

Andreas Helmedach, Markus Koller, Konrad Petrovszky, and Stefan Rohdewald (eds.), *Das osmanische Europa. Methoden und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung zu Südosteuropa*, Eudora-Verlag, Leipzig, 2014, 506 pp., maps and ills.

This large volume consists of 19 articles grouped into four thematic chapters, and an introductory text coauthored by four editors, devoted to the state and perspectives of research focused on Ottoman Europe. The authors admit that the present-day concept of 'Ottoman Europe,' viewed as an integral part of the continent, has been born in the US and only later has entered Germany, yet at the same time they trace the roots of the notion back to nineteenth-century Weimar, where it was coined in 1820 by a German geographer, Georg Heinrich Hassel.

One major conceptual weakness of the book under review is that its editors have not decided either its geographic or chronological frames. Whereas on p. 423 we read that Ottoman Europe distinguished itself by its frontier character that made it different from the empire's other, especially Arab, provinces, the same volume contains an article on eighteenth-century artisans in Istanbul, so one wonders whether inhabitants of Istanbul also felt that they lived on the outskirts of the Ottoman Empire. Besides, one may observe that the term *serhadd*, used in reference to Ottoman Europe (p. 423), was equally valid and used by Ottoman authors in reference to Oran, Aden, or Lahsa that undoubtedly lay within the Arab provinces, and the exposure to foreign culture was probably felt stronger in Beirut, frequented by foreign 'Frankish' merchants, than in Felibe/Plovdiv or Kara Ferye/Veroia, situated within Ottoman Europe. Strangely enough, the volume also contains an article devoted to the adoption of Islam in the Golden Horde as seen by Central Asian and Crimean Tatar chroniclers. Although this highly interesting

study is undoubtedly one of the gems in the volume, one may still ask what persuaded the editors to include it in the present book as the link between its subject and Ottoman Europe has not been critically addressed.

The volume's chronology is another issue. The editors' introductory statement that early modern period lasted in Ottoman Europe till the early nineteenth century and was finally terminated by the Tanzimat reforms (p. 14) did not prevent them from including in the volume a text on nineteenth-century Varna that is focused on the post-Tanzimat period, or from discussing the introduction of clock towers as a sign of *Sozialdisziplinierung* (p. 414), which topic – albeit highly interesting – also belongs to the post-Tanzimat era.

Chapter One devoted to “rule, authority and violence” (‘Herrschaft – Macht – Gewalt’) begins with an overview of recent historiography penned by Andreas Helmedach and Markus Koller. The authors stress the departure from the once embedded view of Ottoman era as a tyrannical and alien rule by the Turks (*Fremdherrschaft der Türken*, p. 27), and describe the gradual incorporation of Ottoman studies into the global discussion on empire-making, fabrication of kingship, sacralization of power, and – last but not least – confessionalization, with frequent references to influential works by Peter Burke and Tijana Krstić. Dwelling on relevant literature, the authors also stress mutual benefits drawn by the Ottoman state and Orthodox church from their cooperation in the Balkans, and a high level of legitimacy enjoyed by the Ottoman dynasty in the eyes of its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century non-Muslim subjects. They also pose a highly relevant and provoking question, whether the Ottoman support for a Slav Orthodox patriarchate, reestablished in 1547 with the support of Mehmed Sokollu, should not be regarded as yet another element of confessionalization, in which the state supported a local church thus gaining in return its cooperation (pp. 39–41). Invoking the monograph by Baki Tezcan, devoted to socio-political transformation within the Ottoman Empire in the years 1580–1826¹, the authors observe that the following period brought a gradual loss of legitimacy, suffered by Ottoman sultans in the eyes of their Christian subjects, whose culmination was marked by Serbian and Greek insurrections, dated in 1804 and 1821, respectively. While interesting and provoking, this overview by Helmedach and Koller reveals yet another conceptual weakness of the volume under review. Based mostly on extant literature, the text provides a welcome introduction to general non-specialized readership, whereas it is of little use for Ottomanists who have been long familiar with the invoked authors and texts. This may suggest that the whole book is addressed to popular audience, yet this is

¹ Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire. Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2010); cf. also my review article in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, lxvi, 1 (2013), 117–25.

not the case, as most of other texts included in the volume are too specific and too detailed to satisfy a reader with generalist interests, who would like to familiarize them with the recent scholarship devoted to Ottoman Southeastern Europe. This internal inconsistency of the volume will be further addressed in my final remarks.

Chapter One also includes an article by Markus Koller who addresses various challenges to the Ottoman sultans' legitimacy caused by the lack of new conquests and military defeats suffered in the eighteenth century. At the same time, Koller observes that the empire's decentralization and the empowerment of provincial elites paradoxically contributed towards the state's very survival throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as these elites served as a clamp (*Klammer*) linking the centre and the peripheries. This thesis, which is not novel in Ottoman historiography, is stressed by the article's title: 'Vom Reich der Osmanen zum Osmanischen Reich'. The following article by Machiel Kiel and Hedda Reindl-Kiel addresses the ethno-religious changes in the district of Kalkandelen (Tetovo) in Ottoman Macedonia from the medieval era till 1900, including the highly politicized issues of the Islamization and 'Albanization' of the region. This little masterpiece shows how a meticulous microhistorical research, combined with a *longue durée* perspective, may help to solve macrohistorical questions in a balanced and unbiased way. The last two articles in Chapter One, penned by Norbert Spannenberger and Karl-Peter Krauss, focus on the colonization and settlement of Habsburg Hungary, mostly by Serbs and Germans, after its conquest from the Ottomans at the end of the seventeenth century. It is laudable that both authors try to bridge the Ottoman and Habsburg periods: for instance, Spannenberger observes that the region between Mohács and Szigetvár had been already colonized with Serbs by the Ottoman authorities in the years 1648–88 (p. 100), and Krauss admits that – contrary to contemporary Habsburg imperial propaganda – the newly acquired lands were in no way uninhabited ("keineswegs eine 'tabula rasa'", p. 134). The latter statement is hardly a new discovery for Ottomanist historians, but one is glad to see that at last it has also penetrated non-Ottomanist historiography. Still, on seeing the term *Befreiungskriege*, used by Spannenberger in reference to the Habsburg conquest of Hungary in the years 1683–99 (p. 105), in which thousands of Muslims, Jews, and Hungarian Protestants were slaughtered or expelled by the victors, one cannot help but sarcastically observe that political bias, of which Southeastern European historians are frequently accused, sits well within the German academia, too.

Chapter Two, devoted to economy ('Wirtschaft'), opens with a text on structures and institutions, penned by Markus Koller and Ralf C. Müller. The authors first recall the old discussions on Ottoman feudalism and the place of Ottoman Empire in global economy, and then examine the influence of new institutional economics and new cultural history, with their stress on institutions,

structures and networks, on present-day scholars who study the Ottoman economic past. Then follow four detailed case studies: on the continuity and discontinuity in pre-Ottoman and Ottoman mining in northern Macedonia (Mihailo S. Popović), on artisans in eighteenth-century Istanbul and their reactions to various opportunities and challenges (Suraiya Faroqhi), on the commercial activity of Ottoman non-Muslim subjects and their trade networks, extending to Western, Central, and Eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Katerina Papakonstantinou), and on the port of Varna and its multiethnic population in the nineteenth century (Neriman Ersoy-Hacısalihoğlu). Interesting on their own, these articles would have certainly benefited if their subjects were less dispersed from each other and if the chapter were better structured, shaped by a common framework, common scholarly questionnaire and cross references. As it is now, it can be best summarized by a conclusion by Faroqhi that can be found at the end of her article, stressing a much larger agency and independence of Ottoman subjects versus the sultan's bureaucracy than it has been believed by scholars thirty or forty years ago (p. 217).

Chapter Three, devoted to religious cultures ('Religionskulturen'), begins with an introductory essay by Denise Klein and Stefan Rohdewald. The authors aim to replace the worn out notion of 'Ottoman tolerance' by addressing, in corresponding order, religious structures, practices, and discourses extant in the early modern Ottoman Empire. The term 'confessionalization', already used in reference to Ottoman realities in Chapter One, is also applied and discussed in Chapter Three. According to the authors, not only the Sunni clergy, belonging to the Hanafi school, benefited from the cooperation with the Ottoman state, but also the Orthodox patriarchate in Constantinople turned into a quasi *Landeskirche* in regard to Ottoman Orthodox Christians, and its zone of influence was substantially enlarged thanks to Ottoman conquests (p. 278). Similar cooperation can be witnessed between the Ottoman government and the Armenian and Jewish religious leaders, although the authors distinguish early modern realities from the nineteenth-century ones and are aware of anachronisms that once distorted our view of the so-called *millet* system (p. 276).² Drawing on rich literature, to mention only the works by Rossitsa Gradeva, Molly Green, Kaspar von Greyerz, Marlene Kurz, Gerhard Podskalsky, and Mihailo Popović, the authors also trace alternative phenomena and trends that ran parallel with confessionalization, namely flexible religious identities and interconfessionalism, embodied by such prominent personalities as Mara Branković – the wife of Sultan Murad II, the 'Calvinist patriarch' Kirillos Loukaris, as well as thousands of inhabitants of Ottoman Europe whose names have not been recorded. Of special interest is a remark, comparing reactions of Orthodox hierarchs to the

² On the *millet* system, see also the article by Eleni Gara in the present issue.

challenges of Catholic Counterreformation in Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire (p. 304).³ The authors also touch upon an under-researched topic, namely religious skepticism and indifference. This last issue is further addressed in the following article by Tobias P. Graf, being a case study devoted to the person of Ladislaus Mörth, a Christian renegade who deserted from the Habsburg embassy in Istanbul in 1593 and entered Ottoman service. The following article by Stefan Rohdewald relates the transfers of relics of Orthodox saints between various religious centres and the ways of their remembering in different regions of Southeastern Europe. For instance, after the Ottoman conquest of the Bulgarian Kingdom, the remains of the Greek saint Paraskeva (Petka) were transferred in 1396 from Târnovo to Serbia. After the fall of Belgrade to Sultan Suleyman these relics traveled to Constantinople, and in 1641 they were successfully claimed by the hospodar of Moldavia and arrived at Jassy. Hence for a time this saint could have been claimed by the Greek, the Bulgarian, the Serbian, and the Moldavian/Romanian Orthodox churches and accordingly remembered (p. 344). In analogy, the Rila monastery shifted its allegiance between Ohrid, Târnovo and Peć, and its holy saint Ivan Rilski could be alternatively claimed by Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian hierarchs and – later on – historiographies, while both Petka and Ivan were also venerated in Montenegrin Cetinje. Rohdewald refers to such shifts and shared cults as trans-church (*transkirchlich*) or trans-ethnic (*transethnisch*), in opposition to trans-confessional and trans-religious ones that have so far received more scholarly attention. To be sure, the latter phenomena also existed in Southeastern Europe, to mention only the cult of St. Petka that also extended to Catholic regions, the popular cult of Sarı Saltuk shared by the local Muslims and Christians, or the veneration of St. Naum of Ohrid among Albanian Bektashis. Also in this case, the author invokes a parallel with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the eastern provinces of the Polish Crown, where shared cults could be observed among Roman Catholics, Uniates and Orthodox Christians (p. 362). The fourth article in Chapter Three, penned by Ioannis Zelepos, discusses ambivalent attitudes of the Orthodox church towards the belief in vampires, which was assumed to be notorious in Southeastern Europe. The fifth article by Denise Klein, already mentioned above, compares narrations on the conversion to Islam of two khans of the Golden Horde, Berke (r. 1257–67) and Özbek (1313–41), composed by a sixteenth-century Central Asian chronicler Ötemiş Hacı, and an eighteenth-century Crimean Tatar chronicler ‘Abd al-Gaffar Kırımı. Klein persuasively demonstrates how shamanistic and folk elements, still present in the earlier version, were edited

³ Cf. an article by Tomasz Kempa on a “Polish-Lithuanian episode” in Loukaris’s life, in *idem*, ‘Kyrillos Loukaris and the confessional problems in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the turn of the seventeenth century’, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 104 (2011), 103–28.

out from the later one, whose author paid attention that his story conform with orthodox Islam. Still, neither the author nor the editors have explained the reason why this highly interesting text has been included in a volume focused on Ottoman Europe.

Chapter Four, devoted to perception of time and historical interpretations ('Zeitwahrnehmung – Geschichtsdeutungen'), is perhaps the most original in the book. It opens with a collective text by Dennis Dierks, Konrad Petrovsky and Nikolas Pissis, announcing possible research fields, from different concepts of time and religiously motivated time-systems, to individual perceptions of time. In a following article, Konrad Petrovsky asks rhetorically whether there existed a historiography of the Ottoman Empire, written by Ottoman Christian subjects, and provides a typology of various literary genres: from traditional narratives that situated the Ottoman state within the divine plan of creation and salvation, to chronicles listing merely the names of successive sultans and sometimes provided with their portraits, to genuine historiographic works, whose authors aimed at explaining the causes of political changes. Although the author agrees that the last genre was born only in the eighteenth century, and the chronicle by Dimitrie Cantemir has been justly regarded as a milestone, he nonetheless observes that Cantemir was not alone. Moreover, not all contemporary Christian authors, who discussed the Ottoman history, shared Cantemir's persuasion and hope that the empire was destined to fall, and some of them remained loyal to the sultan. The following article by Nikolas Pissis focuses on apocalyptic views contained in the texts of Greek authors who were active in the Ottoman era. The author provides an interesting link between these early modern views and more recent phenomena, traditionally associated with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century modernization processes, such as the "fixation on Russia as a liberator" and the Greek nationalism, including the *Megali Idea* (p. 483). In the author's view, these seemingly distant ideas, put into life by local elite members as well as the agents of Venice, Spain and Russia, aimed at awakening the subversive potential that was rooted in the plebeian mind (p. 484). The closing article by Gülçin Tunali examines a unique work by Mahmud Efendi, an Ottoman mufti from Athens, who in the early eighteenth century composed a history of Athens that was focused on its ancient past and recalled the names of its philosophers and mythological heroes, including Theseus. Observing that the Greek and Byzantine past played a larger role in the self-perception of Ottoman elites than it has been admitted in the Turkish nationalist historiography of the early Republican era, the author nonetheless concedes that his observation is less valid in regard to Greek mythology, and the work by Mahmud Efendi did not exert much influence on his contemporaries. It is only during the Tanzimat era, when the interest in Hellenism arose among the Ottoman elite members, who began to create a 'cultural memory' of the ancient past, including the Greek past and Greek mythology.

To resume, the book under review contains many interesting articles that bring new vistas on the past of 'Ottoman Europe' and reexamine mutual relations between its Muslim and non-Muslim (especially Orthodox Christian) inhabitants. Yet this book's main flaw is its incoherence and the lack of correspondence between its different parts. Especially the first two chapters, devoted to *Herrschaft* and *Wirtschaft*, respectively, contain articles that rarely communicate with each other, no common questions are addressed by their authors and there are hardly any cross-references, not to mention common conclusions. Some of the articles, especially on demographic changes in Macedonia and on the artisans in eighteenth-century Istanbul, may have equally well been placed in another chapter, devoted to *Gesellschaft*, that is missing in the volume. Several articles are devoted neither to *Frühneuzeit*, nor to *Südosteuropa*, and the criteria of their inclusion in the volume are not explained. The fact that this book has as many as four editors further adds to blurring their responsibility. Apart from a rather short general introduction, hardly any efforts are visible to provide the book with a more consistent shape. The volume has no conclusion, no index, no information about the authors is provided. In short, this is a textbook example how a scholarly collective volume should *not* be edited. Although the volume contains a number of valuable studies and its last two chapters are slightly more coherent, these studies would have probably fared better and gained a larger audience in a scholarly journal or a better-focused collective volume. A partial explanation why such a sloppy edition has come to light is provided by an attached information that it has resulted from a project financed by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. Sadly, in our times it happens more and more often that half-digested volumes are hastily published in order to satisfy the formal requirements of the grant-givers.

In seventeenth-century Poland, a popular literary genre was the so-called *silva rerum*, literally a "forest of things" whose compiler recorded any event that he deemed worth remembering; hence we find side by side news on a naval battle in the Mediterranean, a civil war in England, and a birth of a three-headed piglet in rural Mazovia. Today, such collections are valued by scholars studying the mental world of early modern Polish nobles, despite their somewhat chaotic internal making. Perhaps the book under review, despite its shortcomings that have been addressed above, will likewise serve future generations of historians as an illustration of realities that conditioned the academic life of early twenty-first-century Europe.

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