PERTEVNIYAL'S MOSQUE REVISITED

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Abstract:
The present paper is an expanded effort to sketch the background to the building of Pertevniyal's mosque in Istanbul (1869–1872) within its contemporary setting and subsequent historical and ideological developments, in order to make the considerable changes and variations in its appreciation understood.

Keywords: Pertevniyal's mosque in Istanbul; Rifāʿī mosque in Cairo; Ottomanism; Ottoman Renaissance; Tanzimat, Islamic architecture; Ottoman architecture; Second Siege of Vienna (1683)

The present paper is an expanded reformulation of some statements made in a recent publication on the relationship between two Circassian princesses and their mosques founded in 1869 in Cairo and Istanbul respectively (Ormos 2022). They are intended to clarify the background to the building of Pertevniyal's mosque in the Aksaray quarter of Istanbul, the historical setting, her choice of site and style. A deeper acquaintance with the highly volatile circumstances, the continuously changing position of the Ottoman Empire within the contemporary political setup and its unsteady relationship with Western Europe, will assist the modern observer to better comprehend the highly controversial ways of defining the mosque's place in the history of Turkish and Islamic art, as well as to obtain a deeper understanding of the relative positions of the Rifāʿī and Aksaray mosques in the evolution of modern architecture both in the Ottoman Empire and in Egypt, as well as in the historical setting of both countries. At the same time, it will no doubt help us understand some of the changes in the relationship between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the course of recent centuries. This paper is dedicated to Tamás, teacher, friend, older brother, colleague, to whom I owe more than I can express and who has been a rock of orientation and comfort for me ever since we first met in 1973 – in other words, for the whole of my adult life.

Pertevniyal's choice of the mosque's site was significant. It was the area where the Janissary corps, whom her late husband Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) had abolished in 1826, used to be garrisoned (Yolac Pollock 2015). In fact, a month after

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the annihilation of the Janissaries Mahmud II also destroyed the Bektashi order of dervishes, who were closely associated with them. Pertevniyal's choice was guided in part by her wish to honour her late husband by setting a memorial to the "Auspicious Incident" (*Vaka-i Hayriye;* وقعة خيرية), as this measure came to be called by Ottoman historians. Driven by the aim of achieving parity with the West or rather of surpassing it, Mahmud II, a gifted politician, realized early on that only substantial reform could even raise a hope of attaining the desired aim. He regarded himself as others also regarded him, as Peter the Great of Russia in his role of Europeanizing his country (Fadeeva 1985:31–32). He followed in the footsteps of Selim III (r. 1789–1807), who embarked on a grand program of transformation (*Nizam-i Cedid* "New Order"). Selim's reforms ushered in a new epoch and paved the way for the *Tanzimat* era (1839–1878).[1] One of the most important ideas, whose role in modernizing the country Mahmud II grasped very early on, perhaps indirectly influenced by the French Revolution, was the equality of peoples and races in the Ottoman Empire, as Ottoman subjects possessing equal rights and obligations. In the middle of the nineteenth century, this idea came to be called the doctrine of "Ottomanism" (*Osmanlılık*). It meant that the Ottoman Empire was conceived as a single uniform society ruled by the Ottoman dynasty, in which every citizen was equal and possessed the same rights and obligations, irrespective of race, religion and nationality, and owed political loyalty to the Ottoman state. In practice, the traditional Ottoman system treated non-Muslim minorities as foreigners. The relationships of the *millet* chiefs with the Ottoman government were principally through the Minister of Foreign Affairs; it was only in 1878 that the situation changed, and relationships were put in the hands of the Minister of Justice (Davison 1963:132, n. 46). However, no matter how much lip service the ruler and the chief state officials paid to the *šarīʿa,* this doctrine openly contravened it and was heavily opposed by large segments of the Muslim population, as became subsequently apparent (Fadeeva 1985:4).[2] It found its first realization in the decrees and politics of Mahmud II and came to full fruition after his death in the *Tanzimat* era. It became more and more popular with the non-Muslim sections of the society as a consequence of their relatively close connections with Western Europe, where modern nations emerged one after the other in the wake of the French Revolution. In the nineteenth century the Sublime Porte was confronted with the complex problem of the presence of ethnic and religious communities in the Empire which had perceptibly overtaken the ruling ethnic group in economic, social and cultural terms, while forced to live in a subordinate position. This situation was made even more delicate by their close ties to the great powers of Western Europe, who made every effort to protect them

[1] On the *Tanzimat,* see Kramers 1934/1993; Davison 2000. On the date of its end, see the latter reference.

[2] On the many-sided role of equality in promoting economic development and progress in the Ottoman Empire, see Fadeeva 1985:26–44, 56–96.

from the Ottoman state, i.e. their own country. Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Âli Pasha (1815–1871) remarked around 1860 that while two thirds of the state's revenue were generated by non-Muslims, who provided the state with much profit in other fields too, they were exploited and not given due respect, being treated as second rate subjects. It is no wonder then – he continues – that they cannot be considered reliable citizens (*Stambul,* 84–85; Fadeeva 1985:88). The ruler and the chief officials strove hard, without however succeeding in achieving complete implementation of this doctrine; it was often obstructed by local authorities among others (Fadeeva 1985:4, 72–78). The promulgation of corresponding laws and regulations resulted in bloody clashes between Muslims and Christians, even pogroms against the latter, as well as armed rebellions against the government. And yet a full implementation of this doctrine would have brought great advantages to the Muslim population. In the traditional system, for example, non-Muslims were not allowed to fight in wars, i.e. to participate in the *ğihād,* which meant that they were exempted from military service. In this way the human toll of protracted wars, especially those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was borne by Muslims alone, mainly those living in the core areas. (Millions of nomadic Arabs, Kurds, mountain dwellers of Albania, Montenegro, etc. were not called up for military service because of the limited sovereignty of the state over them. Fadeeva 1985:74, 86, 115, 230). In consequence, the relative number of Muslims diminished in comparison to non-Muslims. During the expansion of the Empire the number of Christians came considerably to surpass that of Muslims. This was again the case in the era of the great wars in the nineteenth century: in 1875–1876 the number of Christians was higher than that of Muslims (Fadeeva 1985:123).[3] This was a delicate question as the figures fluctuated significantly. Another result of this situation was the increasing backwardness of Muslims as compared to non-Muslims; Christians were more educated and more developed economically and socially than their Muslim fellow-citizens. They were quicker to adopt modern ideas in various fields because they were in contact with Western Europe. The overall result was that a relatively backward minority ruled over a more developed but underprivileged majority, which – in addition – enjoyed the ever greater protection of Western powers. The situation was delicate and called for urgent reform. With the growing impact of European nationalism, Christians were irritated by the arbitrary actions of the Ottoman administration and by their own underprivileged position, while Muslims resented European interference in the affairs of the Empire in favour of Christians. The continuous great territorial losses were not only humiliating for the Empire but posed grave economic, social and even theological problems. Muslim believers who did

[3] This situation changed appreciably after the Treaty of Berlin (1878), with the loss of Serbia, Romania, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Major resettlements of Muslims took place in these years, while many Armenians and Greeks left the country. Fadeeva 1985:193–195.

not want to live under the rule of infidels poured into the remaining core territories in great numbers, where they had to be accommodated and cared for, representing a great burden on state and population alike. For instance, after the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and its sequels their number reached approximately 150 thousand in Istanbul alone (Fadeeva 1985:132).

In the course of his efforts at reform, Mahmud II had to drastically curb the influence of the main conservative power centres. These were the corporate body of religious scholars, the *ulema,* the mystical religious orders of the *dervishes* and the Janissary corps. They were closely interconnected and exerted a strong influence on the population, especially on the less educated strata, which made up its overwhelming majority. The *ulema* and the *dervishes* were deeply integrated into the Ottoman state, providing its main support. (Three great rulers – Mehmed II, Selim I and Süleyman the Magnificent – were members of religious orders themselves.) These bodies were the main strongholds of the opposition against Western ideas and the Westernization of the country in general. There were two main reasons behind their fierce opposition. Notwithstanding the ubiquitous official declarations paying due tribute to the *šarīʿa,* the new laws and decrees openly contravened it, and this was evident to all observers at the time, while religious law had not ceased to occupy a central place in the minds and life of the population. Many believers openly accused the Sultan of infidelity when referring to him as *Padishah Giaour* or *Ghiaour-Padishah* (Farley, *Turks,* 185–186; Macdonald, *Turkey,* 37–38; Fadeeva 1985:46, 49–50, 53). These bodies were not ready to relinquish their power over the faithful. As a whole, the general population opposed Westernization because it considered its features alien, even inimical, to the religion of Islam, to the traditional values, habits and ways of life. Thus, it is wholly understandable that the dissolution, i.e. annihilation, of a powerful military body with deep roots in the population and closely intertwined with other equally influential power centres, was an undertaking fraught with extreme danger, even on a personal level, for the ruler. The decrees and rulings issued by Mahmud II already contained the basic elements of the *hatt-ı şerif* of Gülhane of 1839, which officially initiated the reforms of the *Tanzimat* after his death, although their roots could be traced back to the Westernization efforts of the eighteenth century. This was then further developed by the *hatt-ı hümayun* of 1856. From the reforms of Mahmud II emerged the doctrine of Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) in the middle of the nineteenth century, as we have already seen. The social basis of the reforms was limited; there was considerable opposition to them, and many contradictions accompanied their application. They were never fully implemented. The head tax (*ğizya/ḫarāğ*) levied upon non-Muslims was never abolished. Equality meant obligatory military service for Christians and Jews alike but even the basic details could not be agreed upon: whether they were to serve in detached special units under their own commanders or intermingled among their Muslim fellow-citizens under the command of Muslims. As for Muslims, even the idea of serving under Christian commanders seemed an abomination. Even the staunchest promoters

of reforms, such as (Mehmed Emin) Âli Pasha (1815–1871) or (Keçecizade Mehmed) Fuad Pasha (1814–1869), insisted that power must remain in the hands of Muslims, irrespective of equality and reforms.[4] Ottomanism was based on the concept of equality of all citizens and national as well as patriotic loyalty to an Ottoman nation and an Ottoman fatherland. However, this attitude was unacceptable to the Muslim "majority" of the Empire, and the "minorities" rejected it too, preferring their own particular nationalisms, while drifting towards separation. Ultimately, Ottomanism was unrealizable, of limited duration and impact (Lewis 1961:2, 214, 218).

The 1870s saw an abandonment of the *Tanzimat*.[5] With the disappearance of highly influential reformers of the 1850s and 1860s such as Âli Pasha and Fuad Pasha, traditionalist circles gradually overcame the promoters of reform. Ottomanism, which had served as the founding doctrine of the *Tanzimat,* retained its place to a certain degree in the arsenal at the disposal of the ruling strata, but it lost meanwhile its former appeal and influence. The emerging nationalism of the Turks and other nationalities of the Empire was its main antagonist in the ideological struggles of the period. On the other hand, Ottomanism impeded the development of Turkish nationalism ("Turkism"), which was a complex and protracted process. However, the application of the concepts of "nation", "national" and "nationalism" to the Ottoman Empire is not without problems because they meant something different both in Western and Central Europe and could be applied to the Ottoman Empire only with difficulty for differences in history, social and religious conditions (Lewis 1961:338–339). In actual fact, these were concepts imported from Western Europe. The victory of traditionalism over the reforms of the *Tanzimat* was partly due to the fact that the implemented reforms fell short of expectations. Towards the end of the 1860s the tenets of Panislamism gained a certain popularity; with the death of the great reformers, Âli Pasha and Fuad Pasha, they became very influential, partly as a reaction to the Westernizing measures of the *Tanzimat* reforms. The growth of Panslavism among the Slavic peoples in European Turkey, the results of European expansion and the humiliating territorial losses in the Balkans greatly fostered the spread of Panislamism, which was not home-grown but imported from outside and served to support and develop the central power, especially that of Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876). When the failure of the admission of Christians to the army became evident, and Ottomanism as a whole did not fulfil the great expectations attached to it, the government made substantial efforts to base central power on the Muslim population of the Empire instead. The period between 1871 and 1876 can be regarded as a period of transition, in which the three doctrines of Ottomanism, Panislamism and nationalism ("Turkism") simultaneously defined the

[4] On Fuad Pasha, see Lewis 1961:115–116.

[5] The year 1878 is often regarded as its end, although opinions differ on this point; see n. 1. above. Cf. also Fadeeva 1985:98–99.

ideology and politics of the Sublime Porte. Then under Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) Panislamism became the official ideology of the Empire (Lewis 1961:334–337; Fadeeva 1985:130–201). In general, the doctrines of Ottomanism, Panislamism and nationalism ("Turkism"), which after all were mutually exclusive, developed in a fine interplay.

Pertevniyal's choice of a style for her mosque, Ottoman Renaissance, was significant. In fact, it can be said to have been an application of Ottomanism to architecture, thereby also making a tribute to her late husband, in so far as the mosque combined Ottoman motifs, including some from Bursa, and other Islamic (Seljukid, Mughal) elements, with a vast array of European features such as Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Classical, *Empire* and "Moorish". By freely picking its constituent parts from a wide range of Western European styles along with components of Islamic provenance, Ottoman among them, this style defined Ottoman architecture as a full-grown genre possessing equal rights within the dominant Western European art scene (Ersoy 2015:131–184, 198–199, esp. 132–133). In other words, Ottoman Renaissance was the architectural equivalent of the concept based on the equality of religions and races as prescribed by the doctrine of Ottomanism. From another point of view, this attitude was tantamount to the claim that there was no "limited or partial Westernization" (cf. Lewis 1961:228–229, 262). This was a long way from the Second Siege of Vienna of 1683, when the Ottoman Empire was at the height of its territorial extension. Not only had the Ottomans reached the gates of Vienna; shortly before that date Poland had been forced to cede Podolia and Western Ukraine to the self-assured Sultan. Ever since first crossing the Bosphorus, the classical area of Ottoman expansion had been in the West (Lewis 1961:25), sometimes disturbed and impeded by developments on the Eastern borders. After the failure of the Siege territorial recession began, which was slow and intermittent, yet continuous and inexorable. There was a gradual swing in the balance of power in favour of Western Europe. This progressive decline and recession culminated in the Empire's ultimate fall and abolition in 1922.[6] The failure of the Siege itself was

[6] A new school has emerged recently which rejects the "Ottoman decline paradigm" as obsolete and unfounded, branding it a "myth" and replacing it with other theses, e.g., the assumption of repeated cases of "crisis and adjustment". There can be no doubt that the precise course of the history of the Ottoman Empire and its interpretation have been enriched with many important details by the proponents of this thesis, yet they fail to account for the gradual shrinking of the Empire after the Siege of Vienna of 1683, the continuous and humiliating military defeats resulting in losses of important territories one after the other, the almost uninterrupted defeat and withdrawal of the Imperial Ottoman forces, the growing gap between the performance of the Ottoman army and that of Western forces, ultimately leading to total collapse after World War I. In actual fact, it was due to internal quarrels among European states and Western geopolitical interests that the Ottoman Empire survived for so long and did not collapse a century earlier at least; one or more European states were always interested in preserving "the Sick Man on the Bosphorus" for geopolitical reasons and thus

certainly not the direct cause of decline – after all, the Christian victory came within a hair's breadth – but it was a conspicuous sign of an epochal change of direction in the course of Ottoman history caused by numerous factors. If Vienna had fallen it would have meant a great blow to the Christian cause and represented a temporary setback, yet it would not have altered the course of history and could not have saved the Ottoman Empire because its decline was caused by a complex network of factors.[7]

The end of territorial expansion was not simply a minor wavering in the successful propagation of the true faith. Rather, it was a deadlock that posed an existential threat, boding ill for the future of the Empire. In fact, the Ottoman military-political system was based on the continuous availability of new territory which the Sultan could give to new members of the army and state servants as temporary land grants (fiefs): they became their usufructuaries without possessing them (Ágoston 1992:23, 27; cf. Lewis 1961:26). It is hardly an exaggeration to say that constant expansion was "the very *raison d'être* of its statehood", as has been claimed (Lewis 1961:26).[8] Military campaigns also meant great opportunities for looting and the seizure of booty, which Ottoman soldiers saw as their due and prerogative; they would sharply protest, even enforce these rights by revolt, when they were not available.

A decline in this system was bound to result in far-reaching and complex difficulties in the military, economic and political fields as well as in the administration, ultimately leading to collapse. It was around this time, too, that the Empire began to lag behind Western Europe in warfare, and the gap was widening. A "revolution in warfare" was under way in Western Europe, affecting various fields of military affairs in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. The Ottomans were not able to keep up with the ascendant Christian side.[9] The Ottomans employed irregular forces in great numbers from among Southern Slav and Tatar marauders, who could be regarded as "masters of senseless destruction and devastation on a world scale" inflicting much more suffering and misery upon their victims than was necessary or usual in Western Europe at the time, where a growing tendency to employ regular

actively interfered to save it (see below). Cf. Ágoston 2021:12–14. There is an informative entry on the "Ottoman decline thesis" on *wikipedia,* which can be consulted *with due caution*.

[7] For a tentative list of these, see Lewis 1961:21–39.

[8] The Ottoman Empire, which depended on continuous territorial expansion, was *in this respect* not unlike Nazi Germany in the twentieth century, whose economy also depended on the continuous opening up of new economic resources by conquering new countries, one after the other. Therefore, it was not sheer imperialism and Aryan ideology that induced Hitler to invade his neighbours one after the other, wage war against them and annex them, instead of being content with his not inconsiderable achievements in stabilizing the German economy after seizing power; it was first and foremost a question of compelling economic necessity. This basic feature of Nazi German economy was discovered only recently. Aly 2005.

[9] On this subject, cf. Ágoston 2021:288–298.

forces could be observed, thus turning warfare into something calculable (Ágoston 1992:112).

Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire came to face a general crisis as a result of natural catastrophes, population growth, a slump in corn production, difficulties in the allocation of provisions, inflation in consequence of changes in the international economy (the so-called "Price Revolution"), territorial uprisings and military revolts.[10] Decline can also be understood in a relative sense. However, even in this respect the Ottoman Empire does not come off well. For instance, despite net growth Ottoman finances were inefficient as compared to the fiscal possibilities of the Habsburg and Romanov Empires. In the early 1760s Ottoman and Russian revenues were on the same level in terms of tons of silver; ten years later Russian revenues were already ten times larger. It was not only a question of mere numbers or quantities but that of effectiveness, organization. In the 1760s Russia was able to keep an army twice the size of that of the Ottoman Empire, although the level of state revenues was similar in both countries (Ágoston 2021:333). The problems affecting the Ottoman Empire were enhanced by a great shift in the international trade routes, beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century. None of these existential problems could be solved.

Around the time of the Peace of Zsitvatorok (1606) the military balance began to shift definitely to the West's advantage. It was on this occasion that the Sultan for the first time officially acknowledged the Habsburg emperor as his equal. This was no longer a truce dictated in Istanbul to the "King of Vienna", but a treaty negotiated on the frontier and agreed with the "Roman Emperor" (Lewis 1961:36). One of the first conspicuous signs of the new situation was Raimondo Montecuccoli's not overwhelming yet convincing victory over the Ottoman army at Szentgotthárd (St Gotthard) in Western Hungary in 1664. After the Siege of Vienna of 1683, the Ottoman armies began a pattern of retreat and the territory of the Empire gradually but continuously diminished, right up until its final collapse at the end of World War I. The terror of European Christianity mutated into the sad figure of the "Sick Man on the Bosphorus" and a clutch of Oriental stereotypes from the titillating world of The Thousand and One Nights. Neither was taken seriously any longer because they did not pose a threat: fear was gradually replaced by fascination, even (Williams 2014; Bremm 2021:354–362). In fact, it was because of internal quarrels and divisions among Western European states that the Ottoman Empire did not collapse at least a hundred years earlier in the nineteenth century; some states were always interested in preserving it for geopolitical reasons. For instance, in 1839–1841 the great powers saved the Ottoman Empire from Muhammad Ali, its rebel governor in Egypt, whose army was on the threshold of conquering Istanbul, and in 1854–1856 British, French and Sardinian armies rescued it again, this time from Russia. Decline was slow, with

[10] Fodor–Oborni–Pálffy 2000:23; cf. Lewis 1961:28–30. On the "Price Revolution" see, e.g., Andrews–Kalpaklı 2005:310.

occasional setbacks, lasting for several centuries, but its tendency and basic characteristics were unambiguous. It was continuous, inexorable and had a highly demoralizing effect. This was the beginning of a development which would ultimately lead to a situation where, a century after Kemal Atatürk, as a complete reversal of the earlier attitude, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs would declare in its official "Synopsis of Foreign Policy" around 2020 that "Turkey is determined to become a full member of the European Union as part of its *bicentennial effort to reach the highest level of contemporary civilisation*" (Marshall 2016/2019:184; emphasis added). The "bicentennial effort" represents a claim that it has been Turkey's aim for two centuries to align itself with Western Europe and to join it. This was a long way from Süleyman the Magnificent or the Second Siege of Vienna. Indeed, this standpoint corresponds to the claim mentioned above that there is no "limited or partial Westernization" (cf. Lewis 1961:228–229, 262).

The Ottomans appeared in Asia Minor around the end of the thirteenth century, and then in Europe in 1354. In 1453, twenty-one-year-old Sultan Mehmed II seized Constantinople and Western Europe fell into a state of shock. The ascending Empire was expanding inexorably; no Christian state in Europe could resist its explosive growth and advance, so that it became the most powerful country in South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East around the beginning of the sixteenth century. For a long time, Europe had been a vast area to be conquered and "opened up" (*fatḥ*) before the expansion of Islam. After conquest, immense amounts of war booty were taken from the new territories to Istanbul, the glamorous capital of the Empire, and subsequently these territories were brutally subjugated and exploited.[11] Heavy taxes continued to flow to the capital, serving to embellish it as well as keep the Empire running. The circumstance that the Empire succeeded in seizing big and rich territories relatively quickly and easily, allowed it to enrich itself without great effort by imposing heavy taxes on them, and in this way the necessary stimuli to managing their economy in a rational manner, guaranteeing in-depth, many-sided and long-term development in general, were missing (Fadeeva 1985:19). It is an open question awaiting further research whether the Ottoman authorities, as a rule, were characterized by unchecked rapacity, conducting a ruthless and wasteful exploitation of resources, as is often claimed. On the other hand, it has been maintained that the Ottomans established themselves in the conquered territories for long-term residence, and therefore it was not in their interest to destroy a country's resources but to ensure that long-term exploitation could be continued and on occasion they also behaved as good and responsible masters (Lewis 1961:33 *vs.* Pálffy 2000:40; 2009:21). Ottoman officials were appointed haphazardly and for relatively short periods. They cared little about their offices, exploiting them to enrich themselves as much and as quickly as possible because they never knew when they would be transferred to another post in a distant

[11] On the brutal exploitation in occupied Hungary, cf., Káldy-Nagy 1970:87, 148–150, 173, 174.

corner of the Empire. There was little money available for public investment. Much of what the Ottomans built was temporary and makeshift. Istanbul was a dazzling metropolis, but poverty, neglect and decay were rampant everywhere in the provinces. The overall contribution of the Ottomans to European culture seems on the whole rather meagre; in contrast, the Ottoman Empire appropriated goods, men and professional knowledge from the Christian world in "hardly imaginable measure", without reciprocating them to any extent worth mentioning. A modern historian attributes to the Ottoman Empire a "parasitic existence" with respect to cultural exchange. He also describes the close proximity of the Ottoman Empire as a "continuous extreme nuisance" to its neighbours, and the local Beys, with their marauding troops, as more of a "plague" than normal neighbours (Bremm 2021:399).[12] As far as Hungary is concerned, the impact of Turkish rule, or rather its devastations, are best illustrated by Prince Eugene of Savoy's warning to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in 1717 not to travel southwards from Buda by land in winter but "to stay till the Danube is thaw'd that I may have the conveniency of going by Water" because "I shall be oblig'd to travel 3 or 4 days between Buda and Esseek without finding any house at all" on a distance of 160 miles (260 km) on her way across Hungary to Constantinople.[13] It is worth mentioning in this context that it has

[12] There is a Hungarian proverb, with variants, which is also quoted in the popular poem *A fülemile* [The Nightingale; 1854] by János Arany, one of the greatest Hungarian poets: *"Rossz szomszédság: török átok."* ["Bad neighbourhood is a Turkish curse." Here *szomszédság* "neighbourhood" or "neighbourship" means the "relationship among neighbours".] Some scholars assume a Turkish origin of the poem's subject – this assumption is not valid for the proverb. Arany *összes* 219–223, line 17; 481–482 [textual commentary, including origins]. Incidentally, I owe my acquaintance with this critical edition of Arany's poems to Tamás, on whose desk I first saw it long ago. It greatly impressed me with its 160-page-strong close-spaced textual commentary, so I followed suit and acquired a copy of my own in due course. Interestingly, I have just come across a *politically correct* version of this proverb in a modern dictionary, where *török* [Turkish] has been replaced with *örök* [everlasting]. Országh–Futász–Kövecses 1998:1365. I have never encountered this version before. A rich modern collection of Hungarian proverbs knows only the "Turkish" version, which it describes as "well known". Szemerkényi, *Szólások,* 1319. A brief Google search showed that the PC version is not unknown, though.

[13] *Esseek* is Hungarian *Eszék* (modern *Osijek* in Slavonia/Croatia; German *Essegg*). Wortley Montagu, *Letters,* I 295. Cf. Bremm 2021:247. – The devastations in Hungary in this period were not due to Ottoman rule alone but to the circumstance that for two hundred years occupied Hungary had been a buffer zone, the most important continental scene of the contest between the two world powers of the period, which meant protracted conflict, continuous warring, manhunts and intermittent skirmishes along the borders, causing great destruction and devastation. This state of affairs was, however, the direct outcome of Ottoman intrusion into Hungary. The results were altogether very severe and partly irreversible. On the other hand, the Ottomans never managed to impose their full sovereignty over the occupied areas of Hungary but had to share it with the Habsburg rulers and the Christian landowners, who had fled to the unoccupied areas of "Royal Hungary" under

recently been claimed that even the modern poverty of the Middle East is in fact a heritage of its Ottoman past.[14]

For the West, the idea of Turks at the gates of Vienna in 1683 was a deadly nightmare, because on this occasion, too, just as at the First Siege of Vienna in 1529, the very survival of the Christian West was at stake.[15] In 1529 the Ottoman Empire was at the height of its power under Süleyman the Magnificent, while his opponents were Emperor Charles V and his younger brother King Ferdinand I of Hungary and Bohemia and Archduke of Austria. Contemporaries saw the wars between the "world empire of terror" and the West as a life-and-death struggle to save Western civilization from annihilation. Often these wars, which represented an existential threat to the West, were fought out with extraordinary bitterness and the utmost cruelty.[16] On a number of occasions, many countries and many rulers dispatched soldiers, military units and even whole armies to participate in these wars. This is a clear proof that these countries and their rulers did not perceive them as local affairs but as an existential threat to the Western world as a whole.[17] "Royal Hungary" (by succession under Habsburg rule at the time) was seen as a defence line of Habsburg and German territories, therefore these areas and their rulers contributed large sums

Habsburg rule, from where they also extracted taxes from their possessions, establishing a "condominium" (joint sovereignty) in the occupied areas. Many earlier Hungarian institutions continued to execute their functions in the areas under Ottoman occupation because the Ottomans were unable to replace them. Double taxation was a heavy burden, with corresponding negative results: many areas became devastated and depopulated, because peasants fled from them. Industrialization and the development of a bourgeoisie suffered greatly. This entailed grave demographic, economic, social and cultural consequences. The ethnic composition of the country changed considerably: for geographical reasons, the great loss of population affected mainly the Magyar segment of the inhabitants, in contrast to minorities. This ordeal, beset by wars, brought much suffering upon Hungary. The effects of this complex situation determined the fate of Hungary in the following centuries to a great extent. Fodor–Oborni–Pálffy 2000.

[14] Acemoglu–Robinson 2013:55–56, 61, 120–121, 213–218.

[15] Huntington 1997/2002:146, 210. The Siege of Vienna of 1529 (also known as the First Siege of Vienna) undertaken by Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (the defenders were "hopelessly overborne by numbers") was the first effort of the Ottoman Empire to capture the Imperial City, which was to be followed by several similar endeavours, none of which was crowned with success. For instance, Turkish sources claim that in actual fact, Sultan Süleyman's ultimate goal was the conquest of Vienna when he died at Szigetvár in 1566. On the First Siege of Vienna see, e.g., Bremm 2021:69–81. On the relationship between Turkey and Europe in general *("La Turquie en Europe")*, cf. Osterhammel 2009/2020:148–150.

[16] As one aspect of this struggle, Muslim pirates based in Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli in the Western Mediterranean abducted innumerable Christians and sold them into slavery; their number was close to one million between 1530 and 1640. Bremm 2021:163–168.

[17] Even though Christians, both individuals and armies, fought on the side of the Ottomans on occasion. The opposite did not happen, as far as I am aware: Muslims never fought on the Christian side.

to support Christian military activities in "Royal Hungary"; it would not have been able to withstand Ottoman pressure alone.[18] In 1683, on the Christian side, were fighting forces from Bavaria, Salzburg, the Upper Rhineland, Saxony, Franconia, Swabia, an army from the Holy Roman Empire under Duke Charles Alexander of Lorraine and, above all, a Polish army under John III Sobieski, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Enormous subsidies came from the Pope personally, and from the Catholic church in Bohemia and Bavaria. Both sides fought with the utmost exertion of their power; conquerors and defenders alike knew what was at stake. The Ottomans' reputation for merciless savagery engendered fear in Europe. The relief army of the Christian powers arrived at the very last moment, when everything already seemed lost. Victory was indeed a miracle; the Christian armies defeated the Ottomans by a hair's breadth. It is easy to understand that many saw heavenly intercession in the victory. The subsequent enthusiastic elevation of 1683 by contemporaries can be explained by the terror of the preceding events. The Ottoman army under Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa crossed the Austrian border on 11 July and soon enormous columns of fire indicated the devastations of his Tatar vanguard all over Lower Austria, just as in 1529. On its way to Vienna the Ottoman army captured Hainburg (47 km / 29 m from Vienna), burnt it down and, in accordance with traditional Ottoman custom, the Grand Vizier distributed among the soldiers of his army lavish awards and gifts of honour for the heads of killed denizens of the conquered city (Bremm 2021:257). Once again, thousands of the Emperor's subjects were carried off in chains into slavery. Soon an apocalyptic scene of columns of fire all around Vienna signalled that its outskirts were ablaze: the Siege began on 15 July. It lasted 61 days and ended with the Battle of Vienna on 12 September.[19] The Ottomans suffered very heavy losses during the battle, while those of the Christian relief armies were relatively light. The situation looked quite different for the defenders. More than half of the Viennese garrison and an unknown number of citizens perished, either in the course of the military actions or in consequence of the dysentery raging in the beleaguered city. The Siege meant enormous hardships for the defenders that could be overcome only with the utmost exertion of their powers. Their situation seemed hopeless until the very end; Vienna could fall at any moment. Relief arrived as if by miracle, at the very last minute. The Siege showed clearly that the defenders were ready to risk their lives rather than succumb to the enemy.[20] They knew perfectly well what awaited them in case of defeat. Occupied Hungary was quite close to Vienna; the distance between the two capitals is about 240 km (150 m).

[18] It may serve as a minor though excellent example for the extent to which the finances of states and cities were exploited by the defence against the Ottomans that the northern spire of St Stephen's cathedral in Vienna was never completed because all available funds had to be diverted to the completion of the city's defence system against the Ottomans under Ferdinand I after the Battle of Mohács (1526; Böker 2007:131, 318).

[19] For a map of the battle, see Bremm 2021:270.

[20] For the details of the battle, see Bremm 2021:247–274.

Therefore, they must have possessed ample reliable information about what defeat and Ottoman rule would have meant for them. We are in the year 1683 and the Battle of Mohács, when Hungary fell, took place in 1526. One cannot say that it was wholly unfounded fear of the unknown on the part of the Viennese. If they had had positive information about life under Ottoman rule there can be no doubt that they would not have preferred to die rather than submit to it. The victory of 1683 has been called a watershed, the threshold of an epoch in European history. Its renown reverberated all across the Christian world (Bremm 2021:273–274). On the other hand, it sounded the alarm bell for the Ottoman Empire.[21] This victory heralded the dawn of a new epoch; it was a turning point in the history of the Empire, the moment from when its decline became evident, first in warfare, then in other fields too.

This event has been regarded ever since as a cornerstone of Austrian and German history, an event which has played a decisive role in shaping collective memory and imagination in both countries. Saint Florian, who suffered martyrdom in 304 in the river Enns, a southern tributary of the Danube in Austria, was often invoked for protection from aggressors, such as the marauding Hungarians in the tenth century, in addition to being the popular patron saint of firefighters, especially in the Baroque period, as the widely current supplication goes: *"Heiliger Sankt Florian, verschon' mein Haus, zünd' andre an!"* [Saint Florian! Spare my house; set others on fire!].[22] His monastery nearby, where he had originally been buried before being translated to Rome and subsequently to Krakow, was an important place of pilgrimage in Upper Austria. In 1512, when Ottoman pressure in the Balkans was becoming unbearable, Emperor Maximilian I sought protection with the relics of the monastery. Shortly after the victorious Siege of Vienna, in 1684 Emperor Leopold I embarked on a pilgrimage, together with his family, to thank the saint for his assistance in the miraculous deliverance of both Vienna and Christianity. On this occasion it was decided to rebuild the complex, considerably enlarging it in sumptuous Baroque style, as a memorial to the victory over the Ottomans. Indeed, the monastery devoted the majority of its not inconsiderable income to this project for more than fifty (!) years. It was decorated with frescoes conjuring up the victorious Siege of 1683, rendering it a *lieu de mémoire,* a "memorial site" of symbolic importance, a crystallization point of collective memory and identity (Pierre Nora). Memory is "past in the present", producing identity and continuity by helping us to perceive the present, giving it meaning and assigning it its proper place between past and future. A "memorial site" is a place in which the collective memory of a nation is embodied in condensed and crystallized form. Cultural memory is directed to fixed points in

[21] On the details, see Bremm 2021:247–274.

[22] *Lexikon* 2015:VI, 250–254; Bálint 1977:I, 351–356. The attitude expressed in this popular supplication is called "St Florian's Principle" in German-speaking lands.

the past, which are distilled into symbolic figures to which memory adheres.[23] One remarkable and highly unusual item conjuring up the victorious Siege, as well as other victories gained over the Ottomans, is the magnificent, richly carved, gilded and painted bed of the great military commander Eugene of Savoy, decorated with the picturesque, colourful figures of two captured Turks in vanquished postures as bed posts, in addition to martial trophies of the prince (Williams 2014:31). It is also significant that St Florian Monastery appears in the section "Sworn Enemy" (*Erbfeind*) in the pioneering three-volume publication on German memorial sites (Lepetit 2001/2009). However, such an attitude may change with the passage of time, as indeed happened in Hungary. With the brutal memory of the 150-year long Ottoman occupation fading away, the attitude of the Hungarian public towards the Ottoman Empire underwent a complete reversal in the nineteenth century when the leaders of the revolution and war of independence of 1848–1849 against the House of Habsburg found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Later on, in connection with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, university students staged political demonstrations in Budapest in support of the Ottoman Empire, and their delegation travelled to Istanbul to present to Abdülkerim Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army, a ceremonial sword which was procured by public subscription for this occasion. These actions ran counter to the official policy of the Monarchy, which supported Russia in the conflict. In appreciation of these gestures, Sultan Abdülhamid II returned to Hungary thirty-five illuminated medieval manuscripts which the victorious Ottoman army of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent had seized and taken to Istanbul as booty after the conquest of Buda, the Hungarian capital, in 1541. These events garnered great publicity and enormous public support (Ormos 2009:535). The situation in Austria was different. For political reasons, the feverish atmosphere of 1683 was revived around 1860–1890 (Lepetit 2001/2009). In 1894 the so-called "Turkish Monument" (*Türkendenkmal*) also known as "The Monument of the Liberation from the Turks" (*Türkenbefreiungsdenkmal*) was erected in the transept of St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna to commemorate the two-hundred-year anniversary of the deliverance from the impending catastrophe of a Turkish victory in 1683. It was destroyed in World War II; some of its figures were re-erected in the aftermath of the war. It is a remarkable phenomenon, though, that the memory of the Turkish menace of 1683 should be so vivid, despite the fact that in the meantime the figure of "the fearsome Turk", with a reputation for merciless savagery, had been transmuted into the benevolent exotic "Other" from the enchanted Orient of The

[23] François–Schulze 2001/2009. Pierre Nora's term *lieux de mémoire* is actually a metaphor originating from the *loci memoriae* of Roman mnemotechnics. François–Schulze 2001/2009:17–18.

Thousand and One Nights. This was the titillating world of *turquerie,* a world of unbridled sensuality, the "refinements of an indolent voluptuousness".[24]

About a week before the Siege of Vienna, Emperor Leopold I fled headlong, with his family and the imperial court, to Passau on the Danube; his departure filled the Viennese with despair because it signalled the hopelessness of the situation. Once in Passau, he and the empress would climb the hill to the monastery of the Capuchins every day, as a pilgrimage, to pray for deliverance to the miracle-working image of the Holy Virgin known as *"Maria Hilf [=Maria, hilf!]"*. As the Christian armies defeated the Ottomans in 1683 only by a hair's breadth, victory was generally attributed to the intercession of the Holy Virgin, in particular to her miracle-working image at Passau. It came to be worshipped as "the miracle-working state image of the House of Habsburg" (*habsburgisches Staats-Gnadenbild*), which acquired a central role in shaping the identity of Catholics in Central and South-East Europe, especially in German-speaking communities ("*Donauschwaben*"). It was the image *par excellence* to which subsequent generations would turn in times of greatest peril (Metz 2014; cf. Török 2014). The Roman Catholic Church exalted the Christian victory of 1683 at Vienna when Pope Innocent XI elevated "The Feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary" (*Festum Nominis Beatae Mariae Virginis*) to universal validity by including it in the General Roman Liturgical Calendar in 1684. Earlier it had been a local festival of minor significance in Spain (Schott 1966:1034–1036). During the Siege, *"Maria, hilf!"* was chosen as the battle cry of the Christian armies. (It was subsequently modified to *"Jesus und Maria, hilf!"* as a mark of respect for Protestants.) Thus the "Feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary" on 12 September became popular among Roman Catholics in Central Europe. Many girls are baptized in its honour and this name-day is still commemorated on 12 September as a memorial to the Siege of Vienna of 1683, especially in areas with German-speaking populations and their descendants.[25] The position of this feast in the liturgical calendar is somewhat peculiar, coming as it does four days after one of the two greatest feasts of the Virgin, the feast of her birth, on 8 September.[26]

A remarkable case demonstrating the role that the victories of 1529 and 1683 played in the life and minds of the denizens of Vienna is connected to the finials installed on the spire of St Stephen's Cathedral. The earlier finial was heavily damaged by lightning in 1514 and was replaced by a new one before 1519; this was a mighty gilt brass knob topped by a gilt eight-pointed brass star facing a brass

[24] Williams 2014; Bremm 2021:354–362. The expression in quotation marks occurs in a letter by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Alexander Pope dated 1 September 1717, which the modern editor of her letters considered spurious and omitted. Wortley Montagu, *Additional Volume,* 28. Cf. Wortley Montagu, *Complete Letters,* I, xviii, 371.

[25] Such as the family of the present author. On the subject, see Bálint 1977:II, 272–273; Parsch 1938:III, 612–613.

[26] Bálint 1977:II, 263–270; Parsch 1938:III, 603–608; Schott 1966:1029–1032.

crescent, which revolved around the star with the wind. It was called *Mond* ("moon") or *Mondschein* ("moonlight") in popular parlance. It is claimed that the glittering knob was the symbol of the sun, while the star and crescent represented its satellites. Thus, the whole complex could be seen as a symbol of the universe, although it is also maintained that it referred to the alternation of day and night. After the First Siege of Vienna in 1529 the finial came to be perceived as an Ottoman symbol and the citizens of the capital petitioned the Emperor to have it replaced. It was in the aftermath of the victory over the Ottomans in the Second Siege of Vienna of 1683 that it was taken down on 15 June 1686, after the recapture of Buda, and the following inscription was etched into the crescent: *Haec Solymanne Memoria tua A^{o} 1529* ("This is, O Süleyman, your remembrance of the year 1529").[27] A hand with an obscene gesture (the "fig sign", in other words a symbol of the female genitalia) was also added to the etching, and the orientation of the finial was significantly modified. Originally the centre of both star and crescent had been on the same axis, with the crescent revolving around the star; in its new position the crescent was located at the bottom topped by the star above, thus displaying the defeat of Islam. This new version was never returned to the spire, though; it was replaced by a cross and subsequently by a new and different cross, which bore the inscription *"Luna deposita et Crux exaltata"* among others. It is indicative of its role in popular memory, however, that in 1997 it should have been chosen to appear on the back cover of the official catalogue of the exhibition commemorating the 850th anniversary of the foundation of St Stephen's Cathedral.[28]

Western fears of Ottoman expansion were not unfounded. Since the seizure of Constantinople, the classical area of Ottoman expansion was Europe (Lewis 1961:25). The fall of Constantinople caused real terror all over Latin Christianity at the time.[29] Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) aimed to re-create the Roman Empire; Sultan Süleyman saw himself as the new Alexander, the single and only ruler of the whole world, where he would carry the sword and faith of Islam among the infidels. On a symbolic level this was clearly demonstrated by his crown, made in Venice, which resembled the papal tiara topped by the crown of Charles V

[27] The interpretation of this Latin sentence is ambiguous. In the present writer's view *haec* (referring to *luna* or *res*) is the subject and *memoria* is the predicate in this sentence, meaning that it is the crescent moon's deposition as displayed in the finial or the object itself that is remembered about Süleyman['s deed] in the year 1529. Cf. Hornby 2005:957 (*memory,* 5). Another possibility is that *haec* is a reference to the obscene gesture meaning that it is this gesture (*ficus* or perhaps *res,* or else *signum,* or *gestus,* in these latter cases concord is by *attraction*) that is remembered about Süleyman['s deed] in the year 1529. German *Feige* ("fig") possesses this meaning: *seit dem Mittelalter war, aus Italien her, eine trotzige, höhnende gebärde (als imago vulvae) bekannt.* Grimm, *Wörterbuch,* III, col. 1444.

[28] Kassal-Mikula–Pohanka 1997:188–189, 230–233; Seipel 2003:413–414. On obscene anti-Islamic imagery in and on medieval churches, see Lange 2004.

[29] Bremm 2021:8–9, 84. On the "world empire of terror", see Bremm 2021:19.

(Ágoston 2021:79–81; Bremm 2021:50, 90–92). In the decades around 1560 the Ottoman military was the strongest army in the world, and the Empire aimed at achieving world supremacy, although Christian victories in Malta (1565) and especially at Lepanto (1571) signalled the end of Ottoman invincibility at sea. At Lepanto the Christian fleet under its commander, the strikingly handsome twenty-four-year-old Don Juan de Austria, illegitimate son of Charles V and half-brother of Philip II, annihilated the Ottoman fleet (Bremm 2021:123–136, 145–182). It was at the Treaty of Zsitvatorok (1606) that the Sultan for the first time officially acknowledged the Habsburg emperor as his equal, as we have seen above. These were clear signs of decline. The Ottomans' arrival at the gates of Vienna marked the greatest territorial expansion of the Empire. Vienna was not only an important city in Western Europe, which would guarantee Ottoman sovereignty in Hungary among other places; the Ottoman ruler also strove to wrest the "Golden Apple of Vienna" from the Habsburgs also because it possessed great symbolic value. The fall of Vienna would be followed by the conquest of Germany and then the fall of Rome.[30] It was the key fortress on the way to world power and the resurrection of the Roman Empire under Ottoman aegis.

It was a long way from Vienna to Pertevniyal's mosque in Aksaray. However, it was at Vienna that all began.

Excursus

In recent times a new approach to the relationship between Christian Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the era of the Renaissance has been introduced into scholarly discussion. It aims at replacing the traditional concept of antagonistic opposition with a new approach, one that perceives "the Ottoman Empire as an integral element of the geo-political and cultural continuum within which the Renaissance evolved" as a result of "the development of a co-extensive cultural and intellectual context" (Contadini–Norton 2013b:xv; Norton 2013:6–7). Under the title "The Renaissance and the Ottoman World" a collection of articles was published in 2013 in support of the contention that, along with Western Europe, the Ottoman Empire was an active participant in the unfolding of the Renaissance (Contadini–Norton 2013a). In this volume the reader will find a most welcome list of a vast array of carpets, manuscript- and book-bindings and other objects decorated with Ottoman

[30] Bremm 2021:57, 173, 257–258. The symbol of the "Red/Golden Apple" is of Byzantine provenance and originally denoted the metal ball in the hand of Emperor Justinian's statue in front of the Church of Hagia Sophia, the lucky charm of the Byzantine Empire. For the Ottomans it always referred to the actual great and important Christian metropolis which they were aspiring to conquer, whose possession meant honour, prestige and fame; it came to symbolize world domination. They called Constantinople, Rome, Cologne and Vienna the "Red/Golden Apple". Cf. Fodor 1999:120–131; Ágoston 2021:79.

and Middle Eastern patterns and designs. It is convincingly shown that certain workshops on both sides of the Mediterranean were aware of the activities on the other side of the sea, even on occasion borrowing patterns and designs from each other. Middle Eastern carpets and fabrics were also highly appreciated and eagerly sought in Western Europe. However, this is not enough to prove the claims voiced above: the Renaissance was about much more than carpets, book-bindings and decorative patterns. And we do not even know what these objects meant to their owners, how they perceived them, whether they were even aware that the carpets or designs displayed in Western European homes were of Middle Eastern origin. Anna Contadini has to acknowledge: "But no evidence has come to light that might indicate that the aesthetic appreciation of Middle Eastern artefacts was conceptualised in ways connected with the world of ideas and scholarship, or that the Renaissance scholar perceived the desk rug and the astrolabe that adorned his studio as products of a culture the alterity of which demanded intellectual attention" (Contadini 2013:27). When a Western European carpet weaver borrowed an Ottoman pattern or design, he might have done so in appreciation and admiration of Ottoman handicraft, trying to emulate it in a spirit of cordial, noble competition. However, this was not necessarily the case. Daniel of Morley (*fl*. 1170–1190) declared in connection with the learning of the Arabs: *Mutuemur ergo Domino iubente et auxiliante a philosophis gentium sapientiam et eloquentiam, et sic eos in infidelitate sua spoliemus, ut eorum spoliis fideliter ditemur*. "Therefore, by God's command and with His help, let us borrow wisdom and eloquence from the philosophers of the pagans and in this way rob them in their unbelief so that, as true believers, we can enrich ourselves with the spoils."[31] This attitude may well have characterized some carpet weavers, too, and on both shores of the sea.

It is claimed that "the ex-patriot [*recte:* expatriate] communities of Italian merchant-bankers resident in Ottoman lands helped *integrate the Ottoman state into a wider network of Western European humanist scholarship"* (Norton 2013:6) and that "rulers in the East and West … read the same books" (Norton 2013:4; 20). These claims remain unproven. (On the misleading use of the word "book" see below.) It brings before the reader's eye a vision of eager Muslims avidly devouring printed copies of Boccaccio's *Decameron* in Ottoman provincial towns. As a matter of fact, we do not know of contemporary Western books or works being translated into Ottoman Turkish and circulating in the Ottoman Empire. In the same vein, we are not aware of Ottoman works or books being translated into Italian and French and acquiring great popularity in the West in this period. The existence of trade and political connections between Venice and Istanbul, Amalfi and Istanbul, even France and the Ottoman Empire, is well known. But these are not enough to create a *co-extensive cultural area*. The two sides were aware of the existence of each other.

[31] Richter-Bernburg 2011:280 (translation mine – I.O.). I am indebted to Lutz Richter-Bernburg for drawing my attention to this source.

However, they represented different cultures which had little interconnection. It has also been claimed recently that the period of the late Renaissance (approximately the middle of the fifteenth century through the first two decades or so of the seventeenth, also known as the long sixteenth century or the early modern period) was characterized by a feverish sexual activity both in Western Europe (Italy, especially Venice and Florence; England, especially London) and in the Ottoman Empire, accompanied by a corresponding literary output, and that the reason behind this phenomenon was a similar or even identical historico-social setup, the only difference being that in Western Europe this meant overwhelmingly heterosexual activity, while in the Ottoman Empire it was a predominantly homosexual affair between men and younger men: loving a woman was considered a deviance, even perversity (Andrews–Kalpaklı 2005:18–22, 38–58, 326 and *passim*). A contemporary admirer remarked of the poet ʿAzizi (d. 1585), for instance: "He was a lover of women, but then only God is without fault" (Andrews–Kalpaklı 2005:44. Sadly, no explanation is offered for this odd difference between the two cultures.) This is a highly intriguing thesis presented in a similarly intriguing book representing a claim that the Renaissance was a shared project of Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire – or else that there was a "zone of convergence" between the two –, yet it seems rather vague in its present form, and it is certainly in need of further detailed examination. The authors themselves acknowledge the existence of "the abyss of … faith and culture that separated" the two worlds and also state that "the Ottomans were the enemies of the Europeans for many years and their religion (Islam) was perceived by Europeans as inimical to Christianity" (pp. 5, 11). The author of the present lines wonders whether the two aforementioned Ottomanists should be counted *mutatis mutandis* among "the many influential 'Turks' who want to see themselves as participants in the modernizing project of the West" and as such "have a stake in the project" (p. 11).[32] Eventual further extensions towards Mughal India, China and Japan should also be carefully examined before their thesis can be accepted as a proven fact. On the other hand, if we expand our "co-extensive cultural sphere" to include China, Japan and Mughal India, and start speaking of a "co-extensive cultural sphere" with these extensions, which could be defended to a certain extent too (cf. the case of Chinese porcelain or the Manila galleon route, for instance), then with the loss of reasonable differentiation and gradation our discussion and argumentation will be so general and vague as to result in a loss of relevance. After all, we can also claim that the whole earth is a "co-extensive cultural sphere" with man as its central phenomenon, yet such a generalization and expansion of interpretation cannot possibly serve any reasonable purpose.

In the present volume (Contadini–Norton 2013a) we often encounter the figure of Sultan Mehmed II but little else in this context and it is not proven how far his interest in classical philosophy extended. Some statements are made in this regard,

[32] Quotations slightly adapted.

but their reliability is open to doubt.[33] And even if they were true and Mehmed II was indeed a great expert on classical philosophy, as is sometimes claimed, he would have remained an isolated figure and his attitude would have had little relevance for the great majority of his subjects. The fact that the ruler's library contained manuscripts on classical philosophy, even in great numbers, does not prove that he actually read them, and what is even less certain is that great numbers of his subjects were familiar with them. The level of familiarity with classical philosophy – even among experts – in the Ottoman Empire, is aptly illustrated by the explanation of the outstanding polymath Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa (1609–1657) that Aristotle's *Organon* was a device the great philosopher used to make music with to accompany his teaching activities while walking around with his students in accordance with the peripatetic method.[34] Mehmed II's cooperation with Gentile Bellini was a remarkable and important phenomenon, yet it remained confined to a very narrow circle around the ruler; it did not represent a widespread interest among Ottoman subjects in Bellini's activities or Italian Renaissance painting in general. There were indeed contacts between Western Europeans and Ottomans, notwithstanding the mainly inimical relationship between the two parties, but the *proportions* are important and must be kept in mind: in the period in question their relationship was characterized by a largely antagonistic opposition. The situation was not much different at the time of the Crusades: there did in fact exist contacts of varying intensity between the two sides, but one could hardly point to "the development of a co-extensive cultural and intellectual context" (Norton 2013:6–7) in Crusader times, even if Christians and Muslims seemed to get on quite well in the tranquil periods between wars, as witnessed by the Muslim traveller Ibn Ǧubayr (1145–1217), for instance. If we disregard the obligatory curses of the Muslim author against unbelievers, the coexistence of Christians and Muslims he describes in Syria, Palestine and Sicily seems to be fair and fruitful for both sides. In one case he even mentions that Muslims are much better off under their Christian lords in the coastal area of Syria (*Sāḥil aš-Šām*) than their brethren under their Muslim lords in the Islamic territories (Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla* 302).

The contributors to this volume (Contadini–Norton 2013a) fell prey to delusion. We live in a globalized shrunken world which indeed presents "a co-extensive

[33] The present author is reminded here of his grandfather, a doctor at a provincial hospital with wide general interests. At some point he met the keeper of manuscripts at the Hungarian National Library. She invited him and his wife to the National Library and showed them one or two illuminated manuscripts from the collection of King Matthias of Hungary (d. 1490). My grandfather was very proud of this and mentioned it to his colleagues more than once. Today he is remembered at his hospital as an authority of international renown on medieval manuscripts.

[34] Akasoy 2013:245. As is well known, *Organon* (Gr. "tool, device") is the title posterity gave to Aristotle's works on logic. Our author apparently mixed it up with the musical instrument "organ".

cultural and intellectual context" (Norton 2013:6–7). These scholars grew up and were socialized in it; for them it represents the natural state of affairs. Now they involuntarily project it into the past, into the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, unaware that even a few decades ago the world used to be a bigger place. I can remember that in my childhood the Middle East meant mythical, distant lands somewhere beyond the legendary seas.

I wonder if the inhabitants of Vienna would not have regarded it as faintly insulting to see the Siege of 1683 (in which they took up arms preferring death to submission to the Ottomans) referred to as a "time of tension and the realities of military engagement" (Contadini 2013:28).[35] And would the artisans, cruelly and forcefully deported from Shiraz and Cairo to Istanbul in 1473 and 1517 respectively, have felt that "removal" or "transfer" was an adequate description of their plight (Ohta 2013:228)?

In the article "The Role of the Book in the Transfer of Culture between Venice and the Eastern Mediterranean" the reader would expect, in accordance with the thesis of the volume, an account of the bilateral transfer of culture in the Renaissance between Venice and the Eastern Mediterranean by means of the printed word: books printed in Venice and read in the Ottoman Empire, and books printed in the Ottoman Empire and read in Venice. However, we get nothing of the kind. "Books" in this context is taken to refer mainly to *manuscript codices* (also a few printed books towards the end), and the transfer operates strictly in one direction, and certainly not in the way one would expect at first sight.[36] In fact, the article deals with travel accounts, descriptions etc. about the Eastern Mediterranean written by Venetian travellers etc. for Venetians and Italians in general and read by them in Italy. It is no mean achievement, furthermore, that the author (Deborah Howard) manages to write an article of eleven pages with *this* title in *this* volume without mentioning the fact that there were no books printed for Muslims by Muslims in the Ottoman Empire in the period under discussion because printing by Muslims for Muslims was forbidden, although the technique and the know-how were at hand: soon after Gutenberg (c. 1450), as early as in 1493, the first Hebrew press was founded in Istanbul, while in 1567 the Armenians and in 1627 the Greeks followed suit. The first press operated by Muslims for Muslims was established by the Hungarian renegade Ibrahim Müteferrika, and that was not until 1727. (He was not allowed to produce religious books.) His press printed seventeen titles until it was shut down in 1742, after fifteen years of operation. Regular printing did not commence in Istanbul before 1756. These data alone plainly contradict the basic claim of the whole volume. The case of

[35] The existence of which, it must be admitted, the modern author does not want to deny.

[36] In its generally accepted first meaning the word "book" refers to a *printed* book. It is also used in the above meaning, yet the title is misleading in its present form; nobody will think of manuscript codices when first seeing this title. Its occurrence here is definitely bizarre: the reader realizes fairly soon that the title in this form is nothing less than a dazzling *refutation* of what the whole volume actually claims. Cf. Hornby 2005:165.

printing shows clearly the great cultural difference between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the period in question: printing was present and available in Istanbul for nearly three centuries without its significance being recognized. All told, the volume in question fails to convince the unbiased reader.

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