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# THE OTTOMANS AND EUROPE

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In the summer of 1992, delegations from various cities were bidding for the right to host the Olympic games of the year 2000. The Turkish delegation, bidding for Istanbul, was astounded to hear their Central Asian cousins defend the case of Samarkand as the capital of Timur ("Tamerlane," 1336-1405), who "saved Europe from the Turkish menace" and made the Renaissance possible. So powerful has the European world hegemony rendered western public opinion, and so normative western historical expertise, that such references are by now common. In reality, of course, Timur had no such thing in mind, for when he invaded western Asia in 1402, he aimed only to punish the upstart House of Osman.

## 1. FOUNDATIONS OF THE OTTOMAN POWER

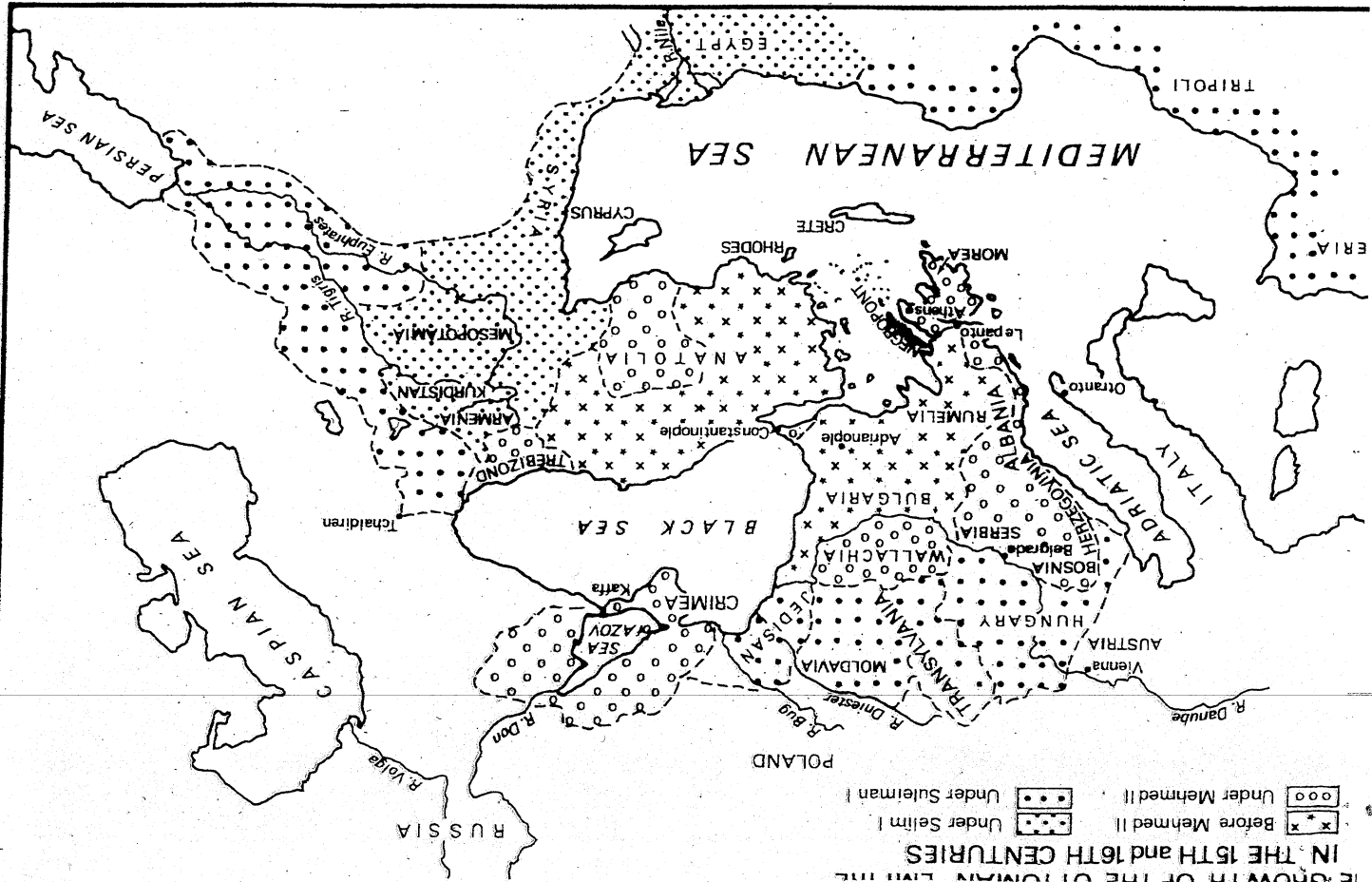
The first large wave of Turkish tribesmen entered Anatolia while Byzantine defenses were crumbling after the Battle of Manzikert (1071). The *modus vivendi*, which subsequently arose between the (Seljuk) Turkish state and the Byzantine empire, was shattered after the 1220s, when Asian conquests of Chingis (1167-1227) sent a second wave of migrants westward into Anatolia. Most accounts of the House of Osman—none date before the fifteenth century—scribe his ancestors' arrival in Anatolia to this wave. Chingisid armies followed, smashing the Seljuks in 1243 and turning western Anatolia into a political wilderness populated by chieftains who dreamed of becoming state-builders. The frontier ethos, as in contemporary Iberia, combined a drive for booty and personal glory with the championship of the faith, whose agents the Muslim Anatolians called "raiders for the faith" (*gazis*). Successful *gazis* attracted not only others of their own kind, but also disenfranchised or dislocated Byzantines and scholar-bureaucrats from the former Seljuk provincial centers or the Islamic hinterland—all of whom helped to construct new institutions of governance.

The political enterprise of Osman (d. 1324), the eponymous founder of

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RECONSTRUCTION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE 15TH and 16TH CENTURIES

- Under Selim I
- Under Mehmed II
- △ Under Süleiman I

the Ottoman dynasty, was one (relatively minor) among a pack of such *gazi* emirates (from "emir," prince or commander). He first appears in a Byzantine chronicle of 1301, and his principality, though less glamorous than those of some other *gazis*, sat auspiciously right next to Byzantine Bithynia (south of the Sea of Marmara) with its neglected defenses. As early as 1337, Osman's son transplanted *gazis* across the Sea of Marmara into southeastern Europe, and the narrow Thracian peninsula became the Ottoman gateway into the Balkans. Having gained a permanent foothold at Gelibolu (Gallipoli) in 1354, after an earthquake destroyed its Byzantine fortress, the Ottomans expanded across the Straits by means of political manipulation, raids, concessions, religious propaganda, and rigid centralization. The Serbian kingdom was reduced to vassalage after the Battle of Kosovo (1389), the Bulgarian one eliminated by 1394. By 1400 Ottoman power had established itself among the Slavic and Latin powers in southeastern Europe, the Turco-Muslim principalities in Asia Minor, and a much-diminished Byzantine empire still holding the region's natural center, Constantinople. By 1396, when Sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402), called "the Lightning," crushed a Christian crusading army at Nicopolis, his lofty titles and style of life signalled that the Ottoman ruler was no longer *primus inter pares* among the raider lords.<sup>1</sup>

At this point, Timur issued a new challenge from the east. Claiming suzerainty as a son-in-law to the Ilkhanid branch of the Chingisids, he invaded Anatolia in 1402. Bayezid, who fancied himself transformer of the Ottoman emirate into an empire,<sup>2</sup> ignored Timur's warning and paid for this folly in the Battle of Ankara (20 July).

## 2. OTTOMAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

When Timur, having shattered the work of four Ottoman generations, turned back eastward, the Ottoman lands fell into a fierce internecine struggle among three brothers. Süleyman (d. 1411), the eldest, ruled from Edirne (Adrianople) and initially looked to be the strongest, but his haughty sultanic style and his concessions to Christian neighbors alienated a good number of his veteran *gazi* commanders.<sup>3</sup> Such reactions nonetheless cannot be understood in the simplistic dichotomies—so beloved of modern scholars—of Turks vs. Greeks or Muslims vs. Christians. "In Gallipoli," runs one report, "we also learned that many Turks dwelt along Negroponte and did not wish to give up any of their land, and the Greeks there supported them."<sup>4</sup> Süleyman retained the upper hand so long as he

remained in sole command of Rumelia, where the *gazis* had no alternative to his rule, but eventually his brother, Prince Mehmed, emerged from this confused time—the “Ottoman Interregnum” (1402-1413)—to rule over the entire Ottoman holdings.

Mehmed I (r. 1413-21) faced two major challenges in Europe, one from another brother, Mustafa, the other from Bedreddin, a religious mystic whose message of a proto-communist utopia crossed religious boundaries and fired an unsuccessful rebellion in western Anatolia. The movement of this *shaykh*, the son of a *gazi* and a Greek fortress commander's daughter from Thrace, was both the last gasp of the hybrid frontier society and the final test of the Ottomans' resolve to establish an orderly state and religious orthodoxy.

The small Christian powers of the region proved tougher, though by 1400 most had been reduced to vassals of the Ottomans, Hungary, or Venice. Only Mircea of Wallachia held out, but in 1417 Mehmed captured parts of southern Albania, including Valona, the first Ottoman outlet to the Adriatic, and the next year reduced Prince Mircea to a tributary vassal. Toward the large Christian powers, Byzantium and Venice, Mehmed acted cautiously, for his brother and rival, Mustafa, was a hostage in Byzantine hands, and the Venetian navy threatened the Dardanelles. The holding hostage (or “hosting”) of Ottoman princes by rival powers exploited a major fault line in Turkish political life, the legitimate right of all princes to compete for the throne. Byzantine and Venetian statesmen routinely encouraged bids by various Ottoman princes—not all hostages and not all authentic—which was sometimes a highly effective way to keep Ottoman aggression at bay. In this case, when the Byzantines released Mustafa, Murad II (r. 1421-51), Mehmed's son, beat him with the aid of the Genoese governor of New Phokaia, who ferried Ottoman troops across the Dardanelles in pursuit of Mustafa, and then brought the unruly *gazi* warlords to heel. Turning to the Venetians, Murad annexed all the Aegean principalities in 1424-25 and took Thessaloniki from its Venetian garrison in 1430, after an eight-year siege. Other threats—from Hungary and from Shahrukh—Timur's son, at Samarkand, failed to materialize.

Ottoman success in the Balkans during the 1430s depended partly on a harmonious relationship between state policy and the border raiders, a spontaneous but unpredictable force in a world ordered by treaties and borders.<sup>5</sup> The tireless *gazis* were nevertheless extremely useful, as they gnawed away at the resistance of frontier populations awaiting Ottoman conquest. Ultimately, of course, the state would transform most of them into cogs in the Ottoman prebendal system.

Having conquered Albania in the 1430s, and after a Hungarian peasant revolt in 1437, Murad launched a devastating expedition into Transylvania in 1438. His successes against Hungary put great pressure on the buffer states, Wallachia and especially Serbia, which lost ground even though its *despot* had only a few years earlier renewed his ties of vassalage and given his daughter in marriage to Murad. In 1441 came the turn of southern Serbia, as the sultan's forces captured Novo Brdo and its silver mines.

These years saw the assembly of the last serious crusading alliance, for the union of the Greek and Roman churches at the Council of Florence in 1439 and the end of a civil war in Hungary in 1442 produced a new situation in southern and central Europe. Several Christian powers now seemed willing to do more than pay lip service to the idea of pushing the Ottomans out of the Balkans. The Hungarians were to provide the main army of invasion, joined by the Serbian forces, while Venice and Burgundy undertook to close the Straits between Asia and Europe, and an alliance was also sought with the last major Turkish rival of the Ottomans in Anatolia, the Karaman principality. The advocates of crusade in these years had good reason to be skeptical of Ottoman invincibility. The Ottoman invasions of Hungary in 1441 and 1442 were cleverly thwarted by János Hunyádi, a Hungarian commander who apparently understood Ottoman military weaknesses. In Albania, too, the Ottoman power began to recede before the attacks of Scanderbeg.

Scanderbeg's story illustrates the complexities of Ottoman family politics. The Ottomans, like other rulers of the time, recognized that dynastic politics implied the strategizing of family relationships; while they conceived of hierarchies of power in the imagery of father/son/brother, they also cemented dynastic ties by means of arranged marriages. It was also common practice to “host”—i.e., hold hostage—the children of vassal nobilities in the court of their patron, so that the fifteenth-century Ottoman court hosted a number of princes and little lords from neighboring polities. Such children, if from Christian vassal families, were maintained in a Christian enclave at court. Such were the four sons of Carlo Tocco I, *despot* in the Epirus (r. 1417-30) and the two sons of Vlad Drakul, ruler of Wallachia (r. 1436-46). One of the latter, who became the famous Vlad the Impaler (known to later vampire lore as Dracula), spent many years in Murad II's palace. Nor were the princesses who married Ottoman princes necessarily expected to convert to Islam. Local nobilities, however, whose territories were earmarked for annexation and redistribution within the Ottoman system, were apparently expected or at least encouraged to convert to Islam. Some of these, too, had their children raised in the palace.

George Kastriotë, son of the Albanian lord John Kastriotë, came to the Ottoman court following such an arrangement. Converted to Islam and given the name Iskender, he graduated from palace training and received a prebend in his native Albania. Called Iskender Beg (his Muslim name and Ottoman title, hence "Scanderbeg"), he took up arms against the sultan, reverted to Christianity, and defended his mountainous land for decades against several Ottoman attempts to quash him. Although Scanderbeg presented a stirring image as a "champion of Christendom," his real territorial challenge to the Ottomans was slight.

The same could not be said of János Hunyádi, who, following on his defensive successes, led a major strike into Ottoman territory in 1443. He attacked in the fall, when the normal campaigning season was over for the sultan's army, especially the prebendal cavalry—by far the larger component in the Ottoman armies—which returned to supervise their *timars*. The Hungarian-Serbian expedition of fall 1443 was able to penetrate deep into the southern Balkans and was turned back only with great difficulty and loss on the Ottoman side. The sultan's most important military force turned out to be his standing ("Janissary") army of infantry and artillery, whose star was now beginning to rise. Hunyádi's exploits were celebrated across Europe. Yet, though he had indeed exposed the Ottomans' vulnerability and handed them some embarrassing losses, Murad had met his challenge.

Murad's military exploits notwithstanding, contemporaries described him as a man of peaceful disposition, which may be why in 1444, the year after his truce with King Ladislaus/Vladislaw of Hungary, he abdicated in favor of his twelve-year-old son, Mehmed. This act tempted Ladislaus to begin land operations in cooperation with the blockading fleet organized by Venice and the duke of Burgundy. The hindsight of later Balkan history suggests that this successful crusade of the 1440s was based not on fantasy but on real weaknesses—as perceived by both sides—of the Ottoman power. When, for example, news came in the fall that the Hungarians had once again crossed the Danube, trenches were dug as far south as Edirne. Murad, recalled from retirement, forced a passage of the blockaded Straits and defeated Ladislaus in the Battle of Varna (10 November 1444). Murad returned to his withdrawal but could not remain for long. Grand Vezir Chandarli (d. 1453) exploited a Janissary revolt to engineer Murad's return to power in 1446. The vezir's gamble paid off when Murad defeated another Hungarian army under János Hunyádi at Kosovo in 1448 (17 October). When the nineteen-year-old Mehmed returned to the throne, he began to plan an all-out assault on Constantinople.

### 3. MEHMED THE CONQUEROR AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE OTTOMAN STATE

The "imperial project" of Mehmed II (r. 1451-81) became the turning point in the Ottoman polity's evolution from principality to empire. Its hinge was the conquest of the Byzantine capital, an extremely prestigious feat which capped centuries of frontier warfare and fulfilled a venerable dream. The venture was facilitated by the withdrawal of the Timurids from Middle Eastern politics after the death of Shahrukh, Timur's son, in 1446. By the end of Mehmed's long reign, the Ottoman relationship to the House of Chingis was reversed, as the Chingisid khans of Crimea acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty.

#### *The Conquests of Mehmed II*

After the fall of Constantinople (1453), Mehmed absorbed all the powers he considered no more than reminders of Byzantine weakness: the Muslim emirates of western Anatolia, Slavic and Albanian powers in the Balkans, the Genoese and Venetian lands and the Latin legacies of the Fourth Crusade, the Greek offshoots of Byzantium, and the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities. Mehmed, who called himself "the ruler of the two seas and two continents," set out to create a seamless domain. Calling himself "Caesar," he imagined his empire to be a Byzantium restored. He took the Genoese holdings in the Aegean during the 1450s, the duchy of Athens, a remnant of the Fourth Crusade, from the Florentine House of Acciaiuoli in 1455, and the Genoese slave-trading towns Kaffa (Feodosiya) and Tana (Azov) on the Black Sea in 1475. The khans of the Crimea became Ottoman vassals, and the Peloponnese despots of the Palaeologue family lost their lands in 1458-60. The story of the two Palaeologue brothers encapsulates the desperate politics of late Byzantium, caught between the Turks and the Latins. When their lands were lost, Thomas took refuge with the pope, while Demetrios received the islands of Limni and Imbros from his son-in-law, Sultan Mehmed. Trabzon (Trebizond), the imperial seat of the Comneni dynasty since 1204, was captured in 1461.

In the Balkans, too, Mehmed moved the Ottoman power forward. The Serbian and the Bosnian kingdoms were overrun in 1457 and 1463 respectively. The local ruling family in Montenegro was coopted, though with a large degree of autonomy, as were many Albanian lords, whose rugged terrain was permanently incorporated into the sultan's realm after Scanderbeg's death in 1469. After the elimination of Vlad Drakul, Wallachia was more or less subdued, and though Moldavia held out longer, Mehmed reduced both principalities to tributary status.

Mehmed II's toughest opponent was Venice, against which he waged war from 1463 to 1479 in the Aegean and the Peloponnese, where the Most Serene Republic held several towns and forts. Venetian fleets also raided the Anatolian coasts, hoping to link up with eastern rivals to the Ottomans, such as the Karamanids, and, when they were reduced to Ottoman subjection, the Akkoyunlu (the White Sheep). But Mehmed defeated the Akkoyunlu in 1473, and in 1479 he forced Venice to make peace.

When in 1480 Mehmed's westward gaze extended beyond the Venetians' empire, his chief target was not Naples, whose king had backed Venice and Hungary against him, but Rome. The Ottomans were well aware of the papacy's central role and the emotive force of its rhetoric of Christian unity. The more so as the Ottomans, who employed a similar, Islamic, rhetoric of universal community, recognized the political potential of such ideas. Thus, the "Red Apple," the heart of Christendom which was an emotionally charged symbol enshrined in Ottoman military lore, was not a fixed target but a movable goal of Ottoman policy. Constantinople seems to have been the "Red Apple" until 1453, and, indeed, in the Byzantine capital there was a gilded orb held by a huge bronze statue, which was widely held to be a symbol of Roman-Christian world dominion, and which was one inspiration for the Ottoman counter-myths. Once Constantinople lay in Ottoman hands, and this great statue was cast into cannon, Rome became the "Red Apple," at least for a while.<sup>7</sup>

Mehmed's western venture stalled, as the Ottoman landing at Otranto in southern Italy in 1480 remained episodic, and the Knights of St. John repelled him from Rhodes in the same year. Mehmed, justly called "the Conqueror," died while on a mysterious campaign in the following year.

With the fall of Constantinople and the medieval principalities in Anatolia and the Balkans, Ottoman unitary rule was established in a region which for centuries had been fragmented. Something similar was concluded by the fall of Granada to Spain in 1492, so that by 1500 the long struggles for regional hegemony by powers, which claimed to represent respectively Islam and Christianity, concluded at both ends of the Mediterranean basin. During the following century, true, these two powers competed for what they regarded as world hegemony. That was "a time," wrote Leopold von Ranke, "when the power, and, in a great measure, the civilization of Europe, seemed to have their chief seat in the South; a time when the Ottoman empire and the Spanish monarchy had grown up, face to face, to an overtopping greatness, dangerous to neighboring and remote nations."<sup>8</sup>

### *Mehmed II and the Ottoman State*

Not only a conqueror, Mehmed II also built a central administrative apparatus and invented an imperial style of rule. His "imperial project" doubtless completed Ottoman political development by means of a ruthless authoritarianism and unclouded vision, which bridled the tensions between the warlords and the bureaucrats that had bedeviled earlier efforts. The sultan's solution to this old problem was to create a new kind of elite to support a new kind of ruler. The frontier lords, for their part, understood that although Mehmed's aggressive militarism provided opportunities, his conquests also consolidated bureaucratic practices that undermined their way of life. A chronicler, sympathetic to the *gazis*, reports that they were not eager to attack Belgrade in 1456, since they "would have to take up farming if Belgrade were taken."<sup>9</sup> They also resented making Constantinople the capital, or at least the kind of capital Mehmed had in mind, for, as a collection of frontier lore from around 1470 reports, the warlords wanted "the keys to Istanbul" kept at Edirne, "home of the warriors of the faith."<sup>10</sup>

Against *gazi* traditionalism, Mehmed preferred a "Byzantine" style of government centered on the person of the emperor and based on the outright social [and economic] dominance of Constantinople over all other cities."<sup>11</sup> His vision emerged as a bricolage derived from a diverse heritage—Byzantine, Perso-Islamic, and Turco-Mongol—plus innovations drawn from fifteenth-century Mediterranean currents. Its central embodiment, a huge complex of buildings symmetrically organized around a mosque, announced the sultans' enhanced claims within the Islamic world by its unprecedented monumentality and its location on an important Byzantine site. Mehmed's Istanbul could also boast of a significant innovation in post-medieval fortification architecture, the first star-shaped fortress.<sup>12</sup>

In his design of a palace Mehmed's conception of imperial rule came fully to life. Three kiosks adorned the royal garden, each in the style of one of the traditions the Ottomans honored—Timurid-Persianate, Byzantine, and Ottoman—and there were Italianate elements as well. The palace defined not just an architectural style, but a new style of rule, for it emphasized the sultan's seclusion from all public functions except for a few carefully choreographed and ritualized appearances. Gone forever was the open court of a *gazi* chief.

The new bureaucratic Ottoman administration, for which Mehmed II laid the groundwork, came to maturity after 1550 under what historians have conventionally regarded as "weak sultans." Its cornerstone, legal codification, produced the first known written codes outside divine law in

Islamic history. There were, in fact, two codes, one to regulate fiscal-administrative practices throughout the empire, the other to regulate the court and the career paths of the ruling elite. The latter reveals Mehmed's vision in a singularly important way, for it offers a blueprint of the kind of ruling apparatus he had in mind. The code defines the terms of the sultan's seclusion, for in a government "centered on the person of the emperor," the very fact of codification made possible an impersonal system in which the royal personage could be an icon. Many of the "weak" sultans after Süleyman have been seen in just this light.

#### 4. SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF CLASSICAL OTTOMAN CIVILIZATION

The mature empire's administrative heart, Constantinople/Istanbul, was also to be its cultural and commercial center. Soon after the conquest Mehmed set out to rebuild and repopulate the city, which had for years lain in some decay.<sup>13</sup> Rent-free property grants to the soldiers and dervish-mentors of the conquering army were rescinded, since this was not meant to be a city of the poor and of renters, and forced colonization brought in more desirable merchants and gifted artisans. Muslim and non-Muslim, many came from newly conquered territories (e.g., Karaman, Kaffa, Levkas), while the exiled and fugitive Greek population of the Byzantine city was pardoned and invited to resettle. Resentment of forced settlement notwithstanding, within a few decades Istanbul became a thriving metropolis. When Mehmed's court and the administrative elite settled in Istanbul as the permanent seat of government toward the end of his reign, the enormous scale of their consumption was bound to lure additional mercantile and artisanal communities. Many of the Iberian Jews, for example, chose to settle there after their expulsion from the Iberian kingdoms.

The city of Pera, across a narrow inlet from Constantinople, had been untouched by the conquest, since Mehmed had no desire to disrupt the brisk international trade of this famed commercial center and its European colonies, headed by the Genoese. The foreign communities' trading privileges under the Byzantines had been periodically renewed through charters, known as "capitulations," a policy which Mehmed continued. Relations with Venice, too, which had been briefly ruptured during the demise of the Byzantine empire, were restored by Mehmed's treaty with the Republic in 1454.

Meanwhile, as trade revived and grew, the typical elements of classical

Ottoman urban life were taking shape in the capital. One was the "charitable endowment" (*waqf*), an institution typical of Islamic urban life, though it also had Byzantine precedents. Mehmed II not only built his own imposing *waqf* complex, he apparently also encouraged his grantees to do the same. These acts set the model of charitable practice, and by 1546, Istanbul had 2,515 such institutions, which performed a whole range of educational, medical, charitable, and religious functions. The practice also spread to other cities.

Mehmed's reign laid the foundations of a new and stable urbanism. The lands now under Ottoman power possessed, of course, long traditions of urban life, and the Ottomans, by politically integrating a region long unstable, made possible a new flourishing of its cities, and not only of Istanbul. This *pax ottomana* promoted a relatively integrated regional economy which basically followed a "free trade" policy in the international sphere. Until the middle of the sixteenth century, when population growth began to have an impact, even the export of grain to Christian Europe—which the state by Islamic law had the right to prohibit—was often allowed, though some other exports—military equipment and horses—were forbidden.

The Ottoman economy developed as a mixture of free and command elements, both of which were shaped primarily by political considerations. In general, international and transit commerce were left free, while internal trade and production were regulated. The victualling of Istanbul became a central concern of the regime, which carefully regulated the supply routes to and the sale of certain goods in the capital. To regulate prices and raw materials, the state worked increasingly through a guild system that drew on the medieval Islamic heritage of urban associations. Through these traditionally autonomous *futuwwa* or *akhi* brotherhoods, together, perhaps, with elements of Byzantine corporate tradition, the practitioners of specific crafts and trades were organized into strictly professional, sometimes multiconfessional, guilds, which gradually lost much of their earlier autonomy.

The extent of state control must nonetheless not be exaggerated. Outside the capital the guilds continued to enjoy a good deal of freedom, notably in the selection of their officials, and the state courts often simply verified and ordered enforcement of guild custom to settle disputes. Prices and disputes regarding market regulations were settled by negotiations among the state, representatives of guilds, and "people of expertise" among the townsmen. The system functioned adequately until the late sixteenth century, when the Ottoman state could not maintain the stability of its coinage.

Although nomadic and pastoralist in origin, the Ottoman dynasty had come to rule an overwhelmingly sedentary and agricultural empire. Nomadism was increasingly circumscribed both directly, through forced settlements, and indirectly, by fiscal and social policies that encouraged settlement. The basic principle of the Ottoman land regime, except in tributary provinces such as Moldavia and Transylvania, was to keep as much arable land under the control of the public treasury as possible and to protect the exploitation of those lands by peasant families subject to taxation.<sup>14</sup> State ownership was not absolute but predominant, especially in the countryside, though even here the amount of privately owned arable was considerable—about 13% in 1528 and increasing thereafter.

The basic bureaucratic instrument for rationalizing the redistributive process was the cadastral survey. Surveys were normally conducted shortly after conquest, though in the fifteenth century they were undertaken for previously conquered, unsurveyed lands, and thereafter every 25 to 30 years until the end of the sixteenth century. They were discontinued in the seventeenth century, when the Ottoman fisc changed its methods. Once freehold and endowed lands were certified, and tax exemptions noted for those providing a variety of public or state services, revenues owed from state-owned lands were assessed, settlement by settlement, through negotiations that involved local officials, clergy, and peasants. Once assessed, the revenues were apportioned between members of the military-administrative class and the public (i.e., royal) treasury. Ledgers (*defter*) containing the information produced by these surveys were recognized as such an important instrument of the centralized power structure that a law forbade taking the imperial ("Janissary") army and the imperial *defters* on campaign, unless the sultan were personally present.<sup>15</sup>

The fundamental Ottoman unit of taxation was a peasant household (*chift-hane*), conventionally an adult male, his family, and a pair of oxen. To the *defters* were added lawcodes, which stipulated the categories, rates, and procedures of taxation and adjusted them to different regions, since the Ottoman fiscal arrangements partly continued pre-conquest local usages.<sup>16</sup> So long as the peasants paid their taxes, they were entitled to remain on their lands and pass them on to their descendants. If they left the land, they could be brought back by force, unless they agreed to pay a certain penalty, or unless they eluded the authorities for a number of years, normally fifteen.

## 5. OTTOMAN ELITES IN THE CLASSICAL AGE, 1400-1600

### *Provincial Elites: Timars and Timar-holders*

The Ottoman elites mediated between this tax-base and the state. During the classic age the preferred mode of exploitation was the *timar* system, which had clear affinities to both the Islamic *iqta* and the Byzantine *pronoia*. The *timar*-holder was assigned revenues from an area defined as his *timar*, in return for which he was expected to join the sultan's army when called, together with proper equipment and retainers in numbers depending on the *timar*'s size. There was a hierarchy of *timar*-holders, but no subinfeudation.

As an exchange of rights over territory for military service, the *timar* system has obvious similarities to medieval European feudalism. In fact, historians quite commonly wrote of "Ottoman feudalism" until the 1930s, when many Ottomans began to emphasize the unique characteristics of the Ottoman land regime. The differences were truly significant: *timars* were not heritable; state ownership remained dominant; the peasantry was free; there was no subinfeudation; and the *timar*-holder, however high his position, lacked judicial power and full administrative autonomy. While some Marxist historians, especially of the formerly socialist Balkan and eastern European countries, continued to speak of an Ottoman "feudal mode of production," albeit of a lesser kind than in western Europe, during the 1960s and 1970s others preferred to see in the Ottoman empire an example of the Asian mode of production. In the main, however, historians continued to employ a political-judicial definition of feudalism but to shun the term itself.<sup>17</sup> In any case, the concentration of power in the hands of the central state—often associated with absolutism in Europe—was too strong in the Ottoman empire for the political definition of feudalism to be very useful.

The assignment of *timars* to Christians, not unusual in the fifteenth century, must have been one means to secure the cooperation of non-Muslim elites. The cadastral surveys of that era reveal Christian cavalrymen (*sipahis*), often ten and twenty percent of all *sipahis*—in several parts of the Balkans (and even in some parts of Anatolia).<sup>18</sup> While many Christians were evidently local aristocrats at the time of the conquests, others, probably of commoner backgrounds, were identified as retainers of this or that Ottoman commander. *Timar* revenues were also assigned to clergy or monasteries, possibly because of deals struck with them for their recognition of Ottoman rule. Various other Christian groups in southeastern Europe were expected to provide services to the state, such as auxiliary func-



kan Christians (plus Bosnian converts to Islam who volunteered), though in later decades the Anatolian countryside was also combed for boys.<sup>21</sup>

While many of the *kuls* were of humble backgrounds, others came from the subtitled aristocracies. Two of Mehmed's vezirs were of the Palaeologue family, and his longest-serving grand vezir, Mahmud Pasha (d. 1474), who acquired a saintly reputation among the Muslim subjects, was of the Serbian family of Angelovitch and also related to the Byzantine imperial family. During the sixteenth century, after the conquered aristocracies had been absorbed, such noble-born *kuls* became a rarity, and the Ottoman system itself did not perpetuate noble lineages qua nobles. Even so, the system occasionally contained enslaved Christian nobles, such as Cigala-zade Sinan Pasha (ca. 1545-1605), who as Scipione Cicala was born the son of a Genoese vicount.<sup>22</sup>

Nor was the uprooting of *devshirme* recruits from their families and native lands necessarily as total as it is often made out to have been. Most recruits were already teenagers when they were made into Ottomans, and although they became at least nominal Muslims and learned Turkish, their earlier memories and identities were not erased. Many are known to have kept, or re-established, relations with their original habitats. Some officials of *devshirme* background, for instance, undertook to construct public buildings in their hometowns, and others suggested the names of brothers and cousins for recruitment. This fostered cliques among the elites, though much more important was ethnic solidarity among, say, Albanians, Bosnians, Serbs, or (somewhat later) Circassians, and Georgians. Even some of the slaves whose homelands lay beyond Ottoman rule found ways, licit and illicit, to communicate with their kin and compatriots, as the numerous letters in Venetian and Genoese archives document.

Close ties to members of one's nuclear family outside the *kul* system were also not impossible. A powerful grand vezir of the early sixteenth century, for instance, Ibrahim Pasha (grand vezir, 1523-36) convinced his father to convert and secured him a large prebend, while he brought his mother, who kept her faith, to Istanbul and found her a residence convenient to the palace. Another grand vezir's brother became an archbishop in Montenegro, who had himself and his brother, the Ottoman grand vezir, depicted on stained glass windows in a church he had built. Naturally, more is known about the lives of those who rose to the top, but some of the lesser *kuls* are also known to have remained in touch with family and patrimony. A document from 1521 urges the *kadi* of Zichna (now in Greece) to make sure that local officials do not interfere with a piece of property inherited and jointly possessed by a Janissary (then a rank-and-file soldier in

Istanbul) and his brother who went back and forth between the estate and the capital city.<sup>23</sup>

These qualifications aside, the combination of Ottoman recruitment, training, and rewards and punishments created a large pool of individuals whose primary loyalty was to the House of Osman. While some recruits ran away, and many novices must have served begrudgingly, over the centuries the system successfully produced many accomplished statesmen and artists, as well as many thousands of able-bodied soldiers who loyally served the sultan. Not merely a standing army, but one whose members were relatively uprooted, this was the perfect centralizing instrument in a young state facing the quintessential Ibn Khaldunian dilemma of nomad-turned-rulers. Its purpose, as some of its pro-*gazi* critics saw, was to bolster at the center the cohesion that had formerly depended on the increasingly fickle ties of tribalism and war-band solidarity. This dimension of the *kul* system came to full fruition under Mehmed II, who enlarged the standing army, extended the *devshirme*, and, for the first time in Islamic history, regularly promoted individuals from this background to the highest administrative posts. Between 1450 and the late 1600s, a large majority of Ottoman vezirs belonged to this system.

The similarly myth-ridden *harem* was a female counterpart of the *kul*. A sultan's *harem* basically consisted of concubines and servants of slave background, whose lives and relationships with others, including the sultan, followed well-recognized codes of deportment.<sup>24</sup> The *kuls* and the *harem* received their architectural and institutional parameters under Mehmed II, though the *harem's* great growth in size and political influence date to the later 1500s. Down to Mehmed's generation, Ottoman sultans and princes married either Christian or Muslim princesses; some of the Christian wives retained their faith and lived removed from their husbands' courts. This changed when the dynasty's style of rule changed, and since Mehmed no further marriages were contracted with women from Christian dynasties, nor, after the generation of Mehmed's grandson, with any neighbors, even Muslim ones. After 1520 for a dynasty to marry was an exceptional event, while concubinage prevailed.

As for princesses of the Ottoman house, who as female Muslims could not marry Christians, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries their hands were given in marriage to Muslim emirs of neighboring principalities. Thereafter, there being no families whom the Ottomans deemed worthy of such a tie, ladies of the royal house were married off to *kul* vezirs, members of the extended artificial family.

While a large part of the Ottoman political elite during the classical age

consisted of *kuls*, recruited through enslavement or the *devshirme*, there was considerable room for others, who are often neglected in depictions of the ruling institution. One might mention here members of the households of other grandees, further training pools to which the central administration had some access, or stray descendants of the leading families of extinct principalities or other reduced nobilities, but the most important alternative path, to the elite was through the Islamic educational institutions (*medrese*), the colleges which had for centuries played such a role in Muslim states.

#### *Centralizing the Law and Property*

The colleges produced the *ulema*, scholars of religious and legal sciences, and the judges, *kadis*, of the kadiships the empire was divided into, whose functions were reshaped by the Ottomans' centralizing logic.<sup>25</sup> The *kadis* as members of the *ulema* adjudicated on the basis both of the *sharia* (Islamic divine law) and the *kanun* (dynastic secular law). The recognition of custom had always furnished a kind of secular law, but under Mehmed II it was for the first time codified through the legislative (*kanun-* or canon-making) prerogative of the secular ruler. *Kanun*, like custom, was meant to supplement, never to oppose, *sharia*, and the supreme *ulema* was expected to interpret, in a highly politicized space, current practices on the basis of texts—sacred scriptures and a huge body of legal traditions—held to be authoritative. Many Ottoman political and fiscal practices, of course, newly introduced or simply codified local pre-Ottoman usages that were difficult to accommodate within the *sharia*. Mehmed's codification of fratricide, for example, which sanctioned the enthroned prince's execution of all his brothers, was difficult, if at all possible, to legitimate within the *sharia*. In this case, the notion of "public good" (i.e., the prevention of civil war) made the law sufficiently flexible.

Mehmed was most radical in extending the coverage of state property. Toward the end of his reign, nearly contemporaneous with the new palace and the legal codification, he transformed a large number of lands thus far recognized as allods or endowments (over 1,000 villages according to a fifteenth-century historian) into *timars*.<sup>26</sup> His high-handed action provoked widespread resentment, for he chose to disregard grants of early Ottoman rulers in favor of holy men and women, by means of which groups, sometimes whole tribes, had been integrated into the larger political community. The dervishes, who inherited the endowments as literal or spiritual heirs of the holy figures, held the allegiance of large numbers of persons.

Although future generations could not maintain Mehmed's absolutism in its full harsh rigor, the basic outlines remained normative for many centuries: It was not, however, nor was it meant to be, a frozen system inherently opposed to innovation, as it is often depicted. Both the desire to inherit and the will to change are simultaneously recognized in Mehmed's codebook, which offers no magic solution to the obvious tension between the two: "Let my descendants act accordingly generation after generation" is followed after a few pages by "Let my noble descendants work on reforming [or, improving] it."<sup>27</sup>

#### 6. THE GROWTH OF OTTOMAN POWER

##### *The Reign of Bayezid II*

Mehmed's son and successor, Bayezid II, could hardly afford to continue his father's disregard for public opinion. When his brother, Prince Jem, gathered support among the resentful Anatolian Turkish tribes, Gedik Ahmed Pasha, the general who landed in Oranto in 1480, was forced to give up further Adriatic designs.

Jem's story illustrates the intricacies of late fifteenth-century Mediterranean politics. Beaten by his brother's armies, Jem sought aid from the Mamluk sultan at Cairo, who had considerable influence in southern Anatolia and northern Syria, a buffer between the Mamluk and the Ottoman states. Unsuccessful, Jem tried to reach a Rumelian base but was taken hostage by the Knights Hospitaler. From 1482 until his death in 1495, he became the object of intense negotiations among the Knights, the pope, various European rulers, and the sultan. Jem was the perfect tool against Bayezid, who negotiated continuously to make sure that he was passed to neither King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary nor Sultan Qaitbay of Cairo. In 1489 Jem came into papal custody at Rome, where he became a regular presence at court, and then into that of King Charles VIII of France. His death in 1495—rumor whispered of Roman poison and Ottoman collusion—saved him from being used for Charles' projected crusade to Jerusalem. Jem, who never abjured his faith or accepted his role as a foreigners' tool against Bayezid, lived on as an exotic lover-prince in Renaissance culture: a novella told of his love affair with Philippine-Hélène Sassenage, a southern French baron's daughter; Pinturicchio painted him into several paintings; and Castiglione served him up as a stern counterweight to Cinquetto gaiety in the *Book of the Courtier*.

The story of Jem partly explains Bayezid's military inaction on the west-

ern front, though in diplomacy he was a regular player, especially in Italy, now the cauldron of European politics. Bayezid undertook only one important military expedition in Europe, against Moldavia in 1484. His main achievement was to conquer the important ports of Kilis and Akkirman, making the Black Sea the Ottoman lake it would remain until the end of the seventeenth century.

Internally, changes occurred under Bayezid II, notably continued codification of the law. New pious foundations helped to fuel the growth of cities, whose life was enriched by the skills and mercantile ties brought by Jewish refugees from Iberia. Better roads improved communications and transportation, both military and civilian. Through his attention to the navy and his patronage to privateers, Bayezid laid the foundations of Ottoman success in his only major confrontation with a European power, the war of 1499-1503 against Venice.

#### *Selim I and the Conquest of the East*

His successes aside, Bayezid seemed weak to those of the political class who judged achievement in military terms. The more so, as a new challenge was arising in the east, where the *sheykh* of the Safavid Sufi order, Ismail (1486-1524), declared himself shah of Iran in 1501. His agents moved among the Anatolian tribes, rekindling old resentments against the Ottoman state.

At Istanbul the proponents of a more aggressive policy had hope in Prince Selim, who opposed his father's passivity toward the Safavids and losses with the Mamluks. When Selim became sultan in 1512, having disposed of his father and his brothers, he moved to meet these foes with a light foot and a heavy hand. Within five years, Selim, who spent more time on the move than any other Ottoman sultan, had blocked the Safavid advance, destroyed the Mamluk state in Syria and Egypt, and incorporated into the Ottoman realm most of the Arab world, including the twin jewels of the Hijaz, Mecca and Medina.

The Ottoman victories partly rested on the institutionalized use of artillery, tested with the Akkoyunlu in 1473 and in the Crimea in 1475. Ottoman guns blasted the traditional cavalry armies of Shah Ismail in 1514 and the Mamluks in 1516-17 and made the Ottoman state the superpower of the entire eastern Mediterranean region. Success breeds imitation, and right across the Islamic world, from Morocco to Ajez in the East Indies, requests rolled in for guns and gunners, while the janissary system became possibly a source of inspiration for similar formations in sixteenth-century Iran, Morocco, and Muscovy.

The conquest of Egypt also opened a new era of Ottoman sea power, for the state now controlled the whole eastern Mediterranean shoreline and had access to the Indian Ocean as well. The origins of Ottoman seapower went back to Mehmed II. When his fleet sailed out into the Aegean in 1470, as a Venetian observed, "the sea looked like a forest."<sup>28</sup> During the following decades, the Ottoman navy swelled with the conquests of seafaring peoples, and when the Portuguese began to threaten the South Arabian coast and the Red Sea during the early years of the sixteenth century, the Mamluk sultan called on Ottoman help against them. With the conquest of Cairo, the Ottoman sultan assumed the role of protector of the holy cities and of the routes of pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites.

The Ottoman protectorate over the holy cities symbolized their maturing representation of Islamic universalism. The office of caliph, of course, had long lost its prestige, though the title had still been held by an Abbasid line that lived, though with no real power, under the Mamluks at Cairo. The Ottoman sultans added this title to their others, plus that of "Servant of the Two Holy Cities," which was more meaningful than the caliphate until the latter's revival in the nineteenth century. The Ottomans could now boast of supremacy in the Muslim world.<sup>29</sup>

#### 7. THE AGE OF SÜLEYMAN

With accession in 1520 of Süleyman, Selim's son, Ottoman universalism resumed a western orientation that had been marginalized in Ottoman policy since Mehmed II's death. For the remainder of the sixteenth century, Ottoman policy was shaped by a nearly continual rivalry with the Habsburg dynasty, which headed a Catholic universalism as the Ottomans headed a Muslim one. Süleyman's shifting, though occasionally effective, alliances with France, the relatively "warmer" attitude toward the "Lutheran" powers, and the wish to satisfy some of Venice's commercial demands, were all to some degree consequences of the Ottomans' underlying sense of themselves as heads of the Muslim world in a two-power system. Besides the competition of two universalist religions, the sultan opposed in his own name Charles V's project of a universal monarchy and claimed—oddly as it sounded to Europeans—for himself the imperial office. Süleyman called Charles "the king of Spain" and his brother, Ferdinand, "the king of Vienna."

The vigor with which Süleyman threw Ottoman weight westward brought ten of his thirteen campaigns, and all of the five during his first

twelve years, against Christendom. His taking of Belgrade in 1521 and Rhodes the following year merely completed unfinished business, for Mehmed II had failed against both places. Belgrade opened central Europe to Süleyman, who campaigned up the Danube in 1526, 1529, and 1532. The first campaign was a smashing success, while opinion is divided about the other two. In 1526 his army crushed the Hungarians on the plain of Mohacs, and the subsequent death of King Louis II ended the Jagiellonian dynasty's rule in Hungary and brought their capital, Buda, into Ottoman hands. Through this kingdom the frontier between Ottoman and Habsburg power was to run for generations.

No more than his predecessors had with earlier conquests in the Balkans, Süleyman did not try to incorporate Hungary immediately into his realm. Instead, he cultivated patron-client relationships with the local aristocrats and encouraged King Jan Zapolya, leader of the Hungarian "patriotic" or anti-Habsburg party, who upon his defeat by King Ferdinand in 1528 threw himself under Ottoman protection.

Süleyman's forces conquered not only Buda but also the royal crown of Hungary, just as it was about to be smuggled off to Austria. The sultan personally crowned his Hungarian vassal with the Crown of St. Stephen, and in 1529, when Charles V was crowned by the pope at Bologna, Süleyman added to his titles that of "Distributor of Crowns to the Monarchs of the World." Although a crown was never, either before or since, part of Ottoman regalia, Süleyman carried the symbolism further on his next campaign, in 1532, when a bejeweled crown-like helmet was displayed during his processions, the sight of which, a Venetian reported, turned the Habsburg envoys into "speechless corpses."

The campaigns of 1529 and 1532 were tremendous logistical feats, in which huge numbers of troops were moved across vast spaces, fed, and kept in order for months at a time. They took a number of castles, including Esztergom, that secured Ottoman control over much of Hungary for 150 years. Yet, if Süleyman's aim was to deal the Habsburgs a mortal blow, he failed, for he could neither take Vienna—the primary target in 1529—nor draw the Imperial army into the field—apparently the main goal of the enigmatic campaign of 1532.

These magnificent enterprises also revealed the Ottoman state's incapacity for further expansion. By the time the Ottoman armies reached Vienna in 1529, for example, it was already late September, the usual time of return to winter quarters. When the armies did start back in mid-October, they were beset by many costly accidents due to bad weather and the great distances. It is not surprising, therefore, that although Süleyman's chroni-

clers portrayed the siege of 1529 as a grand show of might, the Ottoman public seems not to have agreed, and in the following year there was no campaign but a sumptuous public fête organized by the sultan and his vezirs. Thereafter, long, lavish theatrical displays became a standard part of Ottoman public ceremonial. The Ottoman elite, perhaps, had mastered the control of public opinion in early modern style.

Yet, not everything was for show. Between 1526 and 1529 Transylvania and Moldavia became Ottoman tributary states; Buda was taken; and in 1541 most of Hungary became an Ottoman province. King Ferdinand recognized this state of affairs in a treaty of 1547 and agreed to pay 30,000 ducats in annual tribute.

In this struggle, each power found a partner in the foe's enemy: the Habsburgs in Safavid Persia and the Ottomans in France. King Francis I first sought Ottoman help against Charles V in the terrible year of 1525, when he became the latter's prisoner, and the Franco-Ottoman cooperation reached its peak in 1543, when the Ottoman navy, led by the grand admiral, Barbarossa, wintered at Toulon.

Its problems notwithstanding, in Süleyman's early years the Ottoman system was still capable of great expansion, as huge territories were absorbed in Hungary and in modern Iraq in the east. Even later, the empire grew by extending its power over parts of Yemen and the East African coast. Yet, if the sixteenth century was the age of Ottoman glory, it also brought the Ottomans face-to-face with the limits of their empire-building. Süleyman could do little to prevent the incorporation by Ivan IV of Muscovy of the Kazan Khanate. And later, after Süleyman's time, the great Ottoman project of a Don-Volga canal, begun in 1569, had to be abandoned for financial reasons.

By mid-century Süleyman seems to have become as tired of the struggle as had Charles V, who abdicated in 1556. The sultan was less dramatic, for his retreat was not a monastery but a more sober and more pious way of life. The syncretist ethos that made more of the sultan's role as emperor than of his leadership of Islam, slipped away, though sultans did retain the title of "world emperor."

#### *The Ottoman Empire after Süleyman*

The central European frontier remained relatively quiet for about three decades following Süleyman's death in 1566, as the struggle against Christendom shifted to the Mediterranean front. The Ottoman conquest in 1570 of Cyprus, since 1489 a Venetian colony, was followed by a naval defeat at Lepanto—embarrassing, but not consequential in the long run,

for when the allied Christian navy took to sea the next year, it was shocked to see a rebuilt Ottoman fleet. The navy bounced back, taking Tunis in 1574 and extending Ottoman control over the North African littoral from Libya to Algiers.<sup>30</sup> Soon, though briefly, the Ottomans were involved as well in Morocco, permanent control of which would have extended their rule to the Atlantic coast of Africa. This did not happen, partly because of a lack of Ottoman commitment but primarily because Moroccan political structures were far more firmly rooted than anything the Ottomans had encountered elsewhere in North Africa. Moreover, there was trouble in the east again, as the sultan's armies were bogged down in Iran from 1578 to 1590. In the long run, the Ottomans won out, gaining even more lands in eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and the Caucasus. The costs of these wars, however, were staggering in money, human lives, military discipline, and Ottoman self-confidence.

The costly Iranian Wars heightened resistance at Istanbul to resuming war against the Habsburgs. Hodja Sadeddin Efendi (d. 1599), a major political and intellectual figure of the late sixteenth century, nearly finished with his chronicle, pleaded with the sultan not to be obliged to start a new chapter, now that he found such an appropriate ending; namely, that the sultan's wretched *kuls* had taken so much land from the Iranian shah.<sup>31</sup> Worried by a dream he recorded in a letter and anxiously sent for interpretation to his favorite *sheykh*, the sultan himself had misgivings. In this dream Murad III (r. 1574-95) engages in a wrestling bout with the Holy Roman emperor and falls flat on his back with the latter on top. The clever *sheykh*, however, saw a sign of strength in the sultan's shoulders touching the solid earth. Perhaps there was popular support for a western war.

When war did begin in 1593, the struggle against Austria turned out to be as protracted as the Persian Wars.<sup>32</sup> The Ottoman forces performed especially poorly during the war's first years. In 1596 Sultan Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603) personally took the field, yielding to heavy pressure from factions of the ruling class, and perhaps from a public who wanted to see the sultan lead his army. It had been thirty years since a sultan had commanded in person, a task long left to vezirs. This sign of the depersonalization of government was accompanied by others, as the sultan's presence in government became ever more an icon and ever less a force. It is clear from all accounts of the Austrian war in 1596, for example, that Mehmed III was just that, an icon, and not a field commander. His presence nonetheless helped to bring good results, Ottoman capture of the fortress of Eger and the last Ottoman victory in an old-fashioned field

battle (at Meszökerestes). They were not enough, however, to persuade Mehmed to repeat his appearance, for though the war continued for another decade, no sultan appeared again at the front.

Finally, after thirteen years of struggle, the two sides felt exhausted enough to treat, and in 1606 they signed the Treaty of Szitvatorok. Neither side took major lasting achievements away from this war. Still, it was becoming clear that the balance of military might, which had for decades favored the Ottomans, was not so great as it formerly had been. The Habsburgs relieved themselves of the obligation to annual tribute, which they had paid since 1547, and the Holy Roman emperor now called the sultan his "brother" rather than his "father."

The Ottomans saved face by gaining some fortresses, taking back some castles, and reasserting control over the Danubian principalities. By this time domestic strife had grown very disruptive and disturbing to Ottoman self-confidence, so much so, that when the sultan had a grand royal mosque built (the Sultanahmet or Blue Mosque), it commemorated not the "victory" over the infidel but the suppression of Anatolian rebels in 1609.

#### 8. THE "OTTOMAN DECLINE" IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

There are several reasons why the year 1600 is an appropriate point to conclude this overview. For one thing, the two previous decades were a time of major unrest, beginning in the countryside and known as the "Jelali revolts." In 1589 a long series of *kul* uprisings began when soldiers objected to being paid in debased coins, and, with increasing participation by city people, they continued through the next two centuries. Then, too, after a century of fairly stable money and prices, in the 1570s began a monetary instability, fueled by debasements and since 1585 by rising prices. Many villages were abandoned, their people gone to the cities, and migrations led to problems of provisioning and disrupted guild discipline in the cities.

#### *The End of the Classical Age*

It is too early to say what lay behind these phenomena, and in particular too early to blame the "rise of the Atlantic economy" for the late sixteenth-century Ottoman downturn. Even if the influx of American silver could be blamed for monetary instability, it was not behind the rural disturbances. As for population, it is hardly clear that the countryside was overpopulated, though bachelor males are heavily represented in the late sixteenth-

century urban tax surveys. If there was excess labor in the countryside, why were so many villages abandoned? One possible answer is fiscal pressure from the growing state, the chronology of which is uncertain.

Although fiscal oppression must have played a role in rural unrest, as it did in early modern France, the disturbances in Asia Minor were not peasant revolts. The rebels recruited primarily from temporarily unemployed mercenaries and displaced or disenfranchised soldiers, who became all the more dangerous, as the use of firearms spread. Behind their actions lay not population growth but declining opportunities for employment by the state. The end of expansion implied that there were no new *timars* to be distributed. The value of the *sipahi* cavalry, moreover, declined with the spread of lighter firearms, and the state, as in France, resorted to tax farming and in fact reduced the number of *timars* granted. It preferred to enlarge the *kul* forces, who, unlike the *timar*-holders, were paid in cash, and to hire mercenaries on a temporary basis. The latter, out of work at war's end, would in earlier times have become frontier warriors—like the Cossacks, Uskoks, and conquistadors in other lands. They now turned to banditry and rebellion.

It all added up to both a decline and a perception of decline. The leading statesmen did not react with despair, but their confidence—like the official coinage—was being debased, and “decline and reform” grew into one of the most fertile themes in contemporary Ottoman culture. The whole complex had much in common with what was happening in contemporary Spain, where, as Ranke wrote, there came a new era “in which the Spanish monarchy, far from asserting its force over friends and foes, was rent and sub-divided by foreign politics, . . . and in which the Ottomans ceased to be feared, and began themselves to fear. These changes, we know, constitute, in no small degree, the distinctive features that mark, respectively, two periods in modern history.”<sup>33</sup>

#### *The Problem of the “Ottoman Decline”*

Was this age, therefore, the beginning of an “Ottoman decline”? Until recently, it was taken for granted that this was so by Fernand Braudel, for example, whose *Mediterranean* describes an Ottoman empire in decline by the end of the sixteenth century. In *Civilization and Material Life*, written some years later, Braudel was ready to declare the same state “a viable entity until the nineteenth century.” He thereby simply reflected the changing winds in Ottoman historiography, in which the notion of decline has become one of the most highly contested aspects of what increasingly looks like a dated paradigm. The revisionism has some obvious implications for the historiography of the era treated in this chapter.

For one thing, traditionally the course of Ottoman history from 1400 to 1600 has been conceived in terms of power and glory which masked a series of failures that led eventually to decline and ultimately to the underdevelopment of the entire Middle East. There was military grandeur, true, political stability, and some prosperity, but no capitalism, oceanic expansion, printing press (until 1721), Renaissance, or Reformation. The subjection of this perspective to critical revision nowadays is part of the much larger reassessment of the views associated with “orientalism,” the viewing of the east in terms of what it is not, i.e., the west.

#### *New Perspectives on Ottoman and European History*

The present state of revisionist research makes possible only tentative remarks, and it is important not to lapse into the apologetic position of “proving” that the Ottomans were just the same as the west, or just as advanced. Yet, some preliminary findings enable us to begin moving away from essentializing contrasts.

The European conceptualization of the Ottoman system as an “anti-Europe”—Braudel’s term—is most deeply rooted in the sphere of politics: freedom vs. despotism, the rule of law vs. tyranny, and free property vs. state ownership. This vision of “Europe and the Orient” has been since the sixteenth century a most persistent conception, and it remains influential in the study of politics, economics, and histories. One well-received recent work on comparative politics, for example, convincingly develops the point that there existed a rule of law in late medieval and early modern Europe. The writer then adds:

Many opponents of the prince were imprisoned or had property seized without due process. In speaking of the rule of law in this time, it is only meant that such transgressions, if routine, entailed the probability of noble and burgher opposition, from which monarchs and emperors of the Middle East and Orient had little to fear. The edifice of law was in effect an objective, structural restraint on the crown and other powerholders.<sup>34</sup>

The final point, about the Orient, is not developed or argued, it is simply a given of history. Another writer, Perry Anderson, deals with the Ottoman state as an “Asian colossus,” whose “contours provide a strange contrast with those of the European Absolutism that was contemporary with it. The economic bedrock of the Osmanli despotism was the virtually complete absence of private property in land.”<sup>35</sup> His evidence for this state-

ment, it turns out, consists of disappointingly uncritical readings of early modern political writers: Niccolò Machiavelli ("they are all slaves"), Jean Bodin ("when [the timariots] die, their heirs can inherit only their movable goods"), and Francis Bacon ("nobility attempts sovereignty").

What European writers never appreciated was the presence of social institutions and practices that delineated a public sphere of political negotiation. Guilds represented their members before the *kadis*, market supervisors, and agents of the central government; Sufi orders, in the persons of influential *sheykhhs*, spoke in the name of some sector of public opinion; and the spokesmen of the charitable institutions (*vafqs*) and non-Muslim communities did not just bow and comply. In this category, too, belong other institutions and practices, such as village headmen, whose roles are little understood. Enough is known, however, to make untenable facile references to a despotic apparatus which penetrated all levels of public and social life. There was a finely tuned legal machine with widely shared standards and symbols of justice, which totally escaped students of orientalist politics from Machiavelli to Max Weber. Indeed, the Ottoman empire was not unlike the later Roman empire in that, although it is conventionally depicted in terms of corruption and tyranny, its upper classes and some of its subjects considered it to live under the rule of law.<sup>36</sup>

Limits on the practice of absolutism doubtless differed between the classical Ottoman state and, say, seventeenth-century France. Mehmed II, for example, the most "despotic" of the Ottoman sultans in this era, undertook an extensive program of confiscations justified by appeal to the public good, but his program had to be rescinded. His grandson, Selim, whose reputation is embodied in his epithet, "the Grim" or "the Terrible," could not return to Mehmed's policy but had to live with Bayezid II's compromise, since it was based on the law of the realm and the moral standards of his culture. Instead, Selim proclaimed an equally despotic program of converting Istanbul's remaining Greek churches into mosques. When he justified this step by the argument that the *sharia* permitted the confiscation of the properties of non-Muslims, his legal advisers said that his reading of the *sharia* was excessively literal.

The growth of Ottoman absolutism during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries might well be seen in a larger context. It was characterized by such common early modern features as bureaucratization, legal codification, and the search for more efficient tax collection. Might the Ottoman and European trends have been linked by similar forces or even contacts?

### *Contacts between the Ottomans and Europe*

Recent Ottoman historiography tends to emphasize the porosity of the boundaries between the eastern Mediterranean world and Europe and to reject essentialization of the contrast between the two worlds. Trade, migrations, diplomacy, and even war (and enslavement of prisoners) crossed the boundaries. Trade continued the late medieval pattern of Italian merchants enjoying charters and privileges in the Levantine port cities that connected to the caravan routes and kept growing. The sixteenth century brought new actors, from different European countries, onto this scene, who obtained similar charters. By the end of the era, the Ottoman state recognized the appearance of the early modern world's little tigers by extending trading privileges to Queen Elizabeth of England's subjects in 1581 and to the Dutch early in the next century. European traders, however, by no means displaced Ottoman merchants, nor were the latter exclusively non-Muslims (as nineteenth-century accounts alleged).

The sixteenth century also saw the revival of the land routes across the Balkans, traveled by European and Ottoman merchants, Muslim and non-Muslim, and by mid-century the Levant's connections to the Asian trade also revived from the initial shock from the Portuguese voyaging around Africa. This may be the reason why the Ottomans did not continue to challenge Portugal for control of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Generally speaking, Ottoman trade policies centered on infrastructural support for trade, on the securing of ports and sea and land routes and on the construction of bazaars and caravanserais—naturally with expectations of profit to the treasury. Several governors thus endowed Aleppo for its role as a major entrepot of the silk trade; Sarajevo and Novi Bazar were created partly to serve the trans-Balkan carrying trade; and a Jewish merchant, an Ottoman district governor in Dalmatia, and the Venetian authorities cooperated to build up Split as a rival to Dubrovnik.

Beyond these contributions to the infrastructure of trade, plus provisioning which favored imports, we have as yet no larger picture of Ottoman commercial policy. Recent emphasis on early modern developments in world trade, plus the growing understanding of eventual western dominance as the outcome of an interactive process, makes urgent our need for comparative studies of commercial policies. We know little or nothing about the merchants' practices or about the legal institutions at their disposal, and the question of technological diffusion through-commerce also remains to be explored. It is nonetheless already becoming clear that in the sixteenth or even the seventeenth century, the eventual supremacy of European merchants was by no means a forgone conclusion.

A closely related topic concerns science and technology. Sixteenth-century observers, certainly, would not have understood the modern orientalist depiction of the Ottomans as an essentially inward-looking society, which did not want to learn, and, but for a few enlightened statesman, would never have learned, from the west. Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Charles V's envoy who visited the Ottoman realm in the mid-sixteenth century, wrote that

no nation in the world has shown greater readiness than the Turks to avail themselves of the useful inventions of the foreigners, as is proved by their employment of cannons and mortars, and many other things invented by Christians. They cannot, however, be induced as yet to use printing, or to establish public clocks, because they think that their scriptures would no longer be scriptures if they were printed, and that, if public clocks were introduced, the authority of their muezzins and their ancient rites would be thereby impaired.<sup>37</sup>

The inventions themselves aside, why did Busbecq write only of the Ottomans' readiness to borrow and adapt things invented by others? The question contains two issues, one about technological innovation and the other about openness to using the inventions of others. Was Busbecq biased in that he failed to concede the former to the Ottomans? Probably not. However, the role of the craftsman, the technician, and the innovator in Ottoman society, and attitudes toward their skills, have hardly been investigated, and what is known does not support a categorical statement.

When did science and technology become "European" from an Ottoman point of view? The Ottomans do not, for instance, seem to have associated gunpowder and firearms with the Europeans during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In oceanic discoveries, however, a European advantage was recognized. Piri Reis, the Ottoman sailor-cartographer who in 1513 drew, following a Columbus map, one of the earliest surviving pictures of the New World's coastline, observed that the infidels had recently scored some enviable advances in geographical knowledge. He then moved immediately to a type of argument later to appear repeatedly in Islamic westernization discourse, that the new discoveries were based on ancient learning from a book stolen from the Near East. In other words, to import infidel knowledge was really just to reappropriate one's own. Once again, the evidence suggests that the whole notion of "westernization," implying an essential difference between east and west, needs to be rethought for the whole period before the eighteenth century.

It is true, certainly, that Mehmed II was more interested in what the "Franks" were doing than most of his successors were, but this does not mean that the Ottoman court's interest in European culture can be reduced to a linear process of decline since his time. Piri Reis, for example, produced his map not on command but on his own initiative as a navigator, having acquired the necessary information from the fluid world of the Mediterranean sailors. He did present it to Sultan Selim upon the conquest of Egypt, which is why it is preserved in the palace library.

Some of the interest in things western was revived at court during the first third of Süleyman's reign. Under the grand vezirate of Ibrahim Pasha (1523-36) in particular, the links seem to have been active to various European artists, sources of luxury goods, and European mercantile communities at Istanbul. A son of a Venetian doge, for example, was one of the sultan's closest advisors and his appointee to oversee the most prestigious new conquest, Ottoman Hungary. The grand vezir himself, a native of the island of Parga in Venetian territory, was largely responsible for the good standing of this son of a doge and more generally for the links with European politics and culture. Ibrahim watched "ballet" performances with classical themes held in the Frankish quarter of Istanbul.

#### *The Ottoman Identity*

Yet, to look at contacts and interaction is not enough, for the main point is to go beyond construing these relations in terms of two clearly delineated and separate entities—Europeans and Turks. We must reconstruct the Ottoman point of view, taking into account that inclusiveness was one of the most basic forces in the Ottoman identity.

Ottoman inclusiveness should not be attributed only to the *kuls* of the Porte, themselves of non-Turkish birth, for many who joined the Ottoman enterprise and acquired *timars* or other military or civil posts also came from non-Turkish, non-Muslim backgrounds. They all eventually became as Ottoman as anybody else. This fact is of vital significance for our interpretation of the political struggles within the Ottoman elite, which are often anachronistically seen in ethnic terms as conflicts between the *deвшirme* and the old Turcoman families, that is, between non-Turks and Turks. Many *timar*-holders were also of non-Turkish origins, as were many members of the *ulema*, the ranks of which were not closed to those born to, say, Arabic, Kurdish, or Greek-speaking families.

The Ottomans, after all, did not call themselves "Turks," nor their land "Turkey," for these were European terms which ethnicized—much as the eastern use of "Franks" for Europeans did—what was basically a supra-



ethnic identity. Indeed, the still current uses of "Ottoman" and "Turk" or "the Ottoman empire" and "Turkey" as interchangeable terms is comparable to the use of "Italy" for the Roman empire or "Italians" for the ancient Romans.<sup>38</sup>

The worst consequence of continuing this ethnicization of the Ottoman tradition is that it masks the imperial character of Ottoman history. One illustration must serve to support this point. Sinan Pasha, baptized "Scipione" as son of a Genoese nobleman and a Turkish woman, was captured by Muslim seamen and presented to the Ottoman court, where he grew up and graduated to a distinguished career as admiral and vezir. A loyal and successful Ottoman and a Muslim, he maintained a lively correspondence with family and friends in his native Genoa.

This does not mean that the problematic aspects of the relationships between Ottomans and Europeans disappear. For one thing, there is no Ottoman counterpart to the voluminous literature in various European languages about "the Turks." Although this difference is important to understanding the different roles of education and knowledge about the other in the age when the two worlds competed for hegemony, it cannot be reduced to an Ottoman lack of "curiosity" about foreign lands, as often is done. A Venetian or French diplomat may have needed to learn Turkish, but the Ottoman court was easily supplied with servants competent in European languages. For example, when the court interpreter Ferhad, a Hungarian by origin, died in 1576, his son was brought to Istanbul from his *timar* in northern Anatolia and given his father's position, because of his knowledge of Hungarian affairs and the pertinent languages.<sup>39</sup>

Focus on such examples, of course, makes it easy to confine the area of shared discourse to those who were of European origin, that is, to an "anomalous" stratum of renegades. The point is that the renegades could strike Ottoman roots so easily just because they were not anomalous, because they already had much in common with numerous others in this society, in which migration and conversion were common. There was a shared discourse even beyond the migrants and converts, because there were shared interests.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Shared Discourse of the Ottoman and European Worlds*

The roots of shared discourse and interests lay not only in interactions but in a complex of common traditions of the ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean civilizations and of the Abrahamic religions. For example, the Jewish physicians who came into the Ottoman empire from Iberia after 1492, whatever their unique qualities, were also steeped in the familiar

humoralism of Galenic medicine. Emigrés and visitors from Europe would hardly feel totally lost, moreover, in an intellectual world that shared a respect for ancient Greek learning in general and Aristotle in particular. A late sixteenth-century wave of political pamphleteering, for example, included a Turkish translation (from Arabic) of Aristotle's *Politics*.

Ottoman scholars were not necessarily removed from the current scene of science in Europe either. When Taqi ad-Din arrived at Istanbul from Egypt in 1577, he not only brought a deep knowledge of medieval Muslim astronomy, which the Europeans also knew, but he was reputed to be aware of developments among the Franks. Does this make Ottoman astronomy as "advanced" as European astronomy? Not necessarily. Among other things, we must note that Istanbul's observatory was not, as other establishments of that nature were, turned to long-term astronomical observation—it was pulled down sometime after 1579. The efforts of Taqi ad-Din were up-to-date for his time—his measurements of the supernova of 1579 were as accurate as Tycho Brahe's, and they should not be judged by the standards of the subsequent Scientific Revolution in Europe.<sup>41</sup>

In religious thought and philosophy, too, some things were shared. Despite the differing traditions of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic piety, parallel developments occurred. For example, the neoplatonic revival of late medieval Europe has its counterpart in the Muslim world, where Sufi metaphysics, also imbued with neoplatonism, dominated intellectual life. Further, the waves of apocalypticism in Europe and in the Ottoman world during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century were not only synchronous, they apparently were in contact with one another.<sup>42</sup> The heresies, too, had much in common, else how could Bedreddin have attracted such strong followings among the Christians of the Balkans?

#### *Shared Rhythms of the Ottoman and European Worlds*

Beyond shared elements of culture, the shared rhythms of a number of Eurasian commonwealths lend some justification to the term, "the early modern world." The Ottoman empire partook of many of the changes generally thought of as characteristic of early modernity, including some of the most important economic and social ones. Population growth and urbanization, along with commercialization and inflation of prices, affected both the eastern and the western Mediterranean regions. The Middle East, which lay between different zones of the Old World, naturally felt the acceleration of world trade. One does not have to be a monetarist, for example, to acknowledge the impact of American silver via Europe on Ottoman markets in the later sixteenth century. Money flowed across all borders,

and the German *groteschen* lent its name to the *gürüş*, which the Ottomans used for centuries.<sup>43</sup> Curiously enough, these developments are seen as signs of both European growth and of Ottoman decline.

In Ottoman culture, too, there are clear signs of a "modern" mentality in the sixteenth century. New cultural forms deliberately departed from the past or sought competitive dialogues with the "classics." A group of literati in early sixteenth-century Bursa, for example, decided not to continue reproducing new versions of the same old (Persian and Arabic) stories. One member produced an amusing novella—a sort of tongue-in-cheek counterpart of Martin Guerre's story—in which the themes of love, communication, and identity are explored in the midst of an original narrative. This "Bursan realism" also gave rise to new uses of a recently created Persian genre, the versified "city thrillers," of which dozens were set in western Anatolian and Balkan cities during the sixteenth century. Often they open with descriptions of monuments, soon moving on to depictions of flirtatious young men and women.

The Ottoman imperial identity and ideology nonetheless found its principal expression not in literature but in monumental urban architecture. The Ottomans took pride in grand cityscapes, especially the internationally famous one of Istanbul, and dotted them with an architecture of "fresh idiom," as one Ottoman writer described the style of Mehmed II's complex at Istanbul. Recent studies have begun revising the traditional judgment, that Ottoman architecture was a traditional and non-western style, through the study of its connections with contemporary building in Renaissance Italy. The best Ottoman work, which was achieved around 1550 by an architect called Sinan, can be seen as part of broader Mediterranean architecture of the Renaissance era, which consciously departed from medieval traditions and looked for freshness of expression. Sinan's autobiography leaves no doubt that he engaged in self-conscious dialogue and competition with the monumental traditions of late Antiquity and early Byzantium.

The sixteenth-century growth of schools, based on notably the charitable institution of the *waqf*, and the spread of written at the expense of oral culture, notably in histories and hagiographies, indicate a growth of literacy and suggest a secularization of culture. The maxim, religion subsumes everything in Islam, is generally invalid, but particularly so for the Ottoman empire, which was built over a long period of experimentation in frontier circumstances. The Ottomans emerged from this experience with a cultural bricolage of classical Islamic legal traditions with Inner Asian and Byzantine elements, and the syncretic nature of their achievement is es-

pecially clear in the realm of law, where the *kadis* were expected to adjudicate cases on the basis of the sacred *sharia*, local custom, and the written codes of *kanun*.

Elements of desacralization can also be observed in social life, notably in the transition from *ahî* confraternities to guilds, which combined traditional religious elements with a professional life which was trans-religious, at least in the trades practiced by adherents of more than one faith.

The most obviously desacralizing agent in Ottoman life of this period, however, was the coffeehouse.<sup>44</sup> The bright idea, according to Ottoman historians, came to two enterprising Syrian merchants, and the first coffeehouses appeared in Istanbul in the 1550s. They were soon all the rage, for reasons which remain little understood, but the initial reaction of the *ulema* allows no doubt that these new sites of sociability were considered dangerously beyond the control of the *sharia*. Women, of course, could not enter the coffeehouses, but they did use the public baths, which had similar social functions.

The sixteenth century also saw a widening gulf between elite and popular cultures, as the latter's beliefs and practices came under a new criticism from the former. Some of this criticism, perhaps, was related to the more structured orthodoxy required in the classical age, because of the challenge from dissents, especially the Safavid "heresy."

It remains now to ask whether the regional identities in the three Muslim empires of this era—Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal—present us with a parallel to the emergence of proto-national identities in Europe. No unifier ever threatened this configuration, for the Muslim world knew no world conqueror after Timur. The changes between his time and the end of this era are revealed by the accounts of the two peerless travelers of the pre-industrial Muslim world, Ibn Battuta of the fourteenth century and Eviya Chelebi of the seventeenth. Their respective imaginations of "the world to be seen" display quite different sets of criteria. Ibn Battuta left his North African home to see the whole Muslim world and a bit more, going all the way to China. Eviya Chelebi spent even more time on the road and wrote an even longer account, but his horizons remained within the boundaries of the "well-protected Ottoman domains" (with side trips to Austria and Iran). When Chelebi wrote of imaginary journeys, they carried him not to other Islamic lands but to Europe and the Americas.

#### *Paths of Ottoman and European Divergence*

The fact that, in reality, these regional-imperial identities were much less tightly woven than were the proto-nationalities of Europe leads us to rec-

ognize the divergent elements in the histories, both in- and outside the Islamic world. Among the three major Muslim empires, to begin with, only the Iranian state maintained its integrity of territory and identity during the era of nation-states. The Ottoman empire, by contrast, dissolved and was dissolved into more than twenty nation-states, a process of which no end is yet in sight.

The religious realm also displays important divergences. At first glance the sundering of Catholic Christendom and the splitting of Sunni Islamdom seem similar as well as being contemporaneous. The Protestant Reformation and Safavid Shi'ism could and were seen as backstabbing treason by the Habsburgs and the Ottomans respectively, who were comparably eager to lead an imagined universal community of the faithful. A closer look, however, reveals very important differences. While the Ottoman repression of heresy could turn very violent, it had no institutional counterpart to the Inquisition. Moreover, the nature of the Safavid challenge demonstrates that the tribal element was still very strong, if declining, in sixteenth-century Middle Eastern politics.<sup>45</sup>

If the survival of tribal nomadism rendered the Middle East less modern than Europe, the treatment of religious minorities apparently better accords with modern expectations of religious toleration. The Ottoman attitude in this respect, however, simply continued the ancient Islamic principle of *dhimma*, the covenant assumed to exist between rulers of the dominant Islamic faith and people of certain other religions. The covenant provided autonomy to different communities in the practice of their faith and in managing their educational and legal affairs, so long as they remained loyal to the state, paid a special head tax, and conformed to certain norms of public behavior.

Beyond these generalities, the historian of the non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman empire must treat gingerly this subject, since it is dangerously open to either abuse or romanticization of the Ottoman legacy. Thus, while Balkan nationalisms have in general tended to portray Ottoman rule as an unqualified yoke, Jewish history has lent itself to images of the Ottoman empire as a pluralist utopia. The truth, needless to say, lies somewhere in between, although, however harsh their experience, until the twentieth century the Ottoman Jews escaped forced conversion or ghettoization.

The place of women in the Ottoman order, one defined largely by Islamic tradition, always seemed strange to westerners. The comparison, explicit or implicit, often begins with the veiling of women and the segregation of genders. Restrictions on the appearance in public and the mobility

of women were certainly much greater in Ottoman society, and in many other Islamic societies, than in Europe. While women may have played important roles in public life, they did so primarily from within the (sultanic or other) household, so that their activities were invisible except to family members and servants. Both Ottoman and European authors long regarded the "intrusion" of harem women in political life—beginning with Hürrem (Roxelana), Süleyman's slave-concubine and, later, wife—as illegitimate and a sign of decadence. Among European travelers, women's invisibility often turned into their sole or main mark of status in the Orient, a fascination not yet dead today. Yet, within the framework of legal inequality of genders, Muslim women did have access to property rights, divorce, conjugal rights, and although most of this lies beyond the scope of our treatment here, it might be noted that the comparison might look very different, if veiling and segregation were of lesser priority. On the other hand, it is true that, in Ottoman Muslim eyes, a social and religious life that brought the sexes face-to-face in a variety of ways clearly constituted a European peculiarity. Prince Jem, the royal hostage, expressed his astonishment at these liberties in a couplet: "Turned out to be strange, this town of Nice / One can get away with anything one commits." One wonders if, for all that, patriarchy was any less imposing among the Europeans.



Many issues raised in these paragraphs remain to be studied, some for the first time. Some apparent parallels are bound to be found superficial on closer scrutiny, other, new ones may be yet discovered. There nevertheless remains the inescapable fact that the two worlds, western Christian and Ottoman Muslim, perceived each other as other, and that their historical trajectories display enough significant divergences to validate this perception. Yet, it also seems worthwhile to suggest that if the essentialized, bipolar view of the world—western and other—ought to be abandoned, if the unique qualities of modern European history are to be understood, rather than merely assumed, and if representations of otherness are to be studied as historical constructs, then Ottoman history can provide some of the most fruitful comparative agendas to historians of Europe.

## NOTES

- [Editors' Note: Citations by author/date system in the notes refer to Part IIB of the Bibliography.]
- \* Dedicated to the brave people of Sarajevo—once Ottoman, always European.
1. For a thorough review of Ottoman political relations to 1520, see Halil Inalcik, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451," and "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1451-1522," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton, vol. 6: *The Impact of the Crusades on Europe*, ed. H. W. Hazard and Norman P. Zacour (Madison, Wisc., 1989), 222-75, 311-53. See also Imber (1990).
  2. Whatever the validity of Ottoman genealogies that appear in sources only after the Timurid debacle, it is clear that their Anatolian rivals as well as the Timurids saw the Ottomans as upstarts. It is no coincidence that in Ottoman historical consciousness, the legitimacy of the dynasty, though buttressed by various and often contradictory genealogical claims, was ultimately based on their record as champions of the faith. On this issue, see Kafadar (forthcoming).
  3. See the report of Pietro Zeno to the Venetian government from January-March, 1403, cited in George T. Dennis, "The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 33 (1967): 72-88.
  4. Quoted in *ibid.*, 86.
  5. For pre-modern Islamic ideas on international relations, see J. T. Johnson and J. Kelsay, eds., *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York, 1991). For historical examples, see Michael Köhler, *Allianzen und Verträge zwischen fränkischen und islamischen Herrschern im Vorderen Orient* (New York, 1991); Kissling (1974). For Ottoman practice, see Halil Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103-29.
  6. On Ottoman political life, including factions in the fifteenth century, see Halil Inalcik, *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara, 1954).
  7. Ettore Rossi, "La leggenda turco-bizantina del Pomo Rosso," *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* 5 (1937): 542-553; Karl Töply, "Der Goldene Apfel," in *id.*, *Türkische Sagen und Legende um die Kaiserstadt Wien* (Vienna, 1980), 34-73.
  8. Leopold von Ranke, *The Turkish and Spanish Empires in the Sixteenth Century and the Beginning of the Seventeenth*, trans. Walter K. Kelly (Philadelphia, 1845), 1.
  9. See Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Salman ibn 'Ashik Pasha, *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen-Pforte: Frühzeit und Aufstieg des Osmanreiches nach der Chronik "Denkwürdigkeiten und Zeitläufte des Hauses Osman" vom Derwisch Ahmed, genannt 'Ashik-Pasha-Sohn*, trans. R. F. Kreutel (Graz, 1959), 206. This text is analyzed by M. F. Köprülü, *Seljuks of Anatolia: their History and Culture According to Local Muslim Sources*, trans. G. Leiser (Salt Lake City, 1992), 47-48.
  11. Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, Wisc., 1992), 20.
  12. See G. Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: the Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991).
  13. The Ottomans continued to use the Arabized form of Constantinople, Kostantiniyye, without inhibitions until the end of the empire, along with "İstanbul," which also derived from Greek. Only in the aftermath of the Turkish-Greek wars of 1919-21 did Turkish nationalists find the term offensive and make official the monopoly of Istanbul. See Halil Inalcik, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23/24 (1969/70): 231-49.
  14. The works of Halil Inalcik are essential for understanding the Ottoman land system and related fiscal arrangements. His latest treatment of the subject will appear in a volume on Ottoman social and economic history edited by D. Quataert, to appear from Oxford University Press. I am grateful to Professor Inalcik for allowing me to read the parts that bring to light the fundamental role of small-holding peasant families in a comparative eastern Mediterranean perspective. The *timar* is studied by Beldiceanu (1980).
  15. This rule had to be changed at the end of the sixteenth century, when the sultans no longer participated in campaigns. Feridun Emecen, "Sefere Götürülen Defterlerin Defteri," in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoglu'na Armagan* (İstanbul 1991), 241-68.
  16. Halil Inalcik, "The Problem of the Relationship Between Byzantine and Ottoman Taxation," *Akten des XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongresses 1958* (Munich, 1960), 237-42. See also Heath Lowry, in Bryer and Lowry (1986).
  17. Berktaç (1987) and (1990).
  18. Cvetkova (1978), 3-6.
  19. E. A. Zacharaidou, "The Neomartyr's Message," *Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies [Athens]* 8 (1990-91): 51-63.
  20. "The [Sublime] Porte" refers in Ottoman usage to the central government and to its symbolic location just beyond the threshold of the sultan's residence. The notoriously difficult word *kul* encompasses the categories of slave, servant, and subject. Even though Ottoman historians have in general tended to restrict it to the first meaning ("slave"), the "*kuls* of the Porte" included many who cannot have been legally slaves of the sultan.
  21. The inclusion of Bosnian Muslims in the *devshirme* and the incorporation of volunteers are two of the obvious reasons why all *kuls* should not be seen as slaves. The *devshirme* can be called enslavement for sociological (see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* [Cambridge, Mass., 1982]) and certainly moral reasons, but one can still note significant differences between their legal status and that of the slave formations in the armies of some other Islamic states (e.g., the Mamluks of Egypt).
  22. The most detailed account of Sinan Pasha's life is in G. Benzoni, "Cicala, Scipione (Cigala-Zade Yusuf Sinan)," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 25: 320-40.
  23. For a discussion of this official document and others that refer, without any hint of wrongdoing, to relations between *kuls* and their family as well as to *kuls* engaged in the economic sphere—both forms of conduct read as signs of later "corruption"—see Kafadar (1991b).
  24. For a survey of Ottoman marriage policies, see Alderson (1956), 85-100.

25. For the training careers of the *uléma*, see Chapter 1 in Repp (1986).
26. The historian was Tursun Beg, for whose text see Halil İnalcık and Rhoads Murphy, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror* (Minneapolis, 1978).
27. Ahmet Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tabiiyeti: Osmanlı Hukukuna Giriş ve Fatih Kanunnameleri*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1990), 317, 326. Though the original codification is now accepted to have been Mehmed's, the extant codebooks are not free of later embellishments and anachronisms. Cited in Imber (1990): 201.
28. On competing claims to lordship of the entire Muslim world, see Faroqhi (1989).
29. See Hess (1972).
30. *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2 vols. in 1 (reprint, Istanbul, 1980), vol. 2:133.
31. For a concise narrative of the Ottoman-Habsburg wars of 1593-1606, see Finkel (1988).
32. Ranke, *Turkish and Spanish Empires*, 1.
33. Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 1992), 34.
34. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), 365; and there, too, the following quote.
35. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 8-9.
36. C. T. Forster and F. H. B. Daniell, trans., *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, 2 vols. (London, 1881), vol. 1:100-1.
37. The comparison is not far-fetched, for this is approximately what some of the Italian humanists did. Leonardo Bruni Aretino, for example, spoke of classical Latin and Tuscan as "our two languages" (editors' note).
38. The Ottomans seem to have received information from the Venetians of which no systematic written record was kept. See the instructions by the Senate to the most Serene King [Henry VIII], after beheading Queen Anne . . . has taken to wife and proclaimed as Queen a gentlewoman by name Madame Jane. . . . Theyese advices we charge you to communicate as usual to the magnificos the Bashaws." From the Deliberazioni Senato (Segreta), vol. 57:35 (21 July 1536), in *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts relating to English Affairs, existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, vol. 5: 1534-1552, ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1873), 45-46, no. 112.
39. See, for instance, the interesting conversation about the end of the world between a Venetian diplomat and an Ottoman official; Venice, Archivio di Stato, Dispacchi Costantinopoli, filza 20 (1584-85), fols. 426'-433'.
40. See A. Savili, *The Observatory in Islam* (Ankara, 1960; reprint, New York, 1981).
41. See the forthcoming book by Cornell Fleischer.
42. Kafadar (1991a).
43. Hattox (1985).
44. Fletcher (1985): 37-57. He notes the "decline of nomadism" as one of the common dynamic elements of early modern history. While it is true that nomadism declined both as a way of life and as a pool of state-builders throughout early modern Asia, including the Middle East, its erosion occurred much later and slower than in Europe.

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## I. Primary Sources

The most important collection by far is the Ottoman Archives, supplemented by the Topkapı Palace Archives, in Istanbul. See Bernard Lewis, "The Ottoman archives: Sources for European history," *Archives* 4 (1960): 226-31; S. Shaw, "Archival sources for Ottoman history: the archives of Turkey," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 80 (1960): 3-14. There are also important collections in former provincial centers (e.g. Cairo, Sofia, Thessalonike) of materials pertaining mostly to local-regional matters including, of course, trade with Europe. Except for a few 15th-century examples in Balkan languages, all the documents are in the languages of the Islamic Middle East, mostly Turkish. European documents apparently survive only in Turkish translations that include such gems as Leonardo da Vinci's proposal for a bridge across the Golden Horn; see Franz Babinger and L. Heydenreich, *Vier Bauvorschlage Leonardo da Vincis an Sultan Bajezid II* (Göttingen, 1952). A good part of the thousands of court registers from different towns survive; for summary translations of cases from one city in 1600, see H. Duda and G. Galabov, *Die Protokollbücher des Kadimtes Sofia* (Munich, 1960). For an introduction to the categories of Ottoman documents, along with archival lists, see J. Reyichman and A. Zajackowski, *Handbook of Ottoman-Turkish Diplomats*, trans. A. S. Ehrenkreutz, ed. Tibor Halasi-Kun (The Hague, 1968).

Several archives in Europe contain, in addition to some documents in Turkish or other Middle Eastern languages (see, for instance, N. Beldiceanu, *Les actes des premiers sultans conservés dans les manuscrits turcs de la Bibliothèque Nationale à Paris. I-Actes de Mehmed II et de Bayezid II du ms fonds turc ancien 35*, [Paris, 1960], which also includes summary translations), abundant materials in European languages. Among these, the Archivio di Stato of Venice is certainly the most important, in certain matters surpassing even the Istanbul archives, for the period covered in this survey. Venetian diplomats were well informed and insightful observers of Ottoman politics, institutions, finances and trade. Of their formal reports to the Senate, presented mostly at the end of a three-yearly term in Istanbul, the majority has been published. E. Alberti, ed., *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti durante il secolo XVI*, 3d set, vols. 1-3 (Florence, 1842-55). On the other hand, reading the unpublished *Dispacchi Costantinopoli* as a series, of which little use has been made by either Ottomans or Europeans, is the closest thing to reading a gazette from sixteenth-century Istanbul, including even some gossip about the private lives of the elite. The similar collection in Dubrovnik (in Latin and Italian) is almost totally uncharted terrain. No other city state is comparable to these two in terms of their relations with the Ottomans in the long run, but there are significant collections in many Italian cities such as Florence and Genoa as well as in the Vatican. There are also moments of intense relations that produced particularly noteworthy correspondence; for an interesting example, see H. J. Kissling, *Sultan Bajezid's II. Beziehungen zu Markgraf Francesco II. von Gonzaga* (Munich, 1965).

The Portuguese archives must be consulted for that relatively brief but significant moment in world history of Ottoman-Portuguese competition in and around the Indian Ocean; see S. Özbaran, "A Review of Portuguese and Turkish Sources for the Ottomans in Arabia and the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century," *Bulleten* (1985): 64-78. The Spanish archives seem to contain mostly copies of Venetian materials, but no serious investigation has been conducted. Towards the middle of the 16th century, Austrian, French and Polish archives begin to acquire importance that would only grow in the next few centuries; only a









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