

OSMANLI'DAN GÜNÜMÜZE KADIN BELLEĞİNİ OLUŞTURMADA KAYNAK SORUNU

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WOMEN'S MEMORY : THE PROBLEM OF SOURCES FROM THE OTTOMAN ERA TO THE PRESENT

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WOMEN'S NARRATIVES IN THE LOCALLY NOTABLE (EŞRAF) FAMILIES

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In this paper, we aim to elaborate on the interviews we conducted with women from the *eşraf* (locally notable) families in the research project (Ayşe Durakbaşa, Gül Özsan, Meltem Karadağ; TUBİTAK funded project entitled "The Role of the Local Notables in the Formation of a Provincial Bourgeoisie and Middle Classes in Provincial Towns in Turkey, 2008) we have carried out in Muğla, Denizli, Aydın, Kahramanmaraş and Gaziantep for the last two years. We had the chance to compare the women's narratives with the men's based on the research data collected by an ethnographic approach and oral history interviews. The women and men from the eşraf families brought forth different matters as important topics in the interviews. In the interviews conducted with men, the story of the family was related in relation to the growth of family wealth (usually parallel to the establishment of the family firm or business) while women usually underlined such topics as intra-family relations as relationship of the mother and the father, women's education, or relationship among the women of the family. Thus, family was depicted in the form of a narrative of establishment of a firm, an institution in the interviews with men; while women constructed their narratives more on subjectivities, (that is, how they positioned themselves in relation to the family business), and intra-family relationships and tensions.

Another significant feature of the interviews with women was that these women gave primary importance to the social relations with the women of other *eşraf* families and told these stories in an elaborate fashion. Hence, women's narratives contained important data about *eşraf* families as a social status group. Women, from these families, were engaged in building relationships with the local governing elite, the newcomers to the town, and their families. They functioned as representatives of family status. They were active in the formation and development of the social capital and building of appropriate marriage ties by the maintenance of social equivalence in the marriages. They stressed the importance of rituals such as weddings, how and where they are conducted and what kind of a recreation is preferred. Thus, even though the foundations and symbolic characteristics of the *eşraf* and being from the *eşraf* are rooted in a male structure, women played primary roles in all relations with the similar status families and different status families, that is, in the realization of class practices, in general.

The biographical stories related by these women, from the rich and notable families of the provincial towns, suggest significant keys in relation to the construction and realization of modernization and nationhood at the local level as well as the specific context about the particular town and province. Besides, the narratives also illustrate the relations of the provincial *eşraf* with the bourgeoisie of the metropolis such as İstanbul and İzmir and the exemplary life styles followed by these women and their families.