

Daniels, Jacob. 2025. *The Jews of Edirne. The End of Ottoman Europe and the Arrival of Borders.* Stanford: Stanford University Press. 299 + xiv pages. ISBN: 9781503642011 (paperback).

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Change takes many forms and shapes, most obviously differing with regards to intensity (degree), impact (longevity), and time (duration): How encompassing is it, how much does it alter specific people, groups, or even structures, and how quickly does it take effect? What does it mean if space—and the social implications attached to it—are altered, as borders are rewritten and social space newly defined? If space (territory) is newly conceptualized, how do its populations react to this change and what does it mean in terms of belonging, social interaction, and collective identity? Referring to what is roughly termed ‘the Edirne region,’ Jacob Daniels draws on these questions to discuss the impact of nation building and border formation on the local (Jewish) population in the late Ottoman and early Republican context.

Borders and borderland form the conceptual core of what is an in-depth, much-encompassing portrayal of mobility patterns, social structures, individual and collective agency, as well as policies of demographic engineering. Picking up on the relatively recent scholarly interest in Ottoman/Turkish border studies (e.g., *Borders, Boundaries and Belonging in Post-Ottoman Space in the Interwar Period*, edited by Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, 2023), Daniels zooms in on the (spatially shifting) region where first the young state Bulgaria and later also Greece abutted the shrunken European part of the Ottoman Empire. It is this transformation of the Edirne region from an integral part of the Ottoman Empire to a violence-ridden province at the margins of the Turkish nation state which serves as the backdrop of the many anecdotes, life stories, local events, and discourses that are so meticulously retold in the light of a minority’s struggle for economic, social, and physical survival.

By doing so, this title is a further invaluable contribution to the recently sparked and hopefully ongoing discussion on Ottoman and post-Ottoman borderlands, borderland mobility, mentality/identity, and migration policies: among them Ella Fratantuono’s *Governing Migration in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2024), Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky’s *Empire of Refugees* (2024), and *Regime’s of Mobility* (2022) by Jordi Tejel and Ramazzan Hakkı Öztan as well as a wide selection of articles (e.g., the special issue ‘Borders, Belonging, and Refugee Memory since the Greco-Turkish War and Population Exchange’ forwarded by William Stroebel and Kristina Gedgadaitė in 2022) which explore mobility and networks in borderland regions from various angles.

The Jews of Edirne approaches individual lives, activities, and mobility patterns with equal depth and insight. Building on a rich tapestry of biographical accounts, private correspondence, newspapers, and diaries among other sources, Daniel successfully creates a multi-faceted prism through which the reader may perceive the effect of the borderland on individual and collective life in Edirne: the disruption of trans-border relations with suddenly turned-Bulgarian-state communities and business contacts, the equally sudden lim-

itation of personal trans-border mobility, the gradual dissolvment of a decidedly Ottoman identity, the growing tension that erupted into ethnic violence during times of (perceived) external or internal threats, and the eventual evolvement of an ethnically homogeneous, Muslim-dominated borderland that left little room for ethnic or cultural diversity.

Starting off with an insightful discussion of the borderland concept and its on-site realization in Edirne, Daniel turns to Jewish life and identity in Edirne in five chronologically aligned chapters. Chapter 1 sets the stage by presenting Edirne's local, demographic, economic, historical, spatial, and cultural specificities, and especially highlights the Ottoman legacy that continued to shape local, especially Jewish, trans-national networks and perspectives. By reflecting on space, identity, and growing nationalism, Daniels masterfully traces how the Jewish community of Edirne became a target of antisemitic/anti-minority outlashes which marked the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. Following up on this, chapter 2 zooms in on local media discourse, intercommunal relations, and intra-communal conflict, thus portraying how Jewish communities in the Edirne region reacted to political, social, and spatial developments in the first years after the Young Turk revolution. During what Daniel terms a phase of 'political experimentation' (p. 89), the Jews of Edirne are portrayed as meandering between self-assertion, revolutionary spirit, Zionism, and Ottoman(ist) conceptions of communal identities. Moving on to the years 1913–1918, chapter 3 emphasizes the traditional perspectives inherent in the Jewish community's mental maps and self-identification. Arguing that 'the border meant one thing to the Jews and another to almost everyone else,' (p. 121), Daniels shows that the Jews of Edirne largely maintained their trans-regional (and thus trans-national) outlook and solidarity, while Christians and Muslims were much more directly affected by ethnic cleansing and thus connotated the border very differently. While shrinking in size due to economic migration as a result of disrupted trans-regional business ties, the remaining Jewish community kept its distinctively Ottoman identity and networks—a truly exceptional phenomenon in the region and part of what makes Daniels' choice of focus so intriguing. Chapter 4 covers the period of Greek occupation which again forced the local community to navigate the pitfalls of a region where power could change hands quickly. Manoeuvring between the Greek state's expectations, religion-based forms of antisemitism, and general instability, the community was torn on the question how to react to and survive this volatile situation. Once again foregrounding individual perspectives, Daniels gives vivid examples of Jewish (including female) agency while individuals engaged with Ottomanism, Zionism, and Hellenism to varying degrees—which underlines that state allegiance and communal nationalism could still co-exist in the eyes of the respective authorities (p. 148). Chapter 5 begins with the year 1923 and briefly revisits the many spatial and contextual changes marking the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, including an altered concept of allegiance to the nation state which now demanded 'that obedience to the nation should surpass all other attachments.'¹ With the pogrom of Thrace (1934) as its anchor point, this chapter sets out to contextualize this outburst of antisemitic violence, thereby discussing the role of Ottoman legacies, economic specificities of the region, and the ingrained suspicion against borderland minorities. What is most interesting about this chapter, however, is that it presents the pogrom both as

1 Malešević, Siniša. 2013. *Nation States and Nationalisms*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 112.

a result of the Ottoman past and a blueprint for future anti-minority outlashes in Turkey. In view of what was to come, Daniels argues, the pogrom of Thrace was both ‘a culmination of developments that had begun in the Ottoman era and a rehearsal for subsequent acts of displacement and dispossession’ (pp. 175–76) of minorities.

Aiming to ‘probe the many shades of Jewish experience’ (p. 181) in the Edirne region, *The Jews of Edirne* constitutes a masterful account of the lives, activities, adaption and survival strategies of the local community/communities which leaves little room for criticism. Well-written, analytic, and based on a wonderfully diverse source corpus, this book offers fascinating insights into an understudied topic whose marginality in academic discourse used to mirror the spatial frame of the equally marginalized borderland it is set in. By shining a light on this region and its people, Daniels has succeeded in expanding the limits of academic research, and contributed to the fruitful discussion evolving around borderlands, mobility, and identity which has powerfully emerged in the last decade especially.