

# Neighborhood Consciousness as a Social Control Mechanism According to the Ottoman Judicial Records in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries (The Case of Konya)

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## Abstract

Neighborhood was one of the most important elements of urban life in Konya in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Signifying a shared sphere of living and a sense of common responsibility, the concept of neighborhood includes a common neighborhood consciousness. Neighborhood consciousness appears as an important agent in forming and controlling neighborhood life. This consciousness played an active role in leading individuals to conform to social codes and in the individuals' gaining good or bad images in the minds of the neighborhood inhabitants. Knowing the most secret issues of the neighborhood and highly familiar with the inhabitants, the neighborhood imam played the leading role in the operation of neighborhood consciousness, which made important contributions not only to maintaining the way of life approved of by both the political authority and society but also to neighborhood security. However, when individual rights and freedoms were threatened, courts acted as the guarantor of these. This study is intended to investigate neighborhood consciousness as a social control mechanism, depending on the data collected from primary historical and judicial sources.

## Keywords

Neighborhood Consciousness, Social Control, Ottoman, Konya

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## Introduction

Social events take place in a historical context and also have a historical dimension. A closer look at the social surveys conducted by social scientists demonstrates the need for knowing the history of a society in order to fully comprehend it (Mills 1979: 233).

Social events become the subject of history as soon as they take place. Since the disciplines of history and sociology are interrelated in this respect, any sociological inquiry that is deprived of a historical perspective cannot elude superficiality (Günay 2003: 42). Therefore, any attempt to shed light on the structure of Turkish society should begin with saving history from being archival documents and turning them into the means by which to explain the present day. The landscape of societies is drawn by their own history (Arabacı 2006: 69). So, it is almost impossible to understand and explain any society without historical data.

The Ottoman State, holding a major place in Turkish history, set its stamp on the world history, taking its place among the few empires with its vast territory and long period of existence. Undoubtedly, there lies a strong social structure and system under this historical fact. Social systems possess a variety of mechanisms to sustain their existence (Dönmezer 1990: 290). Social control, being one of such mechanisms, is reckoned by Spencer, Parsons, and Malinowski as one of the four requirements essential to the survival of any society (Maryanski et al. 2000: 1030).

Existing on different social plains, social control mechanism operates in the sphere of social relations and exercises influence on all the members of society (Fichter no date:177-178). Dönmezer defines social control mechanism as the “mechanisms which ensure the members of society to act upon the expectations of the other people and, in doing so, enable us to figure out how the others will act” (Dönmezer 1990 : 286). In this context, social control is an extension of the socialization process that secures individuals to act in accordance with the behavioral norms, ensuring the continuity of such norms. Social control mechanisms secure individuals’ following the various patterns, roles, relationships and institutions that are endorsed and valued by society (Fichter no date: 177-178). It is by means of social control mechanisms that any perversion from social values and norms is checked.

Neighborhoods, being the building stones of cities, are one of the important elements of social life. From the 1980s onward, a group of young sociologists have investigated the reasons behind the disorder in cities (Liska 2000: 2659). As already pointed out, neighborhood as a social con-

trol mechanism played an important role in preserving the Ottoman social system and order (see Ortaylı 1996: 445).

The concept of *mahalle*, i.e., quarter or neighborhood, was one of the fundamental components of the Ottoman social and administrative system in the formative and rising years of the Empire. A cursory glance at the everyday Ottoman life from the spatial and organizational perspective shows that the Ottoman city was built upon neighborhoods and the members of neighborhood were responsible for meeting the basic social needs at the lowest level (Bayartan 2005: 96). This sphere in which individuals lived and cooperated in shaping and regulating social relations had a great impact.

One can state that the Ottoman neighborhoods were designed in a way that facilitated social control. The architectural style was intended to help the dwellers enjoy a full control over the neighborhood. The ways in and out of the neighborhoods were limited, built in a way to allow the dwellers to take control of them in time of need. The recurrent concept of dead end can be said to have served the function of securing social control by providing more sense of privacy (Özcan 2001: 146-147). The fact that the dwellers of the neighborhood know one another very well allows identifying the foreigners easily.

The *mahalle* concept has been an essential part of Turkish culture. Individuals' sense of belonging to the city finds its expression in relation to the neighborhood. In Ottoman society in which identity card or similar certificates had not been used until the late years of the Empire, people were defined and identified with their neighborhoods (Tamdoğan 2002: 66, Tok 2005:156). In a society in which oral information and testimonies held validity, the credibility or incredibility of individual depended mostly upon the perception of the people who knew him or her. Therefore, one can talk of a strong consciousness of neighborhood which exercises a heavy pressure on the individual, too. This consciousness not only expresses a sense of belonging to a given neighborhood but also imposes upon the individuals the enforcement and the control of the collective consciousness (Marshall 1999: 420, Ülken 1969: 175). Keeping in mind the fact that there is a high degree of social control in small and homogenous groups, (Dönmezer 1990: 290) one can realize that the neighborhood consciousness functions as a social control mechanism.

The continuity of social system depends in turn upon such factors as conforming to social norms in daily life, respecting other people's feelings as well as upon social control tools. Social control shows how individuals

gradually adopt these forms and how they move away from them though in a limited measure (Kemper 2000: 783).

What distinguishes this study from the others is that it draws attention to the role which the neighborhood life played in the Ottoman social structure and system. Besides, it provides many cases that display how the phenomenon of neighborhood ensures the conformity of the individuals to social expectations. Most of the studies done from a historical perspective fail to furnish a deep analysis of the neighborhood life from this point of view. Furthermore, 90 percent of the data used in this study is culled from seventeenth and eighteenth century Ottoman court registries of Konya that contain social relations and events. Thus, this study approaches and analyzes the Ottoman court registries from a definitively sociological perspective.

This article is intended to investigate the neighborhood consciousness as a control mechanism that we believe played a major role in the continuation of the Ottoman social system with a special emphasis upon seventeenth and eighteenth century Ottoman Konya. Building upon the Konya court records (Şeriye Sicilleri), this study attempts at providing a deep insight into Ottoman society and shed some new light upon the processes of transformation the Ottoman neighborhood and the neighborhood consciousness underwent over the centuries. The study will focus on the manifestations of the neighborhood consciousness as a social control mechanism as well as on the behaviors seen as perversion from the social values and norms adopted by the people of neighborhood.

### **The Neighborhood Responsibility**

The inhabitants of the Ottoman cities perceive of themselves as the members of their neighborhood rather than being the townsmen of their city. Considering the fact that the majority of families were akin to each other, that most of the streets were dead end which not every person could pass through at ease, one can easily realize that the neighborhood members were responsible for one another. Willing to know who come into and go out of the neighborhood and disapproving of the foreigners' entering homes reflects the sense of common life in the neighborhood (Faroqhi 2002: 164-178). Signifying a shared sphere of living, the neighborhood suggests a sense of common responsibility, too.

The inhabitants are held responsible for all the actions and behaviors that are contrary to the laws and social norms. This responsibility assures warning the owners of such actions and informing the official authorities if the warning does not produce the desired effect (Taşkömür 1996: 441-442).

For example, the notables of the Mu'in Quarter filed a cause against a person named Ahmed who they thought might create problem in the neighborhood. The court decided that this person could reside in the district only if an inhabitant of the neighborhood would accept to provide guarantee (Sak 2003: 204).

We can consider the neighborhood inhabitants a social group. The group control is effected upon both the controller and the controlled by means of consciousness, willingness, or deliberate action (Fichter no date: 179).

On 13 December 1670 (26 Sha'bān 1081 A. H.), she went to the court to tell her following story in the presence of five inhabitants of her neighborhood; When she was on her way to visit one of her relatives, an unknown person pulled her to a desolate corner and raped her. She added that the inhabitants of the neighborhood were not involved in this incident and she therefore had no complaint about them (CRK no.15, fol. 37, case no.4).

One can see the same neighborhood responsibility in the following case: On 9 May 1671 (28 Muharram 1082 A. H.), Ümmi binti Osman appeared in the court to inform that her son died as a result of an accident. After investigating the incident, the inhabitants informed the court that no member of the neighborhood or someone else had involvement in the incident, adding they had no complaint, either (CRK no. 15, fol. 147, case no. 1).

The people of the neighborhood felt responsible to prevent any event that might bring harm to the image, honor, and prestige of the neighborhood. They considered even the pettiest information, applying to the authorities. For example, in the year 1797 (1212 A.H.), when a rumor arose in the Kuzgun Kavak Quarter that the little Fatıma binti Mehmed was raped by Seyit Osman, a dweller of the Quarter, the people of the neighborhood appealed to the court (CRK no. 67, Stat no. 590, case no. 5).

The religious and moral attitude that holds every individual responsible for his surroundings, contributed to the sense of neighborhood responsibility. To call on people to good and to prevent from evil is a major moral principle of Islam (The Holy Qur'an, 3/104, 110; 9/71). This principle played an important role in the formation and strengthening of the neighborhood consciousness (Pierce 2005: 236-237). Religious beliefs are not only shared by the believers and practitioners but also effect the sense of unity and solidarity among them (Durkheim 2005: 64). Prompted by such consciousness, the neighborhood people warned those who act against the social norms, and in some cases they applied to the judicial authorities.

In the year 1730 (1143 A.H.), Mehmed, a dweller of the Aksinle Quarter of Konya, sued a file against Ömer and İbrahim because they displayed a bad example for the people. As a result, the court decided to ban them from the quarter (CRK no. 52, fol. 112, case no. 2). One can come across many such cases of reproaching and banning in the court records. Such cases will be addressed separately in the following pages.

Because the neighborhood people knew each other very well, the authorities resorted to them first in investigating any criminal or morally unacceptable incident. In this context, the testimony of the neighbors, imam and the notables of the neighborhood is of great importance. Therefore, when considering evidences and eyewitness testimonies, the judges inquired as to how the suspect was known in his or her neighborhood. In this context, imam of the neighborhood held a prominent position as the representative of neighborhood.

### **The Spokesman of the Neighborhood Consciousness: Imam**

The prominent social actors play important roles in the leading, coordination, and control of societies. Such figures may make warnings and suggestions in resolving the problems that interest the whole neighborhood. The people who lead the social group direct the members towards a collective consciousness and duty by means of rewards and enforcement, strengthening the communication among the members (Dönmezer 1990: 296-298). Imam of the neighborhood also played such a leading role in the Ottoman neighborhood.

In addition to providing religious guidance in mosque, imams act as an administrative and political representative of their congregation. They are responsible for teaching at the neighborhood school (*madrassa*), collecting taxes, advocating the neighborhood before the judges, and knowing the inhabitants. They provide information on the inhabitants to the state authorities in time of need (Beydilli 2001: 6-13). The court had recourse to the opinion of imam and other prominent people in deciding the cases.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from playing a leading role in wedding and funeral ceremonies, they assumed responsibility in keeping order in the neighborhood, preserving social, religious, and moral norms. They took initiative in encouraging good actions and discouraging the bad ones (Özcan 2001:136-137). It is also among the responsibilities of imam to be careful about the people who will settle in the neighborhood and check the spread of perverse behaviors (Taşkömür 1996: 441).

The Ottoman neighborhood was an organic site that centers around mosque (Lewis 1973: 64). Thus, mosque forms the center of social life

(Türkdoğan 1977: 269). Since the dwellers are the mosque-goers, imam was the best person to know the neighborhood. Persisting not to attend the mosque generates a negative impression in the mind of the people, sometimes leading to expulsion from the neighborhood (Özcan 2001: 136). This earned imam a leading position in the neighborhood life, contributing to his role of representation. When there took place an action perceived by the neighborhood consciousness as contrary to the social values and norms, imam was the first and foremost person whose opinion will be sought to discover the real nature of action. Next come the other prominent people and neighbors (Ergenç 1984: 73-74).

The neighborhood imam bore witness to the negative as well as positive attitude of the people in the neighborhood life. With his duties and responsibilities, with his good acquaintance of the inhabitants and prestigious position among them, imam played an important role in keeping the neighborhood consciousness dynamic and alive. On 15 May 1671 (6 Muharram 1082 A.H.), Osman Beşe bin Muhammed, an inhabitant of the Aksinle Quarter of Konya, applied to the court saying, “a person named Yusuf said of me that I had been drunkard. I request that my conduct be inquired from the inhabitants of the aforementioned neighborhood.” In doing so, he wanted to clean his honor and prestige of this accusation. In response to this request, the court sought to collect information about Osman by having recourse to the opinion of Süleyman Halife bin Ahmed and some other notable inhabitants. They responded as the following: “We have observed no unlawful word or action from him so far. He is a plain person, interested only in his own job” (CRK no. 15, Stat no. 394, case no.7). One can observe many examples of this kind in the Konya court records (CRK no. 15, Stat no. 396, case no.2, 5). So the protagonist of this episode was able to restore his honor and prestige in the sight of the neighborhood inhabitants with the testimony of the imam and the other prominent inhabitants.

The following episode better reveals the chief position of imam in the neighborhood consciousness as a social control mechanism. The police chief of Konya Yusuf Ağa and Ali Bey brought Süleyman and Mehmed, inhabitants of the Muhtar Quarter of Konya, to the court with the accusation of drinking alcohol, bringing their home foreign women, and being indulged in mischief. So they are notorious for their mischievous conduct.” The court inquired about the two persons from Imam Ahmed Halife of the neighborhood, Ahmed bin Mahmud, Mustafa bin Mehmed, and Süleyman bin Rıdvan. They confirmed the accusations of the police chief. The court also sought the testimony of the imam of the suspects’ former neighborhood,

Molla İsmail, who testified to their bad conduct, as well (CRK no. 10, fol. 194, case no. 1). So, the “bad conduct” of these two persons was established by the testimony of neighborhood’s imam and notables.

These cases and the likes demonstrate the role of the neighborhood imam as the leading controller. Furthermore, the neighborhood imam restored the honor and prestige of those who were unjustly accused of the blames of similar kinds. Seeking opinion of the imam and other prominent figures of neighborhood about the suspects was fundamental to the Ottoman judicial procedure (Yılmaz 2000: 96). This opinion, provided by the prominent dwellers and considered by the judiciary, can be seen as the expression of the neighborhood consciousness in a specific case. This judicial practice contributed to the active position of imam in the neighborhood consciousness and the influence of the neighborhood consciousness over social life.

### **The Disapproved Patterns of Behavior and Relationship**

A social group’s degree of conformity is taken as a criterion of collectivity. This conformity appears in two ways: doctrinal and practical conformity. Both become stronger with group harmony. The behaviors and relations that agree with the group beliefs and values are regarded as the examples of social control (Shotola 2000: 2636).

People regulate their actions and behaviors in socio-cultural sphere in accordance with their religious beliefs and attitudes. Religious beliefs and norms play an important part in social control process. Religious principles as in the case of the dichotomy of good versus bad and the permissible versus impermissible function as the foundation and standard of social norms (Günay 2003: 415). The impact that religious belief has on Ottoman society is well-known. So, one can infer that the religion of Islam played a major role in the formation of behaviors and relations approved and disapproved of by society.

The procedure of judicial complaints prompted by moralistic drives settled down and the Ottoman neighborhood inhabitants internalized them. In the year 6 May 1704 (1116 A.H.), a male inhabitant of the Celaliye Quarter of Konya sued the person who insulted his dignity (CRK no. 41, fol. 198, case no. 2). Seyit Mahmud Çelebi sued Mehmed bin İbrahim because the latter cursed at his wife and proved his claim with the testimony of the respected inhabitants of the neighborhood (CRK no. 6, Stat no. 43, case no. 1).<sup>2</sup> Muhammed Baş, an inhabitant of the Türk Ali Quarter of Konya sued the people who induced his son to alcohol parties (CRK no. 48, fol. 172, case no. 3).



The neighborhood inhabitants observed how long people insisted on such actions that are against social, cultural, and religious norms, and expressed their disapproval of them, calling the authorities to move. This attitude of the neighborhood inhabitants strengthened and maintained the social controlling role of the neighborhood consciousness in the neighborhood life.

The inhabitants of the Aksinle Quarter of Konya informed the police chief of Konya Ivaz Ağa that Mustafa bin Süleyman and Mehmed bin Musa drank alcohol in the latter's home. So, the police chief and the neighborhood notables raided the home and found one jug of wine (CRK no. 15, Stat no. 341, case no. 7). In a similar case, though the alcohol drinks were forbidden by the Sultan to sell, buy and consume in the Muslim districts, the inhabitants of the Tarhana Quarter of Konya informed the authorities that some inhabitants of the neighborhood keep alcohol drinks at their homes. The security forces and the neighborhood prominents together went to the home of Recep Beşe bin Mustafa, an inhabitant of the neighborhood, finding two pitchers of wine (CRK no. 15, Stat no. 397, case no. 8).<sup>3</sup>

In the year 1713 (1125 A.H.), the inhabitants of the Şeyh Ahmed Quarter of Konya sued Mehmed for drinking wine at his home, and a pitcher of wine was found at his home (CRK no. 46, fol. 253, case no. 3). So, drinking and keeping alcohol at home is disapproved of by the neighborhood consciousness in keeping with the Islamic Law. The inhabitants also controlled if this norm was conformed.

Peering into others' houses through chimneys and holes (CRK no. 40, fol. 167, case no. 1), theft and robbery (CRK no. 15, Stat no. 401, case no.3), bringing home foreign man or women, having extramarital sexual intercourse are among the perverse behaviors disapproved by the neighborhood consciousness. In the year 1715 (1128 A.H.), Ayşe and Hatice, being respectively a daughter and her mother, living in the Fakih Dede Quarter of Konya were sued by the neighborhood inhabitants (CRK no. 47, fol. 118, case no. 2).

The most hated behavior and relation to the neighborhood inhabitants was extramarital relation and cohabitation. A look into the court records of Konya shows that the people are very careful about this issue and keep an eye on the people of such tendencies. In case of suspecting or discovering such behaviors, the people did not hesitate to warn and sue the actors. They sometimes faced expulsion from the neighborhood. One can safely say the sensitivity of Pre-Islamic Turkish custom and Islam on this issue is well-reflected in the neighborhood consciousness. Even the religious differences

of the inhabitants are not important with respect to this issue (CRK no. 15, Stat no. 339, case no.5, Stat no. 335, case no. 4 ; 41, fol. 153, case no. 3).

The neighborhood people felt disturbed when a person brought his former wife to cook for his children after his second wife had passed away. The case was taken to court. The man informed the court that he left the house when his ex-wife came. However, when the neighbors said that they had not witnessed his acting so, the court forbade woman to come to the house even in the day time (CRK no. 41, fol. 96, case no. 2).

In the neighborhood life, an internal social control mechanism operates to assure a full conformity to the shared values and norms. Smearing one's gate with tar<sup>4</sup> is a clear expression of this mechanism. The violators of these norms were confronted with a public denunciation and lost their dignity and honor.

In the year 1723 (1136 A.H.), the gate of İsmail Çelebi, an inhabitant of the Şeyh Osman Rumi Quarter of Konya, was smeared with tar (CRK, no. 49, fol. 145, case no. 4). The gate of Fatma, a married woman and inhabitant of the Akbaş Quarter of Konya, was also marked with tar (CRK no. 50, fol. 67, case no. 3 ; see for an example CRK no. 54, fol. 170, case no. 3). Kiravus Veledi Arslan, a Christian inhabitant of the Kalecik Quarter of Konya also faced the same offense. In the year 1715 (1127 A.H.), his gate was smeared with tar at night (CRK no. 45, fol. 222, case no. 3). This symbolic way of denouncing the perpetrators of immoral actions has a collective character, involving the whole neighborhood in the consequences of this act. This act also functions as a way of informing the authorities.

The neighborhood consciousness finds its clearest expression in the cases of expulsion from the neighborhood. If the neighborhood inhabitants discover that a person has acted against the social values and norms, they demand to expel him from the neighborhood. In such a case, the court summons the parties to hearing and decides the expulsion of the person if the neighborhood people's claim proves true. But one should bear in mind that the judiciary acts very carefully and meticulously in making this decision (Özcan 2001:134). Positive mechanisms such as convincing, proposing, training, and rewarding help individuals adopt and display socially approved behaviors and attitudes. Negative mechanisms such as threatening, commanding, coercing, and penalizing are employed to hinder anti-social behaviors and attitudes (Fichter no date: 179). The voice tones, facial expressions, sarcasms, jokes, keeping silent, and complaints bring the

violators of social norms back into the track (Dönmezer 1990: 290). This may end up with being expelled from the shared living space.

In the year 1723 (1136 A.H.), The Mehmeds, inhabitants of the İbn Salih Quarter of Konya, were banned from the neighborhood by the state authority because Mehmed's wife and mother cursed at each other, and the neighbors sued them (CRK no. 49, fol. 176, case no. 3). Fatma, inhabitant of the Kalecik Quarter, was also expelled because she disturbed the neighborhood people with her hand and tongue, and acted in a loose manner in the presence of stranger men (CRK no. 49, fol. 194, case no. 4).

Lying and calumniating are two grave crimes which are viewed as a valid reason for expulsion if persist (CRK no. 67, Stat no. 565, case no.4).

Among the behaviors and relations which raised the shackles of the inhabitants most, cohabitation and extramarital relations come first. This is one of the reasons for a person to be expelled from the neighborhood by the inhabitants and the authorities. Afife, female inhabitant of the İbn Şahin Quarter, was expelled for bringing home unfamiliar men (CRK no. 49, fol. 150, case no. 4). A woman from the Hoca Habib Quarter was expelled because of performing prostitution (CRK no. 46, fol. 157, case no. 4); Mehmed and Fatma, two inhabitants of the Çifte Nerdiban Quarter, were expelled for cohabiting (CRK no. 47, fol. 162, case no. 4); Marziyye, inhabitant of the Nehri Kafur Quarter, was expelled for meeting with a unfamiliar man in the day time and at nights (CRK no. 53, fol. 52, case no. 4). In all these cases, the neighborhood sued and the court decided their expulsion.<sup>5</sup>

Holding and attending musical parties in which foreign man and women take part is also disapproved by the neighborhood consciousness. İbrahim and Mehmed, inhabitants of the Karakayış Quarter, were sued by the neighborhood people for playing musical instruments at their home where along with their mother and sister, some unfamiliar men and women were mixed. The court warned and then expelled them from the neighborhood (CRK no. 47, fol. 67, case no. 1).

The neighborhood people never approved of the actors of such behaviors even though they were non-Muslim and kept them under surveillance. In the year 1722 (1135 A.H.), Raci, a Christian man inhabiting in the Çıralı Mescidi Quarter, was sued and expelled by the neighborhood people because of bringing home ignominious people, playing musical instruments, and drinking alcohol (CRK no. 49, fol. 27, case no. 1). In the year 1723 (1136 A.H.), Arslan and Nazlı, non-Muslim inhabitants of the İç Kale Quarter, were sued

and expelled by both Muslim and non-Muslim neighbors for bringing home unfamiliar people (CRK no. 49, fol. 155, case no. 4).

The actions and behaviors that were considered by the neighborhood consciousness to be opposed to the social values and norms are couched in the court records as the following: harming people and disseminating mischief, lacking trustworthiness, having a bad conduct and manner, acting in a loose manner, having an inflicting hand and tongue, committing wrongdoing and offense, displaying mischievous behaviors and attitudes, slandering the decent people, acting against the Law (*Şeriat*), drinking alcohol, uttering offensive and foul words, and committing adultery.

The underlying reason for the practice of expulsion is concerned with acting against the shared values and behavioral codes as well as with security factor. In the case that the socially adopted values and norms are violated, and this violation goes as far as to threaten the security and peace of society by gaining persistence and publicity, the neighborhood consciousness promptly moves. The neighborhood people try to check such actions in cooperation with the state power. Coexistence within the same public space brought about a strong sense of solidarity and collective responsibility. With this as their mindset, the neighborhood people felt responsible for what went on in the neighborhood and hindered any religiously or morally unacceptable behavior as well as criminal actions. Nevertheless, one should admit that in effort to do this, they sometimes unintentionally damaged the honor and prestige of innocent people. Therefore, in some cases, the people had to open legal cases to restore and rehabilitate their honor and reputation. So, the courts made great efforts to strike a balance between the individual rights and freedom and the satisfaction of the neighborhood consciousness.

### **Identity Reflections: Good and Bad Manner**

Social order survives as long as social values and norms are followed and upheld. The factors of guilt, shame, and diffidence prevent the individual to perform or insist on the socially unacceptable behaviors. In turn, they encourage increasing the actions that bring in prestige. People tend to eschew the behaviors that lack the approval of society in order to preserve their reputation and dignity, whereas they endeavor to perform the actions that enjoy the endorsement of society in order to add to their honor and fame. So, the people who performed the actions endorsed by the neighborhood inhabitants were regarded as having good manner and image whereas those who acted reversely were considered having bad manner and image.

People seek the approval of their surroundings as to their behaviors and attitudes (Arslantürk 1999: 227-228). This is because they are the status witnesses, and acquiring status is in favor of individuals. Since an individual recognizes the approval of the people around him though not revealed explicitly with applause and congratulation, he can often estimate whether their behaviors are accepted or not. On the other hand, individuals are socialized in a way that they become upset when they break the important social norms. An individual is well aware that they will face disdain, denunciation, and excommunication because of their unbecoming behaviors (Fichter no date: 179-181). Apart from reward and penalty, the wish of acquiring prestige, the fear of losing prestige, backbiting, moral pressures and values, direct and control behaviors and attitudes (see Swingewood 1998: 32). Hence, aside from such official discipline and control mechanisms as law enforcement, there are several civil social control mechanisms operating within the social structure.

This Research based on the Konya court records shows that the neighborhood people kept away from the behaviors that might damage their reputation and honor among the neighborhood members. They themselves made their way to the court in order to rehabilitate their reputation damaged by false accusations. In addition, the impression an individual left in the habitants' consciousness is of crucial importance especially in the procedure of rehabilitating the damaged reputation.

On the first day of the 30 May 1642 (Rabiulawwal of 1052 A.H.), Mehmed bin Himmet appeared in the court to inform that his gate was smeared with tar at night, requesting that his and his wife's reputation should be investigated. The neighborhood's mosque congregation offered their opinion that they had not observed any actions of the couple contrary to the Law, bearing witness to their good reputation (CRK no. 6, Stat no. 87, case no.2). So, the couple was able to restore their reputation thanks to their henceforth good act and manner. One can come across tens of cases of this kind in the court records.<sup>6</sup>

Fatma, a married woman dwelling in the Akbaş Quarter of Konya, applied to court because her gate had been painted with tar. The neighborhood people bore witness to her good reputation and chastity, rehabilitating her prestige and honor (CRK no. 50, fol. 67, case no. 3).

The same holds true of the non-Muslim inhabitants. Kiravus Veledi Arslan, a non-Muslim inhabitant of the Kalecik Quarter of Konya applied to court because his gate was painted with tar. The neighborhood people's

testimony to his good manner and conduct restored his reputation in the neighborhood (CRK no. 45, fol. 222, case no. 3).

In order to protect their reputation, they did not hesitate to interfere in the matters of privacy. In an attempt to check the rumor that his daughter was abused, the father made his way to court. So, he was able to save his and his daughter's honor by establishing her virginity (CRK no. 41, fol. 56, case no. 2). In the same manner, the inhabitants of the Aksinle Quarter of Konya felt compelled to apply to court to put an end to the rumors about Raziye, inhabitant of the neighborhood (Sak 2003: 151).

In the year 1641 (1051 A.H.), Aişe binti İbrahim, a single female inhabitant of the Kara Kurt Quarter of Konya appeared in the court to make the following request: "Some people informed me to the local authorities by claiming that my conduct and manner had been against the Law. I request that that the opinion of the involved neighborhood people should be sought to reveal my real conduct." From among the people of the neighborhood, Musa bin Şaban bin Hasan, Mahmud bin Receb, el-Hac Ali, Muharrem bin el-Hac Emir, and Imam Süleyman Çelebi appeared in court to bear witness to the good reputation of that woman (CRK no. 6, Stat no. 39, case no.1). The following case shows that having a good reputation in the neighborhood is very important and people show a great care in order to stay away from the behaviors and actions which may damage their good reputation. Cemile binti Ali complained to court that Şükrüllah bin Ahmed harassed her on her way to the vineyard. She also made the request of rehabilitation to keep her reputation intact. In the course of rehabilitation, imam of the neighborhood and other prominent persons offered their opinions (CRK no. 10, fol. 118, case no. 3 , fol. 119, case no. 1).

Ümme binti Kenan Beğ, a female inhabitant of the Kara Kurt Quarter, opened a case of rehabilitation because Ahmed bin Hasan informed her to the local authorities, claiming that she interacted with foreign youngster. The neighborhood inhabitants bore witness to her good reputation (CRK no. 6, Stat no. 57, case no. 2). It is possible to find more cases of similar character in the Konya court records.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, if one attempts to exploit the testimony of the neighborhood people to get rid of the legal consequences of his immoral and illegal acts, the neighborhood inhabitants never hesitates to bear witness to his bad reputation and notoriety.

In the month of the June of 1661 (Dhilqa'dah of 1071 A.H.), Seyyid Mustafa bin Hasan was accused of entering into the house of an unmar-

ried girl with a malicious intention. Then, he sued the people, who accused him of this action, in an attempt to rid himself of this charge. But this attempt ended up in naught because the neighborhood image of this person proved to be negative (CRK no. 10, fol. 116, case no. 2). In a similar case, in the year 1661 (1071 A.H.), when Fatma, inhabitant of the Bağrı Quarter of the Konya, was charged of acting loosely and bringing home the rascals, the neighborhood image of this woman appeared in a negative way (Sak 2007: 94).

As seen in the cases described above, the investigation of the conduct and manner of people when they were faced with accusations contributed to the active and efficient role the neighborhood consciousness played as a social control mechanism. On the other hand, no legal reference to the neighborhood testimony is required to establish the good reputation of the inhabitants at normal times. This reference is sought in the rehabilitation cases. Thus, the images of individuals in the neighborhood consciousness played an important role of control mechanism in securing their conformity to social order, and in preventing them to turn away from social norms.

## **Conclusion**

As the building stones of the cities, neighborhoods were one of the major components of the Ottoman urban life. In the neighborhoods of Konya where the face-to-face relation had a dominant position, the individuals led a way of life to which collective responsibility was essential. People were identified with their neighborhoods. Therefore, the collectivity outweighed the individualist attitude with respect to social relations. This sense of collectivity in turn gave birth to the neighborhood consciousness.

However, in the cases in which the individual rights and freedoms were threatened or violated by the people who claimed to give voice to the neighborhood consciousness, the courts functioned as the foremost and ultimate guarantor of the rights and freedoms. This characteristic distinguished the Ottoman neighborhood from its communal social counterparts.

Imam played a leading role in the formation and expression of the neighborhood consciousness. Being in charge of the mosque located at the center of the neighborhood life, imam could get sight and sense of what was going on off-stage since he was acquainted with the neighborhood members. Thus, he was well familiar with the images of individuals as reflected in the neighborhood consciousness.

The neighborhood consciousness contributed to the maintaining of the way of live adopted and endorsed by both the political authority and the

populace. The fact that the judges grounded their decisions on the violators of social norms in their images as reflected in the neighborhood consciousness enhanced the influence of the neighborhood consciousness as a social control mechanism. None of the inhabitants wanted to lose his honor and prestige in the neighborhood. Therefore, any person, who was accused of stepping out of the social, religious, moral and cultural norms, immediately opened the case of rehabilitation because he was well-aware that if he loses prestige in the neighborhood consciousness, he will also lose the support of the neighborhood and even may face expulsion.

Cultural, religious and moral values play a dominant role in that the neighborhood consciousness determines whether a behavior is acceptable or not. The behaviors unacceptable to the neighborhood consciousness are unacceptable to religion and morality, too. Those who insistently violate the norms run the risk of facing the reaction of the neighborhood people. Thus, the neighborhood consciousness strengthened the instinct of living in conformity with the social norms, facilitated and accelerated the socialization process. In doing so, it made a considerable contribution to the preserving and sustaining of the social order in the city of Konya.

The growing urban problems that have arisen as a consequence of the recent industrialization and mass domestic migrations such as terrorism and violence crimes threaten security in the big cities. In the urban life in which the people who live in the same neighborhood or even in the same buildings no longer know each other, the social control mechanisms gain more importance. Hence, inspired by the concept of the dead end, the contractors have begun to build luxurious, self-enclosed, and safe sites within the big cities if available, if not, in the outskirts. Therefore, the neighborhood consciousness can still contribute to the continuation of social system though with some modifications required by the individualist and humanistic ethos of the millennium.

## Comments

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, *Court Record of Konya* (henceforth referred to as *CRK*), *CRK* no. 15, Stat no. 394, case no. 5,7 ; Stat no. 395, case no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For similar cases, see *CRK* no. 6, Stat no. 47, case no. 3 ; 15, Stat no. 346, case no.8 ; Sak (2003). *10 Numaralı Konya Şer'ye Sicili(Transkripsiyon)*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> For similar cases, see *CRK* no. 15, Stat no. 334, case no. 4, Stat no. 335, 1.

<sup>4</sup> This practice is meant to stigmatize, and defame the resident of the house.



- <sup>5</sup> See an other examples, *CRK* no. 48, fol. 144, case no. 1 , fol. 224, case no. 3 ; 49, fol. 145, case no. 1, fol. 206, case no. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> See for examples, *CRK* no. 49, fol. 145, case no. 4 ; 48, fol. 141, case no. 4 ; 54, fol. 170, case no. 3 ; 6, Stat no. 67, case no 6 ; 10, fol. 72, case no. 3.
- <sup>7</sup> See, *CRK* no. 15, Stat no. 348, case no. 5, Stat no. 356, case no. 3, Stat no. 389, case no. 6, Stat no. 394, case no. 6.

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# Osmanlı Kadı Kayıtlarına Göre XVII ve XVIII. Yüzyılda Sosyal Kontrol Mekanizması Olarak Mahalle Şuuru (Konya Örneği)

Hayri Erten\*

## Özet

XVII-XVIII. Yüzyıl Konya'da mahalle, şehir yaşamının temel unsurları arasında yer almıştır. Ortak bir yaşam alanı ve ortak bir sorumluluğu ifade eden mahalle, mahalle şuuru da beraberinde içermektedir. Mahalle şuuru, mahalle yaşamının şekillenmesinde ve kontrol edilmesinde önemli bir öge olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Mahalle yaşamında bireylerin toplumsal kodlara uyup uymadıklarının kontrol edilmesinde ve buna göre mahalle üyelerinin kimliklerinin iyi veya kötü olarak algılanmasında mahalle şuuru etkin olmuştur. Bu konuda mahallenin en gizli konularına vakıf olan ve mahalle üyelerini iyi tanıyan mahalle imamı, mahalle şuurunun işlerliğinde baş aktör olarak yer almıştır. Mahalle şuuru, hem iktidarın, hem de toplumun onayladığı yaşam tarzının sürdürülmesine ve mahalle güvenliğinin korunmasına önemli katkılar sağlamıştır. Haksız yere bireysel özgürlüklere müdahale edildiği durumlarda ise, mahkemeler aracı kılına engel olunmuştur. Bu araştırma, toplumsal ve idari açıdan sosyal sistemin önemli unsurları arasında yer alan mahalle yaşamı içerisinde sosyal kontrol mekanizması olarak mahalle şuurunu birincil kaynakların sunduğu verilerden hareketle incelemeye ve tahlil etmeye çalışmaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Mahalle Şuuru, Sosyal Kontrol, Osmanlı, Konya

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## XVII- XVIII . ( )

### Аннотация

XVII-XVIII . ( )

### Ключевые Слова