

Suraiya FAROQHI & Christoph K. NEUMANN, eds. *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*. Beirut Texts and Studies 73. Würzburg: Ergon in Kommission, 2003. 352 pp., paperback. ISBN: 3-89913-323-4; and Suraiya FAROQHI & Christoph K. NEUMANN eds. *Ottoman Costumes. From Textile to Identity*. Istanbul: Eren Yayınevi, 2004. 336 pp., paperback. ISBN: 13: 9789756372043.

The relative neglect of the history of everyday life and material culture in the Ottoman lands, only rarely discussed in studies based on inheritance inventories, has been more comprehensively challenged in the last decade thanks to Suraiya Faroqhi's efforts in organizing a series of annual workshops in Istanbul. Beginning in 1995, these still continuing explorations in the history of Ottoman material culture (with the thirteenth taking place in 2009) are now appearing in print to reach wider audiences. *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House*, co-edited by Faroqhi and Christoph Neumann, brings together fourteen articles from the first two, the 1995 and 1996, workshops, while the second volume under review, *Ottoman Costumes*, brings together twelve papers from the fifth meeting, organized in 2000.

In her "Introduction," to *The Illuminated Table* Faroqhi rightly argues that whereas the lacunae in food history have clearly been the result of Ottomanists' lack of contact with world history (or with the international practice of history), the study of the Ottoman house has suffered from a formalist approach to habitat by architectural historians originally trained as architects. As for post-1980 developments, Faroqhi underlines the increasing contribution of Ottoman historians to the study of urban housing. Furthermore, she emphasizes the impact of consumption studies and cultural history on Ottoman studies, and postulates that the recent interest in food and drink might be related to the "new" manner in which many historians have begun to perceive the Ottoman state and society. From a correct observation about the non-military thrust of much of the recent scholarship, she moves on to the more dubious assumption that this is also the reason why there is presently a scholarly interest in food and foodways (or manners, or architecture, or indeed any other form of cultural expression), all of which can be integrated into the study of rites of power and modes of legitimation. However, I find this a bit too optimistic, as well as too general. The impact of (what we loosely call) world history on Ottoman studies is still quite limited. Furthermore, the recent interest in

Ottoman food is still on a more popular rather than a truly scholarly level, fed as it is by a retrospective extension of growing interest in good food and wine that has been sparked off by a new wave of metropolitan affluence. Predictably, in its early stages this emerging field is overwhelmingly characterized by a connoisseur's and not (yet) a historian's approach.

Necdet Sakaoglu leads the way with a summary of the "Sources for our Ancient Culinary Culture." Starting with a rather cryptic overview of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century sources published over the last two decades, Sakaoglu dwells on two frequently cited texts, namely Seyyid Hasan's *Sohbetname* and Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname*, for a listing of culinary ingredients. Being partial and fragmentary in approach, this article is further damaged by careless translations. However, on the positive side, Sakaoglu also introduces a new and important source, *Menafiü'n-Nas* of Derviş Nidaî Mehmed Efendi, dated 1566-7.

Dariusz Kolodziejczyk's "Polish Embassies in Istanbul, or how to Sponge on your Host without Losing your Self-Esteem" addresses the types of food served to diplomatic envoys at the Topkapı Palace. Kolodziejczyk refuses to take the early seventeenth-century Polish emissaries to Istanbul at their word, noting that there might have been other motives behind the scorn and contempt that they expressed for the food they had been served as they reported after their return to Poland. Hedda Reindl-Kiel elaborates further on "Official Meals in the Mid-17th-Century Ottoman Palace" in a paper based on five unabridged (mufassal) versions of five imperial kitchen registers. Reindl-Kiel carefully identifies the starters and the other courses, possibly served one after the other. She then explores the social hierarchy embodied in palace cuisine to conclude (somewhat obviously) that the "rank" of any given feast was determined by the variety and rarity of choices that were offered.

Feridun Emecen introduces an equally important source in his article "The Şehzade's Kitchen and its Expenditures: An Account Book from Şehzade Mehmed's Palace in Manisa, 1594-1595," which sheds light on the life-style maintained by members of the dynasty outside the capital, as well as on the supply and provisioning system behind it including both local and distant purchases. Then, an article on "Spices in the Ottoman Palace: Courtly Cookery in the Eighteenth Century" by Christoph K. Neumann explores social stratification and "gastronomic levels" at the court through a steady supply of spices. Starting with a dozen registers kept by the court supplier of spices for the period 1762-80, Neumann

provides an exhaustive list of spices that were procured by the palace. He not only compares the listed items with earlier published accounts of the imperial kitchens, but also questions the position of the supplier—who, according to Neumann, became identifiable both in person and rank only in the eighteenth century. From the 1850s onward a further twist was thrown in as European customs were increasingly adopted by the Ottoman upper-classes. In “Culinary Consumption Patterns of the Ottoman Elite during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” Özge Samancı takes as her starting point the first published Ottoman cookbook, the *Melceiit-Tabbahin (Refuge of Cooks, 1844)*, together with imperial kitchen registers from the same period. She then provides a comprehensive analysis in which she lists food items, kitchen utensils, and tableware. On that basis, she ventures into more complicated questions, trying to identify the changing preferences of the nineteenth-century elite’s palate.

In his essay on “Coffee-Houses as Places of Conversation,” Ekrem Işın argues that “conversation” must here be viewed as an educational method and a mechanism for organizing communication networks. As such this article does not literally address food, but the ritualized mental structures regarding its consumption. In other words, he takes the material side of sociability as his starting point. Whatever his positive contribution ultimately turns out to be, he thus helps to remind us that what is lacking in this volume is attention to the architectural space(s) of eating or of food preparation. The second part of the volume, which focuses on life in domestic environments, including *medreses* and *tekkes*, does not fully remedy this deficiency, but still offers a few insights regarding standards of living, as well as the spatiality of eating and drinking.

Thus Mübahat Kütükoğlu’s “Life in the Medrese,” and Natalie Clayer’s “Life in an İstanbul Tekke in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries according to a Menakibnâme of the Cerrahi Dervishes” both propose to delineate the living environment of the religious. Kütükoğlu’s article, based on mid-nineteenth-century *temettü* registers and several other document collections, focuses on living conditions in the medrese buildings of İstanbul; it does not only pinpoint the poor standards of living and the lack of hygiene, but also provides glimpses into the daily lives of students and resident scholars, ranging from food consumption to intimations of widespread male homosexuality. Clayer, on the other hand, deals with dervish lodges as living spaces in general, revealing much about their inhabitants in the process. Furthermore a striking contrast between the sheikh

and his family emerges, with adult women playing a special role in the upkeep of the tekke, including the reception of *tarikāt* members, guests, and the poor, and the miserable life of the bachelor medrese students.

Emre Yalçın's contribution, "Pastırmacı Yokuşu No: 7, Balat-Istanbul: The Story of a Mansion during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," is based on his own family house, built by Tafılboş Paşa, and bought by Yalçın's family in the 1860s. Yalçın traces the mansion's early nineteenth-century origins through its water-system and physical characteristics, coming up with an account that is illustrative of post-Tanzimat modernization. Suraiya Faroqhi's "Representing France in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: A Wealthy French Dwelling in the Peloponnesus, 1770," however, is based on a much more conceptual approach. Faroqhi poses the question of cultural "border crossing" as she looks at a register prepared at the time of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768-74. Compared with "Cups, Plates, Kitchenware in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Damascus" by Colette Establet and Jean-Paul Pascual, Faroqhi is distinctly successful in making use of plates, cups, and other items used in the preparation and serving of food and drinks so as to establish the "consul's" networks of sociability. For their part, Establet and Pascual embark on an investigation of 450 inheritance inventories from Damascus, dating from 1689-1717, of which only around thirty turn out to provide any information on cooking equipment. There is also some elaboration on the problems inherent in the study of inventories as a source for Ottoman material culture.

Stéphane Yerasimos's "Dwellings in Sixteenth-Century İstanbul" is a study of major stature for the history of the Ottoman capital. Exploring the *vakıf* registers of 1546, 1580, and 1596, Yerasimos does not discuss the terminology of the İstanbul house in the sixteenth century as a glossary of technical terms but rather in the light of the social meanings they convey. His conclusion that most typical of sixteenth-century İstanbul was the single-storey, masonry, or half-timbered house—where the courtyard but not the garden(s) was a characteristic feature—is in stark contrast with the well-known model of the multi-storey wooden house that has been attested for later centuries. Uğur Tanyeli's "Norms of Domestic Comfort and Luxury in Ottoman Metropolises, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries" is mostly based on secondary literature—though Tanyeli also refers to the published *vakıf* register of 1546. Tanyeli's arguments in favor of an eighteenth-century breaking point in Ottoman standards of living, as reflected for example in the increase of specialized kitchens or settees with many

cushions, fits in with Neumann's and Samanci's observations, and merits further discussion.

What then is the conclusion, if any? Here one is left with a high degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that many of the papers in this volume contribute to the accumulated empirical information about Ottoman food and food culture in particular, as well as to our knowledge of material aspects of domestic life and culture. However, at the same time, for many, if not most, of these studies, the starting point continues to be the "discovery" of some new document(s) which are then publicized (though not to the exclusion of other types or groups of evidence). It is therefore difficult, if not entirely impossible, to see in this pervasive practice the developing links with the leading edge of world history for which Suraiya Faroqhi has such a distinguished reputation. A higher mode or plane of integrating empirical research with comparative or theoretical insights thus still seems to lie in the future.

In her "Introduction" to the second volume on *Ottoman Costumes*, Suraiya Faroqhi directly addresses the question of "why and how might one want to study Ottoman clothes." After reviewing the nature of the primary sources (both textual and visual) available for the study of the hierarchical ordering of Ottoman society, Faroqhi turns to the regulations on clothing (enforced both by the state and by particular social group(s) that an individual might have adhered to), and brings out the underlying social, political, and ethno-religious distinctions. She emphasizes the role of textiles in the symbolic context of wealth, social status, and cultural refinement, and proceeds to discuss Ottoman fashion before the nineteenth century and has a lot to say about the influence of eastern and western cultural contacts on Ottoman costume. She also draws our attention to the need to overcome the enduring neglect of poor people's clothing.

However, much of what follows unfortunately falls short of this strive toward comprehensiveness. In order for a new link to be formed between Ottoman history and the leading edge of European (or world) history, a change in the paradigm, meaning a shift from a fragmentary treatment of cultural history to a total history approach, is sorely needed. This, of course, will take a long time to achieve, and most of the present volume is representative of a fragmentary sampling of Ottoman art and costume history. Broken up into separate, quasi-insular fields, such as the history of architecture, of (miniature) painting, of the other decorative arts, of music, and of literature (and now of food and foodways), the Ottoman history of art

and material culture has always been encapsulated within the functioning of the imperial court. Thus, while the universal practice of art history has gradually shifted its interpretative modes from documentary, formalist, or voluntary interpretations and connoisseurship, to discussions of power structures, reception theory, the social foundations of art, and (more recently) identity issues inherent in art, Ottoman art / cultural history continues to be viewed through an all-encompassing royal lens. When it comes to costumes and textiles, this therefore results in a focus on sultans' or dignitaries' silks and velvets, and kaftans and furs, despite a certain extension of the historians' geographical horizons beyond the imperial capital in order to cover the clothing of the middle-class women of Bursa or the local militia in Yemen or Albania.

Partly compensated by three other articles which indirectly address the role of dress codes as identity markers, such shortcomings nevertheless stand in stark contrast to the state of the art European historical contribution to this volume "The Historiography of Costume: A Brief Survey," by Odile Blanc, an expert on medieval French art and costume history. Faroqhi justifies the inclusion of Blanc's historiographical account in terms of providing some ideas for future studies by Ottomanists. In itself, this proves to be nothing more than an indication of the extent to which many Ottomanists are disconnected from world history. In fact, when compared to the first volume, *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House*, Faroqhi's introduction to *Ottoman Costumes. From Textile to Identity* offers a far more realistic evaluation of the field. Studies of textiles and dress culture in the Ottoman realm, apart from art historians' pattern-driven and mostly descriptive efforts, are at a rather embryonic stage. What is striking is the absence of a common problematic area or research agenda even in the fifth workshop of the series on Ottoman material history.

This is not to say that despite such methodological defects fragmentary research cannot provide useful additions to our existing storehouse of knowledge. On the contrary, like its predecessor, this volume, too, abounds in small gems, although some more cut and polished than others. Thus after the historiographical introductions, we are given three articles that explore archival and visual sources, including museum collections, available for the study of Ottoman costume. In the first of these, Hülya Tezcan, whose contribution to the study of Ottoman luxury textiles and clothing has always been significant, provides an important exploration of "Furs and Skins owned by the Sultans." Suraiya Faroqhi's "Female Costumes in Late Fifteenth-Century Bursa" surveys the clothing terms encountered in

kadı-registers, and probes into the problems inherent in these sources. Obviously, it is a very limited sampling which is involved here. Leslie Meral Schick dwells on a major (visual) source for the study of Ottoman costume and explores "The Place of Dress in Pre-Modern Costume Albums." The seventeenth-century costume albums that she reviews fully reveal the extent to which clothing could serve as an identity marker in both European and Ottoman cities of the Early Modern Era.

In the second sub-set, the state regulation of clothing and its role in dispersing unity and separation is explored in four articles. Whereas Matthew Elliot investigates "Dress Codes in the Ottoman Empire: The Case of Franks," Madeline C. Zilfi studies the restrictions on female costume in "Whose Laws? Gendering the Ottoman Sumptuary Regime." This examination of the sumptuary restrictions certainly helps to interpret the Ottoman sense of identity, if not identities or multiple identities, defined by gender, religion, ethnicity, spirituality, language, lineage, geography, township, urban or rural roots, profession, education, etc, within the Ottoman realm. Two specialists on the nineteenth century, Thomas Kühn and Isa Blumi, locate their source material on the fringes of the empire, setting out to explore the role the state played in the process of creating identities for the Ottoman subjects in (respectively) Yemen and Albania. In his investigation of "Clothing the 'uncivilized': Military Recruitment in Ottoman Yemen and the Quest for 'native' Uniforms, 1880-1914," Kühn reveals that the uniform that was adopted for the voluntary conscripts in Yemen, then a newly conquered territory, could better be characterized as a traditional costume worn by local commoners of modest status rather than a genuinely new-style, modern Ottoman military uniform. Kühn argues that this choice was deliberately intended to differentiate the "civilized" regular troops from the "uncivilized" tribesmen called to service. For his part, Isa Blumi, in "Undressing the Albanian: Finding Social History in Ottoman Material Cultures," postulates that in the case of the Malësore Albanians not even religious symbols were easily distinguishable as these were shared with others. Ahmet Ersoy, another art historian contributing to the volume, concerns himself with the cultural and ideological contexts of nineteenth-century world exhibitions in "A Sartorial Tribute to Late Tanzimat Ottomanism: The Elbise-i Osmaniyye Album." Set against the background of the Ottoman exhibition at the 1873 world fair in Vienna, in this costume book—prepared by Osman Hamdi, the first Ottoman historicist painter and the founder of the first Ottoman museum, together with the French artist and amateur historian Victor Marie de Launay—the

figures representing Ottoman officers were put together systematically so as to reflect the nineteenth-century administrative reforms. These figures were followed by ethnic types (from various geographical areas) to show, according to Ersoy, that the Ottoman Empire was an integrated polity at that time.

“How did a Vizier Dress in the Eighteenth Century?” This is the question posed by Christoph Neumann, who thereby takes us back to the Ottoman center, in official if not in geographical terms. Neumann reconstructs the wardrobe of two viziers who were provincial governors, and investigates the extent to which personal choices might be detected behind the rules set by the state and society. But, although Neumann’s hypothesis is interesting, his findings turn out to be meager. The apparent insignificance of individual preferences may, of course, be overcome as more cases become available—or when the character traits, mannerisms, or idiosyncrasies of the individuals in question are more sharply divergent. However, with the two *paşas* discussed here, we are once again left with nothing more than wealth and social status.

Louise W. Mackie’s “Ottoman Kaftans with an Italian Identity” reflects on Ottoman cultural contacts. In the face of the scarcity of written evidence, two dozen kaftans preserved in the Topkapı Palace collections that were made from Italian velvet (as opposed to only two Ottoman velvet kaftans) provide a wealth of information regarding both their technical features and symbolic attributes. Mackie argues that the Ottomans preferred Italian velvets because of their superior quality, whereas the profitability of the Ottoman market proved to be decisive for the Italian producers’ adaptation of Ottoman patterns. Mackie next raises the question of identity. “Discerning individuals in that textile-literate society,” Mackie continues (in line with Neumann), were able to make sense out of (or impart a meaning to) all of this. On the other side of the coin, the imitation of Ottoman fashion in Europe is explored by Charlotte Jirousek in a paper titled “Ottoman Influences in Western Dress.” The author, who has previously explored the interaction between Ottoman clothing and the more rapidly changing fashions of Medieval and Early Modern Europe, discusses in this article fashion and sources of fashion ideas, both in dress and headgear, and singles out layering as a very distinctive feature of Ottoman costume.

It may be noted that while the present volume sheds some light on the ordering of Ottoman society by identifying certain social groups defined through clothing and clothing regulations, the understanding of self-

representation in this multicultural and culturally eclectic realm remains difficult. The individual, adhering to a social group that is differentiated by external signs, continues to evade historical reconstructions. Part of the story is that political and cultural “Ottomanization” had created a relatively unified identity, at least for the political elite, by the mid-sixteenth century. This imperial identity also constituted an ideal for the lesser members of the class of officials and dignitaries. Both the state functionaries incorporated into “the Ottoman way,” and the artistic canons and archetypes, together with rituals, ceremonies, codes, and manners, designed at the court and developed in the capital, were transported outward to various provincial centers, thus spreading the imperial image in order to co-opt provincial elites and to legitimize Ottoman rule. This sense of “Ottoman-ness” proved to be so successful that even when the grip of the central administration began to weaken, the established artistic and cultural order continued to serve as an instrument of consensus. In the sphere of dress or costume, this proposition will have to be tested and re-tested by further research.

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