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used ancient manuscript illuminations as a source for the scenes decorating these secular objects intended most probably for the emperor, imperial family members or high court officials.

Ancient motifs and models in Byzantine art are further analyzed by Melita Emmanouil in her article Ἡ ἀρχαιότητα στήν ζωγραφική τῶν Παλαιολόγων: Εἰκαστικοί τρόποι, μοτίβα καί εἰκονογραφικά θέματα [The Influence of Antiquity in Palaeologan Painting: Artistic Ways, Motifs and Iconography]. The paper focuses in particular on the stylistic manners of Palaeologan painters and on the adaptation of ancient motifs to fit the Byzantine aesthetic. The author argues that Greek motifs were also used to strengthen Greek consciousness among the population in the period of decline.

The last article in the volume, Ἐπανάχρηση ἀρχιτεκτονικῶν μελῶν τῆς ἀρχαιότητος σέ ἐκκλησιαστικά καί κοσμικά κτήρια τοῦ Μυστρᾶ [Reused Architectural

Elements of the Antiquity in Ecclesiastical and Secular Buildings at Mystras] by Stavros Arvanitopoulos, offers an insight into an ongoing research project in one of the most prominent Byzantine cities of the Peloponnese, Mystras. The author does not propose any definitive conclusions on the reemployment of architectural elements but rather suggests some explanations regarding their original use.

The variety of topics addressed in this volume testifies to the diversity and, consequently, to the significance of the influence of antiquity on Byzantine civilization. It highlights the extent of convergence between the two cultures – Christian and non-Christian – and shows once again how a Christian society looked back to antiquity for motifs and themes, modifying them in such a way as to make them respond to the aesthetical, social, political and philosophical demands of their new users.

PÁL FODOR, *THE UNBEARABLE WEIGHT OF EMPIRE. THE OTTOMANS IN CENTRAL EUROPE – A FAILED ATTEMPT AT UNIVERSAL MONARCHY (1390–1566)*.

BUDAPEST: RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE HUMANITIES,

HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 2015, 175 p.

*Reviewed by Ognjen Krešić\**

Pál Fodor is a prominent Hungarian turkologist and historian who devoted most of his research attention to the history of Ottoman-Hungarian (and later Habsburg) relations and Ottoman rule over territories of the medieval Hungarian kingdom. He is director of the Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

*The Unbearable Weight of Empire. The Ottomans in Central Europe – A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)* is an attempt by the author to reconsider his own previous research, to analyze and reassess trends in the study of the Ottoman

Empire over the last twenty years, and to present to a broader public the results of the Hungarian specialists on Ottoman history. The book consists of an introduction (pp. 7–24) and two chapters (pp. 25–133), and is supplied with a list of references (pp. 135–160) and a combined index of persons, places and terms (pp. 161–175).

The end of the fifteenth and the sixteenth century is one of the most discussed periods in the field of Ottoman studies, but nevertheless it still represents an inspiring

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theme for researchers. The attention this period has been receiving has its negative effects too, as it is often included in broader discussions about the European sixteenth century with only superficial understanding of the Ottoman specificities in comparison to the contemporary western states. This is the reason why the tone of the book, especially the introduction, is often polemical. The author does not reject all the changes to the long-established paradigms about the Ottoman Empire brought about by the so-called imperial or post-colonial turn in Ottoman studies, but he calls for a more nuanced approach. As the author stresses: "the 'Europeanisation' of Ottoman politics and social history coupled with the depiction of the empire as a kind of idealized prototype for today's post-national global ambitions, seems to me to be a highly dangerous route, for under certain conditions it can even lead to the falsification of history" (p. 20). On the one hand, he accepts and welcomes the incorporation of the Ottomans into the studies of Early Modern Europe, because he considers the Empire as one of its constituent and important factors. But on the other hand, he rejects those approaches that seek at all costs to find similarities to the European states and societies, sometimes overlooking or paying inadequate attention to established facts.

In order to present Ottoman-Hungarian relations, with an emphasis on the conquests and policies of sultan Süleyman, Pál Fodor focuses mainly on diplomatic and military history. Adopting a chronological approach in presenting the results of his research, the author develops his main ideas about the Ottoman policies towards European states and the reasons behind some of the most important strategic decisions concerning the future of the empire.

The first chapter, "The Conquest of Hungary and the Road to Vienna (1370s-1530s)" (pp. 25-93),<sup>1</sup> supplies ample and

detailed information not only about the Ottoman-Hungarian wars in the discussed period but also about the foundations of the Ottoman state and military system. Starting with the rule of Bayezid I (1389-1402), the author recognizes in the political and symbolic actions of the Ottoman sultans fairly consistent policies regarding the international position of the empire in the making. Their claim to universal imperial rule was based both on the Islamic tradition and on the idea that the sultans were successors both to the Roman emperors and to the previous Islamic ruling dynasties. Nevertheless, the issue of political supremacy was not the only impulse behind the expansionist policies of the Ottoman rulers; they were also driven by a number of social, economic and military reasons. The question of the causes and methods of Ottoman conquests is a well-researched one, and Pál Fodor offers its concise overview, stressing the importance of: the acquisition of booty and territory for the economic stability and sustenance of the army, the connection of military campaigns with a series of undertakings that ensured domestic stability, and the religious aspects of warfare. While accepting that the *jihad* as an ultimate cause of the creation and growth of the empire is an outdated concept, the author acknowledges that "the religious duty of *jihad* was an important element in Ottoman state ideology, one that was not used exclusively for the subsequent justification and sanctification of secular wars" (p. 45).

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"A Bécsbe vezető út. Az oszmán nagyhatalom az 1520-as években [The road leading to Vienna. The Ottoman great power in the 1520s]", in G. Barta, ed., *Két tárgyalás Sztambulban. Hieronimus Łaski tárgyalása a töröknél János király nevében. Habardanez János jelentése 1528 nyári sztambuli tárgyalásairól* (Budapest 1996), 63-96, and "The *Simurg* and the Dragon. The Ottoman Empire and Hungary (1390-1533)", in I. Zombori, ed., *Fight against the Turk in Central Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century* (Budapest 2004), 9-35.

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<sup>1</sup> As the author notes, this chapter is based on two of his previously published articles:

After a discussion about the general situation in the empire and its development during the first two centuries of its existence, the author proceeds to the main subject of his book, that of the Hungarian-Ottoman rivalry. In his view, there is no doubt that the Ottoman plan from the very outset of hostilities was to conquer the Kingdom of Hungary and that the Hungarians were aware of that. Although weaker of the two belligerent sides, the Hungarian rulers undertook a series of steps to thwart Ottoman thrust into their lands (organization and support of crusades, offensive campaigns in the Balkans, maintenance of buffer states on the borders, fortification and military organization of border defences, conclusion of armistices with the Ottomans, and search for possible allies both in Europe and in Asia). The Hungarian-Ottoman conflict started to develop more decisively after the ascension of sultan Süleyman to the throne in 1520. Dismissing theories of some ottomanists that the incentive for the war came from the West and that it was merely a symbolical conflict between the most powerful rulers in Europe at the time – Charles V Habsburg and Süleyman, Pál Fodor claims that it was the young Ottoman ruler who chose Central Europe as the main field for his Empire's expansion.

Süleyman's father Selim I's obsessive campaigning against Iran did bring vast territories to the Ottomans but it also strained the imperial finances to the limit. Because of that Süleyman decided to make a strategic turn and to resume the military conquest of territories in Europe. Pál Fodor draws attention to the economic importance of the Ottoman Balkan provinces and to the widely held belief of the ruling group that further expansion into Europe was the best way to increase state revenues. At the same time, the situation in Europe was more favourable for the Ottomans than ever before, as the political and military conflict between the Habsburgs and the Valois, accompanied by a growing religious division in Europe,

considerably limited the Hungarians' room for manoeuvre and their chances to find allies. That was the beginning of a conflict that would become one of the defining aspects of Ottoman history.

Pál Fodor argues that sultan Süleyman had from the beginning a more ambitious goal than that of conquering Hungary – he planned to defeat the Habsburgs. Nevertheless, the quick victory over the Hungarian army in 1526 seems to have come as a surprise to the Ottomans and they postponed further conquest of Hungarian lands, a delay that had important consequences. In the author's view, it was then that the Ottomans missed their best opportunity to inflict final defeat to the Hungarian Kingdom and incorporate it into the Empire. Such a conjunction of favourable circumstances had never happened again. Süleyman chose to recognize a Hungarian noble, John Szapolyai, as king and to start a frontal war with the Habsburgs who, after the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, became entangled in Hungarian politics since Ferdinand I Habsburg was also proclaimed king of Hungary. As is well known, this confrontation led to two unsuccessful campaigns against Vienna in 1529 and 1532.

After analyzing all of the advantages, both political and military, that the Ottomans had over their European rivals, the author concludes that Süleyman's policy toward the Habsburgs during the 1530s gradually wiped out all of these advantages and opened the way for a centuries-long struggle. The new decade brought the renewal of Ottoman conflicts against the Spanish fleet in the Mediterranean, against the Portuguese in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and against Iranian forces on the empire's eastern borders. The Ottomans could no longer concentrate only on the northern front, but the sultan was under constant pressure from the military-bureaucratic elite to enable the acquisition of further territory in Europe. Besides that, the ideological aspects of the conquests should not be underestimated

and, possibly, Süleyman's personal vanity; he might have seen Charles V as his only worthy rival.

When the conquest of Hungary was resumed in 1541 the Ottomans captured easily the territories ruled by the late king John Szapolyai, but the Habsburgs had in the meantime strengthened their hold over the northern and western parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. Thus, faced with the strong Habsburg presence and without secured and easily defensible borders, the new province of Buda imposed a considerable drain on Ottoman resources. The rivalries were put on hold for a while when the Ottoman-Habsburg peace was concluded in 1547. But the mistaken European policy of the Ottoman Empire, as Pál Fodor sees it, was firmly set in place by then.

The reasons why the author considers Süleyman's approach to the European front to be faulty are further analyzed in the second chapter, "The Capture of Buda and the Road to Szigetvár" (pp. 95-133).<sup>2</sup> In 1541 the sultan once again decided not to fully erase the existence of the Hungarian state and left the lands east of the river Tisza and Transylvania nominally to the son of king John Szapolyai, John Sigismund. Because he was just a child, the power was in the hands of two Hungarian nobles, Friar George Martinuzzi and Péter Petrovics. Two years later the Ottoman army successfully besieged a number of towns and reached Esztergom, but the campaign failed to completely end the hold of the Habsburgs over the northwestern parts of Hungary. The already mentioned peace concluded in 1547 turned out

to be a new source of conflicts between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. According to this treaty king Ferdinand was obliged to pay 30,000 gold coins, which he viewed as a gift whereas the Ottomans interpreted it as the tribute for the Hungarian lands still in Habsburg possession.

The internal power struggle in the eastern Hungarian lands sparked the renewal of open warfare when George Martinuzzi recognized Ferdinand I's claim to Transylvania and invited Austrian troops. The group of nobles loyal to John Sigismund was defeated in 1550, and the Habsburgs proclaimed their occupation of Transylvania the following year. Pál Fodor gives a very detailed overview of the military campaigns in 1551 and 1552, paying special attention to Süleyman's and his military commanders' tactics. The Ottomans conquered Temesvár and the surrounding region, immediately organizing this territory as the new province of Temeşvar. Instead of continuing their conquest into Transylvania, the commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army Kara Ahmed Pasha decided to act upon suggestions presented by the governor of the province of Buda and to transfer the troops to the northern front in an attempt to finally wrest Upper Hungary from the Habsburgs. Trying to understand the possible reason behind this change of plans, Pál Fodor points to an idea that circulated prominently among the Ottoman ruling elite, namely, that financial stability could be acquired only by incorporating the mines of Upper Hungary. By the end of the hostilities that year it was clear that the decision was a bad one. Neither were important towns in northern Hungary conquered nor was the problem of Transylvania solved. In 1556 Transylvania became an autonomous principality under Ottoman suzerainty and with John Sigismund Szapolyai as its ruler, but the strength of Ottoman rule over it was subject to fluctuations and the Habsburgs continued to exert influence in the region.

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter is based on a study published in: P. Fodor and G. Dávid, "Az ország ügye mindenkéül előtérbe való". A szultáni tanács Magyarországra vonatkozó rendeletei (1544-1545, 1552) ["Affairs of State are Supreme". The Orders of the Ottoman Imperial Council Pertaining to Hungary (1544-1545, 1552)], *História könyvtár. Okmánytárak*, 1 (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2005).

The author uses the course and outcome of these campaigns as one more proof of the mistakes the Ottomans made when planning their expansion. Many military successes notwithstanding, "the absence of clearly defined aims and strategies on the part of the leaders of the empire" led ultimately to failures on all fronts. The fight on five fronts (Hungary, the Mediterranean Sea, the Iranian border, Iraq and Hormuz) proved to be an overly ambitious task even for a state as resourceful as the Ottoman Empire was. "Although the sultan's court failed to abandon the wars of conquests for reasons of power politics and under the pressure of the oversized army and state apparatus, there was evidently a growing awareness of the futility and ever-decreasing profitability of these wars" (p. 127). The inability to prioritize its conflicts and to stick to long-term strategic objectives weakened the empire and brought about the collapse of the so-called classical Ottoman administrative and financial system.

The book is concluded with a concise account of Süleyman's last campaign against the Habsburgs in 1566. The old sultan died

while his forces were besieging the fortress of Szigetvár and even though they were successful, Pál Fodor describes this event as a symbol of the failed Ottoman aspiration for world domination. The successors of the most revered sultan in Ottoman history failed to identify the flaws in his policies and, as the author reiterates, by repeating his mistakes they continued to strain the resources of the empire.

Although the book presented here is not a voluminous one, it provides a good starting point for anyone interested in the history of the Ottoman conquests in Hungary. The author's goal was not to offer an extensive account of the period under study, but rather to sum up the achievements of a decades-long research, condensing in one volume his conclusions about the significance of Ottoman policies towards the Hungarian front for the future of the empire. Frequently taking a polemical approach when discussing the crucial issues, Pál Fodor shows that there still is room for further research and for reassessing the reign and achievements of Süleyman the Lawgiver.

STEPHEN ORTEGA, *NEGOTIATING TRANSCULTURAL RELATIONS IN THE EARLY MODERN MEDITERRANEAN. OTTOMAN-VENETIAN ENCOUNTERS*. ALDERSHOT: ASHGATE PUBLISHING LIMITED, 2014, xiv + 198 p.

*Reviewed by Marija Andrić\**

Studies that deal with contacts between East and West and with the influence of the Islamic world on Europe in general have been growing in number, suggesting new analyses, proposing new answers and raising new questions that deserve closer examination. In his introduction to the book reviewed here, Stephen Ortega points to the need for a more in-depth study of relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, but we cannot subscribe to his view that the subject has been neglected.

Because of the complexity of the subject, many authors have chosen to focus on a particular topic, seeking to examine it as comprehensively and profoundly as possible. In her numerous studies, Maria Pia Pedani has addressed the topic of diplomatic relations between Venice and Constantinople, Ella-Natalie Rothman has analyzed

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\* PhD student, Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade