NEW PERSPECTIVES ON TURKEY

No. 41 | Fall 2009

homerkitabevi

The fight over nobody's children: Religion, nationality and citizenship of foundlings in the late Ottoman Empire

Nazan Maksudyan

Abstract

In the late nineteenth century, the religion, nationality, and citizenship of abandoned children became a contested terrain over which much effort was spent by local authorities, foreign missionaries, religious and civil leaders of the communities, municipalities, the police force, and the central state. Relying on Ottoman and French archival sources, together with periodicals and contemporary literature, this paper discerns the elevated political significance of abandoned children within such realms as demographic politics, politics of conversion, and national identities. The state's new preoccupation of properly registering new-born infants, in line with the new Regulation on Population Registration created controversy over the nationality and citizenship of abandoned children. As new administrative reforms challenged the customary jurisdiction and the autonomy of the communal authorities and as the power of the governmental bureaus, police departments, the municipality, and the foundling unit of the *Dârü'l-aceze* increased, non-Muslim leadership resisted these practices: they both submitted official appeals to the government and opened or strengthened their own foundling facilities. Furthermore, the child gathering efforts of Catholic missionaries created an atmosphere of self-defense on the part of the communities, as they felt threatened with losing prospective members of their newly conceived and idealized imagined communities. In this context, abandoned children attracted interest

Nazan Maksudyan, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Germany, maksudyan@gmail.com.

Author's Note: I am grateful to the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for supporting my Ph.D. research through the "Integrated Ph.D. Program" from 2005 to 2007. I am also indebted to Beth Baron, Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont, Malte Fuhrmann, Vangelis Kechriotis, Eyal Ginio, and Fulya Apaydın who previously read this paper and made invaluable comments for its improvement.

hardly due to pity, or disinterested charity. Institutional solutions, policies, and strategies of diverse and competing actors were closely related to the emergence of a modernized governmental structure and attempts to strengthen communities as its mirror image.

Keywords: *child welfare, foundlings, citizenship, religion, modern state*

In 1905, a woman abandoned her illegitimate child in the Greek neighborhood of Keşan in Edirne. The local church took the baby, baptized him with the name Todori, and entrusted him to a Greek household to be breast-fed. However, the governorship opposed this practice on the grounds that the child was Muslim. The authorities claimed that the child had been taken on an improper basis, since Islamic legislation ordered that foundlings should be raised by their own co-religionists. The governorship argued that the baby's swaddling clothes indicated that he came from the refugee (*muhacir*) neighborhood, which was very close to the Greek one. As a result, the government launched an investigation, accusing the Greek clerics for proselytizing. After a thorough investigation in the district, the mother of the baby, a Muslim refugee, was found. According to the records, she confessed "her crime" and admitted that she had abandoned her baby in the Greek neighborhood. The government then asked the local Greek religious authorities to return the baby. Arguing that there was no evident sign indicating religious or national origin on him, the church authorities refused to do so. As a result, the crisis deepened further. The Ministry of Justice and Sects, the Greek Patriarchate, and the Ministry of Interior all became involved to determine the baby's fate. But this struggle between the authorities tragically ended when the infant died before he was three months old, unable to survive in view of the high infant mortality rate of the period.[1]

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This case presents some of the preliminary points regarding child abandonment in the late Ottoman Empire. First, despite the absence of reliable statistical information, evidence suggests that child abandonment was quite common in Ottoman society. The frequency of abandoning children was related to factors ranging from illegitimate birth to poverty, migration, and war. Second, institutional care was absent until the first decade of

1 BOA, DH.MKT., 1007/53, 19/B/1323 (19 September 1905).

the twentieth century. Most of the foundlings were looked after in private care, with the help of wet-nurses. Whether in homes or institutions, most of these foundlings ended up as a figure in the statistics of the period's high infant mortality rates, due to the lack of proper sanitary conditions and malnutrition. Third, as a traditional practice motivated by religious teachings, the state provided vouchers for abandoned babies considered to be Muslim. These vouchers were usually in the form of stipends, and they were granted to the caretaker after submitting a formal application. These allowances were meticulously registered and controlled by the relevant authorities, a practice which points to the relatively bureaucratized nature of this support. Finally, the ambiguity regarding the religious and/or ethnic identity of abandoned children created enormous problems towards the end of the nineteenth century, as the multi-religious and multi-ethnic society began to develop concerns about the conversion of foundlings and the weakening of their communities.

The nineteenth-century urban context of the Ottoman Empire created new circumstances: Previously invisible, insignificant, and non-political figures such as unprotected children and foundlings acquired new political meanings and identities. Actors such as local state authorities, foreign missionaries, religious and civil leaders of the communities, and the central state became increasingly involved in determining the identity of these once invisible members of society. The political significance of abandoned children was elevated, and in some cases they became actors in late-nineteenth-century political rivalries concerning a broad range of issues, such as demographic politics, politics of conversion, and national identities. While child abandonment was an ancient phenomenon, political competition over the re-definition of abandoned children was a new phenomenon in the late Ottoman Empire. This is because the processes of modernization and centralization, through newly emerging tools of governmentality, were directed at regulating the population and citizenry in a different way.[2] The new practices in turn generated concerns and aspirations on the part of non-Muslim religious authorities for a more tightly-knit community life. Therefore, disputes over foundlings were intrinsically linked to characteristics of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century urbanity and the new Ottoman public sphere, which was no longer segregated into reli-

2 The Foucauldian concept of governmentality is widely used by Ottoman historians as an analytical tool to dwell upon disciplinary implications of the modern state apparatus, which employs micro-technologies of power in everyday social life. See, Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Welfare: Philanthropy, Voluntarism and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1914" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 2001).

gious communities, but founded upon interaction and the permeation of individual and collective subjectivities. In other words, emerging forms of governmentality and questions of community identity construction redefined the "control" over abandoned children as a modernist project.

The controversy over the nationality and citizenship of abandoned children was related to the state's new preoccupation with properly registering new-born infants, in line with the new Regulation on Population Registration. This generated resistance among the communal authorities to accept an administrative reform that challenged their customary authority over and the autonomy of their communities. In other words, this crisis can be read as a typical example of the paroxysms of transforming a communally divided multi-national empire into a centrally administered modern state. Moreover, as the power of the governmental bureaus, police departments, the municipality, and the foundling unit of the *Dârü'l-aceze* increased, non-Muslim communal leadership resisted these practices. The minority groups filed official complaints in order to retain their traditionally established rights and privileges over children of non-Muslim descent. At the same time, they opened and/or strengthened their own foundling facilities. But these groups faced even further pressure. The aggressive child gathering campaigns of Catholic missionaries created a permanent atmosphere of self-defense on the part of the communities, since they were threatened with losing precious prospective members of a newly conceived and idealized imagined community.

In that sense, policies or strategies were not simply directed at saving abandoned children from perishing in the streets, but primarily at strengthening or weakening communities and constructing a modern image through the establishment of new institutions for raising citizens. This paper, thus, highlights the politics of the intersection of constructions of childhood, nationhood, and other forms of communal identity.

Patterns of abandonment and provisions for foundlings in the Ottoman Empire

Child abandonment has been thoroughly analyzed from many perspectives in European historiography, benefiting from the rich documentation of foundling asylums and hospitals, as well as parish registers.[3] The

3 John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); Rachel Fuchs, *Abandoned Children: Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth Century France* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard M. Smith, eds., *Bastardy and Its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Nonconformism in Britain*, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica, and Japan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

investigation of this phenomenon in the Ottoman context is still an unaccomplished task, although other important and connected processes and conditions—such as orphanhood in the Ottoman and former Ottoman regions, as well as the work of missionaries—have been broadly analyzed by others. Some of these studies also cover the broader issue of the extent of social welfare policies in the late Ottoman Empire.[4]

The phenomenon of child abandonment refers to the anonymous desertion of infants in the courtyards of places of worship, in the streets, outside houses, or at convents and hospitals. Existing approaches usually highlight the circumstances of extreme poverty or birth outside marriage. In Mouradgea d'Ohsson's famous legalistic account of the Ottoman Empire, *Tableau Général* (1787), abandoned children (*lâkit*)[5] were defined as "unfortunate fruits of crime or of misery."[6] "Crime" refers to an extra-marital relationship, while misery refers to the role of destitution and poverty in abandonment.

University Press,1980); Nicholas Terpstra, *Abandoned Children of the Italian Renaissance: Orphan Care in Florence and Bologna* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2005).

4 It is possible to find rich information in related areas. Avner Giladi, *Infants, Parents, and Wet Nurses: Medieval Islamic Views on Breast-Feeding and Their Social Implications* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Badra Moutassem-Mimouni, *Naissances et abandons en Algérie* (Paris: Éd. Karthala, 2001); Jamila Bargach, *Orphans of Islam: Family, Abandonment, and Secret Adoption in Morocco* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Amira al-Azhary Sonbol, "Adoption in Islamic Society: A Historical Survey," in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Andrea B. Rugh, "Orphanages in Egypt: Contradiction or Affirmation in a Family-Oriented Society," in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*; Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet 1876-1914* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002). Recent studies by Beth Baron are very important in this respect: Beth Baron, "Nile Mother: Lillian Trasher and Egypt's Orphans," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and American Empire, 1776-1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves Ellington et al. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming); "Orphans and Abandoned Children in Modern Egypt," in *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East*, ed. Nefissa Neguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug (Leiden: Brill, 2008). I have been working on the subject for some time now: Nazan Maksudyan, "Guardians of Abandoned Children: Provisions for the Foundlings in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Journal of History of Childhood and Youth* 2, no. 3 (2009); "Foster-Daughter or Servant, Charity or Abuse: *Beslemes* in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21, no. 4 (2008).

5 In Arabic, *lâkit* or *menbûz* are the terms that signify a child abandoned by its mother or parents and found by others. *Menbûz* means an infant who has been abandoned right after birth. Dictionaries also define it as bastard, as product of fornication. *Lâkit*, however, describes any object including a "human infant'" found in a public place. In the Ottoman documents I consulted in my research for this article, these children were simply defined as "abandoned" (*metruk, terk edilmiş, bırakılmış, bulunmuş*). The term *nevzâd* is also used to refer to infants only a few days old.

6 Mouradgea d'Ohsson (1740-1807), also known as Muratcan Tosun, was an Ottoman Armenian who became a protégé of Sweden. His account of the civil code of the empire is the most complete work before the official promulgation of the *Mecelle* of Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, written between 1868 and 1878, although the latter did not include any specific article regarding abandoned children. Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau Général de l'Empire Othoman: Divisé en Deux Parties, dont l'une Comprend la Législation Mahométane; l'Autre, l'Histoire de l'Empire Othoman*, vol. 5 (İstanbul: Les Éditions ISIS, 2001), 119-20.

Child abandonment in the Ottoman Empire also had an urban character: in Ottoman archival documents, relatively big cities and towns stand out as frequent sites of such incidents. The evidence shows that foundlings were never a major problem in provincial cities, since informal networks of child-care existed at the parochial level.[7] Moreover, many unmarried mothers from the countryside came to the city to give birth so that they could hide their pregnancy.[8] However, lower figures of child abandonment in the countryside could be misleading, since rural areas are under-represented in the archives.[9]

Abandoned children survived thanks to the combined efforts of private families and the responsible authorities of the *millet*s (the adherents of a particular religious creed, denomination, or sect within the empire), municipalities, and the governorships. Ideally, persons who found an infant would take the baby into their household and provide for the newborn out of charity and benevolence.[10] As the next step, the person who had found the baby brought it to the *kadı* so that its status could be registered. The registration ensured the basic necessities, such as maintenance and upbringing, which were assigned by the public authority to a member of the community, usually the finder.[11] Studies on Ottoman social life in diverse geographical milieus and periods have shown that it was common for affluent families to take orphans and destitute children into the household, usually in the form of domestic servants.[12] These

7 The association of illegitimacy with urbanization in France has often been noted. Etienne van de Walle, "Illegitimacy in France During the Nineteenth Century," in *Bastardy and Its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Nonconformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica, and Japan*, ed. Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard M. Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

8 An 18-year-old woman, Fadl Wasi, originally from Jirja in the south of Egypt, had an extramarital affair with a soldier, who then deserted her to join his battalion. When her pregnancy started to show, she was forced to leave the village for Cairo, for fear of dishonor and death. Khaled Fahmy, "Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative," in *Making Cairo Medieval*, ed. Nasser O. Rabbat, Irene A. Bierman, and Nezar Alsayyad (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005).

9 *Sicil* records, for instance, may contain more reliable information on rural areas.

10 Adoption in the legal sense was unknown in Ottoman society. Formal adoption (*tebennî*), which existed in pre-Islamic Arabic societies, was prohibited after embracing Islam. According to legal experts, adoption was impossible in Islamic law, since it was not in accordance with the Islamic understanding of lineage (*neseb*). Despite the absence of legal regulations for adoption, it was evidently common to have foster-children in Ottoman society. Mustafa Yıldırım, *İslam Hukuku Açısından Evlat Edinme* (İzmir: İzmir İlahiyat Vakfı, 2005), 43-46.

11 M. S. Sujimon, "The Treatment of the Foundling (Al-Laqit) According to the Hanafis," *Islamic Law and Society* 9, no. 3 (2002).

12 The custom was both very old and widespread in geographical terms. There are examples from sixteenth-century Aintab, eighteenth-century Aleppo and Salonica, and from different places in the nineteenth century. Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Abraham Marcus, "Privacy in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo: The Limits of Cultural Ideals," *IJMES* 18, no. 2 (1986); Maksudyan, "Foster-Daughter or Servant, Charity or

adopted children (*evlatlık*, *ahiret evladı* or *besleme*) worked as servants for the family. The head of the household pledged to provide for the child's basic needs, while the child, in return, was expected to serve in the house in the future.[13]

Muslim households of moderate means also took responsibility for orphans and foundlings in order to benefit from the financial support offered by the state. As Islamic legal teachings point out, if a foundling owns no money or property, the Public Treasury (*beytülmal*) was responsible for his or her maintenance and upbringing (*nafaka*).[14] Therefore, poor households were entitled to receive a small stipend in the name of the child, if they agreed to take care of a foundling.[15] Ottoman state authorities also placed Muslim foundlings with poor wet-nurses and granted these women stipends from the treasury. Interestingly, Ottoman documents and registers point to the gradual transformation of wet-nurses into quasi-institutional solutions to child abandonment.[16]

The Ottoman government was quite late in creating an institutional solution to the problem. Apart from the foundling homes opened by Catholic missionaries, semi-formalized institutions such as wet-nurses and foster families were more common. When they were established in the latter half of the nineteenth century, foundling asylums were usually tied to larger institutions, such as hospitals or orphanages. One such example was the foundling department of the Surp Pırgiç Hospital in Yedikule, İstanbul. In addition, the Greek Orphanage of İzmir, founded in 1870, also admitted a number of foundlings,[17] until the opening of a separate foundling asylum in 1898.

The first Ottoman institution accepting Muslim foundlings was the Haseki Hospital for Women (*Haseki Nisâ Hastanesi*), which was founded in 1869. In 1892, there were already forty orphans in the hospital.[18] In the 1890s, the Municipality of İstanbul (*Şehr Emâneti*) started

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13 Eyal Ginio, "Living on the Margins of Charity," in *Poverty and Charity in the Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Mine Ener, Amy Singer, and Michael Bonner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

14 Sujimon, "Treatment of the Foundling," 362-363. The *Tableau Général* stated: "If nobody takes care of an abandoned child, it belongs to the state, and it is the state who has to nourish and raise him/her." d'Ohsson, *Tableau Général*, 120.

15 For more information on norms and practices of taking abandoned children into households — namely the scale of foster care and adoption, gender distribution, and differences between urban and rural environments — please see Maksudyan, "Guardians of Abandoned Children."

16 For example, it is possible to find long lists of stipend assignments to wet-nurses in various registers of the treasury. BOA, MAD., d. 1/13894: BOA, MAD., d. 1/13578.

17 *Règlement de l'orphelinat grec à Smyrne, fondé en février 1870* (Smyrne, 1874), 7, quoted in Hervé Georgelin, *La Fin de Smyrne: du Cosmopolitisme aux Nationalismes* (Paris: CNRS, 2005), 128.

18 Nuran Yıldırım, *İstanbul Darülaceze Müessesesi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Darülaceze Vakfı, 1997), 7.

to send foundlings to this institution after issuing them identity cards (*tezkire-yi Osmaniyye*), if they were left in police departments and no one volunteered to take them in for fostering.[19] The first genuine foundling home for Muslim infants, the *Dârü'l-aceze Irzâhanesi*, was opened under the roof of the *Dârü'l-aceze*, the famous poorhouse of the Ottoman Empire, established in 1896.[20] The foundling unit was, in fact, one of the symptoms of the state's new concern to expand control over forsaken prospective members of the population. In the next section, I will describe in detail the mechanisms and the logic of how Ottoman governmentality operated on the ground and what it meant in terms of regulating citizenry and population.

The religious differentiation of the support policy

In parallel to the regulations of the *millet* system, provisions for abandoned or destitute children differed between Muslims and non-Muslims. Muslim children received stipends while being breast-fed, and in most cases even longer. In the case of non-Muslim foundlings, the customary function of the state was to transfer them to the relevant religious authorities of their communities—Catholic, Armenian, Greek or Jewish. Therefore, non-Muslim *millet*s had their own communal mechanisms to take care of the foundlings. An infant left at a place of worship was usually guaranteed some type of care. This came in the form of entrusting the infant to a wet-nurse who usually was a poor immigrant, living in a quite poor district in unpleasant dwellings.[21] Therefore, the practice of leaving infants at the doors of particular houses point to the hope of mothers or fathers that their babies would be raised in wealthier households.

In order to receive support from the state, "adopting" families had to prove that the child in question was Muslim. The following story best reveals the importance of this requirement. On a cold day in February of 1817, Sûlti bint Dimitri, a Christian woman, heard a knock at the door of her house in the neighborhood of Kocamustafapaşa. When she opened the door, she saw an unknown woman carrying an approximately 40-day-old baby. The woman told her that the baby was the daughter of

19 BOA, DH.MKT., 2051/40, 24/B/1310 (11 February 1893); BOA, DH.MKT., 2060/93, 20/Ş /1310 (09 March 1893).

20 "Dârülaceze Nizâmnâme-i Dahilisi, 13/Ş/1313 (29 January 1896)," *Düstûr*, ser. 1, vol. 7 (1895-1904), Ankara: Başvekalet Devlet Matbaası, 1941, 43-47. Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet*, 210-213.

21 Méropi Anastassiadou, "La protection de l'enfance abandonnee dans l'Empire ottoman au XIXe siecle. Le cas de la communauté grecque orthodoxe de Beyoğlu (İstanbul)," *Südost-Forschungen*, no. 59-60 (2000-2001).

her son, Mehmed Nûri, a recent convert to Islam, and his Muslim wife, whose name and residence Sûlti did not know. According to the woman, Mehmed Nûri was missing and his wife was incapable of providing for the baby. Adding that the girl was Sûlti's real granddaughter, she left the baby in Sûlti's arms and begged her to feed her and provide clothing for her.

Deprived of financial means, Sûlti applied to the Islamic court in order to benefit from state support, underlining that the baby was the daughter of a Muslim man. After evaluating the case, the court argued that Sûlti's testimony was not enough to determine the child's genealogy. Moreover, since there was nobody else claiming paternity, the status of the baby was that of a foundling (*lâkit*), which meant that she was free and considered a Muslim. As a result, the court ruled that it was impossible for a non-Muslim to adopt a Muslim foundling into her household. It was ordered that the child was to be given to someone from among the Muslim community, and an allowance was assigned for her maintenance.[22] Therefore, Sûlti was not only denied financial benefits, but also her granddaughter was taken from her, since the judge found it inappropriate to entrust a Muslim foundling to a Christian woman. This case summarizes the religiously compartmentalized nature of the traditional provisions for foundlings that existed before the opening of the *Dârü'l-aceze*, which targeted all Ottomans regardless of religious denomination. Ironically, this expansion of state welfare towards foundlings created serious controversies in the 1900s.

The ethno-religious identity of a foundling: Disputes among authorities in the 1900s

According to Islamic law, the legitimacy of children is based on descent (*neseb*), which can only be conferred through legitimate marriage or an admission of paternity in a court of law.[23] Thus, all abandoned babies in the Ottoman Empire were considered illegitimate and without attachment to a lineage or genealogy. The determination of the religious status of foundlings had always been undertaken according to the traditional *Hanefi* regulation: all foundlings were Muslim and free, since all orphans belonged to the state.[24] If foundlings were discovered in a quarter inhabited by non-Muslims (Jews or Christians), or in the courtyard of a church or a synagogue, they were presumed to belong to one of

22 *İstanbul Mahkemesi 121 Numaralı Şer'iyye Sicili* (İstanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi, 2006), 35.
23 Carolyn Flueh-Lobban, *Islamic Society in Practice* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 74.
24 d'Ohsson, *Tableau Général*, 119.

the non-Muslim communities.[25] Yet, problems often occurred in these cases. Non-Muslim authorities had serious concerns about this matter, since state authorities had a tendency to register non-Muslim babies as Muslim, despite contrary evidence at hand. Therefore, the general atmosphere was one of strife between state and community authorities regarding the future of the abandoned infants.

In 1904, Hacı Osman bin Islam took in a foundling girl (*lâkita*) he had discovered in the European quarter (*Frenk mahallesi*) of Salonica, named her Kâmile, and wrote a petition to the municipality for a stipend for having her breast-fed. When she died within a short time, Osman took in a second girl from the street and gave her the same name. His chances of discovering foundlings were high, since he was a night guard strolling through the empty streets at night.[26] In this case, two foundlings from a non-Muslim quarter were entrusted to a Muslim, despite the above-mentioned regulations on their religious identity.

In the 1900s, non-Muslim authorities applied to the government numerous times with the grievance that, despite the traditional arrangements concerning the identity of foundlings, policemen disregarded indicators of religious affiliation. Babies carrying notes or labels (*yafta*) attached to their clothing with a written declaration or sign indicating the child's Christian origin were abandoned in front of churches and non-Muslim households, but they were taken either into Muslim households or to the foundling unit of the *Dârü'l-aceze* and registered as Muslims there.[27] On 19 May 1903, Kalinikos, the vicar-general, warned the superior of the Greek parish of Beyoğlu that "babies born from orthodox Greek parents were taken by the police and placed in non-Greek homes for education."[28]

The director of the *Dârü'l-aceze* prepared a report in 1902 and admitted that since the opening of the institution the police and municipality officers had brought to them babies abandoned in the streets or in front of houses. Furthermore, he added that, although until recently there had been only Muslim foundlings in his institution, there was now an increasing number of non-Muslim children as well.[29] In other words, the complaints of the religious authorities regarding Christian and Jewish babies being registered as Muslims were fully legitimate.

25 Sujimon, "Treatment of the Foundling," 361-362.

26 BOA, DH.MKT., 919/29, 24/L/1322 (31 December 1904).

27 BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 20/R /1320 (26 July 1902). This document is a voluminous dossier, containing numerous complaints and correspondences regarding the dispute over the identity of the foundlings.

28 Anastassiadou, "La protection de l'enfance abandonnée," 302.

29 BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 29/R/1320 (05 August 1902).

In response to the petition of the Greek Patriarchate claiming that many Greek babies were taken to the *Dârü'l-aceze*, the Municipality of İstanbul argued that there had been a change in the traditional policy on determining the identity of foundlings, initiated after the opening of the *Dârü'l-aceze* foundling asylum.[30] He claimed that in the past abandoned children had been a rarity; yet, now their number increased so as to draw the attention of the authorities (*nazar-ı dikkat ve ehemmiyet celb edecek derecede teksir etmiş*). Moreover, due to the needs of secrecy and urgency (*mecburiyet-i ihtifa ve istical*) mothers or fathers had to leave babies in any place they could find (*rast geldikleri yerde bırakıvermekte*). Therefore, the municipality claimed that a baby left in front of a church or synagogue did not have to be a member of that community. Because of the *de facto* annulment of Islamic regulations regarding foundlings, the municipality had to investigate the religious denomination of the foundlings (*tahkik-i milletleri*) with the help of the police department. During the inquiry, babies had to remain in the care of the *Dârü'l-aceze*.[31]

The municipality claimed that this procedure was necessary for two reasons: first, to prevent future controversy between the empire's different communities; and second, to register the infants to the Ottoman census (*sicill-i nüfus*) and issue their identity cards.[32] The proper registration of new-born citizens was a new concern (*devletçe mültezim olan tahrir-i nüfus*) of the modernizing state. It was during this time that an article on foundlings was added to the Regulation on Population Registration of 1881 (*Sicill-i Nüfus Nizamnamesi*).[33] According to this regulation, all abandoned children were registered as Muslim, unless they carried on them any other signs indicating their religious affiliation. More importantly, when a foundling was discovered, the finder was obliged to report to the Council of Elders in the village and to the police department in the town or city, as to where, how and when the abandoned child was found. It was also required to bring the original clothes and belongings of the infant to the authorities. The responsible body, in return, would prepare a record on the baby's estimated age, sex, assigned name, and the place where it would be brought. This record would be used for registering the baby to the census and for issuing its identity card. In this respect, the authorities of non-Muslim places of worship were

30 BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 23/Ş/1320 (24 November 1902).

31 In addition to the above-mentioned report of November 1902, the same arguments were repeated in other reports of the Municipality of İstanbul in January 1904, November 1904, and June 1905.

32 BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 17/R/1320 (22 July 1902).

33 The same specification was repeated in the Law of Population Registration (*Sicill-i Nüfus Kanunu*) of 27 August 1914 (Art. 20-21).

not allowed to take in babies directly, even if they were forsaken at their door. They had to inform the municipality and the police and deliver the foundling.

In fact, this policy change resulted in a serious crisis between the non-Muslim authorities, the Municipality of İstanbul, and the government, since numerous complaints were made, claiming that police officers were taking away Christian babies. For example, in 1903 a girl was abandoned at the door of a Greek household. There was a note attached to her swaddling clothes, explaining in Greek (*Rûmî ilmühaber*) that she had not been baptized. She also carried a tin cross (*sarı tenekeden bir ıstavroz*). Even in the presence of such indicators she was sent to the *Dârü'l-aceze* and registered as Muslim.[34] In another instance, in May of 1902 a foundling was discovered in front of the door of a Greek resident, Konstantin veled-i Foti, in Langa (Aksaray). Although a little note on the baby said that he was a Greek named Todori, the municipal officers took him to the *Dârü'l-aceze*. Only after a complaint by the patriarchate was he returned to the Greek authorities.[35] Similarly, in August of 1904 a new-born baby was left in front of a Jewish house in Beyoğlu, with a piece of paper attached to his diapers, reading in Greek "not baptized."[36] This child was found by a police officer and brought to the Church of Hristos in Galata. The priest immediately baptized the baby, "so that he was not sent to the Ottoman *brefokomeio* [hospice for foundlings]."[37] Here the concern seems exaggerated; yet, it stands evidence to a well-established controversy between the non-Muslim communities and the Ottoman state.

By the same token, the municipality complained about the religious authorities, since they resisted turning in foundlings to the headman of their district (*mahalle muhtarı*). For example, in October of 1903, a boy was found at the door of a house in Boğazkesen, Galata. The piece of paper attached to his diaper indicated that he was seven days old, unbaptized, and born of Orthodox parents. The Greek Patriarchate resisted delivering the boy to the government authorities, arguing that he

34 BOA, DH.MKT., 783/6, 15/Ş/1321 (5 November 1903).

35 BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 3/S/1320 (12 May 1902). In another example from July 1904, the patriarchate complained that two Greek boys were taken to the institution for an investigation of their identities. Yet, when they died, they were buried as Muslims. Ibid., 20/R/1322 (04 July 1904).

36 It is interesting that a Greek foundling was left at the door of a Jewish household. Here, we can refer to poverty and the belief in the stereotype of the wealthy Jews. In the second half of the seventeenth century, there were occurrences of non-Jewish foundlings being deposited at synagogue doors in London. Albert M. Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England: A History of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community 1492-1951* (London: Menthuen & Co., 1951), 36. Personal knowledge of the economic status of one's neighbors, or an individual's reputation for generosity, or a soft spot for abandoned children might also have brought people to a specific doorstep.

37 Anastassiadou, "La protection de l'enfance abandonnée," 302.

was definitely Greek.[38] In another example from November of 1904, the *mutasarrıf* of Beyoğlu demanded that a baby girl abandoned at the door of the house of Kostaki, an employee of the Consulate of Greece, be delivered to the state authorities. But the patriarchate refused, claiming that the foundling belonged to the Greek community according to traditional regulations.[39] These and countless other cases reveal that abandoned children were the subject of a growing debate and confrontation between the patriarchate and the Municipality of İstanbul. The patriarchate insisted on adhering to older regulations (*usul-ı kadimesinin muhafazası talebi*), while the municipality underlined the new needs and requirements of the administration.

After ceaseless petitions by the patriarchate, the Council of State ruled in February of 1905 that abandoned children found in front of non-Muslim religious institutions and quarters would be delivered to the authorities of that community, without being sent to the *Dârü'l-aceze*, while children found in front of mosques and in Muslim quarters were to be registered as Muslims.[40] The municipality objected once more with its report of June 1905.[41] It argued that the traditional procedure was insufficient in responding to the changing realities of the city's social life, since there were no longer strictly segregated quarters in the city; now almost every neighborhood was inhabited by diverse religious and ethnic communities. In the end, the Council of Ministers discussed the issue in June of 1906 and concluded that, regardless of where the baby was abandoned, it was necessary to undertake a police investigation concerning its origin. During the investigation, the infant should not be brought to the *Dârü'l-aceze*.[42]

Evidence shows that the attempts to alter the established regulations of child abandonment resulted from a new vision of governmentality, implying proper registration of the new-born as well as challenging the customary autonomy of the communal authorities with new administrative designs. The controversy, in that respect, stemmed from a new process of redefining the boundaries of a communally segregated society as a centrally administered polity; of approximating a multi-national and decentralized empire to a centralized modern state.

With this intention, the government ordered that all foundlings, without their swaddling clothes having been opened or touched, should

38 BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 5/Ş/1321 (27 October 1903).
39 Ibid., 27/Ş/1322 (5 November 1904).
40 Ibid., 30/Z/1322 (5 February 1905).
41 Ibid., 23/R/1323 (27 June 1905).
42 BOA, MV., 113/119, 20/R/1324 (13 June 1906).

be taken immediately and directly to the police department, with the intermediation of the *muhtar*.[43] The police would record all details including the name of the person bringing the child and where exactly it had been found.[44] Then, in the presence of a committee made up of the local police, municipality officers, and the *muhtar*, the swaddling clothes would be opened. The first thing to be done was to search for a piece of paper (*varaka*) bearing any information on the baby's identity. Second, the officers would look for certain symbols by observing the nature of the cloth and the swaddle. Based on evident marks and signs, the investigation would clarify the identity of the baby, and the foundling would then be sent to the relevant religious authority for further care.[45] Although non-Muslim ecclesiastics demanded to be present during the investigation, their request was rejected, based on the excuse that it would lengthen the process and endanger the life of the foundling.

Even after this new regulation had been passed, complaints continued, although their number decreased.[46] Although the procedural change created a degree of comfort for the religious authorities, its effects on the foundlings were not very positive, since their precarious lives were endangered. As the investigations became more meticulous and took longer and longer, the foundlings became increasingly susceptible to infant diseases. In a document from early 1915, the lengthy duration of the formal procedure to determine the foundlings' identity was criticized harshly.[47] The infants were held in the police department

43 On the Greek (British) island of Kephallenia, the same structure was used from the 1830s to 1856. The children became wards of the state if the identity of the parents was unknown, or if the parents and their kin were able to demonstrate that they were so indigent as to be unable to care for the child. Later they were sent to wet-nurses and foster parents in the countryside. Thomas W. Gallant, "Agency, Structure, and Explanation in Social History: The Case of the Foundling Home on Kephallenia, Greece, During the 1830s," *Social Science History* 15, no. 4 (1991).

44 A similar form of charity for abandoned children was also provided by Egyptian rulers. Cairenes brought abandoned children to the *Dabtiyya* of Cairo to have them admitted to the Madrasat-al-Wilada, the midwifery training school located in the Civilian Hospital of Azbakiyya, which contained a foundling home and an orphanage. Mine Ener, "Charity of the Khedive," in *Poverty and Charity in the Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Mine Ener, Amy Singer, and Michael Bonner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

45 For example, the documents related to Greek foundlings in the collection of the police department inform us that the foundlings were usually sent to the Church of Panaghia of Péra. BOA, ZB., 372/171, 25/Şu/1321; BOA, ZB., 372/172, 25/Şu/1321; BOA, ZB., 373/33, 20/Ni/1321; BOA, ZB., 373/34, 20/Ni/1321; BOA, ZB., 373/84, 27/My/1321; BOA, ZB., 374/95, 2/E/1322; BOA, ZB., 374/96, 2/E/1322; BOA, ZB., 374/102, 8/E/1322. Other Greek churches to which the police department entrusted infants included Hristos (Galata), Hagia Dimitri (Tatavla), Tozaran Penan, and Hagia Nikola.

46 In 1907, a boy was found in a cellar in Yedikule, with a note on him, indicating that he was a Greek named Petro. He was first taken to the *Dârü'l-aceze* and then, following the patriarchate's intervention, returned to the Greek authorities. BOA, DH.MKT., 549/2, 21/C/1325 (01 August 1907).

47 BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 79/43, 3/Ra/1333 (19 January 1915).

while their identities were being investigated; there, they were deprived of the necessary care and nutrition. The accusations against the police departments were rather grave. The pediatrician of the *Dârü'l-aceze* reported in 1921 that infants were put into a basket (*zenbil*) hung on the wall over night. Moreover, in order to stop their crying, a piece of bread wrapped in a dirty cloth was stuck into their mouths.[48] As a result, infants arrived at the *Dârü'l-aceze* half-dead (*nîm-mûrde bir halde*), which rendered futile all efforts to keep them alive (*semeredâr olamadığı*). The police was ordered to deliver the foundlings directly and quickly (*doğrudan doğruya ve vesait-i seri ile*) to the most appropriate caregivers, based on the initial guess about their original identity, and to carry out the investigation afterwards, in order to save the lives of these abandoned children.[49]

In this respect, charity organizations, communal authorities, and the modernizing state did not make life easier for the poor and the needy, and especially for orphans and foundlings. As a result of the intense bureaucratization of relief, the correspondence between the police, municipality officials, religious authorities and the poorhouse increased to a great extent. Stricter police involvement in determining the identity of foundlings and the involvement of different sorts of bureaus in the process required voluminous paper work and lengthened the procedure. The communal authorities' insistence on carrying out extremely detailed investigations in order to prevent non-Muslim foundlings from being registered as Muslims actually increased the mortality rates of these infants.

Ironically, the modernized Ottoman state and its redefined welfare policies meant deprivation, suffering, and higher mortality rates for the foundlings. First, state-subsidized wet-nurses contributed to the poor health of the foundlings, since they were usually asked to breast-feed more than one infant. Moreover, the new regulations of the modernizing Ottoman state, such as mandatory birth registration or the opening of the *Dârü'l-aceze*, made foundlings suffer in filthy police departments or crowded wards. In other words, what was advertised as progress by Ottoman administrators was detrimental to the health of abandoned children. To put it differently, the modernized administrative and institutional apparatus had a very negative impact on the well-being of Ottoman foundlings.

From the perspective of the communal religious bodies, the threat of conversion could only be avoided by jeopardizing the lives of these

48 BOA, DH.UMVM., 114/44, 23/Ra/1340 (24 November 1921).
49 BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 79/43, 3/Ra/1333 (19 January 1915).

precious foundlings. Therefore, it would be misguided to talk about an increased concern for children's well-being, or a new awareness about childhood. Rather, children were valuable because of their future role as Ottoman citizens and subjects, as a part of an imagined community, and also because of their assigned role to strengthen the communal ties of that collective body.

In fact, the non-Muslim communities of the empire felt threatened from many angles. Not only was the modernized state structure officially challenging their traditional authority, but Catholic missionaries were also acting as rivals, competing for at least some of the members of non-Muslim communities.

"Infant abduction": The threat of catholic missionary philanthropy for Christian *millet*s

"If the new-born baby, abandoned by cruel parents, is torn from the mouth of a dog or starving wolf, or from the abyss of a river, torrent or flood, it is the Catholic and French charity towards children that courageously hastens to help, saves him from danger, heats him, covers him, deposits him in the arms of a tender mother and puts in his mouth the milk of the wet-nurse or a piece of bread."[50]

"The poor little abandoned children occupy quite naturally the first place [among our works]. I am often moved by compassion at the sight of the sad state in which they deposit these small creatures at our door. Some of them suffer a long period of negligence and renunciation to which they have been subjected; in spite of the care provided by the good sister charged with this office, which is—I almost dare say—more than maternal; a certain number of them leave for heaven before even leaving the arms of their wet-nurses, and although they are largely remunerated, they often bring these children to us in the most deplorable state."[51]

50 "Si le nouveau-né, abandonné par des parents barbares, est arraché à la gueule du chien et du loup affamés ou à l'abîme du fleuve, du torrent ou des flots, c'est la charité de l'enfance Catholiques et Française qui court courageusement à son secours, le sauve du danger, le réchauffe, le couvre, le dépose dans les bras d'une tendre mère et lui met dans la bouche le lait de la nourrice ou le morceau de pain." "Rapport de M. Lepavec, Supérieur de la maison de Monastir, à M. Soubiranne, Directeur de l'oeuvre des Ecoles d'Orient, (9 Janvier 1867)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 33 (1868).

51 "Les pauvres petits enfants trouvés occupent tout naturellement la première place. Je suis souvent émue de compassion à la vue du triste état dans lequel on dépose à notre porte ces petites créatures. Nombre d'entre elles se ressentent longtemps de la négligence et du délaissement dont elles ont été victimes; aussi, malgré les soins, j'ose presque dire plus que maternels, de la bonne sœur chargée de cet office, un certain nombre d'entre elles partent pour le ciel avant même d'être sorties des bras de leurs nourrices, et quoique celles-ci soient largement rétribuées, elles nous rendent souvent ces enfants dans l'état le plus déplorable." "Lettre de Sœur Gignoux à M. Etienne, Supérieur Général, (Smyrne, 21 Janvier 1873)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 38 (1873).

Catholic missionaries always underlined that the primary concern of their activities was the proper care of the foundlings.[52] Relief for abandoned children was very significant for the Filles de la Charité (Sisters of Charity) operating in the Ottoman Empire, as "the seedbed of the principal work [conversion]."[53] In all mission stations, the care for orphans was left to female missionaries. The most important female missionary group in the Ottoman Empire was the Sisters of Charity. Together with their male counterparts, the Lazaristes, they had a large network of foundling homes, incomparable with any other resident community or missionary group: almost thirty asylums were scattered from the Western and Anatolian provinces (İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Aydın, Salonica, Trabzon) to the Arab provinces (Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Terre-Sainte, Beirut, Mosul) of the empire. Dominicans, Franciscans and Capucins had approximately a dozen of orphanages in the Eastern parts of the Empire (Urfa, Malatya, Mardin, Van, Erzurum, Cilicia). The foundling homes of the Catholic missionaries were the first of their kind, and they were to remain so until the opening of the *Dârü'l-aceze* Foundling Unit around 1899.[54]

The İstanbul mission station was founded by two members of the Sisters of Charity in December of 1839. Within only one year, they took care of 200 students and 24 orphan girls.[55] The work for abandoned children, which was considered "more necessary [here] than anywhere else," began in 1845 with around ten children.[56] In 1851, the population of the institution increased to 25.[57] In 1854, there was another *crèche* for fifteen abandoned children close to Saint Benoit College. Later, all Catholic institutions with an İstanbul mission —the Maison de Notre Dame de Providence in Galata, the Orphelinat de St. Joseph in Çukurbostan, the Maison de St. Joseph in Bebek, Saint-Benoît, La Maison

52 There were several groups of Catholic missionaries in the Ottoman Empire: the Jesuits, the Lazaristes, the Assumptionists, the Brothers of the Christian Schools (Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes), the Capucins, the Carmelites, the Filles de la Charité (Sœurs de St. Vincent de Paul), the Sisters of Notre Dame of Sion, and the Dominicans.

53 "Extraits des Rapports des Missions de Notre Province de Constantinople," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 39 (1874).

54 The Catholics themselves were also aware of this: "We can say, to our glory, one would seek in vain here another foreign establishment of charity of this kind." "Les Sœurs de la Charité à Constantinople," *Oeuvres des écoles d'orient*, no. 153 (1886).

55 *Congrégation de la Mission; répertoire historique... et table générale des annales de la congrégation de la Mission depuis leur origine jusqu'à la fin de l'année 1899* (Paris: à la procure de la congrégation de la mission, 1900), 208-217.

56 "Extrait d'une lettre de la Sœur Caroline, Fille de la Charité à Constantinople, à ses parents (Constantinople, 14 Décembre 1845)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 11 (1846).

57 "Lettre de M. Descamps, missionnaire apostolique, à M. Etienne, Supérieur-Général, à Paris, (Constantinople, Le 15 Janvier 1851)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 16 (1851).

de l'Artigiana, the Hôpital de la Paix in Şişli, and so on—had their own departments take care of abandoned children, each housing approximately 70 to 80 infants.[58]

Incoming infants were entrusted to wet-nurses, and later moved either to the orphanage of Galata or the agricultural colony of Saint-Vincent of Asia, depending on their gender.[59] A centralized and much larger foundling unit was opened under the auspices of the Hôpital de la Paix in Şişli. Starting from its establishment in 1856, the hospital included an orphanage. In 1886, a new *crèche* was opened in the hospital, and children who were primarily looked after by other missionary establishments were brought to this hospital.[60]

The Sisters of Charity had a large network for foundlings in İzmir as well. Established in 1839, the İzmir mission opened an orphanage and a foundling unit within two years. Due to increasing demand, the foundations to the Maison Saint Joseph, another important foundling home in İzmir, were laid in 1846.[61] In 1873, the department for abandoned children was the most important of the station.[62] The Orphanage of Saint-Joseph of Kula was another significant foundling asylum. This was actually a country house established in 1859 for the unification of foundlings scattered among other branches of the İzmir station (*Établissements des Orphelins, Orphelines et Enfants Trouvés de Saint-Joseph au Koulah*). Located in the countryside, in unspoiled nature and in the fresh air, the institution was meant to improve the delicate health of the weaker children.[63] Moreover, an orphanage in the countryside would be free from the dangers of epidemics and other urban inconveniences.[64] The Maison de Bournabat (Bornova), founded in 1853, also served as agricultural colony for abandoned children. In the Buca station, established in 1867, there was another orphanage, with a section for foundlings. Similarly, the Maison de Saint-Vincent of Aydın, opened in 1868 and rebuilt in 1875, had an asylum for abandoned children.

Apparently, Catholic missionaries were very determined in their efforts. As the oldest missionary establishment in the Ottoman Empire,

58 "Rapport sur les Missions," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 59 (1894).

59 "Rapport sur les Oeuvres des Missions de Constantinople, Envoyé à M. Etiene, Supérieur Général, Par M. Boré, préfet apostolique (Constantinople, 25 Mars, 1854)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 19 (1854).

60 "Les Sœurs de la Charité à Constantinople."

61 *Répertoire historique*, 231-236.

62 "Lettre de Sœur Gignoux à M. Etienne, Supérieur Général, (Smyrne, 21 Janvier 1873)."

63 Ibid.

64 "Rapport sur les établissements de Filles de la Charité à Smyrne et aux environs," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 41 (1876); Père J. B. Piolet, *La France au Dehors Les Missions Catholiques Françaises au XIXe Siècle, Tome Premier, Missions D'orient* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1900), 146.

their presence was felt in a significant number of developed urban and commercial centers, most of which happened to be port cities or neighboring areas. Because education in the French language was of high prestige, they managed to open many secondary schools that attracted upper-class children. Their way to the lower classes, however, was mostly through their charity establishments: orphanages, foundling asylums, infirmaries, and hospitals.

While the Catholics were describing themselves as saviors of infants brought to them, the empire's various Christian communities saw them as kidnappers and child thieves, who were undertaking expeditions to gather non-Catholic infants. The missionary movements, which resulted from the religious revivalism of the millenarian movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, created serious reactions in the empire's local communities as well as political and diplomatic crises with the central authority.[65] In the context of the nineteenth century, social assistance was not only about saving individuals from misery. It also aimed to reduce the risk of appropriation of the needy by other communities. If those in need did not receive charity from their own community, they could go elsewhere and give up their identity, language and religion.

As part of the larger context of missionary work and humanitarian "child-saving" efforts of the era and region, this episode also reveals the selective interest of charity organizations: only certain parties took actual measures in order to tackle the "problem" of a select group of children. This generated among non-Muslim communities fear of conversion to Catholicism, disputes over guardianship of abandoned children, and the role of the missionaries in the expansion of foundling relief by various communities.[66]

The Catholics were aware that attempts to convert Muslims would lead to the execution of converts and proselytizers alike; thus, they shifted their operations to the empire's diverse Christian peoples. Thanks to their successful educational and medical establishments that served as a gate to proselytizing, Catholics succeeded in establishing themselves

65 Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); John P. Spagnolo, "The Definition of a Style of Imperialism: The Internal Politics of the French Educational Investment in Ottoman Beirut," *French Historical Studies* 8, no. 4 (1974); Marwa Elshakry, "The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism in Late Ottoman Beirut," *Past and Present* 196, no. 1 (2007).

66 In the literature on missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, there exists a broader discussion about education, conversion anxieties and nationhood. Pioneering works in the field are those of Selim Deringil and Hans Lukas Kieser. See, for instance, Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998); Hans Lukas Kieser, *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet 1839-1938* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005).

among these communities. But the situation was different in the realm of orphan care: the missionaries had difficulty in assuming responsibility over non-Catholic orphans. In the eyes of ecclesiastics, orphans were too vulnerable to the religious influence of the missionaries; therefore, they were under greater threat when compared to the students of Catholic schools or the sick and elderly in the hospitals.

In order to avoid tension with Christian religious authorities, Catholic missionaries directed their attention to foundlings, who were theoretically of unknown descent. They had no family, no relatives, no religious or national bonds that would resist Catholic education and indoctrination. Therefore, foundlings, if they survived, had the largest potential to become staunch Catholic believers. Moreover, since the communal-religious identity of the foundlings was unknown, the Catholic missionaries were trying to avoid the blame of "kidnapping others' orphans" based on the benefit of the doubt.

However, the fact that Catholic missionaries took foundlings of other religious communities into their care could not remain a secret for long and, therefore, became a serious problem for the empire's non-Muslims. For example, the culmination of services for Greek foundlings was directly related to the activities of Catholic missionaries in the field, as a defensive reaction. In other words, the introduction of foundling care facilities was not strictly related to an inner and immediate need of the community; instead, external and rival factors, such as Catholic missionaries redefining these children within a realm of *enjeu*, forced the community to take measures. The fact that the ecclesiastics of other communities took Orthodox infants into their care was disturbing for the Greek authorities, since the community wanted to protect its youngest members' religious and national identity. For example, Dr. Leonidas Limarakis wrote a treatise on the issue and argued that some of the abandoned children, born of Greek parents, were brought to the doors of non-Orthodox authorities, who would admit them after conversion (baptism).[67] These "saviors of souls," Catholics and groups of Protestant women, managed to recruit and convert a number of young people of the Orthodox faith.[68]

The concern of the Greek ecclesiastics was, in fact, well-founded. The Catholic missionaries were always eager to receive non-Catholic foundlings into their institutions. In 1860, the church of the Franciscans, Sainte-Marie Draperis of Péra, started to serve as asylum for "abandoned Christian children" (*les enfants chrétiens abandonnés*) of the Sixth Circle, as the

67 Limarakis was a Greek scholar and for many years the president of the *Ellenikos Philologicos Syllogos*. He died on 2 September 1912 in Constantinople.

68 Anastassiadou, "La protection de l'enfance abandonnée," 301.

municipality was then called.[69] Admitting each year between seven and fifteen infants, by 1873 it had reached a figure of 133 children (both boys and girls), only 67 of whom survived and remained in their care.[70] In order to better respond to the needs of the children, the Franciscan Fathers requested from the sultan a donation of land, so that they could build a separate asylum for these children. Although they succeeded in getting heard and extracting a promise, for a year they waited in vain to receive an official order from the municipality. As a result, they wrote a letter to the ministry in order to reformulate their demands. Although there is not much information on the actual perception of the political authority, the wording of the summary of the application raises some questions. Translation problems aside, the subject matter was entitled "On the construction of an orphanage for abandoned *Greek* children" (*metruk Rum çocuklar için bir eytamhane inşası hakkında*). Why was the expression "abandoned Christian children" translated as "Greeks"? Did the interpreter of the ministry add some detail of his own, based on the knowledge that this quarter of the city was primarily inhabited by Greeks, or that child abandonment was a widespread practice in the community?

If we assume that the translator's addition was intended to clarify and thus appease, then the uneasiness of the Greek community becomes quite understandable. According to the figure provided by Anastassiadou, each year between 20 and 35 foundlings were abandoned to the Greek Church. Therefore, at least one-third of Greek foundlings in Beyoğlu were educated by Catholic religious authorities. This was a high percentage, especially when taking into consideration the sensitivities of the non-Muslim communities of the empire.

There was also contention between Greeks and Catholic missionaries in İzmir after the opening of the Catholic foundling hospital in the mid-1870s. The internal correspondence between the missionaries reveals that they comfortably confessed their conversion success rate. The report of the Bornova station for 1873 states that an orphanage had been opened and that its 33 residents were generally abandoned children, brought from the neighboring islands: "These poor abandoned children do not find any resource for their subsistence and are in danger to lose their faith by professing the Greek religion, but shortly after [entering our institution] they made their abjuration and now they follow the good way."[71]

69 BOA, HR.TO., 458/1 (7 July 1874).

70 The official list that they presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs includes detailed information on the children (exact dates of abandonment, names, and so forth).

71 "Extraits des Rapports des Missions de Notre Province de Constantinople."

The report is an evident confession that the Sisters received Greek children and converted them to Catholicism. According to the Sisters, asylums for foundlings were crucial for missionaries, since these infants "should be received, in order to be saved from what is worse than even abandonment: schism and infidelity."[72] In other words, these institutions had the duty of detaching the infants from "the hands of the schismatics."[73] In fact, as a result of their aggressive policy, the missionaries were able to get hold of a very large number of foundlings, disproportionate to the general Catholic population.

The activities of the Sisters raised some suspicion among the Greek community in İzmir. For example, Sœur Gignoux of the İzmir station reported that their work for the foundlings was closely observed by the Greek ladies of the city, from whom the foundling home received a remarkable number of visits. She claimed that the Greek ladies thought of using their institution as a model for the prospective Greek establishment, since she heard a lady proposing to her friends: "Let's see the *crèche* of the French sisters and we will then be able to organize ours on this model."[74] Although the Catholics narrate the encounter from the perspective of appreciation and desire of imitation, there is evidence of rivalry and perceived disturbance, which pushed the Greek ladies to take action in this matter.

Two months later, Sœur Sauvage informed their head-office that the Greek community of the city had opened a foundling home and that it generated difficulties for the missionaries in finding wet-nurses for their own institution.[75] In other words, the competitive environment and the fears of the Greek community not only brought about the opening of an equivalent institution, but also generated pressure on Greek wet-nurses not to work for the Catholics.

When a larger foundling asylum was opened in 1898, the decision was not triggered by an increase in the number of abandoned children under threat of perishing on the streets. This was, alternatively, a rescue work of faith that was in danger when captured in non-Greek institu-

72 "Lettre de M. Cartel, prêtre de la Mission, à Sœur N..., Fille de la Charité, à maison-mère à Paris (Smyrne, Maison Du Sacré-Coeur, 15 Janvier 1884)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 49 (1884).

73 "Les mains des schismatiques." Quoted in "Extraits des Rapports des Missions de Notre Province de Constantinople."

74 "Allons voir la crèche des Sœurs Françaises et nous pourrons ensuite organiser la nôtre sur ce modèle." Quoted in "Lettre de Sœur Gignoux à M. Etienne, Supérieur Général, (Smyrne, 21 Janvier 1873)."

75 "Lettre de ma Sœur Sauvage, à M. N. à Paris (Smyrne, Maison de Marie, 14 Mars 1873)," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 38 (1873).

tions. Having been inculcated with the values and principles of another community, these infants could have been lost to the Orthodox faith and the Greek nation forever. Therefore, the real objective was to win back and control a part of the population, which otherwise would remain under the influence of Catholics: the charitable network was strengthened in order to reinforce solidarity, in order to create the "dynamics of a community."[76]

The civil status and nationality of abandoned children

Although the Ottoman Nationality Regulation recognized the principle of *jus sanguinis*, the "right of blood," as the principle form of obtaining nationality, it also included the principle of *jus soli*, the "right of soil" or "right of territory," under certain circumstances as a way of obtaining nationality.[77] The civil status of foundlings was determined under the concept of *jus soli*. In other words, they were entitled to an Ottoman nationality because they were born on Ottoman territory. This was a standard procedure, applied to foundlings across different historical periods and countries.

For all communities of the Ottoman Empire, foundlings were considered separate entities. Having no familial descent, they were attached primarily to the state or the church. The Ottoman identity cards (*tezkire-yi Osmaniyye*) of the foundlings verify their lineage in relation to religious authority. Greek foundlings, for instance, were registered as born of unknown parents (*nâmâlum*, *meçhul*) and belonging to the Christian religion (*Hıristiyan*), and their abode (*mesken*) was invariably the parish church (i.e. *Beyoğlu'nda Rum Panayia* [Panaghia] *Kilisesi*). In fact, none of these infants were living in the church; yet, since they belonged to the family of abandoned children associated with a given religious community, the church was the only address that the Ottoman authorities recognized.[78]

The procedure was similar for abandoned children of the Armenian community. The foundlings abandoned at the doors of Armenian churches were immediately baptized. According to medieval Armenian legislation, children "of unknown parentage or resulting from fornication" left "at the doors of churches or elsewhere" could be reared by those who gave the child milk, since feeding a foundling left the right to rear it

76 Vangelis Kechriotis, "Greeks of Izmir at the End of the Empire: A Non-Muslim Community between Autonomy and Patriotism" (Ph.D. diss., Leiden Universtiy, 2005).

77 Engin Nomer, *Vatandaşlık Hukuku* (İstanbul: Filiz Kitabevi, 1989), 44.

78 Anastassiadou, "La protection de l'enfance abandonnée," 310.

to the caregiver's discretion.[79] Infants whose mothers and fathers were unknown were registered in Armenian baptism records as "the child of the church" (*Yegeğetsvo zavag*). Individual Armenian churches have kept records of such entries in their registers.[80] The children were usually named Asdvadzadur or Asadur, meaning "given by God." The same procedure also applied to illegitimate children. When mothers were left alone with their illegitimate children, they applied to the church, and the infant was baptized as the child of the church.[81]

For the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire, regulations concerning illegitimate children were confounded with those concerning abandoned ones. Among the Jews of Ottoman Tripolis (Libya), there were specific regulations regarding illegitimate children. If the father of a boy was unknown, either because he was a foundling or because only the mother was known, it was customary for him to be named "Israel" during his circumcision and afterward considered a full-fledged Jew.[82]

With the introduction of modern tools of population control (such as birth registry) and the more extensive involvement of state authorities in diverse communal affairs, many of the previous regulations covering the administration of Greek, Armenian and Jewish foundlings were challenged or altered. In this context, the previously non-existent practice of registering foundlings in the care of Catholic institutions into official population records became a matter of controversy.

For example, the citizenship status of foundlings created a serious dispute between the Catholic Sisters of İzmir, who were in-charge of the Hôpital Français and the foundling asylum, and the French diplomatic corps—the İzmir Consulate, the embassy, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[83] Sœur de Grancey wrote to the consulate on 18 March 1901, asking for a major alteration in their policy regarding the nationality of the abandoned children they received. She suggested registering these foundlings as French citizens. In her interpretation, these children could not belong to the Turkish (Muslim) community who did not practice the

79 Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 174.

80 I thank Vağarşak Seropyan for information on the registers of the Church of Surp Krikor Lusavoriç of Kınalıada.

81 In one of Krikor Zohrab's stories, "The Deceased," written in 1901, Sofik, the beautiful daughter of a widowed woman, has a son as a result of her relationship with Nigoğos Ağa, a married merchant keen on protecting his reputation. Thus, he does not publicly recognize his paternity. Sofik takes her son to the church to be baptized and registers him as "child of the church." Krikor Zohrab, "Rahmetli," in *Öyküler* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2001).

82 Rachel Simon, *Change within Tradition among Jewish Women in Libya* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 70.

83 Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (AMAE) Quai d'Orsay, Correspondance Politique et Commerciale, Nouvelle Série, 1897-1918, Turquie, no. 459.

custom to forsake their children and who had "more expedient measures to get rid of those [children] they no longer want."[84] Grancey claimed that these foundlings were the offspring of either Ottoman Christian communities or the city's many European dwellers. Thus, there would be no harm in registering them as French citizens. Since these infants were of unknown descent, this would not take away their original Ottoman nationality and replace it with an alien one.

Moreover, assigning the foundlings French nationality seemed natural to the Sisters who received them when they were only a few days old and educated them according to French morals, as true Catholics and francophones. De Grancey accused the diplomatic officials of abandoning these children who had been under the protection of the Catholics their entire lives; she questioned how this could be the "Protectorat Français des Catholiques d'Orient." Her basic concern was the prospects of the foundlings after they would leave the institution.

Actually, de Grancey was remarkably ignorant of citizenship legislation and the practice of her institution. Her protest against the assignment of a "Turkish identity" to foundlings was, in fact, groundless. The French Embassy of İstanbul conducted a small survey, by corresponding with the French consulates of the empire, and reported that abandoned children were baptized according to the Latin rite and thus entered the community of Latin *reaya*s. In that sense, they had a proper civil status, different from that of Muslims. In İstanbul and İzmir, they were registered through a civil administration mechanism recognized by the consulate; however, in other cities of the empire where their small number did not justify the existence of a similar administration, they were registered with the help of the *kadı*s. The French ambassador stated that foundlings born on the soil of any country were considered proper subjects of that particular country, and to deviate from this universal rule in the Ottoman Empire was impossible, unless they wanted to risk their relations with the local authorities and the Ottoman state.[85]

The consulate stressed that the practical financial consequences of granting citizenship or *protégé* status to the foundlings would be insupportable. For once, it meant the expansion of the principle of protection to include the future wives or husbands and children of the abandoned children. Therefore, over a short period of time, the

84 "...des moyens plus expéditifs de s'en débarrasser lorsqu'ils n'en veulent plus." Ibid.

85 "Les turcs ne sont plus assez ignorants pour ne pas connaître notre propre législation sur cette matière et ils ne manqueraient pas de l'invoquer si nous nous avisions de vouloir soustraire à leur juridiction les enfants trouvés qui sortent de chez nos sœurs." Ibid.

colony of *protégés* would become even larger than the original French colony.[86] Moreover, these former foundlings would be in a most needy situation and, thus, a burden to French charitable organizations. The response of the diplomatic authorities reflected their awareness of the tense relations between the missionaries, the Ottoman state, and the non-Muslim communities of the empire. Although staunch believers of the Catholic faith and recognizing the importance of these children for the expansion of French influence in the empire, the French authorities refrained from weakening their relations with the Ottoman and non-Muslim authorities.

The dispute over citizenship demonstrates potential problems of the citizenship status of foundlings. In the absence of standard birth certificates or established census records, the status of abandoned children in the Ottoman Empire was open to political and religious rivalry. For that reason, in the early twentieth century the communities regarded their foundlings as inalienable members of their imagined community.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth century, the religion, nationality, and citizenship of abandoned children became a contested terrain over which much effort was spent by local authorities, foreign missionaries, religious and civil leaders of the communities, municipalities, the police force, and the central state. Unexpectedly, these infants became actors in late-nineteenth-century demography, conversion, and national rivalry.

The emergence of certain practices and conceptions customarily related to a modern state created a sensitivity and a politicized concern for strengthening the solidarity and integrity of the communities who felt under the threat of losing their members' identity, language and religion. Several themes discussed in this paper imply the appearance of a structured, bureaucratized, and relatively centralized administrative apparatus that introduced new governance techniques, approximating the regulations of a modern state. Thus, various communities perceived this as a challenge to their relative autonomy, and fear of dissolution reigned over them.

The Regulation on Population Registration heralded a new era regarding foundlings, since the state now assumed the new duty of registering new-born citizens. This generated a series of controversies over the nationality and citizenship of foundlings. The communal religious

86 In fact, the embassy was allowed to grant the status of *protégé* to only two groups of people: Ottoman subjects who worked in a consulate as dragoman or in mission stations as assistant, and certain foreign people who did not have consular representation in Turkey.

authorities staunchly resisted these new practices, because they did not consent to an administrative reform that challenged their former authority and autonomy over administering community affairs. This crisis represents in a microcosm a broader set of problems resulting from transforming a multi-national empire into a centrally administered modern state. The involvement of new parties—such as certain governmental bureaus, police departments, the municipality, and the foundling unit of the *Dârü'l-aceze*—as responsible and powerful bodies shaping the processes following child abandonment generated uneasiness among non-Muslim authorities. The leaders and members of these groups opposed new regulations by submitting official appeals to the government and by introducing or strengthening their own foundling facilities. Furthermore, the growing presence of Catholic missionaries in the realm of foundling care forced the Christian *millet*s of the empire to pay attention, because they wanted to hold on to their prospective community members.

In this context, campaigns to rescue abandoned children hardly derived from a sentiment of pity, or disinterested charity. Institutional solutions, policies, and strategies of diverse and competing actors were closely related to the emergence of a modernized governmental structure and attempts to strengthen communities as its mirror image.

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Şule Toktaş

ISSN 1305-3299
9 771305 329004