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208 Vanessa R. de Obaldía and Claudio Monge, eds., *Latin Catholicism in Ottoman Istanbul: Properties, People & Missions*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2022. 204 pages, 38 figures. ISBN: 9789754286762

Despite popular interest in the history of Levantine communities in the Mediterranean, a thorough study on the Latin Catholic experience under Ottoman rule is challenging due to a variety of facts. First, to date, general Ottoman history-writing has been influenced by various turns in social sciences and, in recent decades especially, thought-provoking work has been produced; yet the perspective on Ottoman non-Muslims unfortunately is developing at a slower rate. For instance, it has taken forty years to revoke the “Ottoman *millet* system” myth, as articulated by Benjamin Braude in the early eighties, yet it is only acknowledged among a limited academic circle. A complicated topic in understanding the Ottoman administrative policies towards non-Muslims, compared to others, is the issue of Latin Catholics, as the policies were not only defined by Islamic jurisprudence but also by the Ottoman diplomatic relationships to Catholic political powers, among others. As the topic falls at the intersection of researchers with various interests such as religious identities, Catholic congregations, Ottoman diplomacy, Islamic law, and financial history, students of Latin Catholicism in Ottoman lands must endeavour to comprehend this multidisciplinary landscape. To further complicate the field, many of the useful publications and primary sources are predominantly, but unsurprisingly, penned in French and Italian.

The recent contribution *Latin Catholicism in Ottoman Istanbul: Properties, People & Missions*, edited by Vanessa R. de Obaldía and Claudio Monge, is potentially a remedy to overcome some of these difficulties

and to contribute to our understanding of the Latin Catholic experience in Istanbul during the Ottoman period. This is evident in the preface written by Monge who addresses the challenges of research in this field, such as the absence of a solid and updated secondary literature, difficulties of accessing church archives, linguistic barriers, but most importantly, the necessity of collaboration with researchers who can offer the Ottoman perspective.

The book is divided into thematic sections, each of which contain two or three chapters. The first part on legality and conflict is an insightful attempt to address one of the absences in Levantine studies and considers the Ottoman administrative principles as a defining element towards Catholics in Ottoman Istanbul. In the first chapter, Radu Dipratu demonstrates the legal basis of the Catholics’ worship and church ownership rights on Ottoman lands, namely the *ahdnâmes* given to the Genoese, Venetians, French, Habsburgs, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He also underlines that apart from *ahdnâmes*, other documents such as imperial orders and fatwas were also necessary. Based on his research on the originals and translations of these documents, Dipratu clarifies some established misunderstandings in literature and demonstrates which legal rights the Porte had precisely granted. In the second chapter, Kenan Yıldız focuses on a case study of the transformation of the Church of Saint Francis in Galata into a mosque after the fire of 1696. Based on Ottoman documentation, he offers a new perspective on the disputed issue of the transformation of a Christian space into a Muslim one and presents the Ottoman administrative point of view, which was not arbitrary but based on principles, at the same time acknowledging the importance of contemporary military and political relations. Yıldız’s chapter also offers discussions on possible different interpretations of this case that may emerge based on diverse religious stances. In this sense, the book presents a rare example of academic integrity on a rather disputable subject.

In the second section, the authors, focusing on different periods, cases, and individuals, reveal the diversity of attitudes and the heterogeneous nature of Catholics under Ottoman rule and the complexity of the roles of different actors. Padraic Rohan demonstrates the various attitudes of the Genoese after the Ottoman conquest of the city. He reveals that, only after the 1460s, did the Genoese acknowledge that the Ottoman presence was not temporary, as relics were transported from Pera-Galata to Genoa after this time. In the subsequent chapter, Gabriel Doyle expands our understanding of the Latin *vekil*, a civil authority representing Catholics in the nineteenth century. A focus on the activities of Othon Varthaliti, the descendant of an eighteenth-century immigrant family from Syros, who assumed the position in 1866, shows that, as a member of a notable Catholic community, the *vekil* was involved in judiciary and commercial activities, in addition to acting as an intermediary in acquiring landed property between Catholic congregations and the Ottoman administration. More importantly, this chapter demonstrates the inner tensions among the Latin Catholics of Istanbul and the different backgrounds of Latin Catholicism in the city. The third chapter in this section by Anaïs Masot evokes a crucial question: “What is the basis of membership into the Greek Catholic community?” Her article presents the case of the Greek Catholic patriarch Maksimus Mazlum, who endeavored to bring the Greek Catholics into the Greek rite and thus challenged the dependence on Latin missionaries, at the same time recognizing the spiritual authority of the pope and remaining within the Catholic realm. The patriarch’s efforts to expand his jurisdiction were recognized by the Ottoman government in the 1840s, representing a lesser-known case.

In the first chapter of the third section on policies regarding Latin churches, Paolo Girardelli investigates a crucial transformation concerning Latin churches of Galata—namely, that of the growing presence of the Armenian Catholics

during the eighteenth century. Before the Armenian Catholics were legally recognized by the government in 1830, the community members had to frequent the Catholic churches in Galata and Pera. This clandestine presence resulted in the reorganization of the inner spaces of the churches such as the addition of altars and confession booths for Armenian priests, in addition to practicing mass in Turkish for Armenians. The final article in this section, by Vanessa R. de Obaldía, presents the phases of the establishment of the Dominican Church of Notre-Dame du Rosaire in Makriköy (Bakırköy) *ex novo*, which became legally possible under the new conditions of the Tanzimat era. Based on many archival documents, the author reveals the actors involved in the process, and how the contemporary political, demographic, and social circumstances influenced the procedure. The construction process also shows how Ottoman laws were dynamic, thus able to respond to contemporary circumstances as well.

The final section shows how the French protection and dominance on the Latin communities of Istanbul was replaced by the Italians via cultural and educational activities. Francesco Pongiluppi examines the Italian newspapers and journals of Istanbul from the 1840s onwards. His chapter underlines the situation of Europe in the nineteenth century as a factor in the changing demographics of Ottoman Istanbul. Lastly, based mainly on the chronicles of the Salesians among other sources, Buğra Poyraz presents the very interesting case of the educational activities of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Ottoman lands with a focus on the Italian School of Bartolomeo Giustiniani in Istanbul. The Italian school of tailoring and shoemaking was influenced by the instability of the relations and the wars, between Italy and the Ottoman Empire and later, the Republic of Turkey.

The effort of the editors to bring together the Ottoman perspectives with the Catholic ones is enhanced by the contributors' competent uti-

lization of a multitude of primary sources varying from Ottoman court records, chronicles, imperial orders, fatwas, *ahdnames*, and petitions to the archival documents of parish churches, dispatches, and correspondence in the Propaganda Fide archives and chronicles of congregations. Even though many of the cases provided in the book present conflict, this is due to the nature of documents like court cases, and the readers should not conclude that interaction between non-Muslims and the Ottoman administration occurred only at times of conflict.

Each contributor presents a general survey of the history of the Catholic communities on Ottoman lands in a similar way with minor variations which sometimes creates repetitions, probably an unavoidable outcome of all edited volumes. A higher quality of the visual materials printed in the book would make the content clearer. Minor technical weaknesses and thematic absences of the book are understandable considering that the volume was edited under the restrictive conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the well-articulated words of Gabriel Doyle, one of the contributors of the volume:

The multiple relations between foreign embassies, missionary congregations, the vicar, notables, and less privileged inhabitants of the city, help us look at Catholics in Istanbul not only as a community, but as a configuration, a site of interaction and negotiation between a variety of actors in interdependence. (p. 100)

I would further claim that like the other non-Muslim populations in Ottoman society, the Latin Catholics of Istanbul did not consist of one homogenous community. Besides the already acknowledged fact that there was a legal difference between Catholic Ottoman subjects and foreign subjects, the cases in the book reveal that many factors like immigration and inner tensions contributed to the heterogeneity. Immigration to Ottoman Istanbul

was a major factor, as evidenced by examples in the book such as Catholic migrations from Syros, Chios, and Ioannina to Constantinople in the eighteenth century as well as from Europe in the nineteenth century. Inner tensions existed among Ottoman subjects as well as among Catholics of different social backgrounds. Despite this assumption—which is based on the historicization of the Catholic experience under Ottoman rule and suggests that there were diverse Catholic communities in the city rather than a homogenous Latin community of Istanbul—there is no dispute on the unique historical religious identity of Catholics of the city who belong to the “Eastern Latin Catholic universe” (p. 9).

In conclusion, the book is an original contribution to the literature, offering an insightful point of view for scholars and students of Latin Catholicism and Ottoman non-Muslim experience, as well as for readers of the social and religious history of Ottoman Istanbul.

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