

difficulties of navigating a vast and sometimes inaccessible range of sources, it seems that all this effort has been directed towards answering whether it was the war or the epidemics which were the real disaster for the Ottoman army. Özdemir does not aim to use this data for other purposes, or to answer other questions.

The author does not omit to discuss the relocation of the Armenians and other subjects of the Empire. However, he does not engage in any debate as to the reasons for these deportations; he argues that the Armenians were severely affected by epidemics encountered on their way to new places of settlement, while shortages of food and water accounted for the other deaths. He does not take any particular position with regard to the Armenian issue; he nevertheless suggests that, in fact, diseases and epidemics were often spread by refugees and deportees, thereby attributing a negative role to those who were forcibly deported.

In the last, possibly most interesting, chapter, Özdemir discusses the performance of Turkish doctors during the wars fought by the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, the Balkan Wars and the First World War. The author offers readers a unique perspective on an often-ignored corner of Ottoman history. He briefly discusses the work of three Ottoman doctors, their struggle against epidemics and their attempts to promote some form of vaccination. Unfortunately, this chapter ends abruptly, leaving the reader with the feeling that it could have been expanded upon with various questions.

One of the greatest achievements of this book is the fact that Özdemir raises several interesting issues, such as the role of medicine and doctors in the Ottoman army, and, in the author's words, he helps to lift a "blackout of war" imposed on the history of military and civilian losses caused by infections and diseases (p. 203). Furthermore Özdemir fills a gap, which still remains to be fully explored, in the shape of the Ottoman army in the First World War. But there are also a number of problems: sources are often discussed at face value and not critically assessed or contextualized. The author sets the stage for many interesting debates, but these are not fully explored and sources are just shown and not analysed in greater detail. Özdemir does not really assess the relationship between epidemics and the policies adopted by the Ottoman government, and seems to imply that the main responsibility for the extremely high mortality rates from diseases is due to refugees and deportees: scientifically correct, but not explained in political terms.

Although some issues remain unanswered and some problems unsolved, Özdemir's work is an important contribution to military history and to the history of the Middle East in general.

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RHOADS MURPHEY:

Studies on Ottoman Society and Culture, 16th–18th Centuries.

(Variorum Collected Studies Series.) xvi, 322 pp. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007. £65. ISBN 978 0 7546 5931 0.

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Studies on Ottoman Society and Culture 16th–18th Centuries is a Variorum collection of articles by Rhoads Murphey published between 1980 and 2001. The collection is divided into three parts. The first section is on cultural relations and exchange of ideas and includes four articles on medicine and transculturalism, westernization, European writing in the Middle East and the Ottoman attitude to the adoption of Western technology. Section two, on urban living, contains articles on provisioning

Istanbul, communal living in Istanbul, disaster relief practices in seventeenth-century Istanbul, and Belgrade in the early years of Serbian self-rule. Part three, the longest of the sections of the book, covers population groups, population movements, production, and organization of labour. The seven articles in this section cover nomadism, Ottoman census methods, the conceptual and pragmatic uses of the *icmal* register, population movements and labour mobility in the Balkans, silver production in Rumeli, tobacco cultivation in northern Syria and the construction of a fortress at Mosul in 1631. The collection covers many different geographical locations of the empire, from Istanbul, the Arab provinces and the Balkans.

The problem with reviewing a book made up of articles going back to 1980 is that it is rather difficult to comment on or take issue with the articles themselves, except in a very general sense. For example, the article on medicine, "Ottoman medicine and transculturalism from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century", first published in 1992, makes the very valid point about the need to modify the rather crude views of communal separatism in the Ottoman empire and to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the realities of intercommunal relationships (p. 377). However, Murphey's introduction to this collection, which explains why he put these articles together for republication, raises some interesting points about the state of Ottoman history today.

Murphey states that his aim in republishing these collected studies is twofold. First, he wished "to facilitate a closer dialogue between Ottomanists and Europeanists, Asianists and comparativist colleagues working in aspects of the early modern period with the hope of providing the wider integration of Ottoman studies within the sphere of general historiographical studies" (p. xiii). It is indeed much to be regretted that Ottoman history in many academic institutions in Europe and America falls firmly outside of the historical mainstream to find itself marginalized as a rather quaint "other". In some universities it even fails to make it into history departments at all, but lives tenuously, and often in danger, in other departments such as Oriental Studies. Even in Turkey, where one might expect a stronger position, Ottoman history tends either to a more scribal approach, where exceedingly good palaeographic skills are not translated into thoughtful analysis of the data, or a political one, where history is constructed for the political requirements of the day. In this context Murphey's desire to draw Ottoman studies into the sphere of general historical studies and to encourage dialogue with other non-Ottomanist historians is laudable.

Murphey's second purpose in republishing is "to reinforce the message that despite the impressive development of the field in the last twenty years, there remains an urgent need for constant reassessment based on new discovery. This need is especially compelling with relation to Ottoman cultural and social history to which a significant portion of the studies included in the present volume is devoted. The desirability of revised thinking and new approaches applies to all fields of historical research, but given its infancy relative to other fields of historical research, Ottoman history has as yet not confronted its own demons of false hypotheses, unsubstantiated assumptions, imaginary dichotomies, misperceptions and entanglement in barren intellectual debates." (p. xiv). It is certainly true that the field requires development, though to describe it as in its infancy smacks somewhat of the discovery of America approach, for Ottoman history, though new for some, is hardly new for all. It is to be regretted that while much impressive work was done by Ottoman historians such as Ömer Lütfi Barkan in the days of the early Republic, the same cannot be said for much contemporary Turkish historical writing.

It would have been interesting had Murphey elaborated on quite what he meant by "demons of false hypotheses, unsubstantiated assumptions, imaginary

dichotomies, misperceptions and entanglement in barren intellectual debates". It is true, however, that much writing on Ottoman history has been, and still is, dogged by political pressures which prevent serious intellectual activity. While this has less affected the work of western European and American scholars, their research has often been hampered by a lack of use of Ottoman primary source material and by the temptation to jargon and to a version of Ottoman history which owes more to Western historical debates than to any understanding of the internal workings of the empire. Here the empire is constructed from outside and superimposed on its own history. Ottoman history is therefore never allowed simply to be a history like any other. Until that point is reached, Murphey's picture of an Ottoman history bogged down in "false hypotheses, unsubstantiated assumptions, imaginary dichotomies, misperceptions and entanglement in barren intellectual debates" will stand.

Murphey also has other targets in his introduction related to the reassessment of the so-called post-classical age. He argues that in contrast to the beginnings and rise of the Ottoman state and the decline of the empire, the period in the middle, the years from c. 1550 to 1750 have "attracted less than their fair share of research interest and probing study" (p. ix). Noting that all but one of the articles in the collection are on these "lost centuries", Murphey expresses the hope that the volume "will offer its readers an opportunity to reach their own assessment or re-assessment of the ways in which the Ottoman empire not only survived, but continued to thrive in the post-1600 era of change and gradual imperial adjustment to new social and political realities" (p. ix). He also attacks the "distorting effects of Istanbul-centric views of the Ottoman empire" and sets out to dispel "the myth of developmental retardation or backwardness in comparisons between 'developed' and 'enlightened' Istanbul and the rest of the empire" (p. x), a view which "has left its inevitably distorting mark on both contemporary and modern historical understanding of the Ottoman empire" (p. xi). For Murphey the "Ottoman governing elite's narrow perception of the bounds of the Ottoman world . . . provides a highly impoverished view of the rich cultural mosaic and complex matrix of forces that made up contemporary Ottoman society" (p. xi). Murphey also argues against the "misplaced emphasis and distorted understanding" which comes from an incorrect assessment of the relationship between the ordered and rational centre and the unruly and irrational provinces, an approach which has "seriously hampered the development of a wider agenda for research into Ottoman social and economic realities focused on real issues" (p. xi).

Kate Fleet

TAMAR MAYER and SULEIMAN ALI MOURAD (eds):

Jerusalem: Idea and Reality.

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This book is a multidisciplinary study of Jerusalem which aims to discuss the complex issue of Jerusalem, defined as an idea and as a real place, throughout the millenarian history of the city and its religious and political divisions. It consists of seventeen short articles and is arranged thematically and chronologically: six articles deal with Jerusalem and its religious significance, four with the city and the ways in which it was, and still is, represented in various artistic forms, and finally, seven deal