

Beyhan Sultan's Household: Organization and Consumption Patterns

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Beyhan Sultan (1765–1824) was an Ottoman princess, the daughter of Sultan Mustafa III (r. 1757-1774) and his consort Adilşah Kadın. She was included in a group of high-born Ottoman women who led entirely separate lives with their own households, enjoying great privilege and liberty during the last quarter of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Very few studies examine the lives of royal women through consumption. In my paper, I discuss issues such as consumption patterns, the freedom and privileges enjoyed by the princess, and the composition and social networks of her household, in order to show how Beyhan Sultan defined status through consumption. To this end, I have utilized Beyhan Sultan's personal expense register, which contains her monthly expenses from December 1813 to November 1814. This archival source is very useful since it reveals a great deal about the organization of the princess's household as well as her lifestyle, by mentioning functionaries and hangers-on and covering various categories of expenses.