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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

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

trans-imperial subjects between Venice and Istanbul, and Eric R. Dursteler has focused on the life of the Venetian community in Istanbul. Religious questions concerning Venetian and Ottoman subjects living in borderland areas between the Ottoman Empire and the Venetian Republic have been the focus of Giusepina Minchella's research.

Referring to a study by Paolo Preto (*Venezia e i Turchi*, 1975), Ortega points to the fact that it is mainly concerned with the manner in which Venetian politics and literature presented Ottoman culture and society, and that it fails to address many other aspects of this long history of exchange and cooperation. The main topic that Ortega identifies as being neglected is the Ottoman presence in Venice. This assessment, however, seems to be an overly critical one given that the topic has to a greater or lesser extent been addressed by all of the above-mentioned scholars from the diplomatic, cultural, social and religious aspects. Besides, one should not lose sight of the conception of Preto's book, which is laid out at its very beginning and followed through all chapters. His central concern is the extent to which the Venetians were acquainted with the Ottoman subjects and how that shaped the perception of the Ottoman world in Venetian texts of political and social importance. That is the framework within which Preto approaches the problem meticulously, analyzing some great works of Venetian literature from the pen of travellers, politicians and philosophers. It cannot be said, therefore, that the only aim of his study was to look into the physical presence of Ottomans in Venice, but rather, to pay attention also to notions inspired by travels both of the sultan's subjects to Venice and of Venetians to the Ottoman Empire.

Although the topic of relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire cannot be described as neglected, it has not been fully researched either, as the constantly growing number of historiographical works based on

previously unknown primary sources raises new questions and offers new approaches.

In order to see if Ortega's approach manages to take a step further in this area, one should go through his book chapter by chapter, analyzing its conception and structure.

The first chapter deals with the Ottoman merchant community in Venice. The author brings some already familiar facts about the circumstances surrounding the founding of the first larger facility for the accommodation of Ottoman merchants. The main documents from the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* analyzed there are: the petition for the foundation of a *fondaco* submitted by Francesco di Demetri Lettino, the records of the interrogation of Lettino and his family members, and of the hearing of a Paulina Briani who also provided accommodation to Ottoman merchants.

The second chapter is focused on petitions and other documents which show the types of administrative problems Ottoman subjects sought to solve with the help of the Venetian authorities. This chapter in particular provides a good insight into the life of Ottoman merchants in Venice, considering the fact that they are known to have lived in various private lodgings before the founding of the *fondaco*. In view of our very patchy knowledge of the conditions in which they lived in the city, it should be said that Ortega gives a good overview of the documents which may be used for a more detailed research into this topic. In addition to complaints concerning stolen goods and unpaid debts, and documents relating to the estates of merchants who died in Venice, there are also documents that show that the Venetian Senate had to cope with the problem of insults thrown at Ottoman merchants. The latter problem led to a proclamation being read on the Rialto Bridge in 1574 and again in 1594: it was strictly forbidden to insult or harass Ottoman subjects, under threat of penalty. Information of this nature shows us that it was a matter of great importance

to preserve good relations with the sultan's subjects in order not to jeopardize peaceful relations and trade.

Life along the border between Venice and the Ottoman Empire is the focus of the third chapter. The author describes how the border was crossed in both directions. How easy or difficult it was for a person to convert to other religion and change the way of life depended on the effort of the family and their social status. The border was not always crossed voluntarily but, as some of the described cases show, could have been an act of sheer kidnapping.

The long history of diplomatic relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire has left us a number of primary sources testifying to the influence of Ottoman representatives in the Republic. Describing that influence on the Venetian government's decisions in the fourth chapter, Ortega discusses some of the Porte's documents appealing to the Senate to help resolve a matter. His analysis of some cases of stolen goods or lost property suggests that the Ottoman authority acted efficiently in case of the disappearance of Ottoman possessions or subjects. In such cases, the Senate pursued the matter more vigorously in order to avoid it affecting their relations with the Ottomans.

Conflicts in the Mediterranean are dealt with in the fifth chapter. The author presents some of the reasons why sailing in the Adriatic was hazardous, focusing on the seventeenth century as a period of increasingly frequent attacks on merchant ships. At the centre of his attention is the conflict between Venice and Spain, which caused problems in relations with the Ottomans. The period in question starts with the year 1617, when Spanish galleys attacked Bosnian merchants in the Adriatic, and encompasses the Spanish conspiracy against Venice in 1618, which caused the latter a number of problems and strained its relations with the Ottomans.

After this brief overview of the major topics of Ortega's nook, it is pertinent to analyze whether his book provides new

information and whether the author's approach helps better to understand transcultural relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire.

There seems to be little connection between chapters, they do not seem to be kept together by a unifying idea. The first two chapters devoted to Ottoman merchants in Venice may function as an introduction to a study on the Ottoman merchants' life in Venice, but the third chapter switches to a completely different topic. What Ortega identifies as a shortcoming of Paolo Preto's study is that it devotes a single chapter to Ottoman merchants. Ortega does not devote them more than two. When it comes to the accommodation of Ottoman merchants in Venice, Ortega does not provide any significantly new information. Although he does offer a good introduction and then, in the second chapter, describes some situations that may be illustrative of the Ottomans' life in Venice, he does not elaborate further on this topic. More informative in this respect are studies by, for example, Uggo Tucci, Paolo Preto, Ennio Concina, Ella-Natalie Rothman and Maria Pia Pedani. Ortega's useful contribution to this topic concerns the status of Ottomans as foreigners in Venice. His analysis of sources from the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* shows that it is possible to infer what rights they had when appealing to the Venetian authorities. Regrettably, Ortega has not recognized the crucial potential of this topic for understanding *transcultural relation* between Venetians and Ottomans enough to devote the whole book to it.

Mentioning the theory of "connected histories" (Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia*, 1999), Ortega is of the opinion that Maria Pia Pedani and Cemal Kafadar have managed to present them in their works. The structure of his own study does not manage to reflect his attempt to give a picture of the "connected histories" of Venice and the Ottoman Empire. The only connection between the chapters is that

they all discuss an aspect of relations between Venetians and Ottomans, but the five different aspects of this “connected history” are not given the attention they deserve. As a result, each chapter is but a brief overview of what is already known since his study for the most part deals with problems which have already been more broadly treated by other authors. Ortega also points to problems that require further study.

It should also be noted that the problem that Ortega addresses in the third chapter has been given a more in-depth analysis by Giuseppina Minchella (*Frontiere Aperte. Musulmani, ebrei e cristiani nella Repubblica di Venezia*, Viella 2014). Minchella’s book published the same year as Ortega’s provides a rich account of the religious conversion of Christians, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, and Muslims motivated by various reasons. Ortega presents a few cases of women crossing from Venetian to Ottoman territory and the situations that they had to deal with in order to change their lives. Unlike Giuseppina Minchella’s study, his examples do not provide a wider picture of this phenomenon.

What emerges as the central problem with Ortega’s study is the fact it does not go beyond the results offered by previous research. In order to try to understand his intention choosing this particular approach, one should also look at it in the light of his academic predilections.

Stephen Ortega is an associate professor and director of the Graduate Program in History/Archive Management, he teaches at the History Department at Simmons College in Boston. The focus of his lectures is on Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and world history, and he pursues an interactive teaching style that involves analyzing and discussing a topic with a group of students, with special reference to the ways in which people in the Mediterranean defined their identity over time. Another study Ortega published the same year, this time in co-authorship with Adrian Cole (*The Thinking Past. Questions and Problems in World*

History to 1750, Oxford University Press), is concerned with global history. Structured on the model of teacher/student discussion, it addresses topics such as the origin of war, the features of the empire, technology, religion and trade.

A comparative look at the two books reveals why the one reviewed here is organized the way it is. It comes as a result of the focus of Ortega’s academic interest on working with students and enabling them to develop understanding of key concepts of history. Presenting some of the major problems and aspects of connections between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, the author outlines this “connected history” for his students.

More of a textbook than a research monograph, this book cannot be included among major scholarly works in its field. But, because of the way in which it is structured, with every chapter devoted to a separate aspect of the main topic, it may make useful reading for students who have only just begun to acquaint themselves with the history of the Mediterranean.