

universities, the expert opinion of certain historians and art historians could have been included in a couple of articles. Regrettably, the book misses the opportunity to introduce Anglophone readers to the rich scholarship emergent from decades of engagement by Turkish scholars with these hard-to-analyze primary sources.

Emrah Safa Gürkan

John-Paul Ghobrial,

***The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull,***

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 208 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-967241-7

There are a significant number of books written about how early modern Europe perceived the Ottoman Empire, i.e., what decision-makers, scientists, artists, authors and the common people knew about this exotic land whose “otherness” played a great role in the shaping of Europe itself. John-Paul Ghobrial takes a more innovative approach to the issue of encounters between the “East” and the “West” when he shifts his focus from what people living in Europe knew about Ottoman Empire to how they actually knew what they knew. This required him to concentrate on “information flows” between Istanbul, Paris, and London, with a focus not on flows themselves, but on the people who made these flows happen. Given that there was no printing press in seventeenth-century Istanbul, he is thus faced with the hard task of tracing the myriad forms of oral communication that took place every day between an exclusive group of individuals whose personal interactions were the starting point for a long “process that carried information originating in Istanbul to audiences in London and Paris through the circulation of oral, scribal and printed media” (p. 6).

How to recover oral communication that took place more than four centuries ago? Ghobrial’s approach is to follow a microhistorical methodology and a ‘microscopic approach’ by studying small details as windows into wider general realities. To be able to penetrate the “actual mechanics of everyday communication across geographic and language barriers” in the Ottoman capital, he uses a source of exceptional length and depth, the personal notes of Sir William Trumbull, the English ambassador to Istanbul between 1687 and 1692. A typical English diplomat,

one of many who served in the Ottoman capital, Trumbull's importance lies in his meticulous record-keeping: His voluminous papers (300 volumes in total, 40 of which cover his tenure in Istanbul) not only offer a detailed account of the everyday communication that took place between European diplomats, Ottoman officials, and a wide range of intermediaries in Istanbul, but also enable the historian to reconstruct the circles of individuals with whom he interacted in the Ottoman capital.

The first chapter gives us a general understanding of England's interest in the Ottoman Empire. Chapter Two, on the other hand, tells how Trumbull collected information about the Sublime Porte before he embarked on a ship for his new post in this far-away capital. Exchanges between a circumscribed set of officials in London, Paris and Istanbul through oral and scribal media (epistolary exchange, conversations with people who had been to Istanbul, consulting archival documentation) offered richer, more up-to-date information, not available in the wider world of print (*Turcica* and newsletters).

In Chapter Three, Ghobrial tries to shed light on the social interactions between Ottomans and European diplomats such as Trumbull. Using the rich corpus of documentation that Trumbull left behind (his diary, preliminary drafts of his letters, newsletters he obtained in Istanbul, chancery records, etc.) he tries to overcome the silence of official dispatches which, he justly claims, reveal little about the diplomats' personal lives and their encounters with the Ottomans.

Chapter Four tries to analyze how information circulated in practice between European and Ottoman circles in Istanbul and how it transcended linguistic barriers. Ghobrial asserts that rather than formal translation of texts, it was more often oral translation and mediation that rendered the spread of information possible. He offers a new insight by drawing attention to individuals other than dragomans who acted as informal intermediaries between European diplomats and Ottomans. Then he ventures into delineating the network of people that provided Trumbull with information circulating in other languages. It was thanks to these linguistically diverse intermediaries (dragomans, renegades, merchants, doctors, Ottoman officials, information brokers, etc.) that oral and epistolary networks managed to overcome the linguistic and geographical distance that separated Europeans and Ottomans.

In most probably the most exciting chapter of the book (Five), Ghobrial traces the source of stories which appeared in European media about the most important political event that happened during Trumbull's tenure in Istanbul: the deposition of Mehmed IV in 1687. According to him, Thomas Coke, the veteran

secretary of the embassy, gathered information about the event from oral sources and then put raw information into writing for Trumbull's use. The ambassador then prepared a second account slightly different from Coke's, tuned for a specific audience and embellished with narrative devices. It was this second account which he communicated to London that shaped printed media's coverage of the issue in England. Ghobrial's diligently prepared case study that traces back these stories as far as rumors that circulated orally in Istanbul skillfully exemplifies a process through which information moved across space, languages, and media between Istanbul and London through the involvement of a variety of intermediaries mentioned throughout the book. Moreover, by tracking the travel of information from the mouths of Ottoman subjects to the pages of journals and printed books in Europe, it demonstrates to us the close relationship between oral, scribal and printed forms of communication.

The power of Ghobrial's book lies in his novel approach to the issue of Ottoman-European interactions and information flows between the "East" and the "West." Also worthy of praise is his focus on the role of human agency in carrying information and on the centrality of orality in the making of the news. Even though not an Ottomanist himself, his account is extremely valuable for students of Ottoman history, especially those who do research on diplomatic history. This is so because Ghobrial aptly demonstrates how fragile the normative principles of Ottoman diplomacy are once the historian goes beyond the taciturnity of official records that closely follow the official imperial rhetoric. His work is extremely valuable because it shows the potential of different type of sources (not only European diplomatic dispatches located in the archives, but also personal records, diaries, drafts of letters, newsletters, etc.) for demonstrating the divergence between theory and practice and because it sheds light on the cross-confessional exchanges that took place every day between Europeans and Ottomans across linguistic and religious barriers.

In spite of its many qualities, *The Whispers of Cities* has a couple of mistakes that need correction. One is that Ghobrial qualifies the Venetian *relazioni* as official dispatches on page 68. This is wrong, however, as the *relazioni* were long reports that the Venetian diplomats prepared *after their tenure* and presented in front of the Senate. Apart from these very formulaic reports, the Venetian *baili* also sent regular dispatches to Venice, the *dispacci*. As these letters were written right after the fact, they include detailed information on contemporary events and issues and thus they should be less susceptible to Ghobrial's criticism that official diplomatic correspondence does not reflect the daily encounters between the Ottomans and European diplomats. Among these *dispacci*, one can easily find

the likes of the account of Trumbull's meeting with Fazıl Mustafa Pasha, described in detail with long quotations in pages 75-77.

Also, Ghobrial argues on page 73 that European diplomats were treated with the same ceremonial pomp used for senior Ottoman officials as well as notables arriving from the Muslim East such as the Tatar Khan or the envoys of the Uzbeks. This is simply not correct. First, one has to make a difference between the Khan of Crimea, a descendant of Cenghiz Khan, and the envoys of the Khan of Uzbeks, diplomats whose status could no way match a Chingizid prince that carried the title "Khan." Having pointed out this important difference, it goes without saying that it was inconceivable that a European ambassador would be honored as much as the Khan of Crimea. Neither was he treated on the same par with his colleagues from the East as can be seen in an Ottoman *kanunname* that was promulgated in 1676 and therefore is more reliable for the time period under scrutiny (1687-1692) than *Tableau général de l'Empire ottoman* (printed in 1787-1820), Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson's multi-volume work which Ghobrial uses to back his argument. The *kanunname* explicitly states that a Muslim diplomat (*ehl-i İslam ilçisi*) was treated more respectfully during ceremonies in the palace than his Christian counterparts: while the Grand Vizier and other high officials received an incoming Muslim ambassador by standing up as soon as he entered through the gates of the Imperial Council, everybody remained seated during the reception of a Christian ambassador (*kefere ilçisi*); furthermore, it was a custom that the Grand Vizier went to the "ablution room," *abdesthane*, beforehand, only to welcome the Christian ambassador coming out of it. While the Muslim diplomat sat on the *Nişancı's* table (*suffe*), his Christian colleague sat on a stool (*iskemle*). The two were only equal (*ale's-seviyye*) while eating with the Grand Vizier.<sup>1</sup>

The author has a very engaging style that makes the book an easy read. In spite of its fluent narrative, however, long quotations, most of which do not contribute substantially to the argument, runs the risk of tiring the reader. Also, it should be stated that in spite of the book's fancy cover that puts together the pages of manuscripts written in English, Italian, French, Arabic and Armenian, Ghobrial's sources are mostly Western European and not Ottoman. Even though Ghobrial's assertion regarding the silence of Ottoman sources has a grain of truth, they still could be relevant to Ghobrial's studies. For instance, archival sources have the potential to shed light on the gift exchanges between Ottoman grandees and European ambassadors; these examples of cross-cultural political reciprocity

1 Ahmet Arslantürk (ed.), *Abdurrahman Abdî Paşa Kanunnâmesi* (İstanbul: Metamorfoz Yayıncılık, 2012), pp. 36-7.

could allow the author to get a better grasp of the intricacies of daily encounters between Ottoman officials and European diplomats. Moreover, Ottoman chronicles could have served as a background against which Ghobrial could check the veracity of rumors regarding the deposition of Mehmed IV. Given his emphasis on oral communication, a cross-reading of Ottoman and European sources could have offered new insights and yielded interesting conclusions.

*In fine*, John-Paul Ghobrial's book is a diligently prepared study that succeeded in incorporating Ottoman Empire into the overtly Eurocentric historiography of early modern news and communication that privileged printed forms of communication over oral and scribal forms.

Emrah Safa Gürkan

Yahya Araz,

**16. Yüzyıldan 19. Yüzyıl Başlarına: Osmanlı Toplumunda Çocuk Olmak,**

İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2013, 196 s., ISBN 978-605-105-118-5

Çocuk tarihi çalışmaları ülkemizde henüz fazla ilgi görmemiş bir alan olarak araştırmacılarını beklemektedir. Alandaki ilk özgün çalışmalardan biri Yahya Araz'ın, birincil kaynak olarak Şeriiye Sicillerini kullandığı ve İslâm hukukundan beslenerek kaleme aldığı *Osmanlı Toplumunda Çocuk Olmak* başlıklı araştırmasıdır. Çocukluk yıllarının cazibesinin Batı'da da yeni bir olgu olduğundan bahseden yazar, 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında çocukların yetiştirilmesine yönelik kaygıların, okul sistemindeki gelişmelerin ve çocuk emeğinin kullanımına dair düzenlemelerin sebep olduğu tartışmaların, çocukluğun tarihine gösterilen ilgiyle yakından ilişkili olduğu tezlerine bu çalışmasında yanıt aramaktadır.

Yazar, ülkemizde bu alana karşı olan ilgisizliği, "Osmanlı tarihçileri sadece çocuklar değil onlarla ilişkili olan aileler ve toplum hakkında da önemli ipuçları verebilecek bu alanı görmezden geldiler. Osmanlı tarihçiliğinin Türkiye ve dünyadaki gelişimi karşısında, çocukluğun tarihine gösterilen ilginin azlığı, bu alanın üvey evlat muamelesi gördüğü izlenimi uyandırmaktadır" sözleriyle haklı olarak tenkit etmektedir.

Batı'da 50 yıllık geçmişe sahip olan çocukluk tarihi çalışmalarının, Türkiye'de elle tutulur bir geçmişinin olmaması son derece düşündürücüdür. Yazarın ifadesine