

AMILA BUTUROVIĆ and IRVIN CEMIL SCHICK eds., *Women in the Ottoman Balkans – Gender, Culture and History* (I.B. Tauris, London/Palgrave Macmillan, Library of Ottoman Studies, 15), 2007, 420 p.

Far from being just a worthy collection of academic studies, this is a lively and highly readable bundle of essays, the fruit of the joint editorship of Amila Buturović, Associate Professor at the University of York (Toronto), and Irvin Cemil Schick, a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who also contribute to the volume.

It is a genuinely interdisciplinary endeavour, bringing together specialists in Ottoman studies, cultural historians, folklorists and literary historians and covering, apart from Turkey itself, large, if selective, areas of the Ottoman-controlled Balkans, from Bosnia and the Romanian Principalities, to Ottoman Austria and Greece. In addition, not only does it accommodate established specialists in their research areas, but also lesser-known younger academics and independent researchers.

The twelve contributions in the volume approach women in these areas in their manifold and often contradictory or ambiguous roles as founders of pious endowments, workers and conspicuous consumers wives, widows, marginalised 'others', as well as characters in and narrators of folk literature, victims as well as empowered agents in their communities.

The essays of Olga Augustinos and Irvin Cemil Schick explore Oriental 'otherness' and are thus largely indebted to the tradition established by the classical study of Edward Said.

Olga Augustinos concentrates on Abbé Prévost' *Histoire d'une grecque moderne* to set up a discussion on the difference on women's condition in the West and in the East. It reveals an infinite series of interesting aspects of the above and of the switch the main character makes upon moving her place of living from the East to the West. The Greek woman became a free person as a result of the conscious application of learned principles (a Western ideal of self-definition) but her tragic end was a testimony of the perils of free choice.

Irvin Cemil Schick explores the accounts of violence against women in a broader pattern of sexualization of national conflict in the Ottoman Balkans. One of the key ingredients of the inter-ethnic and inter-confessional sexual relationships seems to have been suffering. The deployment of sexual violence as a political metaphor bolsters the protection racket that is chivalry, i.e. men claim the right to control women in exchange for protecting them from the other men. Schick reaches the conclusion that most of the stereotypes of his discussion are still in place in the Balkan area and the reason why is found in Marc Bloch who believed that legends inspiring cruel actions are indestructible.

Mirna Šolić's article on the poetry of Luka Botić discusses the geographical border between the Christian and Muslim worlds that divided these areas not simply physically, but also according to a mental mapping where 'difference' was overpowering. Although Luka Botić was from Croatia, he constantly refers to neighbouring Ottoman Bosnia as 'other' and 'strange'. More importantly, both Mirna Šolić and Amila Buturović in a related article emphasise the ways in which women in Bosnian-Muslim love poems and in Luka Botić's poetry – which was inspired by the latter – had important roles as agents in their society, even when the social order did not appear to work in their best interests.

Patricia Fann Bouteneff's paper is a comparative analysis of stories told by Greek women whose families had been forced to migrate to Greece from the Turkish Black Sea and narratives of men from the same milieu, and highlights the different ways in which women and men constructed their authorial selves and even their real-life identities.

Peter Mario Kreuter brings in a "devilish" feminine guise. In an area like the Balkans where so many pre-historical traditions were and still are preserved here is a discussion on eighteenth-century Austrian investigations by medical officers into allegations of vampirism in Serbian communities. Kreuter suggests that women could take on active social roles only by undertaking the dirty work of preparing the victims of vampirism for burial, and thus acting also as spiritual healers and defenders of their communities.

One may question the inclusion of the Romanian Principalities into the Balkans, but, apart from this quibble, one has to salute the introduction of a study on Romanian women in a major English-language publication. Angela Jianu, who conducted her PhD research at York University in the United Kingdom, approaches the history of early nineteenth-century Romanian women from the

perspective of 'consumption history', currently a growth area in Western European and American historiography. Drawing on the extensive empirical work of historians of dress such as Alexandru Alexianu and, more recently, Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, as well as on contemporary travelers' accounts, she describes the sartorial shift from Oriental to 'European' dress that elite women effected and the impact it had on a sense of national identity which started to redefine itself increasingly in opposition to the Ottoman suzerain and closer to Western cultural and political models. It would be interesting to find out if further comparative research might reveal in the future Balkan and East-European areas where, conversely, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, men – rather than women, who are usually more conservative - were the agents of modernization in consumption patterns and fashion.

The volume includes four inter-related articles based largely on Ottoman sources. Sophia Laiou speculates in why Christian women on the Greek islands would often prefer going to *kadis* rather to the Christian church tribunals, Kerima Filan's topic is women as founders of public endowments in Bosnia, Svetlana Ivanova highlights the matrimonial difficulties of women in eastern Rumeli, and Selma Zečević analyzes the differences between the *Hanefi* and other traditions of Muslim jurisprudence via the rulings of a Bosnian jurist in cases of abandoned wives. Kerima Filan's study is particularly remarkable for her comprehensive use of primary sources until now little known outside Bosnia.

Women in the Ottoman Balkans should be greeted as one of the few book-length contributions in English to a little-explored and complex topic. One could start nit-picking and deplore absences, geographical selectiveness or other inherent weaknesses of multi-authored, multi-disciplinary volumes, but it has to be saluted as an early and valuable contribution to the history of women in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Moreover, it highlights the roles, status, work and destinies of these women with a conceptual arsenal that comprehensively takes into account categories such as class, culture, religion, ethnicity and nationhood.

Lia Brad-Chisacof

OLIVER JENS SCHMITT, *Levantiner. Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im osmanischen Reich im "langen 19. Jahrhundert"*, R.Oldenbourg Verlag, München, 2005, 516 p.

L'auteur, auquel on doit déjà un très important ouvrage d'érudition, paru en 2001 dans cette même collection des « Südosteuropäische Arbeiten » (*Das venezianische Albanien, 1392–1479*), se pose la question de savoir si les Levantins peuvent être considérés comme une nation. Le sujet qu'il a affronté avait longtemps attendu que des fouilles systématiques dans les archives et dans des récits de voyageurs occidentaux le ramenassent à l'attention des historiens. Parfois, des antiquaires ou des mémorialistes avaient signalé son intérêt¹; seul jusqu'à présent, M. Livio Missir de Lusignan, avec une passion ardente et une brillante faconde, s'est consacré à l'étude des Levantins. Des contributions précieuses à la prosopographie des familles de drogmans sont dues à Marie de Testa, Antoine Gautier et M.D.Sturdza. J'avais jadis évoqué « les nations sans Etat » dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe, mais en insistant surtout sur les diasporas (RESEE, XVII, 4, 1979, pp. 757–762). Les Levantins, dans Galata-Pera et à Smyrne, ont formé, à la suite de la conquête ottomane, un groupe confessionnel (catholique), ayant comme source les colonies génoise, vénitienne et, plus tard, française. Ensuite, ils ont été adoptés par la « nation de France ».

L'introduction du livre, destinée à expliquer sa conception et sa méthode, manifeste un scepticisme justifié à l'égard de « gourous » comme Huntington et Toynbee. Une bibliographie qu'on ne peut parcourir sans envie recueille presque tous les récits de voyage dans l'Empire ottoman du

¹ Voir par exemple le livre du colonel B. Bareilles, *Constantinople, ses cités franques et levantines*, Paris, 1918.