“Mobilizing Gender and Family for the Ottoman First World War”

The front and homefront are familiar concepts in the study of the First World War. But dividing how we understand the experience of World War I into these separate spheres conceals the fundamental integration of the military and the family. Further, reproducing the idea of the front and the homefront by studying them separately serves to conceal the contributions and suffering of women to this transformative period in the history of the Late Ottoman Empire.

In this talk, I will present findings from my current book project, *A Patriarchy Without Men: Mobilizing Gender and Family for World War I in the Ottoman Empire*, to argue that we must understand mobilization for World War I—and the broader history of militarization in the Late Ottoman Empire—as processes that worked through the gendered family, and in particular were supported by the exploitation of women’s care and social reproductive labor as well as the extraction of other resources from Ottoman families. In other words, the family—and women in particular—provided the material foundation for waging World War I in the Ottoman Empire.

Through a feminist reading of Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, French and English archival sources, I demonstrate how military law and policy, and its reverberations in everyday life, situated the gendered family at the heart of the military enterprise—with important consequences for the trajectory of gender, family, welfare, and military policy and practice in the Ottoman Empire and its successor states.

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