



Book Review

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Women in the Ottoman Balkans: gender, culture and history

By Amila Buturovic, Irvin Cemil Schick

London, 2007

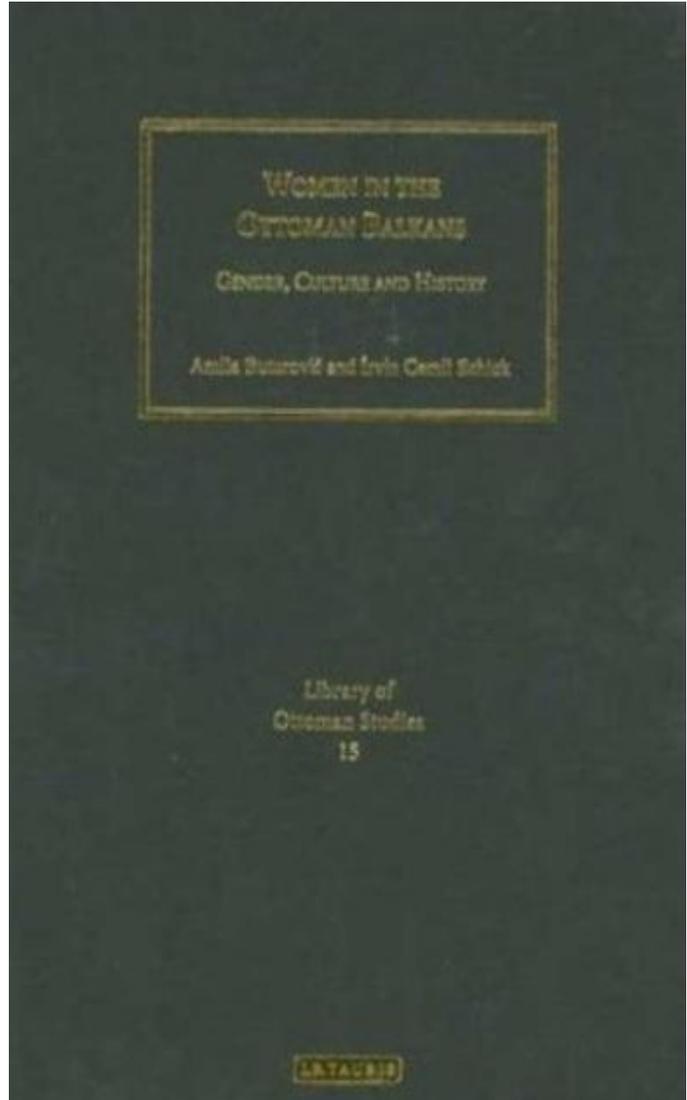
375 pages

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Ottoman Balkans for centuries includes that rich and complex linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity of experience; represented Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together in peace a peaceful geography. While Ottomans managing this geography, have inherited from the Byzantine process and blends with its spiritual structure and have built an atmosphere of peace which has not seen in any period in the history of the Balkans. As long as the Conquest, many more people has been involved in the Ottoman nation system. During the Ottoman period, in the Balkans, in the cultural sense, increased positive relationships between people and despite the fragmented mosaic structure of the Ottoman nation has managed to maintain the cultural dynamics.

Amila Buturovic and Irvin Cemil Schick have compiled the 'Ottoman Balkans Women' (Istanbul Bilgi University Publications) gender, culture and history in terms of addressing these issues is a highly successful study. Irvin Cemil Schick, I closely followed the studies and I had the chance a few times to correspondence, is an interesting intellectual. With both Western and Eastern culture is a multi-lingual enlightened. More than this book, there are many important studies; Sexual West Coast: Sexuality and Spatiality in Diversifying Discourse, trans. S. Kılıç and G. Sarı (Istanbul: The History Foundation Dormitory Publications, 2002) Cherkess Beauty: Image of an Orientalist Adventure trans. A. Anadol (Istanbul: Capricorn Publications, 2004) Europeans prisoners and their Muslim Lords: Captivity Narratives in Turkish Province (Istanbul: Book Publisher, 2005) Writing Body, Society, the Cosmos: On Islam, Gender and Culture gratification. and trans. P. Tünaydın (Istanbul: Contact Publications, 2011)

The book of 'Balkan Women' mentions in detail the identities, love, commercial relationship of women who have great contributions to this social



situation remained as inheritance for the future and to the peaceful life in Ottoman era in different articles. Besides, it emphasizes the role of women both in the process of cultural and social interaction and in the scope of accepting them as a member of society or detaching them from the society, so it aims to make a contribution to sensibility that grows gradually in the researches. The book has also been designed as an interdisciplinary study; it does not target only to deal with social gender by putting some analytical categories aside like class, culture, ethnicity, becoming a nation and religion. On the contrary, this book makes a net among the categories mention above like law, religion, economy, literature, legal and private life and politics, while doing these, the book is based upon various area and disciplines.(p.4) In fact, the academicians make contributions to this book try examining cultural interactions of women that change with the daily life and different genders live all together here in despite of religious and ethnic border of Balkans. This book is one of the reference books about Ottoman Women.

Olga Augustinos in 'Balkan Women', tells a story inspired by a novel of Abbe Prevost about an Ottoman Woman who becomes Christian in France when she is captured. Angela Jianu describes the fashion and Europeanization situation of women in Wallachia and Moldova. She emphasizes the historical role of consumer's traditions in Romania that provides a pro-national identity. Patricia Fann Bouteneff draws a portrait of man and woman philosophy in Greek stories. Amila Buturović who is the other compiler of the book addresses the problematic love in traditional Bosnian folk songs. Kerime Filan

treats the women who establish a foundation in Ottoman Bosnia and solution of the problems.

Especially rich women play an important role in conducting Muslim community by establishing a foundation and building a mosque. Selma Zecevic has also told about lost husbands and the situation of their sorrowful wives. Mirna Solic tells Bosnian Women in the eye of Christian Poet Luka. Svetlana Ivanova has examined marriage problems of Rumelian women and records of Muslim judges from a historical perspective. Gila Hadar has searched the situation of the women within Thessaloniki Jewish tobacco workers. The writers of the articles mutually show that speech duality with a case, sometimes elaborated chat become a common mistake. It points forming more dialogical tendency in Ottoman Research (this concept belongs to Mihail Bahtin).

The spiritual peace atmosphere that was established when Ottoman retreated, left its place to blood and tears. This tragedy was recently on display again on Bosnian war. I think it wouldn't be wrong to say that the chaos, because of the corruption of the identities and the ethnic and religious borders led this mostly. Victor Hugo, Lord Byron and other less known writers who are unable to see this situation, incorrectly assessed Ottoman as a simple Asian despotism. It will easily be seen how weak this orientalist stereotype is, when the Ottoman nation system in the region is observed in the light of historical documents. Today, a disintegrative language is used for this precious Ottoman region, too. This discourse influences the course of events not only in that period but also today as Schick identified.

When reading the texts in the book without prejudice, it will be seen that the women who tried to balance the necessities of an empire of many beliefs that live together and poetic justice, had roles beyond their traditional, private and public status. The women in Ottoman Balkans were foundation founders; they were organizing workers and were consuming luxury Western goods to show off. They were lovers, wives, left behinds, divorced and widows; they were symbols, mediators, subjects of folk songs and fairy tale narrators, victims of community pressure and protectors of their communities against supernatural powers.” (p.9) History is an experience that was formed not only with the contribution of men, as thought, but also with the contribution of women such as our mothers, wives and sisters. The function of woman in Ottoman society is far more important and profound than just to sit behind the cage and watch. We are the descendants of the generation who says 'Heaven lies at the feet of the mother'.

