The contrast between Muslim Istanbul and Anatolia in the late Ottoman years was based on the large-scale socioeconomic dichotomies that often set great traditional cities apart from their hinterlands. These differences were also felt in the rhythms of ordinary domestic life in the city. Istanbul was marked by a unique system of marriage and household formation, one that had cultural connections with the Anatolian hinterland, but that also resembled those found in other major centers in the Mediterranean basin. This pattern is not at all what it seems to have been to many Turks or to most European observers of Turkey in the 19th century.

My aim in this article is to describe the Istanbul Muslim system of marriage and household formation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries using the only reliable population data available for that period. This description will be set against those of a number of Turkish and foreign observers of family and household life in Istanbul during more or less the same years. In order better to understand the Istanbul pattern, I will compare and contrast it with the late Ottoman rural Anatolian Muslim system and with systems of marriage and household formation in various European societies in the past.

DATA

The quantitative data used in this study are derived from an analysis of the original main rosters (esas nüfus kayıtlı defterleri) of the de jure Ottoman census (tahrir-i nüfus) of 1907. The census of 1907 was the second major Ottoman census to record information about both males and females and to include a considerable amount of information of potential demographic and sociological value. Individuals are recorded in the rosters as members of residential groups of various types, the most common of which by far was the household (hane).

A 5-percent systematic sample consisting almost entirely of households (hanes) was drawn from the surviving registers for the permanent (that is, Istanbul-registered) Muslim population of the five central districts of the city. The data from this census are without doubt the most reliable source for the study of the household in late Ottoman society. Registration in the Ottoman capital is known to have been quite thorough, for both females and males. Financial penalties
were imposed on those who were not registered, and strict measures were instituted to ensure that census officials carried out their tasks correctly. Each individual registered was issued a nüfus tezkeresi (population certificate), a combination of a birth certificate and identification card. The nüfus tezkeresi was an essential document for transacting all official and legal business, for buying and selling property, and for obtaining travel documents. It is likely that registration was more complete for the literate and sophisticated civil service and commercial classes and less so for the petit bourgeois, artisanal, and wage-laboring classes. Although our data yield the full range of socioeconomic strata for Muslim Istanbul during that period, it appears that artisan–shopkeepers and, in particular, wage laborers may have been underrepresented.

OBSERVERS OF THE ISTANBUL HOUSEHOLD

Ahmed Midhat Efendi, one of the most popular Turkish writers of the late 19th century, portrays Muslim marriage patterns in Istanbul in his novels and essays in the terms in which many people have commonly perceived them: girls in particular—like the proverbial European child brides of the past—were described as marrying very young, not long after puberty, “at thirteen or fourteen, or fifteen at the latest.” In his well-known novel Felâtun Bey and Râkim Efendi (1876) Mustafa Merâkî Efendi, the father of the protagonist Felâtun Bey, “was married . . . at the age of sixteen . . . to a girl of twelve.” Generally speaking, however, men were portrayed as marrying much later than that. In the same novel Râkim Efendi married at the age of 27. But many people believed, and still believe, that men in Istanbul also married very young in the past. Perhaps they believe that because it fits in with the way they conceive households as having been set up at marriage in the past. We shall discuss this important matter in some detail.

Charles White, writing about Ottoman families in Istanbul in 1846 articulates what was certainly the most common view held by Europeans at that time about marriage age in the past, a view not radically different from that of Ahmed Midhat. White tells us:

The majority of Osmanlis attach so much importance to the early marriage of their children, that they sometimes discuss and arrange these matters before the birth of the destined spouses. Mothers, whose sons have scarcely attained their fifteenth year, can neither sleep nor eat until the latter are suitably disposed of; and the same anxiety is felt by those who have marriageable daughters.

There are no reliable statistics available on marriage age for Istanbul in that period, so we cannot comment with certainty upon White’s observations. There are, however, some data available for the period when Ahmed Midhat was writing. We now know, from a systematic examination of marriage registrations, that the mean marriage age for Muslim Istanbul males just after the turn of the century was nearly 30 and for females around 20. The mean age at first marriage for women was 19 in 1885, at the time of the first Ottoman census to record women and hence the source of the first, and perhaps only, reliable statistical data on this subject. While there was a rising trend in female marriage age
during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Istanbul, male age at marriage remained quite stable—and quite high—throughout those years. It is rather unlikely that in the 30 or 40 years prior to the census of 1885 average marriage ages (particularly those for men) could have been as low as Ahmed Midhat Efendi, Charles White, and many others believed them to have been, though the Tanzimat years may have been characterized by the beginnings of a change in Istanbul marriage-age patterns.

Lucy Garnett, who wrote a number of books about Ottoman family life around the turn of the century, explains what she too believed to be the early age at marriage of men in the 19th century, by referring to “patriarchal customs... [which] mak[e] it unnecessary for a youth to wait until he has a home of his own before taking a wife.” The implication of Garnett’s analysis is that Ottoman young men were not burdened with the expenses of setting up their own homes at marriage as she knew was the expectation of those getting married in England and parts of Europe at the time. They had little choice, she felt, given the strong patriarchal tradition in Turkey, other than to include the bride in their father’s household, forming what we now call a two-generation, multiple family household. Since, the argument goes, men in Turkey in the past did not have to spend their youth accumulating sufficient resources to support a wife and future family, they could get married at a young age.

It seemed very clear to Garnett and other observers that pressures, both cultural and economic, were pulling in the direction of early marriage and multiple family households, creating a system very much like that which John Hajnal describes as characterizing most of the non-European world, and which he calls the joint-household system. Ziya Gökalp, the Young Turk sociologist and ideologue, called this patriarchal multiple family household, which he said typified the period, the “konak” type of family. Though it was not his intention, his choice of the term konak (urban mansion) clearly points to households of the elite, or rather generalizes about a historical period on that basis. How typical were large complex multigenerational households? Were there great differences between Istanbul and its hinterlands? Can we build the Ottoman household formation systems of Istanbul and its hinterlands on the common foundation of the multiple family household? It appears that there is some confusion in this area that must be clarified before we can decide.

Quite a lot has been written in recent years about household formation patterns in Europe and in particular about what are believed to be the distinctive features of the (Western) European family and household. The impetus for many of these efforts may be attributed to Hajnal’s now classic essay on European marriage patterns in past times. The evidence Hajnal collected led him to draw a rough line from Leningrad to Trieste as the eastern frontier of the pattern that he and others have claimed as a possible feature of the West or of Western civilization.

In Hajnal’s joint household system, men and women marry early and start life in a household in which an older couple, usually the man’s parents, is in charge. The senior generation—and that means the father when he is alive—remains in charge until his death. The system accounts for fission in which several married couples may split to form two or more households, each containing one or more
The timing of the split is especially important, and has a crucial effect on the size and composition of households, Hajnal tells us. Laslett elaborates on Hajnal's model utilizing current research on the European family and household and presents us with a more differentiated set of patterns, or tendencies as he calls them, as to the composition of the family household. These are largely geographically based distinctions that, he observes, often belie considerable intraregional variation. France is notable in this respect in the Western region. Laslett's regions are “west and northwest,” “west/central or middle,” “Mediterranean,” and “east.” How does early 20th century Istanbul fit into this scheme? It would be helpful in locating Istanbul in this way not only to view it in relation to Europe, with which it had a geographic and a belated yet increasingly pervasive cultural connection. It is also important to view it from the perspective of the rural Anatolian Turkish heartland with which it shared deep-rooted cultural and social traditions, but from which, as we shall see, it differed in many important ways.

Istanbul in 1907, with a population of approximately one million inhabitants, was the cosmopolitan capital of a rapidly shrinking multidenominational, multietnic, polyglot empire. It was the nexus for the diverse influences from the various parts of the empire in Europe, Asia, and Africa. It was the major point of attraction for hundreds of thousands of ethnic Turkish refugees from the collapsing Ottoman provinces, many of which provided the city with a great dynamism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nearly half of the permanent Muslim population of the city in 1907 was not born in Istanbul. More than 35 percent of the population of the city as a whole was non-Muslim, and over 15 percent carried foreign nationality. These elements played a great role in setting the tone of its commercial and cultural life.

Istanbul was the major political, administrative, economic, and cultural center of the empire. It was the primary focal point for the processes of Westernization that, at the time of the census of 1907, were beginning to penetrate even the lives of middle-class Muslim families in the city. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 accelerated that process and increasingly set off modern Istanbul from its more inward-looking, parochial hinterlands. It is not an exaggeration to say that the future identity of the country was largely being constructed in Istanbul during those years—not only in its political, educational, and economic institutions, but also in its households and families.

There is little doubt that the Muslim household formation system in rural Anatolian Turkey in past times was non-European, resembling in many respects Hajnal's joint household system. It also appears to share certain tendencies with the "East" (European) type that Laslett distinguished. Residence was patrilocal (i.e., with the husband's father's household), authority remained in the hands of the patriarch; and the young married couple had no control over the factors of production, as inheritance was delayed until the death of the pater familias.

Marriage did not have the significance in the rural Turkish household formation system that it had in Western Europe, where a young couple generally set up
a household independently of their parents at marriage. Mortality rather than nuptiality appears to have been the engine pulling the system in rural Turkey in the past, where a married couple would only be in a position to set up an independent household after the husband’s father died. In the ideal Turkish system, marriage meant the entrance into the husband’s household of a gelin, a bride, the formation of a new conjugal unit (an aile) in the household, and the beginning of legitimate sexual relations and biological reproduction. It did not change the residence of the husband, nor did it have any significance in terms of the transfer of rights to property. Neither did it change the structure of the household (hane) as a production and consumption unit.

As an economic entity the hane was not constructed by the sum of conjugal units. Rather, the division of labor for production fell along lines of sex and age, which meant that husbands and wives spent much of their time in work groups composed of members of their own sex, and when they entered the household conceived as a production unit, they did so in the role of adult male and female laborers. The system of residence was, as we have seen, clearly patrilocal, and the patriarch had the responsibility for providing residential quarters for the new aile, either under the same roof or in close proximity. The residential quarters of the couple were furnished either by the parents of the groom or of the bride, with variations from region to region.

The rule for rural Turkish households was, then, that fission should not take place until the death of the patriarch. In theory, this might mean that Anatolian Turks in the past lived in large and complex households composed of married offspring and their children before the split. In reality, a significant number of them did not live that way, though apparently through no choice of their own. The estate would be divided at the death of the father, with offspring receiving their customary shares. Married brothers might live together for a short period after that, but it would have been unusual for them to continue doing so for long. As a result, the division of the estate almost inevitably meant the breakup of the hane, assuming that the household had at least two sons and that they were married at the time of their father’s death.

Like neighboring pre-20th-century Christian Russia and the Balkans, early age at first marriage was the rule in rural Turkey for both men and women. Although Anatolia borders on the northern Mediterranean, its marriage system seems to have been as impenetrable to the traditions of the region as the Taurus Mountains are to Mediterranean ecology. For men, marriage probably took place no later than 20 or 22; for women, it occurred between 14 and 18. In a society such as Turkey of the recent past, where the control of female sexuality was so intimately linked to the honor (namus) of the family, early marriage of one’s daughters was a safe strategy to follow. Since marriage was not linked to the devolution of property, and since there was no need to be self-supporting upon marriage, a relatively young age at first marriage for men was a reasonable alternative. The age differential between husbands and wives was low in contrast to the northern Mediterranean pattern that Smith, largely following Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, describes.

The rural Turkish household formation system in the past can be called a joint household system because the rules of the system call for the joint residence of
Senior and junior generations at the marriage of the latter, because authority always rested with the senior generation, and because of the young age at which people married. The rules, however, do not describe the ways families actually lived, because there were often barriers—social, economic, or demographic—to the realization of those rules. At any one time, it appears that 17–34 percent of all households were composed of two or more couples, and 4–25 percent were composed of a couple and various other nonconjugal relatives. About 55–60 percent were simple (nuclear) in structure. They ranged in size from about 5.3–6.5 persons. Under ideal conditions—ideal, that is, in terms of what we know about rural Turkish cultural preferences in the past—most individuals would have experienced all the household types at some point in life, since households in rural Turkey in the past went through a series of phases as their members aged. In only one of these phases were they large and complex structures. They appear to have followed a cycle virtually identical to that of southern Trans-Danubian households in Hungary during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Because men in rural areas married at a very young age, it is very unlikely that they would have assumed the headship of their own households immediately upon marriage, even if their fathers were not alive. Given the probability of a relatively low male life expectancy in the Turkish countryside during our period, many young men, even many eldest sons, surely did begin their married lives without the presence of their fathers. Even if the patriarch were not alive, however, his son and daughter-in-law—preferably his eldest son if he had more than one—would typically reside in his house with his widowed wife and her unmarried children. Though it is difficult to know with any certainty, it seems likely, given the young age of the couple at marriage and their inexperience, that a number of years would have to pass before they could emerge as the true managers and head of their household though that could, and probably would, have taken place while the husband’s mother was still alive.

ISTANBUL HOUSEHOLD FORMATION SYSTEM

The contrast between Muslim rural Anatolia and Ottoman Istanbul in marriage patterns and household formation was as great as it was in so many other aspects of the social and economic life of this dichotomous society. Not long after the turn of the century, the mean marriage age for Muslim men in Istanbul was 30 and for women 20, a pattern, which if we take into account an elevation in age of a few years, more closely resembles the Mediterranean pattern from urban Italy in the past, than that of the Anatolian hinterlands of the Ottoman Empire that we have just described. As in urban Tuscany, nearly 500 years earlier, “the city discouraged males . . . from assuming the burden of matrimony early.”

Households in Istanbul were also much less complex on the average than those in rural Anatolia. In 1907, only 12 percent of all households in Istanbul were multiple in structure (see Table 1 for an explanation of the classification system used); 16.1 percent were extended in structure; 40 percent were simple in structure; and nearly 21 percent composed of people living alone or without
families. The mean household size was a modest 4.2. This is, as we have seen, a significant contrast to the greater complexity and larger size of rural households during that period, and at the same time runs counter to commonly accepted views that hold that in the past Istanbul was characterized by large and complex households. Despite its pretensions to universality for that period, Gökalp's konak type encompassed only slightly more than 10 percent of households in pre–World War I Istanbul.26 It is hardly surprising that Istanbul, the cosmopolitan capital of the Ottoman Empire and a major port city with dense maritime connections to the whole Mediterranean basin, would differ from the rural, landlocked hinterlands of the Anatolian plateau. It is also not surprising that family and household formation patterns in an urban economy increasingly slipping away from the traditional production arrangements of its premodern past would differ from those of a rural society in which small family farms using rather simple technology were the norm.

The age at which people marry is the key to so many other aspects of their domestic life and demographic behavior. Schofield, Wrigley, and Smith, in a number of recent studies, have examined the complex connections between age at marriage, the economy, and fertility patterns in pre–19th-century England and have come to the conclusion that the age at which women married was the major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Number of Type</th>
<th>Percentage of Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solitaries</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No family</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple family</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple family</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassifiable</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All households 1176 100.1

This system of classification was developed by the members of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. See Peter Laslett, ed., assisted by Richard Wall, Household and Family in Past Time (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 28–32, for more details.

Solitaries consist of individuals living in households alone.

No family households consist of coresident siblings, or other relatives, or nonrelated coresidents and, in all cases, preclude the presence of a conjugal family unit.

Simple family households, often known as nuclear family households, consist of a married couple, or a married couple with offspring, or of a single parent with offspring.

Extended family households consist of a conjugal family unit with the addition of one or more relatives who themselves do not constitute an additional conjugal family unit.

Multiple-family households consist of all households that include two or more conjugal family units connected by kinship or marriage.
Alan Duben

fertility-regulating mechanism during that time. Wall, following the same logic that has guided his colleagues at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, notes that, “when people marry at a later age there are fewer complex households and more households containing only parents and their unmarried children.” He then adds that this was “the situation not just in England but in much of northwest Europe.” If this logic is correct, there should be a systematic connection between age at marriage and household types, or more precisely between age at marriage, household formation patterns, and the subsequent sequences of types through which households pass. Istanbul men married late, later on the average than Englishmen in the past. Their marriage age fits the Mediterranean pattern. Women in Istanbul, however, married a few years younger than their English peers, though later than Mediterranean women in the past, and their marriage age rose a year each decade beginning at least as early as the turn of the century. How do these nuptial facts connect with their household formation patterns?

Laslett is convinced that “neolocalism”—setting up a household independent of one’s parents or one’s spouse’s parents at marriage—is the “outstanding point of differentiation among the postulated regional tendencies.” He argues that it is “a decidedly structural principle” and that it entails many of the other characteristics of the regions with regard to their household systems. Our problem begins at this point. It is not that we shall claim that Istanbul had a neolocal system; but there were, it appears, strong tendencies in that direction, or at least circumstances that mitigated against multigenerational residence and economic dependency at marriage. This is surprising to find at the very periphery of the European continent and at the edge of the Muslim world. If anything, Istanbul fits into the Mediterranean marriage and household formation system, particularly with regard to age at marriage. There were, however, some important differences in domestic group formation, postmarital residence, and in the kin composition of households. Our ability to classify the Istanbul system is further complicated when we take into consideration the inconsistencies between household formation and kin composition of households viewed as a cultural system, on the one hand—i.e., as the largely unarticulated generalizations of people’s deeply rooted preferences—and the ways in which people in the past actually went about setting up their households, on the other.

As Macfarlane points out, a high degree of “emotional” as well as “economic nucleation” characterized the relationship between generations in English families in the past. That was, as he tells us, the “custom” of that society. It was not, however, either the custom or the statistical norm in societies other than a small number of those located at the northwest tip of the Eurasian continental mass according to Murdock and Macfarlane, though recent work has also located the pattern south of that area on the Iberian peninsula, and future studies may show that it is even more widespread than we now know it to be. Complex arrangements between custom and practice are possible. “It may,” for example, as Macfarlane postulates, “be frequently the case that sons settle near their parents, thus setting up a sort of patrilocal system within an apparent system of neolocality.” Reher describes a similar situation in the supposed normatively
neolocal Spanish town of Cuenca in the 18th and 19th centuries, where neolocal residential patterns are embedded in a system of strong ties between family members in different households. The obverse of this pattern is also possible. That is, it may be the case that most sons assume headship of their own households at marriage, setting up a tendency toward a kind of economic neolocalism within a system in which the preferred form of postmarital residence is with the parental generation, and where the emotional bonds connecting extrahousehold family members are quite dense.

The evidence is strong that the custom, the ingrained traditional residential preferences of people in Istanbul at marriage, was not neolocal. Occasional suggestions by Ottoman modernists beginning after the turn of the century that young couples should set up independent households at marriage and be self-sufficient are insistent and reflect, if anything, the deeply embedded preferences of parents, and we presume their children, for living together. Some sons and daughters—themselves modernists, perhaps—may indeed have preferred to live apart from their parents. We will, however, never know much about desires so difficult to express in the gerontocracy of Ottoman Istanbul. While the custom, the cultural preference, was not neolocal, it was also not purely patrilocal, as it most certainly was in rural Anatolia.

There is a longstanding tradition in Istanbul of preferential residence with the wife's parents, part and parcel of what appears to be a kinship system that gives equal weight to both sides of the family in contrast to rural areas, particularly in central and eastern Anatolia, where the husband's side receives special attention. The Aegean area seems to bear a closer resemblance to Istanbul in this respect than do central or eastern Anatolia. Although filiation in Istanbul followed the male line as it did elsewhere in the Mediterranean region, residence patterns differed from the predominant patrilocalism in the area. Fifteenth-century urban Tuscany seems to have been more patrilocal than Istanbul.

The Istanbul custom of residence with the wife's family may have been modeled after the imperial palace tradition where, in the absence of married sons, daughters' husbands, known as damats, traditionally played politically very significant roles in palace and state affairs. Many grand viziers were at the same time the sultan's damats. The prestigious status of the damat was emulated in the microcosm of the elite households of the city, which were linked to the palace both through intricate patron–client ties and a kind of institutional mimesis. The high status of the damat in Istanbul was not just something limited to the upper crust of society, but pervaded domestic mores in the city in general.

In statistical terms, it was just as common to find patrilocal multiple family households in Istanbul in the late Ottoman period as those formed with the wife's parents. Demographic realities reinforced the latter custom. As we shall see, with men marrying at the age of 30 to women about ten years younger than they, there would (given the probability of a relatively low life expectancy during the period) have been fewer husbands' parents surviving to that time than wives'. More than half of the multiple family households of which 20–29-year-olds were the junior married partners and nearly two-thirds of those in which 30–39-year-olds were in the same position were composed of a married couple and the wife's
parents. The majority of resident relatives in Istanbul households were from the wife’s side of the family. The position of the Istanbul resident damat is inverted in Anatolian Turkish culture, where the term for his rural equivalent, iç güvey, conveys anything but a desirable status for a young married man. Although the residential custom in Istanbul gave more or less equal weight to both sides of the family, there was, it seems, greater emphasis placed on the husband's side as one moves down the social ladder, that is, with social distance from the palace model.

Headship rates for Muslim males in Istanbul in 1907 follow a pattern similar to those characterizing preindustrial Western and Central Europe. By the time they reached the 30–39-year-old age group, over 60 percent of all men in the city were heading their own households. Rates continued to rise until men reached the ages 50–59 and then began to fall off slightly, indicating an authority system flexible enough to allow some elderly men to be superseded by their sons. This is very different from the typically delayed pattern of headship in non-Western societies, and in certain non-Western European societies such as Krasnoe Sobakino in neighboring Russia in 1849, where headship devolved at least ten years later. Even in other Mediterranean urban centers in the past, such as Renaissance Tuscany, at the age of 30 fewer than 50 percent of all men headed households and “marriage and the establishment of an independent household do not coincide.”

The relationship between marriage and household formation in Istanbul was a close one in comparison to what it must have been in rural Turkish society in the past. The fact, though perhaps not the rule, was that at marriage a young couple formed a household independent of the control of their parents. We can only presume what the situation must have been in rural areas on the basis of what we know about the relatively high percentages of multiple family households in past times, since there are no figures available that would give us a clear picture of headship rates in the Ottoman Turkish countryside. When the relationship between marriage and household formation is close, a great percentage of couples set up new households at marriage rather than joining their parents. They begin their married lives in charge of their own families rather than under the tutelage of one set of their parents. They are the masters of their house and bear the burden and responsibility for running the household economy. This was the situation in Istanbul in contrast to rural areas, where men married very young and were more likely to have been dependents in their father's household.

The threshold for headship in Istanbul in 1907 was clearly located between the 20–29- and 30–39-year-old age groups; that is, more or less at the age of 30, the same age at which men on the average married in the city at that time (see Table 2). Only 35 percent of all men in the 20–29 age cohort headed their own households. By the time men reached the ages 30–39, the majority (61 percent) were heading their own households, and the percentage rose to 78.5 by the ages 40–49, remaining at a high plateau until after 60, when it begins to decline slightly.

The Istanbul data (see Table 2) appear to fall somewhere in between Western European and Mediterranean patterns with respect to the connection between marriage and autonomous household formation. In 1907, 88 percent of men in
the 30–39-year-old cohort were married, as compared with only 42 percent of the 20–29-year-old cohort. As we have observed, 61 percent were heading their own households. That figure is less than that which typified Western European societies, though greater than that found in parts of the northern Mediterranean world in the past. It appears at first glance, however, that nearly 40 percent of the 30–39-year-old cohort had not set up autonomous households at or soon after marriage, and one might presume that they were living with their parents in a joint family household. These crude figures are deceptive.

A breakdown of the kin composition of the households of the married nonheads reveals a different and more complex picture (see Table 3), and an adjusted percentage brings Istanbul headship even closer to the Western European norm. Approximately one-half of married nonheads between the ages 30–39 were living as the secondary unit with one or the other set of parents. The rest were living with age-peers, usually with their own siblings or with those of their spouse, in a household the management of which they presumably shared with the head in a way they would not have had they been the junior couple in a multiple family unit. The situation is similar for the 20–29-year-olds. If we combine the percentages of such individuals with those for the household heads in these cohorts, we get figures of 31 and 73 percent for the 20–29 and 30–39 age cohorts, respectively. This figure of 73 percent represents the proportion of those living in family households independent of the authority of the senior generation and points to a residential relationship between generations in Istanbul quite different from that characterizing joint household systems. It is interesting to note that there is a greater tendency to reside with the wife’s family among the 30–39-year-old cohort than among their juniors. Of the 20–29-year-old nonheads, 53 percent live in that way, whereas 61 percent of their seniors do. That may be because, as we have argued, the probability of the husband’s father or mother surviving at that age is lower than that of the wife’s parents, given the age difference between spouses.

Three-quarters of male household heads in their prime marriageable years, ages 30–34, were heading households that were either simple (51 percent) or

---

**TABLE 2 Marriage and headship in Muslim Istanbul, 1907**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group of Household Head</th>
<th>Proportion of Males in All Age Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ever-married &lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–29</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>90.1 &lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>87.2 &lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Includes all married and widowed heads.

<sup>b</sup> These proportions are lower than might be expected due to the classification of some widowers as single at the time of the census.
extended (22 percent) in structure. We know that in most cases the extension resulted from the presence of a mother, or less likely, a mother-in-law. Widowed mothers would not, as a rule, head households if their sons, especially their married sons, were alive to do so. As we have seen, only 12 percent of all households in 1907 were multiple, and only 10.2 percent were the multigenerational family household that many have presumed to have been the typical form of residence for Ottoman Turks in Istanbul.

In sum, only a small percentage of men setting up households at marriage were doing so with their father present in the households in which they were born and grew up. They were largely on their own, either having succeeded to the headship of their father’s house at his death, or having set up an independent household, possibly with another relative not too much older than themselves. In either case, they were supporting their own household, or they shared the responsibility for doing so with others of their generation. They may, as in 19th-century...

---

**TABLE 3 Kin composition of Muslim households containing married male nonheads for selected age groups, Istanbul, 1907**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended upwards(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended downwards</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended laterally</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combinations of these</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary units up(^b)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary units down</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary units lateral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frérotches</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combinations of these</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassifiable</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The extension is “up” if the resident relative is of a generation senior to that of the conjugal family unit; “down” if of a junior generation; and “lateral” if of the same generation.

\(^b\) The disposition of a secondary unit is “up” if of a generation senior to that of the household head; “down” if of a generation junior to the head; “lateral” if the secondary unit is of the same generation as the head and includes a widowed parent of the head or his/her spouse; and “frérotche” if laterally disposed but does not include a parent.
In the past, the correlation between social stratum and multiple family households was, perhaps, stronger than it is today in Istanbul. Our analysis of the 1907 household sample by occupation reveals that 21 percent of household heads with elite civil service, military, or commercial occupations were in charge of multiple family households, whereas only 14 percent of those with civil service, military, or commercial occupations of lower ranks and statuses, 13 percent of artisan-shopkeepers, and only 6 percent of wage earners were in charge of such households.47 Ordinary people in Istanbul spent at most a small part of their lives in such complex households. Even after age 60, the optimum time in life for being a household patriarch—when 42 percent of elite and 33 percent of nonelite civil service, military, or commercial household heads were in charge of multiple family units—only 24 percent of artisan-shopkeepers were in that position. Of the artisan-shopkeepers over age 60, 65 percent were heading simple or extended family households; only 42 percent of the elite and 44 percent of other rank civil service, military, or commercial strata were doing so.

We also find different patterns of household size among the various social strata as they moved through the lifecycle. Elite households continued to increase in size even after the primary reproductive period of the head and his spouse. Those whose head was engaged in other civil service, military, or commercial occupations remained more or less the same size, whereas households of the artisan-shopkeeper strata decreased in size, especially after the head reached the age of 60. We may conclude, then, that the size of the households of ordinary Istanbul residents appears to have been more directly a function of fertility within their households than was the size of those of very high rank and status, whose households frequently grew with the addition of individuals (especially servants) other than the offspring of the head.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Three ostensibly demographic events in the lives of many Muslim Istanbul residents seem to have played a major role in fracturing families and setting men and their wives on their own at marriage in the midst of a cultural environment which quite strongly emphasized just the opposite: intergenerational solidarity. The cultural emphasis on such solidarity and joint residence in Istanbul may be a reflection of common cultural connections between the metropolis and its hinterlands. But economic and social circumstances differentiated city and countryside, and these resulted in differing demographic regimes.

One of these demographic events was the late age at which men married, another the age at which their fathers died, and the third, migration. As Wall
indicates, when people marry late there are fewer complex households. This is, if for no other reason, because the likelihood of the father of the person or persons marrying being dead increases with their own increasing age. Given a mean male marriage age of 30 throughout our period, an age at which we will assume both fathers and sons married, and also given certain presumptions about life expectancy, we have calculated that at marriage only 39 percent of all men would have had their fathers alive. If we assume that the mean interval between births was three years, then only 28.3 percent of the fathers of married men would have been alive to witness the birth of their first grandchild. In other words, only a minority of all men marrying in our period would have had the benefit of the demographic conditions allowing for the possibility of setting up a multiple family household should they have wanted to do so; an even smaller percentage would have had the possibility of being the patriarch of a full three-generation family household.49

Migration was also an impediment to the establishment of complex households, especially in the extremely disruptive domestic circumstances under which many Turks departed from the collapsing Ottoman provinces of Europe and western Asia in the late 19th century. Permanent migration may lead to the fragmentation of families; often old people choose not to make the traumatic move. This clearly decreases the probability of there being enough family members at the destination point to form complex households. It may be that there was a greater propensity for fathers and sons to be separated from each other among the refugee population, or for migrating fathers to have lower survival rates than Istanbul-born fathers. In either case, it is not surprising that whereas 17 percent of Istanbul-born household heads lived in multiple family households only 10 percent of those born elsewhere did so. We know that a large proportion of the Istanbul population was composed of people born elsewhere: some refugees, some simply migrants from the provinces; in either case, there was the potential for fractured families.

The results of our analyses lead us to the conclusion that there was a rather distinctive pattern of marriage and household formation among Muslim families in Istanbul during the post-Tanzimat years, one that bears some relation to that found in Anatolian Turkey but that also resembles in certain respects patterns found in the past among some of Turkey’s Mediterranean neighbors. In the final analysis, it seems that Istanbul stood apart from either of these influences. It was neither Anatolian nor entirely Mediterranean, but rather a complex amalgam of the diverse influences that had their interplay in that imperial center. Among those influences were a cultural system shared with Anatolia that emphasizes intergenerational solidarity and filial allegiance, an urban Mediterranean pattern of late age at marriage for males and moderate age for females, a de facto system of neolocal residence and economic and social independence at marriage, and a rather unusual kinship environment in which a similar importance was placed on the relatives of both wife and husband.

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY
ISTANBUL, TURKEY
Author's note: This article is based on data collected for a larger project entitled, “Family, Fertility, and Society in Istanbul, 1880–1940” which was undertaken in Istanbul at Boğaziçi University by Cem Behar and myself. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support that this project has received at various stages from Middle East Research Awards in Population and Development (grant no. MEA 160/WANA 85.302X), the National Science Foundation (grant no. BNS-8519748), the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. (grant no. 4697), and the Rockefeller Foundation (grant no. RF85050-A223). See Alan Duben and Cem Behar, Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880–1940 (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming) for a more detailed discussion of many of the issues taken up in this article. I thank the anonymous readers of an earlier version of this paper for their very helpful comments and suggestions.


3. Individual members of such residential groups, both familial and nonfamilial, are listed together in the registers by street address. For each individual name listed, there is information on form of reference and occupation (Âöreî, sîfat, sanat ve hizmeti), relationship to the head of the household, religion, date and place of birth, date of registration, sex, name of father and mother, and marital status, along with other information of little sociological value for this study such as descriptions of distinctive physical features or markings of the individual. By “form of reference” we mean such terms as bey, efendi, hanum, aqa, kalfa, devletld, etc., which are often recorded in association with a proper name and are indicators of the status or position of the individual in society. Since, after the census, the rosters were also to function as permanent population registers, space was allocated for the transcription of vital events—births, marriages, divorces and deaths—which were also to have been recorded on a regular basis in another series of registers for vital events (vukuat defteri).

4. In addition to the hanes, we also included in our sample certain other units indicated as residences, such as konak (mansion), kulâbe (shack), and oda (room). The numbers of such units are very small in proportion to those places classified as hanes. We did not sample the registers (yabanci defters) for the quite large nonpermanent Ottoman population that was resident in Istanbul but officially registered elsewhere in the empire. Our sample included those sections of the city that correspond to the present-day districts of Eminönü, Fatih, Üsküdar, Beşiktas, and Şişli. See Alan Duben, “Understanding Muslim Families and Households in Late Ottoman Istanbul,” Journal of Family History (forthcoming), for a discussion of methodological issues with regard to this study.


6. Fifty-two percent of all males in the prime years of working life (between ages 30–59) whose occupations were recorded in 1907 can be classified as belonging to the civil service, professional, military, or commercial (ticari) classes, ranging (in the case of the civil servants) from the highest to quite lowly positions. We classified 37 percent of all males in our sample as artisan–shopkeepers and 11 percent as wage earners. It is perhaps possible that the percentages of artisans–shopkeepers and wage earners in our population were somewhat larger than they appear to be from the census, since the occupations of only 31 percent of all males between the ages 30–59 in our sample were recorded at the time. Presumably there was less likelihood of (most probably illiterate) wage earners and of artisans–shopkeepers having had their occupations recorded than of the members of the other, literate, and more sophisticated civil service, military, and commercial occupational groups. Since our
sample only includes the permanent Muslim population of the city, there is a clear bias against wage earners. We know that many of the wage laborers in Istanbul during this period were single males who resided in special bachelor hostels (bekâroddaları). Since all the bachelor hostels are listed in the yabancı defters, we did not include them in our sample. Although the percentage of those in the artisan–shopkeeper strata in our sample appears to be low relative to the civil service, military, and commercial strata, we must remember that more than 35 percent of the population of the city was non-Muslim and that non-Muslims constituted a significant proportion of the artisanal and shopkeeping professions in Istanbul during that period. Conversely, civil service and military occupations were predominantly in the hands of the Muslims.


9 Charles White, Three Years in Constantinople; or Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844 (London, 1845), vol. 3, p. 198.

10 The age at marriage referred to here with respect to the 1885 census is, technically speaking, called the Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM). SMAM is a measure of the mean age at first marriage derived from a set of proportions of people single at different ages for a particular census. For an analysis of marriage patterns and trends in late Ottoman Istanbul, see Cem Behar, “Nuptiality and Marriage Patterns in Istanbul, 1880–1940,” Boğaziçi University Research Papers (Istanbul, 1985). Like the historians of European households and marriage patterns, we now have reliable data to show that literary and impressionistic accounts of these institutions in the past often mislead us about the typicality of certain types of occurrences. See Peter Laslett, “The Wrong Way through the Telescope: A Note on Literary Evidence in Sociology and in Historical Sociology,” British Journal of Sociology, 27 (1976), 319–42 for a discussion of these issues.


17 See Duben and Behar, Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880–1940, Chap. 7.


21 There are no reliable data on rural household size and structure for the late Ottoman period. The figures presented here are based on very few cases and must be taken as rough approximations only. See Duben, “Turkish Families,” 75–77, 88–91, for a discussion of these issues.


23 See Duben, “Turkish Families,” 92–93 for a discussion of life expectancy and household formation in rural Turkey in the past.
Household Formation in Late Ottoman Istanbul

29 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 91.
34 The reference is to George P. Murdock, Social Structure, (New York, 1949), pp. 16–19, as cited in Macfarlane, Marriage and Love, p. 91.
36 Macfarlane, Marriage and Love, p. 91.
38 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, Tuscans and Their Families, p. 282.
39 See Wall, Introduction, Family Forms, p. 37, fig. 1.1.
40 Hajnal, “Two Kinds of Household Formation.”
43 Ibid., p. 302.
44 Though the number of observations is small (and not statistically significant), this breakdown does provide certain insights not available elsewhere into the kin composition of the households of married males not heading their own households. See Wall, Introduction, Family Forms, p. 37, fig. 1.1 for the European pattern.
47 See n. 6 for a discussion of the limitations of the occupational data used.
48 Wall, Introduction, Family Forms, p. 16.
49 In this calculation we proceeded under the assumption that the mean birth interval was three years and that the sex ratio was equal to one. The probability at birth of a man still being alive when his son’s son is born was 0.27. The probability of the same man being alive when his son’s first child is born was 0.283. We have used Ansley Coale and Paul Demeny, Model Life Tables and Stable Populations (Princeton, 1966) East, Level 14, and have assumed that both fathers and sons marry at age 30. I thank Cem Behar for his assistance with this calculation. On the use of various microsimulation techniques to study kinship cycles, kinship networks and survival, see, for example, Kenneth W. Wachter, “Microsimulation of Household Cycles,” in John Bongaarts, Thomas Burch, and Kenneth Wachter, eds., Family Demography: Methods and Their Application (Oxford, 1987), pp. 215–27; and Peter Laslett, “La Parenté en Chiffres,” Annales Économies Sociétés Civilisations, 43 (1988), 5–24.