

Yılmaz, Gülay and Zachs, Fruma (eds.). 2021. *Children and Childhood in the Ottoman Empire, from the 15th to the 20th Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. XXII + 408 pages. ISBN (E-Book): 9781474455404.

Reviewed by **Özkan Bardakçı**
University of Lorraine, CRULH
o.bardakci@yahoo.fr

After the publication of Philippe Ariès' book in 1960,¹ studies focusing on child multiplied in Europe² and in the Muslim world.³ They are all in line with the work of P. Ariès and bring new elements that fill a historiographical gap. Recent studies have shown the complexity of this field of research in the Ottoman Empire as Nazan Maksudyan in her works and Benjamin C. Fortna in his edited volume.⁴ This new book, directed by Gülay Yılmaz and Fruma Zachs, is a welcome contribution to the field of history of children and youth in the Ottoman Empire. Suraia Faroqhi opens with a foreword and the editors' introduction as well as a comparative introductory article by Colin Heywood. *Children and Childhood in the Ottoman Empire* is then divided into five main parts: 'Concepts of Childhood,' 'Family Interrelationships,' 'Children Outside Family Circles,' 'Children's Bodies,' and 'Children and Education.'

In the first part, two articles canvass underlying concepts. Cahit Telci problematizes the age difference across regions in the conscription of unmarried adolescent boys based on peasant militia registers in the 15th and 16th centuries. Eleni Gara's chapter then discusses the childhood and boyhood memoirs of Panagis Skouzes in late eighteenth-century Athens. She offers a broader methodological overview of life narratives as sources.

The second part opens with an essay by İrfan Kökdaş who focuses on the correlation between wealth and the survival of children in its investigation of the historical roots of the nineteenth-century demographic transition in Ottoman lands. On her side, Leyla Kayhan Elbirlük delineates through an advice manual the ideal relationship between a child and a father in early modern Istanbul. Finally, Nicoleta Roman analyzes legal regulations concerning juvenile delinquency and discusses attitudes changes toward children and youth in post-Ottoman Romania.

- 1 Ariès, Philippe. 1960. *L'enfance et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*. Paris: Plon.
- 2 Fass, Paula (ed.). 2013. *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- 3 Browning, Don M. and Bunge, Marcia J. (eds.). 2009. *Children and Childhood in World Religions*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock (ed.). 1995. *Children in the Muslim Middle East*. Texas: University of Texas Press; Georgeon, François and Kreiser, Klaus. 2007. *Enfance et jeunesse dans le monde musulman/Childhood and Youth in the Muslim World*. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose.
- 4 Maksudyan, Nazan. 2014. *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire*. New York: Syracuse University Press; Fortna, Benjamin C. (ed.). 2016. *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

The third part concerns and goes beyond family settings. It starts with Fırat Yaşa's chapter on child slaves in 17th century Crimea. Yahya Araz elaborates upon the highly interesting issues of gendered labor mobility between the provinces and Istanbul, government efforts to control and standardize this migration pattern, and the relationship of the girls with their host families. Mahmoud Yazbak completes this part. With his significant and pioneering works on Muslim orphans in Ottoman Palestine, he describes the social status of Muslim orphans and regulations with regard to guardianship according to *Shari'ah*.

The fourth part opens with an essay by Gülay Yılmaz. She concentrates on how the Ottoman government transformed the bodies of non-Muslim children into *devşirme* bodies and enslaved these children by imposing its authority on them. She uses regulations of janissary army and unique levy registers from 1493–1494 and 1604. Didem Yavuz Velipaşaoglu deals with the architectural characteristics of an imperial factory by shedding light upon accommodations, living standards, sanitary conditions, and recreational facilities for its child workers. Nazan Çiçek examines the persistence of corporal punishment of children as an esteemed child-raising practice in the Turkish-speaking Muslim community by bringing to light children's voices (and screams).

The final one brings together three chapters on education. It speaks about how education was implemented to transform children into mature adults in Ottoman society. It shows the attitudes of religious institutions towards the education of children in minority communities of the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 18th centuries. Elma Korić examines data from several pious endowment deed (*vakfiyes*) from Bosnia province during the 16th and 17th centuries. With a panorama of educational institutions for Muslim children and youth, she also brings to light hiring and enrollment criteria, curricula, bonds between teachers and students, and educational techniques. Ruth Lamdan relies on sermons, books of ethics, and extensive ethical literature (*musar* books) to analyze concepts of childhood, education (institutions and theories), and the religious obligation of society and of the family to educate children. Fruma Zach's final chapter in the volume shows the transformative role of education for the family and the nation, but also as a means of emancipation for the lives of women and children.

Of the fifteen chapters, nine concern the modern era. It should be emphasized that research on Ottoman children focuses mainly on the 19th century, as sources are both more abundant and more accessible. Likewise, the wide geographical coverage of the book, going beyond the Balkans and Anatolia to Wallachia, Crimea, Palestine, and Egypt, is another added value because these articles allow easy comparisons. From a critical perspective, the volume offers more content on 'childhood,' which often comes from a discourse among adults, than research on actual 'children,' bringing to the fore children's perspectives, experiences, and voices. In her *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Ottoman Empire*, historian Nazan Maksudyan delves into the experiences of real girls and boys during the late Ottoman Empire. Her book compels us to reconsider late Ottoman history in light of the increasingly significant roles that children played and the heightened interest paid to orphaned and destitute children. Nazan Maksudyan's analyses and work could have improved the book published by Gülay Yılmaz and Fruma Zachs.

Despite these small details, the book is a welcome contribution not only to the history of Ottoman childhoods, but also to children's historiography and childhood history more broadly. It offers comparative narratives at the heart of family bounds, outside of the family, of their children's bodies and finally of their upbringing. This book will undoubtedly be useful to students and scholars, specifically with regards to the research among children in multi-religious and multi-national contexts.