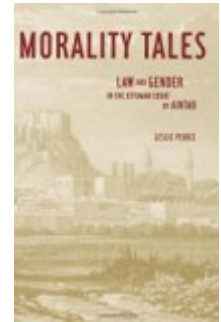


Leslie Peirce. *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003. xx + 460 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-520-22890-0.



Reviewed by Iris Agmon

Published on H-Turk (September, 2007)

Morality Tales constitutes a major contribution to the field of Ottoman and Middle Eastern social history, indeed to social history as a whole. The author, Leslie Peirce, offers the readers a microanalysis of a single year, 1540-41, in the lives of the people of a southeastern Anatolian town, Aintab, and its surrounding area. The analysis draws on two volumes of the *sharia* court record (*sicill*) of Aintab and a wide range of other sources: legal, administrative, and fiscal records of the Ottoman state, normative Islamic literature, and local Aintaban documents and histories. While embracing the entire provincial society of sixteenth-century Aintab, *Morality Tales* is devoted to, and shaped by, two intertwined themes: the *sharia* court of law and its justice; and Aintaban women and notions of gender.

Morality Tales has been already reviewed in several forums.[1] This rich and multilayered study undoubtedly deserves serious discussion. Moreover, its methodology, which is (still) considered suspicious in certain scholarly circles, makes it susceptible to criticism. And, finally, like any other book, this one, too, is not immune from

drawbacks. Indeed, each one of the reviews I have read so far highlights a different aspect of the book. In the present review I have chosen to focus on two aspects of *Morality Tales*: its microhistorical interpretive approach and its sociolegal analytical framework.

Content and Structure

Leslie Peirce reconstructs the world and lives of the people who lived in the provincial town of Aintab and its surrounding villages and towns in the sixteenth century. In particular, she focuses on the legal culture of the local court and the nature of its justice, stressing that the people of Aintab were important participants, together with the court personnel and other state officials, in the process of shaping these phenomena by "negotiating with and through the court" (p. 1). Peirce has therefore chosen the local court as her research arena (pp. 105-106). Within the society of sixteenth-century Aintab, Peirce has a special interest in the women "not only for the intrinsic interest of their own encounters with the law but also for what their conduct at court reveals about

the variety and flexibility of legal practice as a whole in this time and place" (p. 2).

The analysis of the local court and Aintaban provincial society is embedded in a broader historical context, namely, the effects of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Middle East. In mid-sixteenth-century Aintab, the local court constituted a setting within which Ottoman state officials and the people of Aintab, a province that had been conquered and become Ottoman only one generation earlier, encountered and interacted with each other. The author, therefore, uses the local court as a prism for observing macro historical processes, mainly the process of imperialization, "the accelerated integration of Aintab into the judicial, fiscal, and military systems of empire" (p. 341). Following the conquest of the Arab provinces (1516-17), the versatile Anatolian-Balkan empire transformed into a huge state seeking to develop efficient means for controlling and consolidating its highly diverse population under an Ottoman umbrella. In the methodological discussion I will return to the linkage that *Morality Tales* reinforces between the Ottoman imperialization process and the lives of the Aintabans who enjoyed the services of the local court in 1540-41. To my mind, the interrelations between the macro and micro historical domains displayed in this study constitutes one of the most important achievements of the book.

Thus, *Morality Tales* presents a *provincial history* dealing with the interrelations between the former Mamluk frontier region of Aintab, which had been recently conquered and turned into an Ottoman province, and the political center of the empire. From this point of view, the book may be defined as a social and political history of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, a period that represents a turning point in Ottoman history. As a by-product, it also adds yet another nail in the coffin of the grand narrative of Ottoman decline, especially with regard to the connection that narrative made between alleged de-

centralization and decline. The author demonstrates the efforts made by the Ottoman administration to become visible in Aintab through direct involvement in the daily affairs of the inhabitants. The demographic composition of the provincial population, encounters between city dwellers, peasants, and the tribal population, the years of economic prosperity following the Ottoman conquest, along with the Ottomanization strategies in the provinces, all exacerbated local tensions related to gender hierarchies, inter- and intra-community relations, and religious-political loyalties. The Ottoman interest in integrating the region into the empire and bringing it under effective control prompted Ottoman officials to become involved in relieving these tensions. Peirce shows how the involvement of Ottoman officials of various ranks and duties in the affairs of Aintab reshaped both the Ottoman reorganization in the provinces and the Ottomanization of Aintab. She stresses, however, that whereas collective identities in Aintab were reconstituted through local and regional networks, the redefinition of Aintab region as an Ottoman administrative unit did not play a significant role in reconstructing these identities (pp. 66-79). Peirce further emphasizes the issue of Aintaban identities by analyzing a wide range of phenomena in these terms throughout her book (pp. 139-141, 146, 150, 267-268, 295).

Peirce's discussion on the position of the Aintab court in the 1540s skillfully reveals the interaction between state officials and local inhabitants. Although she does not explicitly employ a specific sociolegal model, in effect, *Morality Tales* is a sociolegal study par excellence. This perspective is demonstrated, first of all, by the author's insistence that the law does not exist in law books, or, more accurately, not only in law books, but rather in legal practice (pp. 1-2, 6, 86-106, 188-189, 336).[2] The underlying legal question of the book is, therefore, not which specific law was implemented in certain case and to what extent its application followed the letter of the law. Rather, it explores *law as a process and social action*.

Hence, the production of justice is depicted as a dynamic process shaped by various legal sources, cultural notions, and social circumstances involving all kinds of actors—rulers, state officials, judges, court scribes, and, most important, every man and woman requiring the court services. All these are presented as participants in the process of legal interpretation. Thus, the court in this study is perceived as a social arena, and the legal proceedings are analyzed in terms of the sociocultural world of the parties involved. For this purpose, the legal documents are read not only for the positivistic information they contain, but also for what their discourse reveals about the court and society within which they were produced.

Within this sociolegal framework, the author adroitly ties together several seemingly unrelated findings—the appointment of a new judge in 1541 to preside over the local court; the fact that apart from one earlier register, the court registers from the year 1540-41 were the earliest that survived to the present, although a local court did function in Aintab much earlier; the evidence found in these volumes indicating that litigants, court personnel, and state officials were all involved in the production of justice in the court; the state legislation (*kanun*) and legal opinions (*fatawa*) released by the Ottoman chief mufti regarding the conduct of women and other topics; various fiscal steps taken in the Aintab province by the Ottoman center—in order to show that the Ottoman rulers at the center rendered the local court an effective tool of social control in their efforts to reorganize their rule in the provinces. Consequently, the court record was handled more systematically and hence better preserved from that period on. This conclusion convinced the author that the Aintab *sharia* court was significant enough to warrant a profound exploration of its record, and to turn the registers from 1540-41 into both the main source material and an object of historical study.

Another major theme linked to the sociolegal perspective is *women and gender*. The local court

is described as a "user-friendly" institution encouraging litigants from all walks of society. But in practice, it was mainly the middle and lower urban classes, women and villagers, and, to a lesser extent, foreigners and non-Muslims who sought the justice of the court, whereas members of the local elite hardly came to the court as litigants. This composition of the court's clientele (members of the public who came to court) was typical not only of the court of Aintab. Earlier *sicill*-based studies dealing with Ottoman courts in other regions and eras have pointed to similar findings.[3] In some of these works the fact that women formed a significant group of the court's clientele has been particularly stressed. When studies on women in *sharia* courts began to appear about three decades ago, the evidence indicating that non-elite women had gone to court to seek justice and in many cases had won their suits was received by scholars with great enthusiasm, not least because prior to the use of court records for empirical research, Muslim women were perceived as totally oppressed and deprived of any rights. Thus, perhaps as a counteractive historiographical move, authors produced interpretations that tended to overstate women's agency in court. [4]

Morality Tales may well be seen as part of the trend of depicting the *sharia* court as a corrective forum for women whose legal status according to Islamic law was profoundly inferior to men's. Peirce's analysis of gender construction through legal processes, however, goes well beyond women's agency. The intersection of gender with almost any socially constructed category pertaining to the power relations that prevailed in Ottoman Aintab is discussed throughout the book, and is indeed one of its strongest aspects. Peirce's treatment of the evidence on women turns the fundamental understanding about the role of the court in reshaping gender relations into a detailed and highly nuanced description of the position of women in sixteenth-century Aintaban society. The legal stories of several women are unpacked in

the book. Some of these cases become the focus of microanalyses and others are examined as part of discussions on the wide range of issues addressed by the book. Women came to court for various reasons, not always on their own initiative. The legal proceedings in which they were involved were of different types, and often case registrations ended without a recorded court decision. From these records, Peirce reconstructs many aspects of the everyday life of urban and rural women, mostly of modest background, their family ties and gender relations, their domestic cycles, their involvement in trade, agricultural production, and domestic services, their ownership of property, their social networks, education, and religiosity.

A key issue underlying Peirce's discussion of these topics and her understanding of women's experiences in court and society is *honor*. In Aintab, a complex local notion of honor played a major role in the lives of all people, not just women (pp. 177-179). For women, honor was not restricted only to the norm of seclusion and correct sexual conduct. Rather, it entailed women's agency at large, their ability to struggle in court for public recognition of their reputation. Honor as constructed in several legal and administrative sources typically represented notions held by males affiliated with the ruling elite. Had these notions alone been implemented, only upper-class women would have been able to defend their reputation. However, Peirce shows how ordinary women of different socioeconomic strata insisted on defending their reputation in court in terms of their own ways of life, thereby contributing to the production of a socially diversified and highly inclusive concept of honor. This broad notion of honor forms an organizing principle for Peirce's interpretation of gender relations in Aintab and the legal culture of its local court. Hence, she draws a picture in which women, who under the prevailing cultural norms were clearly inferior, nonetheless did not form a monolithic group; a wide range of social markers represented wom-

en's social position. Honor, which, according to Peirce, constituted an important factor in shaping women's (and men's) standing in society, "was offset by the culturally tenacious assumption that everyone was entitled to assert personal honor no matter what their location in the social hierarchy" (p. 387). It appears, therefore, that in *Morality Tales* the term "honor" (which interestingly enough does not exist as such in the court record of Aintab, p. 179) represents Peirce's efforts to interpret sixteenth-century Aintaban culture by means of an *emic* approach. Often, therefore, instead of speaking about the "agency" of women (or, for that matter, of ordinary people), which in this context, would represent an *etic* approach, she places women's strategies and patterns of behavior within their own frame of reference, honor, while exploring its multifaceted meanings.[5]

Morality Tales is structured along two axes. The first is a thematic division into four parts. Following a brief introductory chapter, part 1 presents the historical setting by zooming in from the history of Aintab to the make-up and characteristics of sixteenth-century Aintaban society, and from there to the local court, the research arena. Part 2 focuses on the social relations of the people of Aintab, particularly their gender and class hierarchies, and related moral issues that Aintabans brought up in court. In part 3 the provincial court is employed as a prism through which the larger setting of the state is viewed. This part deals with the integration of the province of Aintab into the Ottoman state by examining legal cases revealing the interaction between state concerns and internal tensions in the local communities of Aintab. In part 4 Peirce wraps up the various themes of the book by telling the story of an unmarried pregnant girl, Fatma, "a story about a local community making justice through its court" (p. 15), which is the main theme underlying the entire book.

The second axis of the book contains three stories interwoven into three of the four parts of

the book (parts 2-4). Each story unpacks a single court case whose main protagonist is a woman: The child bride Ine, the teacher Hacıye Sabah, and the peasant girl Fatma. Each story, an unnumbered chapter, opens the part of the book in which it is included (the last part contains only a story, Fatma's story). Peirce calls the three stories "case studies." She refers to their status in the book only by saying that "they can be read independently" (p. 13). The analysis of these three court cases connects each one of them to its respective thematic part (the first axis). Yet, the technical fact that, unlike the other chapters, the three stories--*morality tales*, literally--are unnumbered, stresses their unique status in the book. Methodologically, these chapters form microanalyses and their special position in the book's structure reinforces the focus on microhistory as an interpretive strategy. I will elaborate on this issue shortly.

Organizing the book along two axes which are simultaneously parallel and intertwined serves several thematic, methodological, and literary ends: it highlights the unique type of microhistorical approach that Peirce has adopted. Moreover, together with the title, *Morality Tales*, the location of the three stories within the thematic chapters emphasizes the focus on ordinary people. Peirce transforms them into historical subjects by narrating their legal troubles, which she turns into stories, historical events, despite the narrative-resistant nature of the texts that documented these events (p. 13). In addition, the mixture of thematic chapters and stories highlights the interplay between microanalysis and macro historical processes. Finally, this structure serves to enhance the study's holistic nature, its strong ethnographic hue. At the same time, however, certain features of the structure undermine some of the book's accomplishments. The monograph is inordinately long--the first part dealing with the historical setting is in itself long enough to form a short book in its own right. As a result, there are unavoidable repetitions. Although Peirce's bril-

liant rhetorical style and her talent for presenting highly sophisticated ideas in simple and jargon-free language manage to avoid creating clear instances of *deja vu*, there is nonetheless a sense of overstatement at times, along with a general impression that certain strange editorial decisions were taken in the production process of the book. The lack of a bibliography at the end of the book is one such decision that, together with the method of endnotes rather than footnotes, makes this heavy volume somewhat user-unfriendly.

Methodology

The development of microhistory since around the 1970s reflected a disappointment among certain social historians with the achievements of social history and its strong conceptual inclination toward the disciplines of economics and sociology. Social history had emerged in the twentieth century as a field of study claiming that social structures and institutions rather than political events should constitute key issues in grand historical narratives, and that ordinary people constitute historical actors no less than kings and notables. Originally, these arguments were designed to challenge early-twentieth-century mainstream political history. The precursors of social history in that period had criticized historians' tendency to focus exclusively on political events as issues worthy of historical investigation, on national elites as a pool of historical actors, on the nation-state as an exclusive unit of analysis, on state documents and archives as historical sources, and on a narrative-oriented structure as a model for historical writing.

However, while around the mid-twentieth century social history became a mainstream field of research in its own right, some of its practitioners began to criticize its main characteristics, notably its marked preference for the study of large-scale social structures using mainly quantitative research methods. They argued that the tools and research strategies that had been developed in the field of social history failed to unearth the interre-

lations between two historical aspects, the large-scale social structures and their meanings for ordinary people. Social history failed, according to this argument, to provide a better understanding of the forms taken by major historical transformations in the lives of common people (or any people, for that matter) and of the contribution of these people, in turn, to shaping these changes. Without such an understanding social history inevitably fell short of correcting the conservative grand historical narratives which early social historians had struggled to change to begin with. Hence, social history, according to this critique, had failed to achieve its original goals.[6]

From the outset, social history had been heavily shaped by the social sciences. For the classic social historians this influence, as noted, meant borrowing mainly from economics and sociology. In contrast, the reservations about classic social history, which since the 1970s have led some social historians to pursue an alternative agenda, were inspired by cultural anthropology.[7] Naturally, this meant a greater focus on the role of culture in historical processes. This tendency reflected not merely methodological discontent with quantitative approaches, but also disappointment with and criticism of Marxist theories that had hitherto inspired social history (the role played by Marxist theories and ideologies in the development of both the classic and new social histories was, in fact, more complex). In the 1980s studies employing microhistory were also shaped by and contributed to the return of narrative history.[8] With the "linguistic turn" in the 1980s and 1990s the influence of literary criticism on the historical profession reinforced these trends, highlighting the similarities between history and literature and the borrowing of literary methods for analyzing historical texts.[9] It should be noted, however, that while being methodologically enriched by post-structuralist ideas and tools, microhistory as an approach of social history has remained loyal to the belief that past realities are tangible; otherwise there would have been no point in the claim

made by microhistorians about the need to revisit grand historical narratives. Post-structuralists, on the other hand, have basically called for getting rid of grand historical narratives altogether (claiming that since narratives represent contemporary power relations rather than past realities, fragmented polyphonic multi-narrative history needs to be encouraged instead of grand narratives that by definition represent and reinforce the domination of particular interests).

Microhistory has never developed into a full-fledged theory of historical investigation. Rather, it has been defined as an interpretive strategy which has been used rather differently by each historian. Nevertheless, certain common features characterize many microanalyses. In the following, I discuss the way some of these features have been employed in *Morality Tales*. The term "microhistory" is somewhat misleading for it highlights a single aspect of this approach, namely, *the reduced scale* of the unit of analysis. For the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that microhistorians aim to gain a better understanding of historical processes on *both the micro and macro levels* and, most important, link the two domains together.[10] What stands behind this goal is one of the fundamental motivations shaping social history: To turn ordinary people into historical actors, uncover how they experienced major historical transformations, what these processes meant for them, and in what ways they not only lived through these changes but actively shaped them (p. 11). The point I try to stress here is that, in the end, the success of microanalyses depends to a large extent on the insights they provide about the micro and the macro historical domains *as a whole*. The reduced scale of the analytical unit is, therefore, not necessarily an end in itself. Rather, it constitutes a means to the goal of writing ordinary people into the grand historical narratives in order to change these narratives.[11]

From this perspective, *Morality Tales* represents a great achievement. Peirce seems equally

comfortable in both the macro and micro domains, moving elegantly between the two. She skillfully turns the events, troubles, and legal experiences of her protagonists into fascinating stories and weaves them convincingly into the big picture. Consequently, this big picture becomes tangible: Instead of large structures--an empire, or province--and abstract descriptions of changing Ottoman notions of rule, the reader is given a sense of what it was like to be an individual Ottoman subject in that era, how these changes might have affected such individuals' daily affairs and social relations, and what sort of choices made by these individuals reshaped in turn these changes. As a result, the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire becomes much less exotic and strange than might be expected, thus turning into an integral part of world history.[12] To achieve these goals, Peirce uses a wide range of sources. She also moves back and forth between different "time zones," from snapshots of personal events that occurred in Aintab during 1540-41 to processes that had begun long before that year and continued long after it ended (more on the issue of time in microhistory below).

The historical context of the study, as noted, is the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Middle East and North Africa and the significant internal transformations this growth entailed, particularly in the realm of interrelations between the imperial center and the provinces. Peirce's discussion on Hacıye Sabah, the female teacher who was blamed by her neighbors for heresy and gendered misconduct (pp. 251-275), may be a good example of the interaction between the micro and macro domains of *Morality Tales* (for brevity, I will primarily use this case to illustrate my methodological comments). Peirce explores the records of this court case, which deals with a woman who earned her living by teaching women at her home and providing them with religious guidance. She and a certain Ibrahim, a preacher she had hired to teach her pupils, were sued by her neighbors (in fact, it is

not specified whether the neighbors sued them or merely served as witnesses; more on this question below). The judge found them guilty and ordered that they be expelled from the town as a punishment for the presence of the preacher and two of his apprentices in a class full of women, with whom the three males were forbidden to associate, according to the prevailing norms of female seclusion. The other complaint against Hacıye Sabah, that she had been teaching heretical *kizilbash* ideas, was ignored in the recorded court decision. Peirce raises many questions about the local circumstances surrounding this case, the social background of its main protagonists, and the way in which the judge handled the case. As I will maintain shortly, the latter issue, the analysis of the legal proceeding, surprisingly forms the weakest part of Peirce's discussion. Nevertheless, her analysis of the case in terms of the interrelations between the micro and macro levels is extremely instructive. After briefly presenting the case of Hacıye Sabah and raising various questions about it, Peirce puts on hold the story of the female teacher and the event that brought her to court, and presents the roots of *kizilbash* heresy in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in border zones near the emerging Safavid state, like Aintab. The reader, who in previous chapters has already acquired substantial knowledge about the Ottoman conquest of the Middle East and the efforts of the Ottomans to integrate the Mamluk provinces into their political culture, now learns that the long-standing rivals of the Ottomans on the eastern border, the Mamluks, were not the key reason for the expedition of the Ottoman army into the Middle East. Rather, it was the charismatic Safavid leader, Ismail, with his appealing *kizilbash* doctrines that blended Sufism with Shi'ism, and the rising Safavid dynasty that would turn Iran into a Shi'i state that were depicted as a major threat by the Ottoman sultans at the turn of the sixteenth century. In the years that followed the Ottoman occupation of the Middle East and well into the sixteenth century, the *kizilbash* movement contin-

ued to challenge the Ottoman administration in eastern Anatolia. After elaborating on these developments and the *kizilbash* sentiments in eastern Anatolia, Peirce returns to the trial of Hacıye Sabah, embedding the accusations of heresy against her within that context. The Ottoman approaches to the *kizilbash* movement and the trial of Hacıye Sabah are now interrelated, despite the huge difference of scale between these two analytical units. Moreover, each casts new light on the other, allowing further discussions in the following chapters on Ottoman treatment of heresy and other forms of resistance in Aintab.

Whether or not Hacıye Sabah did indeed preach *kizilbash* beliefs is irrelevant to the insights we gain from this discussion concerning Ottoman interests, Aintaban realities, and the interrelations between them. Not that we have no desire to discover what really stood behind the heresy accusation. Quite the contrary: an effective microanalysis should enchant its readers by the personal details of the small event explored (i.e., the story), making them forget their "commitment" to dreary abstractions. Students of history are, after all, fans of good stories like anyone else. What is important about the accusation of *kizilbash* heresy against Hacıye Sabah is that it *could have been true*, so that in the historical circumstances of mid-sixteenth-century Aintab it was a reasonable accusation to make in order to elicit serious legal treatment. We will never know what Hacıye Sabah taught her female pupils, which aspects of her behavior really disturbed her neighbors, and why the court decision ignored the heresy accusation in favor of the charge of gendered misconduct. And yet we can benefit from this opportunity to imagine why Hacıye Sabah's neighbors sought to harm her by making accusations that might make sense in court and alarm the judge. They enable us to make *informed speculations* about plausible scenarios for the legal event by linking it to social relations and net-

works in the local community in question and to the broader imperial framework.

This point allows a better understanding of the role of small-scale analytical units in microhistory. The most common complaint of historians who take issue with this approach is that it produces an anecdotal history, a code name for writing that is "not really" history, that is too speculative, offering unsubstantiated generalizations and unproven conclusions. This common critique is directed mainly against two features of microhistory: the reduced scale of the analytical unit, or—as it is sometimes presented—its ethnographic style; and the lack of measurable categories in microanalysis, which creates a typicality problem. Yet, we would not have a better understanding of the interrelations between the case of Hacıye Sabah, here the small-scale analytical unit, and heresy trends in the Ottoman Empire, the macro-level domain, even if it were possible to determine some statistical ratio between this particular case and the large-scale trends of heresy. In contrast, we do gain invaluable insights by looking for every tiny detail about this single court case and using it to learn how prevailing anxieties could have affected the daily lives of common people and what kind of interpretations these people attributed to such concerns, thereby reshaping them. In the case of Hacıye Sabah, moreover, Peirce focuses on an issue ignored by the court decision, namely, the heresy accusation. In other words, she pays a great deal of attention to an absent issue, or, according to her interpretation, a silenced one. It is unlikely that such an absence would have even been noticed if any approach other than microanalysis had been used. The latter point underlines *plausibility* as an indispensable and extremely useful technique of microanalysis.

The reduced scale of the analytical unit should be seen together with another characteristic of microhistory, the *holistic approach*. As noted, both features are inspired by practices of

ethnographic fieldwork in cultural anthropology, in particular, by Clifford Geertz's approach of "thick description." [13] Taken literally, the holistic approach might be understood in terms of functionalist theory as rendering the observed culture a coherent system in which any disharmony may be dismissed as dysfunction. Indeed, much of the critique of Geertz and scholars who have been inspired by his interpretive theory of culture has been basically directed toward the pitfalls of holistic notions of culture: a harmonious ahistorical portrayal of the observed society. [14] This danger always lurks for microhistorians: the close examination of people's everyday life in a small-scale unit of analysis, and the attempt to make sense of it *as a whole*, almost by definition encourage a harmonious representation of the observed culture. Therefore, a holistic methodology poses a challenge to microhistory. It requires scholars to look deliberately for disharmony, contradictions, and loose ends (in addition to finding creative solutions to the problem of time, which I discuss below). For this purpose, when seeking a small-scale unit of analysis, microhistorians actually look for "telling events," neither typical nor average but rather unique and strange (and "uniqueness" here does not pertain to statistical exceptionality). [15] By focusing on such events, individuals and groups, microhistorians expect to learn about internal tensions and disharmonies, and in this way understand better the entire system in question. In *Morality Tales*, the very fact that a court of law forms the focus of analysis highlights this insight since the court, by definition, is a place of conflicts and tensions. In a way, the danger facing historians who explore courts of law is not that they will draw an excessively harmonious picture of the society under observation but rather the opposite, that they will portray the entire society in terms of legal conflicts.

Peirce tackles this challenge successfully. She unearths several social and political conflicts, instances of local violence, and resistance by individuals and groups both to the Ottoman adminis-

tration and local power elites. Aintaban society emerges from her analysis as extremely heterogeneous, dynamic, and tense. At the same time, however, the court itself, presided over by Judge Husameddin Efendi, is presented as highly effective in resolving conflicts (not necessarily by passing judgments) and relieving various social tensions. Consequently, the portrayal of the court, its clientele, and their interrelations often seems too harmonious. To illustrate this point, I return to Hacıye Sabah's story and the plausibility that the judge intentionally ignored the heresy accusation against her. Peirce invests much energy in showing that the judge deliberately chose not to deal with that accusation, describing his choice as "creative ambiguity" (p. 275), a strategy that allowed him to maneuver between Ottoman worries about disloyal elements like the *kizilbash* and the local social balance in Aintab. However, as noted earlier, the strength of this case's analysis rests in Peirce's aptitude in showing that under the prevailing circumstances an accusation of heresy was as severe as that of gendered misconduct. Whether or not Sabah preached *kizilbash* beliefs, whether or not the judge deliberately ignored the heresy accusation, these options neither reinforce nor reduce this success. To be sure, my reservation here is *not* about the specific hypothesis suggested by Peirce, and certainly not about the fact that she speculates about what happened. In contrast to historians who come from quantitative traditions of writing social history and feel uncomfortable with Peirce's (and other microhistorians') speculations, basically because they are based on what these historians regard as too little evidence, my reservations come from *within* microhistory. From this point of view, the hypothesis that the judge preferred to ignore the heresy accusation is perfectly reasonable and relevant and is sustained by the evidence that Peirce provides. However, she seems to take it too far, beyond the realm of plausible scenario, squeezing every piece of evidence into its assumed place in the puzzle, so that the judge appears almost superhuman. For

a newly appointed judge who had arrived from the capital and begun to give rulings in the Aintab court only a couple of weeks earlier, his handling of this serious court case is presented as astonishingly percipient: He was able to discern local Aintaban sensitivities and address them in court (by not opening the Pandora's box of heresy accusation), and then manipulate the order of the case's entries in the court register with the aim of diminishing the heresy accusation. An account so neatly concluded undermines the purpose of making informed speculations in microhistory.

This brings me to the sociolegal perspective of *Morality Tales*. Historians who endeavor to write about ordinary people, focusing on the small-scale analytical unit, employing a holistic approach, wrestling with the scarcity of sources that allow meaningful historical ethnography, and making extensive use of informed speculation and plausibility, are faced with a particularly difficult task. A major challenge concerns the ways in which they deal with the main body of documents at their disposal and the extent to which they share with the readers their considerations when interpreting these documents. In *Morality Tales* the court cases recorded during 1540-41 form this body of documents. In chapter 3 ("Introducing the Court of Aintab"), which concludes part 1 that presents the historical setting of her research, Peirce makes general observations about the court of Aintab and its record. She presents the textual features of the record and discusses additional legal sources that enhance her analysis of the court's legal discourse. She explains the structure of case records, the range of issues brought up in court, the order of entries in the court registers, and the calligraphic styles of the court scribes who wrote them--all the features that testify to orality, gendered vocabulary, sociolegal performance, and interactions in court between litigants, the judge, and other state employees. This broader introduction provides the framework for

turning the court into an object of historical investigation in its own right.

However, as Peirce pursues her discussion on the various topics of the book (parts 2-4), these issues, particularly legal procedures and work routines of the court as inscribed in its record, are explored in a somewhat unsystematic way. These issues are essential for developing convincing interpretations of the court cases under observation, which in turn requires engaging the readers in these interpretations. Since, as noted, informed speculations and hypotheses are major tools in microhistory, the author needs to gain the readers' trust in the interpretations offered by clearly showing the logic behind each hypothesis, the way in which bits and pieces of evidence are put together to sustain each interpretation. Any such interpretation begins from the court records. Therefore, evidence about the production processes of these documents, namely, court routines and legal procedures, provides the glue for connecting all the loose ends that the author ties together through her interpretations. The reconstruction of these routines, which constitute the "everyday life" of the court, allows Peirce to conduct discourse analyses and develop cultural interpretations, which are the two strongest aspects of her discussion. Nonetheless, her treatment of the documents and the practices of their production sometimes make it difficult for the reader to follow her arguments.

The author includes in her discussion translations of complete entries from the court record or sections from certain entries that pertain to the themes she discusses. In this way, she exposes her readers to these texts and shares with them her interpretations. Although at times she adds the transliteration of legal or other terms from the original text, some important transliterated terms that are crucial to her argument are missing. In the Hacıye Sabah case, for instance, Ibrahim, hired by the accused teacher, is presented as a preacher, but the original term for preacher is not

given in the translated record. In her interpretation of his social affiliation (p. 265), Peirce explains that two of the case witnesses were also preachers, but of a higher rank than Ibrahim, citing as evidence that the term *hatib* was attached in the record to their names. In contrast, she maintains, Ibrahim was a popular kind of preacher, but she does not give the specific term used in the record to describe him so it is not clear on what basis she concludes that he was of lower or popular rank. Since she uses the difference in socioreligious status between Ibrahim and the case witnesses to sustain her argument about the religious tension underlying Sabah's case, the missing term is important. In the story of Ine, the child bride, the omission of certain original terms is even more critical. It is not clear what convinced Peirce that Ine was a child in the first place. In the translated entry, Peirce uses the word "girl" once (without giving the original term used in the record). However, this word does not appear in the opening sentence of the entry, whose function was to identify the litigant for the record (representing the court's definition of the litigant's legal personality), but as part of the sentence preceding the testimony of Ine's step-father "The girl's step-father Hudavirdi said:..." (p. 130). Thus, it is not clear what Peirce means by describing Ine as a child bride. Was she legally minor? Minority is not mentioned in the translated text either, although elsewhere Peirce notes that when a litigant's legal identity was different from the "default" identity, namely, freeborn Muslim male adult (pp. 144-145), the record would indicate it. In her discussion of the gendered vocabulary of the court record she mentions the terminology that defines females according to their position in the domestic cycle: female child or unmarried adolescent; newly married young woman; and female adult, married or once-married (p. 149). The issue of legal minority is also mentioned there but it is, again, not clear what "female child" stands for in terms of legal minority, or in terms of age, and whether the record's vocabulary was examined

systematically in these terms (pp. 148-154). In addition, Peirce cites the testimony of Ine's step-father and infers that she was an orphan. But it is not clear how she arrives at this conclusion, as the original term for "step-father" is not provided, so that Ine's relationship to this man remains obscure. Was he her legal guardian? This would have sustained the possibility that she was still a minor and orphan (but "step-father" would then be an inaccurate translation). However, Ine's patronymic name in the identifying opening sentence mentions her father, Maksud, without the adjective "the late." Does that mean that he was still alive? If so, Ine was not an orphan and the question about her so-called step-father again arises (pp. 130-135, 322). A similar vagueness characterizes the author's more general discussion on the performance of children in court and the question of sexual assaults against boys (p. 195).

The missing terminology points to the importance of studying court procedures for the reconstruction of the court arena. As noted, in addition to the court records Peirce bases her sociolegal discussion on normative literature and other sources pertaining to legal administration. This is not an easy task and Peirce handles it skillfully, making difficult legal notions accessible for readers who are not experts in Islamic jurisprudence. At the same time, legal concepts and practices affecting the court routines, particularly notions of legal personality, the legal capacity of different types of litigants, witnesses, and court staff, different types of legal proceedings, and most important, recording procedures--the very issues that Peirce highlights in chapter 3--are then studied somewhat arbitrarily. I return to the case of Hacıye Sabah to illustrate this point. Peirce mentions that the case represented in the record by four entries was heard in court on the same day, and points to the peculiar order of these entries in the record: Sabah's deposition was recorded first, then the version of Ibrahim (the preacher Sabah had hired), followed by a statement of one of

Ibrahim's apprentices. The neighbors' complaint was the last entry of this case and was recorded after a few entries pertaining to other cases heard on the same day (p. 258). Although the author suggests that the order of registered entries does not necessarily reflect the order of actual court sessions (pp. 251, 271), she skips several basic questions about the court's recording practices, a systematic examination of which might have reinforced both the explanation she offers for this case and her sociolegal analysis as a whole. Instead, at this point Peirce develops her interpretation, arguing that the judge deliberately separated in the record the entries that included the depositions of Hacıye Sabah, the preacher and one of his apprentices from the entry containing the neighbors' complaint about Sabah's classes in order to silence the heresy accusation that was included only in the neighbors' statement. In terms of court practice, she bases this interpretation on the assumption that "the judge's summary most likely imposed this order [of recorded entries] on what was no doubt a less episodic, more confused, and perhaps more drawn-out confrontation," and on her impression that "in several other instances recorded in the court's register, the written record obviously collapses the time frame and separates into distinct testimonial narratives what was actually an acrimonious dispute full of mutual accusations" (p. 271).

These issues, however, need to be further explored. An important question in this context is whether the scribe recorded each case during or soon after the case session or at the end of the day (or even after a few days), on the basis of notes he had taken during the deliberations and dictation by the judge. It is also important to explore the dates of case records and what they represent in terms of the actual legal proceedings: were court cases always tried and decided in a single day or did some of them take longer? Another important question concerns the actual meaning of "entry" in the Aintab court record. Does it represent a certain legal proceeding conducted separately in

court, a court session, for instance, or perhaps the court staff rendered each legal component of the entire proceeding—a plaintiff's claim, a defendant's response, a testimony, and so on and so forth—as a separate entry, no matter whether or not they were conducted consecutively? Peirce actually raises these questions in chapter 3, and offers a general response to some of them. But to tackle questions like the order of entries in Hacıye Sabah's case (which is central to Peirce's interpretation that the judge deliberately ignored the heresy accusation against Sabah) would require a detailed analysis of the records in light of these questions.

From the various entries cited throughout the book and the description in chapter 3, Peirce seems to maintain that the court entries do not represent cases that were resolved in a single day. She believes that an entry represents "the final summary of critical points in a case" (p. 101), in other words, cases were recorded after they were resolved. Apparently, she also concludes that the date of an entry record represents the date of the actual trial, or the concluding session of a trial (p. 86, cf. a different conclusion suggested by her discussion on pp. 336-337). The very fact that I am not sure how to present Peirce's understanding of these issues demonstrates part of the problem, because even her general description of the court's work in chapter 3 is not entirely clear. For the sake of this discussion, however, let us assume that the above presentation of Peirce's description of the recording practices is accurate. If so, the question of how individual entries, like the four entries of Hacıye Sabah's case, relate to each other and to what transpired in court leading to the entries' production remains open. To resolve it one needs to look for legal hints concerning the type of proceeding inscribed in each entry. As there is no mention in the cited case record of any official who took the teacher and preacher to court, is it possible, for instance, that the four entries of Hacıye Sabah's case represent one lawsuit initiated by the neighbors? Are there any legal terms

(beside *ikrar*, specifically translated by Peirce as "statement," p. 258) or legal conventions that point to the plausibility of such an interpretation (or any other, for that matter)? Peirce describes the entries containing what the various participants in this case said as "statement," "testimony," or "censure" intermittently. Furthermore, she barely uses basic legal terms like plaintiff, defendant, claim, response, and counter-claim in the entries cited throughout the book (and it is not clear to what extent this reflects the inconsistent use of such terms in the original texts). Hence it is hard to say whether it makes sense to consider the four entries as a single lawsuit (in which the neighbors would be plaintiffs, Sabah and Ibrahim defendants, and the preacher's apprentice a witness). In any event, I mention this possibility *not* to suggest that this is what actually happened in court, but rather to illustrate two intertwined issues: (1) the efforts to trace such legal procedures and terminology for reconstructing individual cases would prove useful even if these procedures are hardly inscribed in the Aintab court record, for even such findings alone would provide extremely important insights into the local legal culture; and (2) even if reading these four entries as one private lawsuit does make sense, it does not contradict Peirce's interpretation about the difference between the actual legal event and the way it was recorded, but rather reinforces it since it means that the last entry, containing, in terms of legal procedure, the neighbors' claim as plaintiffs and Sabah's response as a defendant, represents the first part of the actual trial that for some reason was recorded as the last. This gives an idea of the potential inherent in a broader discussion of legal procedures which would provide more evidence for sustaining the interpretation of case records.

Another issue that the author highlights in her analyses of the court discourse, the direct speech of court clients, is closely related to the production of the court record. In chapter 3 Peirce mentions that what various people said in court

"is more often than not represented in the written record as direct speech (i.e., speech that can be framed by quotation marks)" (p. 103). In the entries cited throughout the book she indicates verbatim expressions by quotation marks, showing that direct speech was indeed a major feature of the court record, a feature she attributes to the judge's and/or scribe's rhetorical strategy of amplifying certain voices in the record in order to underline the court's position on the content of the speech in question (pp. 103-105, 275, 352). When certain words in the text are crossed out, she highlights the scribe's involvement in shaping the text (pp. 96-97, 195-196); and at times, her treatment of the documents serves to support her argument about the ability of ordinary people to be heard in court regardless of how their words found their way into the record (pp. 177, 195, 199, 335). Such interpretations demonstrate Peirce's inclination to analyze court records in cultural terms, overlooking certain questions about the production of the court records that may significantly affect the understanding of direct speech, in fact the Aintab court culture as a whole. To what extent was direct speech part of a prevailing bureaucratic tradition? How was it related to the recording practices at the court? For instance, was it connected to the scribe's note-taking during trials? What can direct speech tell us about the division of labor between the judge and scribe in the production of case records? The purpose of addressing these (and similar) questions is not to replace the above interpretations, but rather to ground them in the sociolegal arena of the court. Both the questions about the order of the entries and the use of direct speech seem fundamental not only for understanding the legal culture of the Aintab court but also for sustaining major arguments of the book, such as the significant role played by the court in the imperialization process of Aintab, and the claim that the arrival of Judge Husameddin in Aintab in 1541 and the transformation of the court record into public record rep-

resented a turning point in the history of the Aintab court.

Finally, there is the question of the other volumes of the Aintab court record and their relevance for the sociolegal analysis in *Morality Tales*. Obviously, I *do not* suggest that more registers need to be read microscopically in the same manner as Peirce has read the two volumes of 1540-41. Rather, my point is that other court registers covering the research period pertain to this study, like the other sources (beside the *sicill*). A selective study of these registers, guided by specific questions in the way that the other sources are explored in *Morality Tales*, may yield significant information. Peirce explains that the registers of 1540-41 constitute the second and third volumes that survived to the present and that the first volume is inaccessible to scholars (p. 88). She also notes that several volumes among the registers for the following years until the end of the century are missing, including the registers for the years 1542-44, that is, immediately after the year under observation (p. 100). However, an examination of the available volumes in order to discover trends in the court's work and the ways in which its personnel handled these registers could answer many of the questions that Peirce raises and speculates about, or at least furnish better evidence on which to base speculations. For instance, to what extent did court patterns typical of the judgeship of Husameddin Efendi continue under his successors? Peirce has deemed his judgeship extremely important both because of the way he, personally, functioned and because it embodied the changes introduced into the Aintab court by the Ottoman administration (pp. 93-95, 184, 287, 301, 321-322, 341, 342). In practice, however, only the case records from the last three months covered by the second register of 1540-41 represent his work (p. 92). Consequently, some of Peirce's interpretations derived from Husameddin's strategies in handling court cases or registering them in the record seem odd. Returning for a moment to the case of Haciye Sabah, was a verdict of banish-

ment for gendered misconduct as unique in the Aintab court in later years as in 1540-41 (p. 271)? How did later judges deal with heresy accusations in court? Did they confront such accusations at all? Another example is the author's claim that from the 1540s the Aintab court record served as a public record, as the supposed memory of the community (pp. 98-100, 195, 285). To what extent do later court registers sustain this claim? What exactly does it mean in terms of court practices that the court record was used as public record? A microanalysis does not mean that there is no room for quantitative data to sustain it. As noted, Peirce has used such data from other sources (the cadastral surveys, for example), which, as in other microhistories, have indeed served the goals of her microanalysis.

The latter point brings us back to the discussion on microhistory. Conducting holistic research into a small-scale analytical unit raises another methodological issue: the status of *time* in such a study. Because of their focus on such questions as typicality and harmony, not many methodological essays discuss the status of time which entails significant implications for microhistory.[16] The question of time relates to two intertwined aspects: *time span* and *time movement*, both of which affect the issue of dynamism in microanalyses. Is it possible to look closely at a small unit of analysis and end up with more than a snapshot? Obviously, a time span that is long enough for exploring social processes is crucial. In practice, however, it is very hard to conduct a profound microanalysis that also covers a large enough time span as to reconstruct large-scale changes. This is where the author's movement in time becomes most relevant. Microanalysis requires more than one type of "clock" for measuring time. Two kinds of navigation through time seem obvious: one, involving detailed analysis of small and often rather short events, or the everyday life of individuals, provides a framework for an in-depth analysis of a small-scale unit; the other relates to large-scale processes. In both cases, however, the

historian's movement through time is not necessarily linear; the question also arises of how to link these two types of time. In different microhistorical studies, therefore, we find a number of combinations of time span and time movement.

As noted, in order to include both the micro- and macro-domains and create links between them, Peirce moves back and forth between in-depth analysis and long-range examination. Within the same discussion, she moves fast forward and back, pausing at certain moments to focus on specific issues. Another important feature of her study is that her very unit of analysis is defined by time: a single year at the court of Aintab. Obviously, this year does not represent the time span covered by her study. The one-year framework, however, turns *Morality Tales* into a unique type of microhistory. On the one hand, it is a *longue-duree* kind of local history, covering the entire sixteenth century in the province of Aintab, like Abraham Marcus's study of the town of Aleppo. [17] On the other hand, by focusing on a few stories recorded in the Aintab court during a single year, *Morality Tales* resembles microanalyses that explore a particular event, like *The Return of Martin Guerre*, or the life of specific person, like Menocchio, the Italian miller, or Isma'il Abu Taqiyya, the Egyptian merchant.[18] Like the authors of these works, not only does Peirce spotlight ordinary individuals, thereby rendering them historical subjects, but she learns about these individuals as a result of their involvement in legal proceedings.

The issue of time is linked to chronology and narrative, topics that conclude this methodological discussion. A major criticism made by some microhistorians against classic social history was that it had become inaccessible to almost all readers, except for an extremely small and exclusive club of experts, because of the tendency of classic social historians to replace the narrative history that they had rejected with a too "scientific," ultimately unfriendly, problem-oriented analytical

history. Reviving narrative history by focusing on a small event or a particular biography whose ingredients would encourage historians to structure their studies as stories was, therefore, not just a by-product for those microhistorians, but an important goal in its own right. The notion of narrative was developed in particular by what might be called "the Italian school" of microhistory.[19] *Morality Tales* is clearly inspired by this tradition more than by any other microhistorical tradition. As noted, the book's very title, *Morality Tales*, indicates the importance that Peirce attributes to storytelling, which is enhanced by the special status of the three main stories in the book's structure. Yet, Peirce's narration strategy cannot be defined as straightforward storytelling. The study is not narrated as a story, not even as a combination of the three main morality tales. Instead, it is composed of many small stories and bits and pieces of stories that produce a multilayered text. Furthermore, Peirce never follows a simple chronological order that moves forward steadily from earlier to later events, neither when she deals with *longue-duree* processes nor when she focuses on a story of one of her female protagonists. While moving between the latter two types of analysis, which, as noted, require different notions of time span, she nevertheless entwines "hard" historical analysis with small details of common people's experiences into one narrative. She achieves this integration by employing a non-chronological approach even for case records that seem to offer the opportunity any microhistorian always waits for—to write history by simply telling a good story.

In the introductory chapter Peirce describes her narrative approach as "frustrating" "from the reader's point of view," because readers "want a resolution to stories such as those of Ine, Fatma, or Hacıye Sabah" (p. 13). Peirce attributes her choice to avoid narrating these cases as stories, and especially to avoid giving them endings, to two aspects of the court work: The nature of the court records as "resistant to narration"; and the fact that "the court is not always interested in the

whole story" which according to her interpretation, is consistent with the judge's perception that "indeterminacy was sometimes a good thing, since it helped achieve the goal of social equity" (p. 13). In other words, Peirce's narrative strategy reflects the special status possessed by the court documents of 1540-41 and the court arena at large in *Morality Tales*. In addition to the non-chronological organization of the text, Peirce's narrative strategy may be characterized by its perpetual motion between tension and relief, between deconstructing text and reconstructing it in order to understand it differently. Like Ulysses's wife Penelope (as I metaphorically described Peirce's style elsewhere), she weaves bits and pieces of stories taken from the Aintab court record together with information derived from other sources.[20] And when they seem to form a single piece of fabric that resolves a certain problem she unravels it and redesigns it differently, providing the readers with another point of view for resolving the same problem. In this way, while Peirce does not simply tell a story, she nevertheless produces a fascinating multilayered microhistory which constantly stimulates the readers' imagination.

There are many other important aspects of *Morality Tales* that cannot be covered even in this lengthy review. This study, despite certain weaknesses, forms an extremely refreshing and thought-provoking addition to Ottoman social and sociolegal history. One should hope that it will encourage further methodological discussions, and inspire more sociolegal and microhistorical research on Ottoman history, as these fields are indeed far from being exhausted.

Notes

[1]. Abdurrahman Atal, "Osmanli Donemi Antep Mahkemesinde Hukuk ve Cinsiyet," *Kebikec* 17 (2004): 83-88; Hulya Canbakal, "Book Review," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 27 (2003): 128-132; John J. Curry, "Book Review," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125 (2005): 102-104; Bogac Ergene, "Book Review," *International Jour-*

nal of Middle East Studies 38 (2006): 309-310; Liat Kozma, "Book Review," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19 (2004): 111-13; Isik Tamdogan, "Comptes rendus," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales* 59 (2004): 1219-1221; Madeline C. Zilfi, "Book Review," *American Historical Review* 110 (2005): 258; Julie Hardwick, Patricia Skinner, Indrani Chatterjee, and Leslie Peirce, "Book Forum," *Journal of Women's History* 18 (2006): 181-202.

[2]. On the sociolegal approach, see, e.g., Roger Cotterrell, "Why Must Legal Ideas Be Interpreted Sociologically?" *Journal of Law and Society* 25 (1998): 171-192, and "Subverting Orthodoxy, Making Law Central: A View of Sociolegal Studies," *Journal of Law and Society* 29 (2002): 632-644.

[3]. To mention only a few examples: Ronald C. Jennings, "Women in Early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Judicial Records--The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri," *JESHO* 18, no. 1 (1975): 53-114; Judith E. Tucker, "Ties that Bound: Women and Family in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Nablus," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), 233-253; Fatma Muge Gocek and Marc David Baer, "Social Boundaries of Ottoman Women's Experience in Eighteenth-Century Galata Court Records," in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Madeline C. Zilfi (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 48-65; Najwa al-Qattan, "Litigants and Neighbors: The Communal Topography of Ottoman Damascus," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3 (2002): 511-533; Iris Agmon, *Family and Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

[4]. For the scholarship on women and *sharia* courts, see Annelies Moors, "Debating Islamic Family Law: Legal Texts and Social Practices," in *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Margaret L. Meriwether and

Judith E. Tucker (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 141-171; and Iris Agmon, "Women's History and Ottoman *Sharia* Court Records: Shifting Perspectives in Social History," *Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World* 2 (2004): 172-209.

[5]. The terms "emic" and "etic" represent two perspectives of cultural analysis. They originate from the terminology used by linguistic anthropologists, "phonemic" and "phonetic" (respectively), in exploring foreign languages. In analogy to "phonemic," the perspective of a native speaker of the language in question, the "emic" perspective focuses on cultural distinctions that are meaningful for members of the observed society. And following "phonetic," the "etic" perspective uses analytical concepts and categories that are meaningful for foreign observers. This terminology has been developed in several directions provoking theoretical and methodological debates among anthropologists. See, e.g., Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth Lee Pike, and Marvin Harris, eds., *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1990).

[6]. See, e.g., Sigurdur G. Magnusson, "The Singularization of History: Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 3 (2003): 701-735; Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 101-117.

[7]. Natalie Z. Davis, "The Shapes of Social History," *Storia della Storiografia* 17 (1990): 28-35. Davis uses the term "classic" social history to describe the socioeconomic mainstream social history (as opposed to "newer" social history, which describes microhistory).

[8]. Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on New Old History," *Past and Present* 85 (1979): 3-24.

[9]. Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1989); Iggers, *Historiography*.

[10]. Don Handelman, "Microhistorical Anthropology: Toward a Prospective Perspective," in *Critical Conjunctions: Anthropology and History beyond the Cultural Turn*, ed. Don Kalb and Herman Tak (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 29-52. See in particular note 3, pp. 47-48.

[11]. E.g., Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 93-113.

[12]. E.g., the reviews included in the "Book Forum," note 1.

[13]. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30. The title of the present review quotes an expression taken from "Thick Description."

[14]. See, e.g., a critique of the works of Clifford Geertz and Robert Darnton in Handelman, "Microhistorical Anthropology," 32-37. See also Levi, "On Microhistory."

[15]. Davis, "The Shapes of Social History," 30; Levi, "On Microhistory," 103.

[16]. Handelman's "Microhistorical Anthropology" excepted. His discussion on temporality, however, pertains to anthropological rather than historical microhistory, in spite of his emphasis on the similarities between the two disciplines in this regard.

[17]. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth-Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

[18]. Natalie Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: John

Hopkins University Press, 1980); Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Isma'il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

[19]. Magnusson, "The Singularization of History," 109-111.

[20]. Iris Agmon, "Fatma's Dilemma, Bertrande's Invented Marriage, and Penelope's Thread: Introductory Note on Leslie Peirce's Article 'Fatma's Dilemma,'" *Jama'a: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Middle East* 11 (2003): 109-121 [Hebrew].

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-turk>

Citation: Iris Agmon. Review of Peirce, Leslie. *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*. H-Turk, H-Net Reviews. September, 2007.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=13539>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.