

Discourses on Women's Rights in a Cross-Cultural Perspective: Women's Periodicals in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey from the Mid-nineteenth Century to the Interwar Period

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Abstract

Discourses on women's rights in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire were inscribed within the prevailing widespread debate about the future of the imperial order – a debate that, apart from the Ottoman realm, embraced the whole Balkans. In this framework gender considerations became significant since new notions of citizenship were elaborated in gendered ways. Women of every ethno-religious origin became major agents of these renegotiations in the Ottoman territories, subsequently in Turkey, and in the wider Balkans. Their collective interventions for civil and political rights are aspects of this process.

In this presentation I will attempt to follow this process through women's periodicals that were published amongst various ethno-religious groups in the Ottoman Empire, in Greece and later on in Turkey, from the mid-nineteenth century to the interwar period. Those initiatives will be approached as effects of communication between ethno-religiously disparate people across the entire Balkans. This interaction created a common canvas of challenges and imperatives with significant differentiations. The latter are linked to the different political agendas prevailing in each community. Such an approach enables us to revisit such dominant historiographical concepts as nationality or the millet and their role in people's everyday lives during this period.

Biography

Efi Kanner is Associate Professor of Turkish Culture and Society in the Department of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her research interests cover fields of social history of the Late Ottoman Empire and Turkey such as micro-history, history of education and of philanthropy, history of gender relations and history of social movements. Her books: *Ftôheia kai filanthrôpia stên Orthodoxē koinoteta tēs Kônstantinoupolēs (1753-1912)* (in Greek) [Poverty and Philanthropy in the Istanbul Orthodox community (1753-1912)], (Katarti, Athens 2004); *Emfytes koinônikes diekdikêseis apo thn Othomanikē autokratoria stên Hellada kais stên Tourkia. O kosmos mias Hellênidas Hristianēs daskalas* (in Greek) [Gender-based Social Demands from the Ottoman Empire to Greece and Turkey. The World of a Greek Orthodox Female School Teacher], (Papazisis Publishers, Athens 2012); *Andres kai Gyniakes stên trohia tou eksyghronimou. O tourkikos eksyghronismos apo tē skopia tōn emfylôn sheseôn* (in Greek) [Men and Women in the Modernization Adventure. Turkish Modernization from a Gender Perspective], (Athens: Herodotos Editions, 2021); and the direction of the collective volume *Tourkia: via, antistash kai politiki ston kairo tēs ktisēs. Politikes kai koinônikes antidraseis apenanti stên emfylē via* (in Greek) [Turkey: Violence, Resistance and Politics in a Time of Crisis. Social and Political Reactions towards Gender-based Violence], (Athens: Herodotos Editions, 2018).