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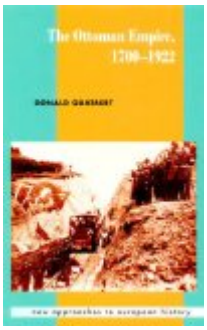
Donald Quataert. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xxii + 205 pp. $60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-63328-4.



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Overview of the Empire in a Time of Change

Donald Quataert's books and articles have become indispensable for those specializing in the modern history of the Ottoman world. Some of his recent titles include *Ottoman Manufacturing In The Age Of The Industrial Revolution* (1993) and *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (1994), with Halil Inalcik. The latter book may be considered the best work on the economic history of the Ottoman Empire. His new work is published as part of Cambridge University Press's New Approaches to European History series. Observing the format of this series, Quataert provides a concise but authoritative survey of the most important trends during the later years of the Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922.

In addition to the text, necessary annexes for a better understanding Ottoman history such as a genealogy of the Ottoman dynasty, chronology of Ottoman history, maps, plates, figures, and a guide to pronunciation of Turkish words are provided. Thematic bibliographies follow each chapter, with entries especially marked for students new to the subject. One observation must be made concerning recommended readings, in that they are exclusively English-language publications. Besides the titles listed, many titles in French and German should have been included in a thematic bibliographical list of Ottoman history, even in a book written primarily for undergraduate and graduate students.

A book written at a level and length accessible to advanced school students, undergraduates, and general readers should begin (as does chapter 1) by answering the question "Why study Ottoman history?" (pp. 1-12). South-East European students understand very well the necessity of studying Ottoman history in universities, because this region was directly affected by the long Ottoman rule. But what about Western students? Although for some, Ottoman history is interesting by virtue of its being exotic, Quataert has tried and succeeded in emphasizing the Empire's vital role in the history of Europe and the Middle East as a whole.

"The Ottoman Empire from its origins until 1683" is the subject of chapter 2, which provides the necessary background for understanding Ot-

toman history, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. "The era from 1300 to 1683," Quataert says, "saw the remarkable expansion of the Ottoman state from a tiny, scarcely visible, chiefdom to an empire with vast territories" (p. 13). It is not only an epoch of expansion, but of consolidating the Ottoman state. In explaining the Ottoman Empire's remarkable achievements during this early period, the author places more emphasis on Ottoman efforts, and less on its enemies' problems. In this respect, he looked at the methods of gradual conquest (the subject of Halil Inalcik's famous 1954 article[1]), the rising importance of firearms, the devshirme system, etc.

The principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, as well as the Crimean khanate, are given as examples of the Ottoman "linear progression from alliance to vassalage to incorporation" in Southeastern Europe (p. 27). Two observations need to be made, however. First, in order to be complete, this list must include Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and the principality of Transylvania. Second, the Ottomans imposed direct control in Moldavia and Wallachia in the first half of the sixteenth century, after Suleyman the Magnificent's expeditions to Hungary and Transylvania (1526, 1540) and Moldavia (1538)[2], not in the eighteenth century. Moreover, in my view, the suggested bibliography of this chapter does not mention other necessary works, such as Colin Imber's *The Ottoman Empire: 1300-1481* (1990), and Gilles Veinstein's *Etat et Soci=t= dans l'Empire Ottoman, XVIe-XVIIIe si=cles. La Terre, la Guerre, les Communaut=s* (1994).

The era of political and military success was followed by a long period of decline, marked first by the "wars of contraction" with the Habsburg Empire and later, more especially with Russia. Decline began, in Quataert's view, with the failed siege of Vienna in 1683. Let us say that many Ottomanists basically agree that economic decay caused the military and political decline, which started in the second part of the sixteenth century. The political elite of the imperial center looked for solutions--even religious ones--to political and military weakness, but were unsuccessful (pp. 37-53).

Economic and military decline continued into the nineteenth century, marked by internal rebellions and territorial losses after wars of contraction in the Balkan, Anatolian, and Arab provinces alike. This process was accompanied by an ongoing transformation of the Ottoman society, called "modernization" by many historians, a term Quataert seems to avoid. However, the facts are more important than terminology, and Quataert emphasizes them very well. During this era, an expansion of the Ottoman state's bureaucratic apparatus took place. At the same time, European capital overtook control of the Ottoman economy, by investing in commerce, transportation, and urban facilities.

"Transformation of Ottoman state-subject and subject-subject relationships" (p. 3) as well as problems of nationalism marked Ottoman policy in the nineteenth century (pp. 54-73). Once again, in my view, two remarkable works should have been included in the suggested bibliography, even if their authors have different opinions. These are Bernard Lewis's *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961), and Roderic H. Davison's *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (1973).

Several pages are devoted to the place of the Ottoman Empire in the international order from 1700 to 1922. In this chapter, the author briefly surveys Ottoman relations with Europe, Iran, India, and Central Asia. Quataert emphasizes the role of caliphate as a special tool in Ottoman diplomacy, and distinguishes the main aspects of the evolution from the occasional to the permanent methods of Ottoman diplomacy. The contents of this chapter ("The Ottomans and Their Wider World") require some detailed observations.

Quataert cites the treaty of Zsitvatorok of 1606 as being unusual as the first occasion of diplomacy between equals from the Ottoman per-

spective. It should be noted, however, that in this treaty sultan Ahmed I addressed the Habsburg monarch only as *Nemce casari*, a title inferior to that of padishah. If it is necessary to identify a moment when the sultan started to treat a foreign monarch as an equal, this would be in the first part of the sixteenth century, when Suleyman the Magnificent addressed Francis I of France with the title padishah. This is not the place to discuss which was the first capitulation granted by the Ottoman sultans to Western powers. Anyway, neither the legendary ahdname of 1352 to Genoa nor the unratified project of 1536 treaty between Suleyman the Magnificent and King Francis I of France needed to be quoted in this context.

Also, Quataert's affirmation that "the ruler granted capitulations to foreigners in a unilateral, non-reciprocal, manner" must also be discussed (p. 77). Generally, one can say there are two opposing historiographical opinions concerning the legal and diplomatic characteristics of Imperial charters (ahdname-i hmyn). These are unilateral documents or bilateral ones. These distinctions originated in the definition of official documents from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries using modern legal criteria; in ignoring the specificity of the Ottoman chancery; in extending a particular case (certain ahdnames granted to France, nineteenth century commerce treaties) to the whole system of capitulatory regime; or even in outlining the notions "unilateral" and "bilateral" by inconsistent criteria. Taking into consideration the diplomatic form of Ottoman texts of peace agreements concluded with states of the boundary area, and their translations following the prototype, one can say that the ahdnames granted to Venice, Hungary, Poland, and the Habsburg Empire had an obvious unilateral character. By an ahdname the sultan was the only person who acknowledged the result of negotiations ("let it be known") and ordered the "clauses" of peace and trade agreement (the "illustrious sign commands"; "I have given this Imperial charter and I have ordered that"). These formulas expressed one way, according to the criteria of diplomacy, by which a document issued by a sovereign was characterized as a unilateral one. The Italian or Latin translations of these texts prove the existence of a specific Western view, contrary to the Ottoman one.

Yet, by their contents, certain ahdnames could be considered "bilateral peace-settlements," if they included clauses formulated in a counterpart manner, sometimes called "conditional privileges" or "reciprocal rights." These types of articles were stipulated in the ahdnames granted especially to states of the frontier zone, such as Venice, Hungary, Poland, the Habsburg Empire, or Russia.

The question of validity of the peace agreements concluded by the Ottomans also needs to be more clearly explained. The ahdnames which confirmed the conclusion of peace with European rulers were valid for only a limited period of time. The life of the agreement was either an indicated number of years, or for the length of the reigns of the two signing rulers. The former practice observed the rule of Islamic law which prohibited conclusion of perpetual agreements with non-Muslim states, recommending that they indicate a fixed and specified number of years in the compact text. The latter followed a medieval custom under which there was no idea of the perpetuity of official documents after the issuing ruler's death.

The first category should include the ahdnames granted to Hungary, Poland (up to 1528), or the Habsburg Empire, with whom the character of truces was clearly underlined by a certain number of years written in the text (one to ten years in the Ottoman-Hungarian treaties, between 1421 and 1519; from two to five years in the Ottoman-Polish treaties, between 1489 and 1528; eight years in the Ottoman-Habsburg treaties from 1547 to 1591). The treaty of Zsitvatorok (1606) opened the sequence of the seventeenth-century Ottoman-Habsburg peace agreements whose validity was expanded to twenty or twen-

ty-five years. This list concludes with the treaties completed in the first half of the eighteenth century, i.e., those of Passarowitz in 1718 for twenty-four years and of Belgrade in 1739 for twenty-seven years. A short-time validity, that is between three months and three years and which reflects a state of open conflict, occurred with the truces with Spain in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The second category of ahdnames, issued by the Ottoman chancery from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, included no specific number of years for its validity. The addressees were South-East European tribute-payers or certain European powers, e.g., Venice, Poland, France, England, Holland, etc. In these cases, the force of these charters was limited to the granting sultan's reign, the successor not being obliged to observe documents which bore the forerunner's signature (*tugra*). Moreover, in this second type of ahdnames, the Ottomans were accustomed to condition their observance of a pact upon the behavior of the other party. Sultans, who had obliged themselves by oath, did not violate the peace stipulations so long as the Christian princes had not broken them first. Thus, the period of validity lost any time delimitation, depending in practical terms on the Ottoman authorities' will. In this respect, a standard formula can be found in any sixteenth and seventeenth-century ahdnames granted to Venice, France, England, Holland, etc. In Ottoman chancery practice, the validity of ahdnames ended concurrently with the established number of years or the end of the contractors' reigns.

Consequently, if the interests of both parties were in agreement, the renewal of ahdnames was a legal and diplomatic necessity. The renewal of peace agreements when a new sovereign came to the throne was a medieval customary practice, applied also by Ottomans in their relations with the Christian rulers of the frontier area, including Polish kings and tribute-paying princes.[4] Excepting some isolated examples, cited by Quataert (for example, the 1711 treaty with Russia and capitulations granted to France in 1740), only in the second part of the eighteenth century can one can speak of Ottoman permanent peace agreements, which obligated the successors as well as the original contractors.

The next three chapters of this book complete an image of a state, society, and economy in an era of dramatic and irreversible transformations that took place during the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. First, in chapter 6, titled "Ottoman Methods of Rule," Quataert offers in-depth analyses of dynastic legitimation and principles of succession, the Ottoman administration--albeit with an excessive emphasis placed again on the devshirme--and center-province relations (with two case studies: Damascus, 1708-1758, and Nablus, 1798-1840).

A richly detailed chapter ("The Ottoman Economy: Population, Transportation, Trade, Agriculture, and Manufacturing") emphasizes "a complex matrix which relates demographic information on population size, mobility, and location with changes in the significant sectors of the economy." This chapter is followed by an overview of social relations and mobility, both inside and among groups, and includes illustrations that greatly complement the text ("Ottoman Society and Popular Culture"). It is during this period that new public spaces appeared, such as coffee houses and bathhouses, alongside the traditional forms and sites of sociability.

The final chapters seem to have been written in response to the Balkan and Middle East ethnic and religious conflicts of our day. In the last chapter, however, Quataert's claim that "writers, politicians and intellectuals all over the Balkans--in Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, and Serbia--resonate with a terrific hostility to the Ottomans" must be addressed (p. 193). In this respect, it should be noted that there are differences in the attitudes of Romanians, Bulgarians, and Greeks towards the Ottoman era. Excepting early Communist histori-

ography (1950-1960), which saw Ottoman domination only in the darkest terms, Romanian historians generally have not manifested a special hostility to the Ottomans in their works. Moreover Ottoman protection was perceived by Romanians as the best protection against expansion into the Danube region by the great neighboring states, i.e., the Habsburg Empire and Russia.

Both contemporary conflict and co-operation can be explained and understood more fully, at times, by analyzing their historical roots. That is why the work of historians needs to be appreciated by politicians and studied by students. Donald Quataert's book is a useful instrument for understanding the historical evolution of an unsettled part of the European world, as well as of the Islamic world.

Notes

[1]. Halil Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 104-129.

[2]. Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace. The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers*, East European Monographs, no. DLXII. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 2000.

[3]. See also, Roderic H. Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (1954): 844-864 (reprinted in Roderic H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History. The Impact of the West*, Saqi Books, no date, pp. 112-132).

[4]. For details, see Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace*, pp. 233-263 (ch 5., "Ottoman Peace Agreements").

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