

## **The Urban Agricultural Economy of Ottoman Tripoli (Tarāblus al-Shām) and its Impact on Gender Dynamics: A New Perspective**

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The literature of the past three decades or so convincingly demonstrate that Ottoman women did not fit a secluded and financially dependent profile despite some anomalies. In Tarāblus al-Shām, Beshara Doumani shows that circumstances unique to this urban center set Tripolitan women aside from females living in other places within or outside the empire; the green zone, the groves and gardens rich in cash crop trees surrounding this provincial capital, put women at an advantage. The purpose of this paper is to analyze in depth the economic benefits and possibilities this fertile zone opened to Tripolitan females in the second half of the eighteenth-century.

Using court registers, I show that women had connections within their social circles and robust ties to their natal families and formed alliances along the gender lines which they manipulated to serve their financial interests. At the time of distribution of inheritance, women routinely resorted to *takhāroj* of inherited assets, a practice that entailed the trading or buyout of shares among heirs, which gave them room to circumvent male, and female, domination, and a tool to have full control of the profits urban real estate and cultivated land yielded. Married women formed business partnerships with their husbands, which, though informal, had legal and fiscal responsibilities on both parties. Moreover, there was a clear distinction of ownership of the couple's properties and assets. Many couples lived in houses purchased/inherited by the wife. *Tarika* (estate inventories) distribution shows that, upon the death of a husband, household effects consistently became the wife's property. While there existed a private space interconnected to women's visibility, and a public space opened to their mobility, I show a 'permeable dichotomy' between public (court) and private (*dār*/house), blurring the spaces' constructed boundaries which women freely navigated to attend to their personal- and business-related affairs.