The term “Italian colonialism” perhaps conjures images of Eritrea or Libya rather than Rhodes. But Rahamim Coen, who perished in Auschwitz in 1944, may not have noticed the difference. He lived in a community whose children spoke Greek, Turkish, Spanish, French, and Italian by the age of ten. Their schools were diverse: the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which ran schools for Jews in cities such as Tangier and Baghdad, competed with the governmental Scuole Israelitiche Italiane—not unlike in Libya. But while European colonialism in North Africa has been well studied, much less is available on Italian rule in the Dodecanese Islands. This is especially true for readers limited to English-language scholarship. Similarly, the subject of youth under colonialism is not a pristine historiographical territory. Still, it is often studied with British or French case studies rather than Italian ones. Andreas Guidi’s *Generation of Empire* is thus commendable for using Rhodes to contribute to both research frontiers.

The book uses a capacious definition of “youth.” The term has never encompassed all young people. A classic example in the European historiography of youth is the German word Jugend, which was extended to the working classes only in the late nineteenth century. There are two approaches to writing the history of youth. One can define youth as an external label, e.g., as an age group, or be guided by the term “youth” as contemporaries used it. Writing about the early twentieth century, the latter option is tempting: everyone was writing about youth and tried to organize them into movements. Writing about how people wrote about youth is a difficult task in itself. As Guidi rightfully notes, “a Young Turk newspaper, an Italian colonial governor, a group of Orthodox students, a rabbi, or a Muslim notable might all use the term youth with quite different aims” (7). They often did so to discuss problems (perceived or actual) and express aspirations. Guidi’s narrative goes both ways. He devotes chapter 1 to the construction of youth as a political category.

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before turning to young people. The following chapters deal with household formation, education, work and leisure, and emigration.

While “youth” is fraught with enough difficulties, Guidi introduces the equally ambiguous concept of “generation.” Karl Mannheim’s oft-cited “Problem of Generations” (1928) is appropriate for sociological generations. It helps us understand how a group of people who were born around the same time fostered similar attitudes toward issues they tackle collectively, often in defiance of their predecessors—be it young poets against the literary establishment, young politicians against their parties, etc. Alternatively, generations may help historical demographers explain persistent roles in the family. The dynamics between grandparents, parents, and children are often described as generational, even without referring to political and social attitudes but merely to demographic behavior. Yet common parlance uses generations much more liberally than that. For example, the “post-Ottoman generation” can simply refer to those who came after the Ottomans were gone: it is nothing more than a unit of periodization. Guidi’s narrative once again tries to capture all these layered meanings.

Both “youth” and “generation” offer him a perspective on the more significant transition from Ottoman to Italian rule. Tensions between parents and children or teachers and pupils can thus be attributed to constant tensions between roles or the differences between growing up under Ottoman versus Italian rule. Guidi does not claim that his book is comprehensive or schematic. While he draws on quantitative data when it is available and reliable, much of the book sketches micro-historical scenes to illuminate macro-dynamics. This approach is not faithful to the spirit of Italian microhistory, which traces a single protagonist through the paper trails left behind. Instead, it nods to developments in global history that favor episodic stories over sweeping narratives. The fact that the author chooses the “Mediterranean” as his historiographical terrain also testifies to the ambition of his book. To underpin these ambitions, he marshals evidence in eight languages, which it contextualizes against an impressive array of secondary sources. Guidi is, therefore, uniquely posed to write the history of the eastern Mediterranean. His lucid prose makes it seem almost easy.

Chapter 1 is an excellent example of how these meanings coexist and overlap. Guidi notes that youth as a collective noun (e.g., gençlik in Turkish) seems to have emerged immediately after the 1908 coup in the Ottoman Empire that brought the Young Turks to power. In a sense, to suspecting eyes, all politicized young Turks became Young Turks. The Italian rulers brought with them from the metropole a preconceived mistrust of youth, especially bourgeois youth. But on the other side were the hopefuls: For the nationalist movements, youth was a promise of renewal. But they could also become anxious and see the youth as souls that needed to be won over so that the community did not fall apart. This was more than just rhetoric. If the movement was successful, it was translated into organizations with youth or student sections. In between, some efforts targeted all young men, such as mass conscription, which was a cause for concern for communities (which are a preferred unit of analysis in this book) and a cause for hope for the regime—the former for their communal identities and the latter for socialization into nationalist or imperial identities. In other words, as the communal framework of Ottoman rule came under attack, communities and regimes described their future in relation to youth.

The more youth was regulated, the more subversive it could become. The fascist regime on Rhodes introduced a youth movement with membership strongly encouraged, if not mandatory. It coexisted with communal movements. But while adults governed the youth movements, the 1930s also brought forth the realization that the political socialization of youth was not necessarily tamable. Neither the clergy nor teachers

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could convince students to shun Greek irredentism or revisionist Zionism. The latter was particularly dangerous as it presented itself as an ideology specifically for young people. Of course, even when youth seemed independent, their socialization could be affected by other adults. Considering cases like the Polish student strikes in late imperial Prussia and Russia could have offered an interesting comparison, as even the national movement itself began fearing that their too-loyal disciples might undermine the cause of the politicians who sent them. Likewise, many of the other phenomena described here have antecedents in the Ottoman Empire, Italy, or elsewhere in between. Yet the author’s choice to represent the local landscape is fruitful—it adds fresh data and incisive interpretation for later syntheses.

Chapters 4 and 5 exemplify where the following contemporaries’ preoccupation with “youth” limited the historiography, including in this book. These chapters provide a nuanced portrayal of schooling, apprenticeship, and leisure (and the closely linked sex work and delinquency). These are staple themes in the historiography of youth. The author aptly recognizes important continuities in notions of productivity and idleness. On top of this, he adds the too-little-studied aspect of generational dynamics within elite families. These generational dynamics were perhaps better explored in the meager historiography of Southeastern Europe than in many other European territories, especially in Evgenia Davidova’s extraordinary monograph Balkan Transitions to Modernity (cited by Guidi), whose chronological remit ends before the present book begins. Davidova’s approach helps highlight the agency of young people, especially against familial aspirations. Leisure usually attracts the historian to adult criticisms of youth, especially working-class youth. Indeed, Guidi largely accepts the class divisions which are ossified by the historiography. Yet it is precisely the fascinating section on how the Agiakatsikas family adapted to fascist rules and institutions that makes us sense that there are topics that are not mainstream to the historiography of youth that could have emerged from these sources.

But no book can do everything. Guidi has constructed a theoretical framework that teases out a wide range of themes from his sources and has shaped them into provocative images of life during the interwar transitions of Rhodes. An equally wide range of historians should want to read the book. Scholars of the post-Ottoman space, Italy and its empire, the Mediterranean, youth, education, colonialism, and emigration will all find value in its empirical findings. Its most important contribution is the focus on the transition between empires, as opposed to the other watersheds that historians of youth have favored, like industrialization. Generations of Empire will certainly inspire future work for those capable of undertaking it—an endeavor that stretches across archives, languages, and vast historiographies.

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10 Compare, for example, with Miranda Sachs’s recent An Age to Work: Working-Class Childhood in Third Republic Paris (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).