

**Ottoman Children & Youth During World War I.** Nazan Maksudyan, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019). Pp. 248. \$60.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780815636274

Heidi Morrison, Department of History, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WI; e-mail: [hmorrison@uwlax.edu](mailto:hmorrison@uwlax.edu)

Nazan Maksudyan's *Ottoman Children & Youth During World War I* asks important questions that traverse the fields of Middle East Studies, Children's Studies, and War Studies. Using a variety of sources including autobiography, oral history, press, and archives in Istanbul and Berlin, the book convincingly argues that Ottoman children were simultaneously targets of and actors in World War I. This book builds on Maksudyan's first book, *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire*, which integrates children into the narrative of late Ottoman Empire modernization.

The introduction provides an overview of the book, as well as reaffirms the need to write children into histories of the Middle East. Chapter 1 outlines the Ottoman institutions set up for the children of martyrs and veterans during World War I, focusing on the emergence of a large state network of orphanages. These orphanages imbued a number of projects that sought to Turkify and nationalize children of non-Muslim ethnic groups, such as the Armenians. Chapter 2 looks at the unilateral apprentice exchange program between the Ottoman state orphanages and German empires. The Ottoman boys went to Germany hopeful, but experienced painful othering, acculturation and no real improvement in their life lot. Chapter 3 considers the total militarization of Ottoman society during World War I, particularly the state's Turkification campaigns through scouting and paramilitary education. Some Ottoman children and youth used clubs, sporting activities, and street life to push back against this propaganda along ethnic, nationalist and religious lines. The survival strategies and resiliency of Armenian children during the genocide are the focus of Chapter 4. Maksudyan concludes by asking historians to reconsider the "loss of childhood" discourse that underlies World War I historiography and paints children as passive victims.

Maksudyan's succinct writing style and rich primary source material offer new ways of viewing the Ottoman Empire, children, and World War I. The book adds to the growing literature that shows that war was on the home front, and not just the battle fields and trenches. Maksudyan enlarges the actors of World War I to include children and youth, illustrating their role in domestic agriculture and manufacturing, as well shaping Ottoman-German relations. The state mobilized war efforts by holding children up as symbols of virtue, sacrifice, and patriotism. In an era of rivaling nationalist ideologies and changing power constellations within the Ottoman Empire, children and youth suffered from ethnic tensions, forced displacements and massacres. Nevertheless, children and youth spoke back to power and injustice in various ways, from holding demonstrations to reclaiming a sense of childhood through everyday life activities such as play and friendship. Children in orphanages played with marbles and made silly bets with one another to hold on to a sense of life (pp. 129–35). Armenian children on the deportation road engaged in clever trade activities to stay alive (pp. 127–29). In the street, children acted out nationalist and religious rivalries through war games (pp. 94–101). Although the war only lasted four years, Maksudyan reminds readers that the children and youth of this era grew up to impact the postwar period.

In addition to being the first book to engage Ottoman children and youth in the "total war" paradigm of World War I, Maksudyan's book breaks new ground in its unwavering integration of the Armenian genocide into the chronology of the war, and hence into Ottoman, European, and world history. In Maksudyan's book, the Armenian genocide is not the elephant in the room that historians typically skirt around. Maksudyan minces no words in stating that the Ottoman state targeted Armenian children as part of its larger campaign to eliminate ethnic minorities and force Turkish identity during the war. In the Prime Minister's Ottoman archives, Maksudyan uncovers orders for the forced adoptions of Armenian children by wealthy Muslim families and administrative and military officials (p. 111). Rather than focus on the death and suffering of Armenian children during the genocide, Maksudyan's book operates from the underlying premise that children are enterprising and capable of social action. She shows Armenian children's various forms of resistance through their disobedience, creativity,

courage, and charm. Some children on the deportation road figured out ways to make money, barter, and steal in order to eat better. Others figured out heroic ways to travel long distances to find family members. They held on to life despite the surrounding trauma. Maksudyan backs up her argument with rich survival narratives, but does not engage deeply with the politics of memory.

A growing critical mass of books on children and youth in the Middle East (Beth Baron, Heidi Morrison, Benjamin Fortna, Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim) opens the door for engagement with issues that crisscross the field of children's studies. Maksudyan's book is a great launching point, for example, to problematize the concept and experience of children's agency in the context of the Middle East. The popularity of uncovering children's agency must not belie important questions such as: What authority do historians have to accord or refuse agency to the subjects of their work? What role do racial, gender, and class politics play in limiting or privileging different forms of agency? What exists between and across the binary categories of powerful vs. powerless (adult vs. child)? What is at stake when adults try to "liberate" children? How do we define agency in different times and places?

Maksudyan's book also provides exciting new material to put in dialogue with Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's new concept of "unchildling," or "a violent racial regime of control that actively maintains the machinery of dismemberment always and everywhere" (Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Incarcerated Childhoods and the Politics of Unchilding* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019], 22). Whether it be Armenian children in early-20th-century Ottoman lands or Palestinian children in contemporary Israel and the Occupied Territories, young people's relationship to power structures is a rich area of research.

Maksudyan's book pushes the boundaries of historiography by viewing World War I through the eyes of children and youth. Additionally, she focuses on orphans, some of the most vulnerable groups in this period. It will be a great day when distinguished scholars such as Maksudyan do not have to dedicate a portion of the book's introduction to justifying the inclusion of young people in historical research.

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## **Ottoman Women During World War I: Everyday Experiences, Politics, and Conflict. Elif Mahir Metinsoy, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Pp. 290. \$99.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781107198906**

Melanie Tanielian, Department of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; e-mail: [meltan@umich.edu](mailto:meltan@umich.edu)

Saliha, Elif, Nakiye, Zümürd, Fatma, Hamdiye—these are only a few of the "ordinary" women, who, for the first time, appear as participants, negotiators, sufferers and victims during total war in the Ottoman Empire. Filed away in the Ottoman archive, cataloged not as women but as "the family of men, as civilians, or as soldiers" (p. 7), and overshadowed by their literate upper-class sisters, a women's press—often penned by men—that cared little about poor and working-class women. Ordinary Ottoman women's experiences on the home front until now, with a few notable exceptions, have been a non-topic. While there are uncountable monographs about working-class women's experiences on the European home front, Ottoman women's separate and gender-specific wartime encounters have inspired less than a handful of books. Among these, Elif Mahir Metinsoy's *Ottoman Women During World War I* stands out for its capable methodology in accessing ordinary women's hidden lives; its colorful, varied, and beautifully abundant archival evidence; and its meticulous attention to the everyday experiences that can highlight the "conflict between ordinary women and the Ottoman state," and "nationalist forces, women's discontent with wartime, propaganda, and socio-economic conditions or women's appropriation of these for their self-interest" (p. 4). Relying on reports from Ottoman officials, women's petitions, and telegrams, as well as popular folk songs and poetry, Metinsoy argues that ordinary Muslim (although