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Expanding Frontiers of Ottoman Studies

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There have been a number of publications and conferences recently which methodologically deal with the frontiers, encounters and interchange between different units within the Ottoman Empire throughout the long history of Ottoman times.¹ The present two-volume work is an end product of the 15th *Symposium of the Comité International d'Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes*, held in London from 8 July to 12 July, 2002. It contains a selection of the presented papers: thirty three papers which seek to extend the frontiers of Ottoman studies either with new methodological approaches or by “reading” new historical sources and materials for the sake of Ottoman studies. These articles are arranged into four chapters per volume.

The first volume consists of the following chapters: “Politics and Islam,” “Economy and Taxation,” “The Development of Ottoman Towns,” and “Arab and Jewish Communities” with a total of seventeen articles. Other four chapters, situated in the second volume, include “Ottoman-European International Relations,” “Ottoman Manuscripts in Europe,” “Ottoman-European Cultural Exchange,” and “Christian Influence and the Advent of the Europeans.” Before going deeper into each chapter, it is worth mentioning the contributory character of these volumes to Ottoman historical literature. As Colin Imber notes prominently in his introductory chapter, the study of Ottoman history carries in itself some burdens and it is flowing in the intersection of different trends, misconceptions and clichés. On the one hand,

¹ The recent publication of the proceedings of the international congress on the 150th anniversary of the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung in Wien, September 2004, might be mentioned as a good example: Marlene Kurz, Mertin Schuetz, Karl Vöcelka und Thomas Winkelbauer (Hrsg.), *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie*, Wien & München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005. Another good example can be the conference which took place in Warburg Institute at the end of April 2006: *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*. This conference is also a good search by a number of prominent scholars for the encounters, exchange and the trade off between two different entities in the course of time, Italian Renaissance and the Ottoman Empire. For more information on the conference, please conduct the relevant link on the page <http://www.sas.ac.uk/events/areas/warburg>. For another publication on this issue see, Kemal Karpat, Robert W. Zens (eds.), *Ottoman borderlands: issues, personalities, and political changes*. Madison [Wis.]: Center of Turkish Studies, University of Wisconsin, 2003.

“there is a greater awareness of Ottoman history and consciousness of an Ottoman legacy” in the former lands of the Ottoman Empire (1). On the other hand, this development cannot get rid of the nationalistic approaches of each currently existing country. Despite this barrier, further studies enable us not only to increase our knowledge concerning the Ottoman Empire, but also they allow us to overcome already existing clichés and to correct “our misconceptions”. This collection has significant articles completely confirming and extending this framework. Thus, the title of this work seems to be extremely well-fitting in the sense that the contributors have been dealing with frontiers of Ottoman studies either geographically or methodologically in a convincing way. The proposed methodology for this type of historical studies seems to be “close reading of primary source materials” (4).

Politics and Islam

In this first chapter we come across three articles referring to different time periods and subjects. Rhoads Murphey tries to analyze the kingly virtues which are presented in *Zühtü'dü'l-Tevârih* by Mustafa Safi. Unlike his contemporaries, Safi did not focus on the “global history, or political and diplomatic history of his own time” (24). Rather his focus aimed to give an account of the personality of the sultan and of the “underlying meaning of events affecting the dynasty” (24). Therefore, Murphey suggests that this “full” account of a personality provides for us alternative readings in Ottoman history.

In the next article, Kemal Karpat tries to indicate the continuity and similarity between the structure of Ottoman *ilmiye* and the republican construction of the religious organization, and the relationship of this organization to other religious groups by citing a good number of documents. According to Karpat, this similarity, which comes out of an evolution within Islamic thought, makes the coexistence of Islam in Turkey with a “self-proclaimed secular state supposedly not involved in religious issues” (25).

The third article in this chapter deals with the reorganization of the Ottoman judiciary system during the *Tanzimat*. Studying the so far neglected area of *naibship*, Jun Akiba shows us clearly that the shift from the *kadi* to his deputy, *naib*, means at the same time a replacement of the old system with a new one (44). This replacement brought about an extensive reorganization in institutional practice: regulations after the 1855 *Tanzimat* reforms, the establishment of *naibship* in 1864 by the Sublime Porte, and the creation of the *nizamiye* courts. As can easily be seen, the new system of *naibship* was a “by-product of the provincial reform” (54).

Economy and Taxation

In the next chapter, Yavuz Cezar studies the role of the *sarrafs* in Ottoman financial and economic life between the 1750s and 1850s. During this a century long period, they played a “crucial role to solve new problems caused by the monetization of economy” (61). Cezar tries to find out the influence those played in the financial life of the empire during the period under examination. The author designs two appendices: the first lists the names of the *sarrafs*; the second lists the persons who had been indebted by *sarrafs*. This second list shows us the share of *sarrafs*’ credits in the total debt of these persons. The article has some crucial conclusions: the majority of *sarrafs* were non-Muslims and they played a very important role in the social and financial life of the empire in the absence of a banking system, which also made them very rich. The centralization of the Ottoman financial system decreased the significance of this group.

In the following article, Nenad Močanin revises a generalization on the “per hane” basis of the poll-tax during the sixteenth century for the vast regions of Bosnia, Serbia and



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northwest Bulgaria. He derives from the documents that this tax was assessed per capita rather than per household (77). Throughout these pages, he tries to combine demographic data with the historical tax registers. The author concludes that a thorough investigation into marriage structures, mortality and birth-rates during the seventeenth century is needed to find out the degree of the overall decrease in the Balkan population in this period (88).

The third article of this chapter analyzes the practice of tax farming in Baghdad in the 1830s. Keiko Kiyotaki bases his study on the survey of tax farms in 1247/1831, which was registered “by the local office of finance in the treasury after the collapse of the quasi-independent military regime in Baghdad” (92). To continue with tax farming enabled the local government to access agricultural production. This source provides data for the researcher for classifying tax farmers and their place in local life. The author has visualized this kind of information with six tables (Table 1-6, pages 103-106).

The Development of Ottoman Towns

The third chapter considers five different towns from different regions and periods of Ottoman times: Adilcevaz, Çankırı, Kastamonu, Salihli and Damascus. On Adilcevaz, Tom Sinclair offers us a method of touching on continuities in order to be able to grasp the early Ottoman period of the town. After citing the situation of the city during the late Middle Ages, the author comes to the Ottoman period and tries to find an explanation for the difference between Evliya’s account about the population and the house number and the *tahrir defter* of 963/1556. Sinclair concludes that Adilcevaz was not a city primarily depending on urbanity, but was a farming city (118).

The following article in this chapter discusses the population and development of the Central Anatolian town, Çankırı, on the basis of two detailed *tahrir* registers, and an additional *muhassebe defteri* (summarised account register), which are dated 927/1521, 986/1578, and 937/1530 respectively. M. Mehdi İlhan has divided his article into the sub-titles education, quarters, population and economy. He incorporated also the Evliya’s account of the city in order to check the demographic data he found in the registers. The author gives us a table of population development in the city, which seems to be a slight increase of approximately seven percent from 1521 to 1578 (131). Since the author mentions in his conclusion that these “two registers are rich enough to at least gain an idea about the population of the town and its distribution among quarters, the social strata of the town and the sources of income for the town and its inhabitants” (136).

In the next article we move to another Central Anatolian town, Kastamonu. John J. Curry deals this time with the mystical life of the city, on the basis of the life of a Sufi, who was the fifth in a series of successors to the head the Şa’baniye tarikat in Kastamonu, Ömer el-Fu’adi (d. 1636). For 33 years, he had been the head of Şa’baniye order. His extraordinary character gave him a reputation of reviving the cult of his sheikh, Şa’ban Efendi. Thus, he created a literature to defend his order against anti-Sufism polemics. He cared about the refinement of the ideological stance of his follower by translating materials into a simple Turkish. The author ends up his article by assessing the value of his works to evaluate the provincial context of Ottoman cultural and political life (146).

The development of Salihli in the middle of the 19th century is the subject of the next article by Nejdett Bilgi, who analyzes the social and economic structures of the process from the village to a kaza up to the 1890s while utilizing two *temettuat defters* (records of profits) from 1844-5. This kind of analysis enables the author to reproduce twelve tables from the records to show readers communities, the cultivated lands, occupations etc.



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Last but not least, we shift to Damascus in order to see the urban fabric of this city in the middle of the nineteenth century on the basis of the tax register (*Rüsum Defteri*) of 1852. The author, Tomaki Okuwara, can reach a conclusion on the inapplicability of the Sauvaget's model on the "Islamic" quarter model. After his research, Okuwara is able to criticize the quarter model, due to the fact that "the public and commercial facilities were distributed along by the main streets and/or streets of secondary importance" (178). Okuwara also deduced the number and distribution of economic establishments from these tax registers (180-182).

Arab and Jewish Communities

The first article in this chapter is contributed by Michael Winter on the cultural ties between Istanbul and Ottoman Egypt. Throughout these pages, Winter tries to show "the important and obvious influences of the Ottoman system on Egypt in many spheres—the political, social, and economic" (200). He argues that Turkish and Ottoman versus Egyptian and Arabic constitute two distinct cultures in spite of the shared religion and civilization. He reached this conclusion by looking at the language, rulers' attitude towards Egyptian culture, *Ulama* and Qadis, Sufis in Egypt, and architecture.

Jane Hathaway looks for the targets of terms designating a group of people as *evlâd-i 'Arab/awlâd al-'Arab* (sons of the Arabs), terms employed by the Ottoman governor of Egypt in orders he issued to his officers in the middle of the seventeenth century expelling these "sons of Arabs". Hathaway looks for the identity of this group, studying the ethnic and geographic connotations lying behind this phrase. She consulted a number of chronicles which enabled her to see the association of this term with specific Arab provincial capitals and the constant contrast of *evlâd-i Arab* to Anatolian and Balkan populations (207). Hathaway clearly argues that historians' interpretation of these kinds of labels should consider the context of the times "in which they were invented and used, rather than anachronistically assigning modern nationalist meanings to them". The vagueness of the exact referent of the label *evlâd-i 'Arab* seems to continue, but it is obvious that "they were not simply Arabs" (214).

The next article by Caesar E. Farah deals with the Young Turks and their attitudes towards the Arabic press. Young Turks used strict restrictions against the oppositional and critical voices from the Arabian lands in the press. In light of the trial of the publishers of the newspapers *al-Muqtabas* and *al-Balagh*, the author shows how uninformed the Young Turks were about the newspapers. This was the reason for the alienation of Arabs after they came to rule, which "brought about a break with the Arab component of the movement" (237). Farah claims that if Young Ottomans would have succeeded in their reforms and modernization attempts, then Young Turks would not have succeeded those with their own program, leading to the rise of Arabs in revolt against them.

The second part of the fourth chapter goes on with three articles on Ottoman Jewry. Shaul Regev tries to examine Ottoman-Jewish scholarship in the sixteenth century. The author looks at the literature of this century which is filled with philosophical material, mostly referring to Aristotelian works, translations or commentaries. Even Kabbalistic scholars benefited from the philosophical treatises and methods at that time. Despite their academic importance, scholars found it difficult to employ these printed philosophical books due to financial reasons. Instead, books that were more relevant to religious life and to the study of the Torah were printed and then circulated through the libraries of intellectuals.

In the next article, Yaron Harel studies the significance of the archive of the Hakham Bashi in Istanbul for the history of Ottoman Jews. The office of Hakham Bashi gained more importance for the Jewish community of Istanbul in 1860 when he functioned as an



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intermediary between the Sublime Porte and Jewish communities. Recently found correspondence in the archive of the Hakham Bashi in Istanbul enables the historians of the Ottoman Jews to visualize “how these communities and their activities appeared to their own people” throughout some ten thousand pages of records (253). This archive covers many fields as the economy, daily life, administration, and religion. Harel tries to make this corpus of documents accessible in the framework of a project founded by the Israel Academy for Science and Humanities which consists of cataloguing, transcription or translation of some documents and their publication and indexing.

The third article of this sub-chapter tries to tell us of Jewish entrepreneurship in Salonica during the final decades of the Ottoman regime. Orly C. Meron analyzes the correlation between Jewish commercial activities and the growth of the city between the years of 1881 and 1912. The role they played as mediators between European industrialists and local Macedonian consumers in which they linked the interdependent regions was also a significant factor in their success. With the annexation of the province to the Greek national state, the Jewish entrepreneurs lost this privileged role leading them to “relinquish their unique role in the Salonican economy” (279).

As noted above, the second volume also consists of four chapters, all of which have some connection with Europe, or more accurately, with the world laying “outside its own borders of the Empire”.

Ottoman-European International Relations

In the first section of this chapter, Colin Imber analyzes Ottoman historian Peçevi’s narrative of the “Long War” with particular references to the “European military revolution” that occurred in the last three decades of the sixteenth century and its effectiveness against Ottoman armies, especially in the field. Although this alone is not sufficient to permit a clear conclusion on the issue, Imber claims that Peçevi’s account should be taken as evidence by historians.

Next to this article, Maria Pia Pedani shows us the Ottoman geo-political vision of the Mediterranean during the Cyprus War. As in the land battles, geo-political motives were omnipresent for the sea wars and sieges of islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, Pedani tries to analyze the political scene and geo-political claims of Ottomans during this particular period. The author indicates clearly how many different political factors, international actors, and local struggles intersected with each other in the decision for a war. The Cyprus war enabled Mehmed Paşa Sokollu to maintain his position as the most powerful servant of Sultan by losing a battle, but winning the war, and eliminating his enemies (32).

The third article is about the Ottoman views of Hungarian movements against the Habsburgs at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sándor Papp analyzes five movements from 1666 to 1738, all of which tried to make contacts with the Ottomans. The aim of these movements was not to acquire independence. Rather, they tried to choose the supremacy of a power which would guarantee for them more autonomy. Thus, Hungarians negotiated with the Ottomans, and in exchange for the guarantee of their autonomy and rights of nobility by the Ottoman Sultan, they paid a tribute called a “present”. Two of the five efforts were successful, and at the end of the negotiations, Hungarians had in their hands a complete draft of “ahdname” (46).



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Ottoman Manuscripts in Europe

The first article in this chapter examines Ottoman-Turkish documents in Sweden. Elżbieta Świącicka gives an overview of the archival materials in various libraries in Sweden (National Archives in Stockholm, Royal Library, Uppsala University Library, Swedish Military Archives). The author informs us not only about the content of the archives, but also gives us a broad picture of the development of Swedish-Ottoman relationships, of the influence of diplomatic exchange on the collections, and of the catalogues pertaining to the documents.

Alexander Fotić contributes to the knowledge of non-Ottoman documents circulating in the Ottoman Empire between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. His corpus consists of medieval charters used in the Kadi courts. He takes some examples from the Archive of the Hilandar Monastery (Mount Athos). Fotić asks the crucial question while studying these documents: “why were they written in the languages of local Christians, especially when one of the parties involved was a Muslim?” (64). Either the *omologias*, (term for *temessük* or *tezkiye* in Cyrillic languages) or medieval charters used in the Ottoman shari’a courts did have legal force. The author suggests that the study of non-Muslim peoples in the Ottoman Empire considering such rare and unconventional sources may raise “new and exciting questions” (72).

The next article by Jan Schmidt investigates Johannes Heyman’s manuscript collection in the library of Leiden University. After an overview of the rise of Orientalism in the Netherlands from the late sixteenth century onwards, Schmidt tells of the career and achievements of Heyman (1667-1737), who was a professor of Oriental languages in Leiden between 1710 and 1737. He collected many interesting manuscripts and documents among which interesting items such as some collection of original Arabic and Turkish letters, and a collection of copies of *fermans* are to be found. Heyman seems to be the first Dutch orientalist, “who was primarily interested in the contemporary Ottoman world, in the historical relations between the Dutch republic and the Ottoman Empire...” (77). Thus, the manuscripts and Oriental collections he left behind are important to tracing the development of the Dutch interest in the Ottoman world.

The last article of this chapter is a contribution by Engin Berber on an unusual type of sources for obtaining information about the Ottoman city of Izmir: calendars (*imerologion*) and guidebooks (*odigos*) in the Greek language which had simultaneously been published with Ottoman yearbooks. Berber ordered these yearbooks under three classifications: those that were printed within the Kingdom of Greece, outside the Ottoman Empire, and those printed within the Empire in the Greek language. As Berber declares in his conclusion, using those yearbooks—which contain all kinds of information from history to geography, literature to archaeology, demography to folklore and natural disasters—may contribute to our knowledge of the “Ottoman universe” (100). The author also gives a list of the yearbooks under three categories in the form of three tables at the end.

Ottoman-European Cultural Exchange

In her article leading off this chapter, Hedda Reindl-Kiel analyzes the meaning of diplomatic gifts during the encounters of East and West. In the gift exchange between courts, the impact of the cultural codes of each side is extremely important. Therefore, whether the gifts were recognized by each side sufficiently seems to be a vague area, which also makes Reindl-Kiel conclude that in every meeting of East and West, there is a third guest present: cultural misunderstanding.



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In the next article Sonja Brentjes examines mapmaking in Ottoman Istanbul between 1650 and 1750. She tries to define whether mapmaking was a domain of painters, calligraphers or cartographers. Stemming from her research project on the exchange of geographical and astronomical knowledge across the Mediterranean Sea, Brentjes is interested in the manuscripts and maps of Hajji Khalifa and Abu Bakr al-Dimashqi. Apart from the third important question on the style, content, and background of the translation and reproduction of maps by these two Ottoman scholars, she tries to trace an extra line of inquiry: “who was involved in producing and copying maps?” (126). She could figure out how the approaches of both authors deviated from each other while translating original names, picturing the world, etc. Also, Brentjes identified two different workshops in which maps were produced. The difference in their art of map production stems from their attitudes towards the relationship between maps and texts. This article clarifies the complexities of the translation and reproduction of maps.

Adnan Şişman’s contribution to this chapter explains about the Egyptian and Armenian Schools in Paris in which Ottoman students studied. Apart from the French schools in Paris, this article tells us the story of the Saint-Samuel Moorat College of Armenians, and of the students studying there. The support of the Ottoman government in the establishment of this school indicates the “impartiality and equality of the government towards non-Muslim subjects” (162).

In her article, Svetlana Kirillina examines a rare phenomenon: Arab scholars in Russian universities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Starting with the eighteenth century, Russian people began to construct the first steps toward the study of the languages, history and religion of the Arab world. As a result of this endeavour, shaykh Muhammad Ayyad al-Tantawi (1810-61) was appointed as a professor at St. Petersburg University in 1847. His fame among the Europeans in Cairo made him a good candidate for the vacant position to instruct in the Arabic language at the Institute of Oriental languages. His success there opened the way for other Arabs into Russian universities. It has been possible to recover the experiences of “Russian Arabs” in Moscow, Kazan, St. Petersburg and Kiev and to identify the different mentality, research techniques, and different schools of creative thought each represented. They contributed not only to teaching in major Russian institutions, but also they increased the amount of Arabic manuscripts and rare books which were indispensable for Oriental studies.

In the last article of this chapter, Netice Yıldız studies wakf monuments and artefacts in Ottoman Cyprus which had been established in the early period of Ottoman regime in light of several documents such as *Mühimme Defterleri*, *Vakıf Defterleri* and *Şeriye Sicilleri*. Yıldız blames the British Period for the loss of the wakfs due to the bad administration of them. Nowadays, the wakf land in the southern part of the island is one of the biggest issues in peace negotiations. The pictures enable us to see the monuments of which she is telling us.

Christian Influence and the Advent of the Europeans

The first article in this last chapter by Elias Kolovos underlines how the Athonite Monasteries negotiated with the Ottoman administration for state protection in order to secure their assets and their share in production. Their attempt to reach better conditions of survival made them active subjects in Ottoman society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The next article deals with the construction of Armenian churches in provinces up to 1860. Muammer Demirel focuses on the reign of Mahmud II in which the prohibition against the construction of new churches was loosened. This process reached its peak with the Islahat



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Fermanı in 1856, after which non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire began to construct temples quickly. The churchbooks are very good sources to follow the developments regarding churches since 1869, of which ten pieces are available. Three tables in the article clearly indicate the construction activities among non-Muslims both at the center and in provinces in the nineteenth century.

Peter Mentzel then examines work hazards on Ottoman railways. He looks at two railway companies and their activities in order to scrutinize the hazards on railways. Apart from the daily railway accidents, workers faced threats from terrorists and saboteurs. In response to those accidents and attacks, railway workers asked for better working conditions in terms of safety and general working environment. Mentzel tries to give some anecdotes in order to present a general picture available to readers. Another significant aspect of all the occurrences on railways seems to be that the workers created among themselves a sense of solidarity disregarding their different ethnic origins and national antagonisms.

The last article of volume two is written by Bülent Özdemir. He tells about the consul at Salonica in the 1840s. He argues that consular reports are primary sources to explain the Ottoman cities. Özdemir consulted these reports not only as important sources for diplomatic and political history, but also as a rich source for social history, cross-checking those reports with other contemporary sources. This article is a part of his broad project of writing a collective biography of British consuls “who served in the Ottoman cities during the nineteenth century” (241). Özdemir argues that the subjectivity of the consuls made them always “strange” to the society about which they tried to write reports. This subjectivity led to the idiosyncratic selection of historical materials as in most personal accounts.

These volumes contain a broad range of topics and methodologies for the study of the Ottoman past. As Rhoads Murphey mentions in his introductory article at the beginning of the second volume, which, I think, is valid for both volumes, this collection “...opens our eyes to the richness and diversity both of the modern interpretive communities encompassed by the Ottoman Studies in its current academic context, but also of the richness and diversity of the cultural, political and aesthetic world inhabited by the Ottomans themselves.” I hope that these two volumes will enhance the frontiers of Ottoman studies by bringing forward new source materials and methodologies as proposed by a number of contributors in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies*.



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