagreements about whether this participation constituted a recognition of its sovereignty or not. However, based on recent research on the diplomatic history of Ottoman Empire, I shall take it for granted here that the Empire had become sub-

out. The meetings and debates on international law were sites of contention that positioned this “eastern” Empire within a hierarchy dominated by its “western” peers.⁹¹ Throughout its engagement with the debates surrounding international private or criminal law, there were constant implications of a “defective rationality” in the Ottoman legal system, denoting its technical and moral inferiority at the face of European legal imperialism.⁹² Capitulations, which had already been intrinsic to the legal culture of pluralism in the Ottoman Empire⁹³, now had become tools of imperial expansion and financial gain. Extraterritorial jurisdiction emerged at the physical loci of these moral and legal contestations, the port cities of Ottoman Empire. In any conflict that emerged from the extant system of legal pluralism, it was now the *free*, liberal subject of modern law that set the stakes.

Any political intervention into the international trade in sex was thus made on the basis of a woman’s *free will*. The discourses on sex trafficking vis-à-vis that of Ottoman slave trade attributed the sex worker a priori existence of free will. That created a contradiction between the regulationist policies targeting sex trafficking and the abolitionist efforts of both British and French authorities against the slave trade networks of the late 19th century. For example, French abolitionists had denounced the *manumission* and registration of African slaves, by justifying their action on the sanctity of free will. They had argued that manumission practically meant *forced* conversion to Ottoman subjecthood against the will of the slaves in question.⁹⁴ This humanitarian mentality underlying the legal difference between the victim and the delinquent was very much adopted by the Ottoman statesmen. The consular correspondence in the Ottoman archives show that the British and French were very much concerned with the enslavement of Ottoman - predominantly Muslim - subjects from across Alexandria, to the Americas⁹⁵, or to South Asia.⁹⁶

Arguing the depravity of the Ottoman subject’s condition was also about presenting an indirect attack on Ottoman sovereignty, the self-proclaimed protector of the “realm of Islam”. That seems to be the cleavage that had provoked a cunning *Mehmet Rasid Efendi*, a true Occidental drifter and an ex-conscript to the French Army, to bring to his highness Abdulhamit II’s attention the public

ject to the “European system of international law” and a “member of the concert of Europe” thus effectively constituting a fully recognized (if slightly disrespected) sovereign state.

⁹¹ Nir Shafir, “The International Congress as Scientific and Diplomatic Technology: Global Intellectual Exchange in the International Prison Congress, 1860–90,” *Journal of Global History* 9 (1) (2014), 76 doi: 10.1017/S1740022813000508.

⁹² *Ibid.*; Umut Ozsu, “The Ottoman Empire, the Origins of Extraterritoriality, and International Legal Theory,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Theory of International Law*, ed. Anne Orford, Florian Hoffmann, and Martin Clark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

⁹³ Eldem Edhem, “Foreigners at the Threshold of Felicity: The Reception of Foreigners in Ottoman Istanbul,” in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Robert Muchembled and E. William Monter, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹⁴ BOA, HR. HMS. ISO., 44/21, 1327/T/21.

⁹⁵ BOA, DH.MKT., 831/45, 1322/M/1.

⁹⁶ BOA, DH.MYI., 81/35, 1328/RA/25.

degradation of a Turkish prostitute in the Chilean Republic.⁹⁷ She had been the victim of sex trafficking through an infamous procurer by the name of *Lazatrona*, who had moved in and out of the imperial capital in search for assets, inveigling the Bulgarian, Armenian and Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire way into the farthest corner of Latin America, to the port city of Valparaiso. The unnamed prostitute had provoked the mercy and compassion of Abdulhamit II, and as such was to be delivered to the Sublime Porte via the American consulate at Washington D.C., instead of accompanying *Mehmet Efendi* via the French consuls in Chile. While the Muslim prostitute at the imperial frontier was paraded around the new world in the name of moral righteousness, her non-Muslim peers were restrained in their circulation within the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

This is not to say that a singular, *religiously* minded project of imperialism characterized the Ottoman State within the international field of law, as the spatial and legal transgressions of migrants provided the occasion to interact and compete with other imperial states. Imperial politics were based on ambiguous and contradictory identities and ideas⁹⁸, and more often than not took advantage of that ambiguity. Competing imaginaries and a number of communitarian belongings existed within the Ottoman imperial project. The cultural codes denoting ethnicity, religion, and gender all served to make and unmake this project at each critical moment, from Abdulhamit II's *Istibdat* to the CUP⁹⁹ regime to follow.

On the eve of twentieth century, situating the prostitute at crossroads of civilizations and religions was a political choice, as much as it was a symbolic act. It allowed for the intrusion of the state upon the bodies and souls of itinerant women. The same legal and administrative practices that took hold of the Armenian, Jewish, or Arab prostitute served a number of political ends that were neither incongruent to nor inextricable from one another.

The international system of states that was consolidated after the Great War thus was not an antithesis to the system of imperial states whose form was consolidated during the long 19th century¹⁰⁰, but rather the nation-states that emerged throughout Middle East in the 20th century were *enabled* by the transformations that took place during the zenith of 19th century imperialism.¹⁰¹ The core transfor-

⁹⁷ Karakisla, *Eski Hayatlar*, 329.

⁹⁸ Caglar Keyder, "Port Cities in the Belle Epoque," in *Cities of the Mediterranean: From the Ottomans to the Present Day*, ed. Biray Kolluoğlu and Meltem Toksöz. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 18.

⁹⁹ Committee of Union and Progress, the party of the Ottoman intellectuals sent to exile by Abdulhamit II. It was formed in 1889, and came to power through the Young Turk revolution of 1908.

¹⁰⁰ On the sociological formations and trajectories of Modern Empires, see George Steinmetz, "Major Contributions to Sociological Theory and Research on Empire, 1830-Present," in *Sociology and Empire*, ed. George Steinmetz (Durham: Duke University Press, 1-50).

¹⁰¹ George Steinmetz and Julia P. Adams, "Sovereignty and Sociology: From State Theory to Theories of Empire," in *Patrimonial Capitalism and Empire*, ed. Mounira Maya Charrad and Julia P. Adams (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2015), 270.

mation was that of the changing relationship of the state to the body of the individual, in the making of modern state and its liberal subject of law.

Conclusion

In his autobiographical inquiry into the history of prostitution in fin de siècle Istanbul, Ahmet Rasim had reflected the sentiments of his peers by condemning the degeneration of war-torn Istanbul and the diffusion of prostitution from the taverns of *Pera* into the domain of respectability and of family.¹⁰² Fully attuned to the gendered constitution of the public/private divide, Rasim firmly believed that the circulation of women within each domain - private/public - corresponded to the integrity of the family and the state, respectively. Women's circulation *in-between*, ergo, had meant the degeneration and impotence of both.

This “debauchery” and “deprivation” left at the wake of Great War did not just concern the statesmen of the new Republic of Turkey. Post-war population management was also a core concern for the Mandate authorities in the Middle East. Making humanitarian interventions into human trafficking was one of the aims of the newly formed League of Nations¹⁰³, while its travelling commissions documented and penetrated into this illicit trade for the purposes of its termination.¹⁰⁴ Abolitionist movements were to do away with regulationist policies towards “sex- and child-trafficking” in the Mandate period.

Taking its place within the international state system, the newly formed Turkish Republic began a violent process of nationalizing its citizenship, that had evolved into a social engineering project centred around the spaces and places that women inhabited. As the nation-states have achieved a global monopoly over the legitimate means of circulation, and the legions of migrants that had inhabited the Ottoman Empire either integrated or disappeared into the social fabric - either way, at a great human cost. The purity of the family and the integrity of the state had been reinstated in the Turkish Republic, through the administrative practices of the new ruling elite.

However, there was an ironic - and tragic - consequence to the migration crises of 19th century globalization as experienced in the Ottoman Empire. As the Turkish Republic took on the task of nationalizing the economy as part of their CUP heritage, they also reversed the process of de-nationalizing sex work that had begun during the *Istibdat* regime. The secularist republicans did indeed aspire to dismantle the whole economy of sex in Istanbul, with their moralism in contrast to the pragmatist and stance of the late Ottoman Empire. While they were ambitious

¹⁰² Ahmet, Rasim, *Fuḫṣ-i Atîk (Eski Fuḫṣ Hayatı)* (İstanbul: İskit, 1958[1340/1924]), vi.

¹⁰³ Nessim Znaïen, “La prostitution à Beyrouth sous le mandat français (1920-1943),” *Genre & Histoire* no. 11 (2013), <http://genrehistoire.revues.org/1781>.

¹⁰⁴ Liat Kozma, *Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 4-7.

enough to engineer a whole society from scratch, they were not capable of realizing their vision. Their efforts at eliminating prostitution, while escalating into an all-out urban warfare¹⁰⁵ against women during the twenties, failed.¹⁰⁶ Rather unwillingly and unwittingly, the Republican elite had to contend with the fact that a total command over the circulation of sex workers and penetrating into the spaces they could inhabit was impossible. As a result of the new regulation on ‘Prostitution and Venereal Diseases’ in 1933, brothels were reopened, and prostitution was legalized under the full control of the state.

¹⁰⁵ By urban warfare, I aim to denote the violent and intrusive practices of policing women not only within the public spaces but also within their *mahrem*, their familial space; as single or non-married women were forcefully taken from their homes during police crackdowns, registered, and disciplined; disregarding and violating their right to privacy and secure space.

¹⁰⁶ Zafer Toprak, “İstanbul’da Fuhuş ve Zührevi Hastalıklar 1914-1933,” *Tarih ve toplum: aylık ansiklopedik dergi* (1987), 31–40, 39-40. Demographic and administrative problems regarding an abundance of “destitute” women and lack of a strong police presence led to the failure of abolitionist policies targeting sex work. In the 1930s, prostitution was again legalized.