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Ottoman family and child education (1300-1600)

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Abstract

Children, from past to present have always been an important part, in fact a keystone of our life. According to Islam, a child is a continuation of the lineage; therefore children were very precious in the Ottoman State. From its' birth, the child's, care, nourishment, first step, circumcision, education etc. were celebrated through different rituals. Furthermore, their toy and play had special meanings.

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I. Family in Islam

According to Islam, Allah (c.c.) created human being, gave him the ability of knowledge acquisition and using it (The Most Gracious - Ar-Rahman, 55/4), He made him the most honourable creature, He made him, human being, undertake the trust (liability and responsibility) which was refused to undertake by any other living creatures (The

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Confederates-Al-Ahzáb, 33/72). He enabled him to rise and become lofty with his own will and effort (The Sun - Ash-Shams, 91/10). So, the human being, who acts on this aim, should always be diligent to find the truth and goodness.

This human being will exist, procreate, form the society and culture and pass it down. In addition to these, Islamic people need to cooperate and act with solidarity (Erdil,1991:11). This unity and solidarity includes the circles of family, neighbour, nation (race), ummah (Islamic races) and humanity.

Family in the centre is also the base. Unless family is the base, it is unlikely for the other structures to form and to protect the creatures. Acting with solidarity and cooperation is a kind of behaviour and for starting a family and marriage there are some requirements. These are as follows: Sexual need, love, fear, need for security, education and desire for lineage continuation. Islam took these needs into consideration and while forming the family, it directed and encouraged in compliance with them (Karaman,1992:386).

II. Turkish family

In Turkish history, in a long time period, the military and political intuitions and even organizational units were hard up, states could not continue their existence and because of that they had to fall.

Family was the unique stand of Turkish society against these hitches mentioned above (Turan,1992:85). The main factors of Turkish family, which was one of the institutions suffered the least change in Turkish society, were wedding, birth, mother and father in the rise of Ottoman Empire (Turan,1992:86). Birth was the source of happiness as usual in Turkish nations. When a birth occurred, coins used to be spilt, a piece of jewellery used to be pinned onto the infant and the new dad had feasts prepared. When a baby was born, the most important process was name-giving ceremony. The name-giving ceremonies, which we encounter in the tales of Dada Gorgud, went on, as a tradition, in the 1300s (Turan,1992:87). At the name-giving ceremonies, an event which concerned the family or society was the source of inspiration and usually Turkish names were chosen.

While bringing up a child, one of the most striking point was teaching him Turkish language well. Cradle was indispensable furnish. Perambulator was also used if financial status of a family was good (Turan, 1992:88).

Circumcision ceremony was always important. In fact, in the capital of the state, when the children of statesmen and notables were circumcised, the children of poor inhabitants were commonly included into the circumcision ceremonies.

A child was trained by his mother and father (parents) at home, when he reached at a certain age, he was sent to school. At that term, children were usually sent to school when they were 4 (four) years old, even though there was not a certain limitation (Turan,1992:89). At a certain age, children got more extensive education (Turan,1992:90). Children 12 age and above could take the courses such as language, vocabulary, meaning, statement, rhetoric, prosody and calligraphy, afterwards they learnt maths, logic, philosophy, astrology, Arabic and Persian.

A father plays a crucial role at bringing up a child. A father meets his family's needs and he organizes domestic tasks. A child grows up at his family home and he has temper and morals similar to his elders. Family and environment have a great positive or negative influence on a person. Especially childhood is a fertile term for education. As a matter of fact, a child's sole is simple. In the coming ages of a child, it is difficult to change and correct (Turan 1992:92).

Throughout history, the place of mother in a Turkish family is incontestable. A mother is the most important factor at the language learning of a child. Mother is dominant and responsible person for several matters at home. It is natural that all natural needs of a child are naturally supplied by mother. Mother is the person who maintains a household, determines requirements and conducts immigrations between summer pastures and winter quarters.

Family is the most universal among all social forms. Family origins are grounded with our complex feelings in our organic system. These are desire for continuing bloodline, motherhood, friendship and parenthood (mother-father) feelings. These feelings are strengthened with interdependent secondary feelings, which rise and occur as a result of social relations, such as romantic love, racial proud, compassion and mercy of partners, economic safety of family, individual need and keeping bloodline.

Personality structure of a child improves in a family. Family members provide the child with organic and mental habits. Since the socialization of an individual occurs in the family, the influence of family on a child is a part of personality development (Gökçe,1976:3).

Family is composed of individuals who are connected each other with material and moral relations which have juridical and moral results including a range of responsibilities. It involves several people having relationship

whether they live under the same roof or not. Within this scope, families which consist of individuals, who love and respect each other, help each other expecting nothing in return, act with solidarity, and as well become peaceful and be in safe, become a nation joining each other. Nations who involve individuals and families like these will be peace, safety and tranquillity factors for all humanity (Karaman, 1992:388).

III. Child education

A. Child Education in Family

Family, which is natural and basic element of society, has existed since the beginning of humanity. So it has had important duties to continue existence of society, has directed economic life, has arranged social and politic life, and has performed religious and cultural functions. Moreover, family has been the main factor of existence of human and formation of new generations. The most important duty of it is to bear a child and rise him well (Demirel, Gürbüz, Tuş, 1992:97).

A child's education and training is the most important issue subsequent to nutrition. Since Ottoman Empire was governed with compliance with Islamic principles and it was majorly theocratic, Islamic values were given priority to in all kinds of educational institutions (Seyidoğlu, 1985:58). The educational institutions of Ottoman Empire were religious centric. A child was not only a member of a family, he was also a little member of the place he lived in other words of neighbourhood community. Nurture provided to a child in family was given in an unnamed system, what nurture meant was teaching Muslimized Turkish mores to a child. (İpçioğlu, 2001:135).

In a sense, family was major school in Ottoman society. Child was brought up by his mother. Child was under guardianship of his parents (Ortaylı, 2006:40).

Child gets his initial experiences in his family. A person's following life and relations are substantially effected by his intrafamilial relations. Early childhood ages are very important for a person's personality development and acceptance. Girl identify with mother, boys identify with father. Nearly all of the proverb about personality development and identification emphasize that characteristic features of family elders are also seen at their children (Kırımloğlu, 2005:118,119).

A child should be nurtured with nice and pretty words, he should be taught nice and clear words, his unmentionable and impolite words and behaviours should be prevented. A child remains unchanged when he grows up, he does not give up his old habits easily. A child should be sent to bazaar and street when he is little. Meal and water are firstly given them at dining table. Boys over ten years old should sleep in a different bedroom from their parents' and sisters', they should be prevented from being friend with bad tempered people. Girls should be loved more by their parents (Akyüz, 1982:70).

Women, especially girls, were brought up like coy flower, they were prevented from envious eyes. Because of that both house building and neighbour formation were done taking this privacy into account. Important precautions were taken in order to preserve girls and women by Ottoman Empire (Z. Demirel, 2010:79).

In an Ottoman family, a child was under his father's legal supervision. The records such as "Ömer bin Ahmed" or "Zeyneb bint-i Ahmed" showed female and male child were mentioned at all religions and everywhere. Because of that child education was done by mainly mother and grandmother and in addition to that relatives, neighbourhood and community had control on it. Child was someone who had to be preserved. If a child lost his father, he had to be supported by his grandparent, if he did not have a grandparent he had to be supported by his uncle. Ottoman community attempted to bring up a child well. In Ottoman Empire, parents gave more importance to get their child marry than their education, because of that child used to stay in the background. Girls were nurtured in compliance with marriage and boys were directed to their fathers' jobs (Doğan, 2005:124).

Child care was done by their mothers and milk-mothers. Each child had its own cradle. A child slept in it and spent most of a day in it. Some of them were made of walnut. Wealthy families used to have silver and slim embossment cradles made. Cradles of sultans' sons and sultans from Ottoman dynasty were made of golden or precious stones.

Child were educated at home. No matter how rich, girls were educated at home. They did not have a tutoress or teacher. They learnt religion lesson and moralities. Then they were nurtured about marriage (D'ohsson, a, 1992: 213,214).

Katip Çelebi was important in Ottoman society. He mentioned about the education of society both in his works and speeches. According to him, a child should be sent to school when he was six, boys should be taught craft, girls

should be taught housework, and children should not be told evil tongue and damned. He gave importance child education and training (Sakaoğlu, 2003:37).

One of the most distinguished issue on child rising in Ottoman Empire was teaching Turkish language. This situation was clearly seen when Christian children particularly chosen to be Janissary were taught primarily Turkish language and Islamic religion. When Guild of Janissaries was founded, Çandarlı Hayrettin Pasha said about the children recruited that “let’s give them to Turks, they will both become Muslim and learn Turkish, then they will become Janissary”. A family, who taught the religion and language to Janissary candidate Christian child, could not be considered to be disregardful of their child’s education on these issues. Mother was effective at language teaching. Mother was responsible for lots of things at home. It was normal that a child’s lots of needs were met by his mother.

From the period the child spent in the uterus to the one he was ready to be accustomed to the society and the morals: the family used to be observed. The main aim was to bring the child up to be someone who was dutiful child for the society. As it was understood the basic task of an Ottoman family was to bring up a child as it was all other families. Children were considered as a material connection to the future and they were regarded as future.

B. Child Education at School

The early education of a child was given at home by his parents. A child at a certain age was sent to school. Children were sometimes sent to school when they were 4. However, children were generally sent to school when they were 6 (Turan, 1992:85,86).

Amen parade for children was a term used for the ceremony practised for the children who started school on time. “Amen”, which was a Syriac becoming Arabic, means “God, accept it, let it be”

Let it be protected from all the troubles in the earth

For the sake of the greatness of God, Amen.

Baki

When a child was at school age, he started school with a ceremony. Starting school used to take place on blessed days. If there were not any blessed day in that season, Amen parade for children took place on either Monday or Thursday.

Starting school used to start with house cleaning, all family members used to go to bathhouse, and there were entertainments till evening. When other members of family finished their preparations, the child was prepared. He was dressed up cleanly. The child in his new clothes used to wear scarf and diamond moon. Then the child was taken to Eyüp Sultan on a horse. While he was being taken to school, hymns were sung. When a hodja finished his hymn, the child got down the horse and they followed the parade. While following the parade with the shouts of “Amin, Amin”, the child to started school and learnt the first lesson.

1. Ottoman Elementary-Primary School

They were “the basic schools” where girls and boys between the ages of 5/6 and 11/12 got education together in other words got coeducation. At these schools, basic knowledge such as reading writing, Quran and calculation were taught.(Pakalın, 1983:58,59)

Teaching at Ottoman Elementary-Primary Schools was not conveyed as suitable to strict-year-class system but “success level”. Discipline was basic principle for education. The teacher teaching at these schools were usually trained at madrasahs (Akkutay, 1994:6,7).

Schools went on until Thursday noon. Since Fridays was holiday, children were allowed or in their words they were relieved. Every day afternoon when lessons finished, they all swore off their sins altogether and prayed and said “Amen!”. This old custom was not forgotten and was kept on at all schools (Abdülaziz Bey, 2000: 63).

Teachers of Ottoman Elementary-Primary Schools used to tell that children should be served, complimented and smiled at first three days, but they should not be admonished, beaten and sworn.

They stated that after children were accustomed to school slowly and in easiness, they should start their education little by little.

It is not known whether Ottoman Elementary-Primary School had a formal curriculum. Graduation age was not also

stated, either, however, there was an obligation to read the Quran from beginning to end in order to graduate (İhsanoğlu, 1999:1).

A teacher at an Ottoman Elementary-Primary School put what he taught children and how he behaved people into words with the following poem

(Original Version in Ottoman Turkish)

Dolardı mektebin içi sübyan
İderdim onlara talim-i Kur'an
Olup beş vakitte mihraba mülazım
Bu manalardı ancak bana lazım
Oturmazdım avamın aresinde

English version:

The children would rush into my school
I would teach them the Quran
I would make them pray
Just these would concern me
I would neither interfere the gossips of the public nor spend time with them.

Alphabet, public and other component, Turkish wordbook, moral, writing, catechism, Turkish, Tajwid, Quran memorising were taught at Ottoman Elementary-Primary Schools, and it was important to teach them children (Akyüz, 1994: 62,79,106). Teachers taught children reading methods courses at Ottoman Elementary-Primary School. They especially taught reading Quran. There was a teacher teaching writing, calligraphy and different types of writing in one of schools (Abdülaziz Bey, 2000: 70).

Teachers of Ottoman Elementary-Primary Schools socialized well with the socio-cultural environment they lived in and they became a part of the society. Because of that they were respected and consulted people. There were some reasons why they had socialized with socio-cultural environment and they had been consulted. The people considered teachers and schools as a way to “grow into a man” and they respected them a lot (Akyüz, 1994:62).

In summers, Ottoman Elementary-Primary Schools organized school trips in order to have children entertain and show around. In these trips, children would be taken to Veli Efendi Meadow, Beykoz Meadow, Kağıthane Park and Göksu meadow. Teachers would inform children about the decision to go on school trip, children would tell it to their parents and bring the money, which they took appropriate to their financial situation, for trip expenses to their teacher. Children used to enjoy and be happy with these school trips.

When each of children trained at these schools grew up and got a job or advanced in the career, they always respected the rights of their teachers. It was an old moral principle to respect and kiss their hands when they saw their teachers, additionally, to call their friends and help them when they were in difficulty (Bey, 2000: 64).

a) **Madrasah**

They were educational institutions which trained complying with the principles of Islamic religion. The madrasah opened the city of Fez in Morocco was the first of them. These schools marched forward in time and experienced their most productive period during the time of Seljuk and Ottoman Empires.

Madrasahs which were educational institutions served under mosques and prayer rooms next to them at first, in the course of time they severed their connection with them and continued their operation in different buildings.

Iznik Madrasah was the first Ottoman Madrasah founded in 1331. Religion and positive sciences of that time were taught in Madrasah (Gülbüz, 1993:200,201).

There were departments of madrasah corresponding secondary schools, high schools and universities of today. Primary education was out of madrasah. There was a school near madrasahs. In that term, school meant primary school (Öztunç, 1977: 144,145).

Madrasahs were the backbones of the system of education in Ottoman Empire. In fact, madrasahs played a crucial role at the development of culture and civilization. During the foundation of the empire, madrasahs which developed

in Iznik and Edirne climaxed with Süleymaniye Madrasah which was built by Mehmet the Conqueror in 15 and 16th centuries. Both provided pecuniary resource and brain drain from Islamic World to the madrasahs in İstanbul actualized this development (Öztürk, 2007:566).

Madrasahs were educational institutions which had a certain programme and were open to public. The ones founded by Sultans were called “sultanic” and the ones founded by statesmen or ulema as a foundation were called “private”. There was a madrasah next to nearly all of the big mosques in metropolises and towns.

During the Ottoman Empire, the people taught at madrasahs were called “mudariss”, the students of madrasahs were called “aspirant” which meant “someone who looks for wisdom” or “suhte (burnt)” which meant someone who burnt for the sake of truth.

Students of a teachers were called “Shakird (pupil). New disciples used to serve their teachers and even the assistants who were negotiants in madrasahs.

The grades of education in madrasahs were determined with lawbooks. In this regard, three-stage education was conveyed at madrasahs until 16th century. The first part of it was called “Outside”, secondary part was called “Within” and higher part was called “Sahn”.

Students were able to choose their teachers. A student who learnt “introduction to scholarship” from the teacher he had chosen at outside madrasah, then passed to one of the telvih madrasahs which belonged to one of the teachers of “within madrasahs”. Madrasahs were divided into four as Fatih and Kanuni madrasahs, Darulkurra Madrasahs, Darulhadis madrasahs and Medical madrasahs(Özbilgen, 2003:310,312).

The system and organization of madrasahs were established on the base of foundation like mosque, imaret, caravansary, inn and bathhouse in the Islamic world. Since these institutions had religious aspects, the foundations had to be in conformity with shariah. Madrasahs were also for training administrative and judiciary staff and they made the central administration durable and powerful.

Mathematical sciences such as Arithmetic, geometry, algebra and astronomy and physic, one of natural sciences were taught at Ottoman madrasahs (İhsanoğlu, 1999:232).

When the quality of teachers, students and education went down at the end of 16th century, madrasahs started to spoil (Özdemir, 2011:119).

Whatever the opinions of the founders of madrasahs were, the main aim of them was to get man ready for afterlife not for this world (Sakaoğlu, 2003:20,21).

b) Child Education in Palace

Shahzade was the title given to sons of Padishahs. They were educated for a length of time. When Shahzades were weaned at the age of one, they were trained by private trainers. When they were 6, they started their primary education and they were taught to ride horse and use a gun (Özdemir, 2011:496).

Shahzades were called as “Chelebi”, but then they were named Shahzade. They were called with this name until the end of Ottoman Empire ((Özdemir, 2011:496).

Shahzades were born by haseki, ikbal and odalisques. In other word, regardless of their mother’s race, sons of Padishahs were called Shahzade and they were cared.

His mother and three aghas superintend a Shahzade’s care. The oldest agha was the head tutor called “head lala”. The other tutors under the command of him were called “lala”. Lalas were responsible for shahzades’ education and their loyalty to the Padishah. Because of that one of the Enderun aghas who was close to the Padishah and known by him used to become lala (Özbilgen,2003: 90).

Ottoman shahzades got their theoretical education in the palace. Leading scholars of the term were hired as teachers. Teachers used to come to the palace with an old woman wearing black clothes without being seen by seraglio women. Shahzades learnt especially Arabic and Persian. Shahzades did horse riding and battle practises with page boys in the third yard of the palace. Ottoman shahzades got their applied education in sanjaks they governed.

Lalas were responsible for Shahzades’ education. Lalas were made responsible for a shahzade’s education. A lala also prevented a Shahzade to come under the Padishah’s domination (Afyoncu, 2010:186,187).

When a Shahzade was at the educational age, the notables of the state used to get together at the palace, the shaykh al-islam used to pray the young prince and his alphabet book, then he made him recite all letters. The Shahzade’s book, cartoon, bag and etc. were the gift of the shaykh al-islam and they were ornamented with gold and precious stones. After this ceremony, shahzades used to wear the caftan of honour. A teacher was assigned and lessons started at the camber of Kızlar agha (D’ohsson,b,1992: 963,964).

All students of Palace schools were recruited from families, who had divine love and were totally on the way of God with their religions and traditions, from different places of the Empire, in accordance with the Devshirme Law. Palace schools were managed by White Aghas from the time they were founded to the time they vanished. They were very disciplined and talented (Akkutay, 126).

i. Shahzadegan School

It was a school pertain to education of Shahzades. Their curriculum was the same as the curriculum of Ottoman elementary-primary schools where children of community went to. The reason why some members of Ottoman dynasty were very sophisticated was the private education they had later. In addition to that there was a meshkhane in the palace. Meshkhane was a school where page boys had music education (Akyüz, 1994:65). Shahzadegan School was peculiar to the palace. Shahzades, who were appointed as sanjak-beys or state governors at young ages, had education under the supervision of intellectual, experienced civilian or soldier lalas. Shahzadegan School was upstairs of chamber of Kızlar Agha in the palace (Sakaoglu, 2003: 40).

ii. Enderun School

Enderun School and military schools were educational institutions which had been established directly by the state until the reign of Mahmud the second. The major duty of Enderun School was to raise well-educated, talented, mannerly and reliable statesmen and soldiers from the children who were recruited from Christian citizens.

The children, who were to accepted to Enderun School, initially were given to a Turkish family so that they could learn Turkish-Islamic culture, after they had stayed there for a few years, they were sent to acemi oğlan schools to have military education. The ones chosen from these schools were accepted to Enderun and they had higher education there. A great number of grand viziers who had a say in ruling the country, viziers, army commanders, governors, architects and engineer raised for centuries at Enderun (Kazıcı, Ayhan, 2010:520,527).

The organization of Enderun consisted of six-graded seven chambers most of which were founded by Mehmet the Conqueror. These were a Grand and Small Hall, a Falconers Dorm, a Campaign chamber, the Larder, the treasury and the Privy Chamber. The Enderun students had to pass twelve promotional exams during their education. However, in addition to their success at the exams, their interest, abilities and individual differences played crucial roles at their promotion. Students who could not their education there, attended their troop leaving their chambers via “leaving” method.

Enderun had educationally a progressive structure. Unless a page boy made a hit, he could not graduate from Enderun, he was assigned to a troop pursuant to the degree of the chamber he left as a leaver.

Another aspect of Enderun education was to teach Ottoman perception and Islamic culture. Under favour of Enderun, the Empire could fulfil its mission with its all institutions.

Another principle of Enderun education was discipline. There was some rules and morals that Enderun people had to obey. The going to bed and getting up times were scheduled. All daily salaahs were prayed with the community. There was a White Agha bed in addition to the beds of eight or ten youngsters in the dorms. Youngsters ate neither more nor less, and meat and rice were among their staple food (Z. Demirel, 2010:34,36).

Enderun was not a kind of school which had a grade system, people got education there to serve. They were promoted from a dorm to another dorm. The more they were appreciated, the closer service to the Padishah they were assigned to. Interestingly they had spoken and face to face education there. There were also sport, painting, literature and calligraphy education there.

Mehmet the Conqueror was the one who gave its main form to Enderun School. Mehmet the Conqueror, who was the best-knowing “Sultan” in the Ottoman Dynasty, brought the academic structure of the school to perfection. The feature of Enderun School was that it was long-term and continual and its sphere of influence was large.

Science, culture, Islam religion lessons were taught at these schools where period of study was 14 years. However, in progress of time as the number of schools increased, they lose their significance. Enderun was abolished officially on 3 April 1924 when the Topkapı Palace (New Palace) was converted into a museum) (Uslubaş, 2013:203,204).

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