

the image of Hatra (p.98), it is surprising that the siege wall is not pointed out (and indeed surprising that this is not discussed at any length in the text). On the other hand, the provision of the many maps, which Palermo has clearly gone to great effort to create, is excellent—it is one of the real strengths of the work. I would just point out that in the case of the distribution map of minor settlements (p.117), the small lettering in white makes it virtually unreadable. Similarly, the diagrams illustrating ceramic frequencies (pp.178–179), which are important, would have benefited from being redrawn in a programme such as Illustrator.

The other problem is the quality of the binding: by the time I had finished reading the book it had fallen apart. These shortcomings are regrettable. But they are soluble, and it is very much to be hoped that in any future edition of the work they will be remedied. They distract, but do not detract, from the value of this work. In due course a second edition could give both a more extensive selection of images, including in colour, as well as addressing these issues of production quality. But on the scholarly side, Palermo can be justly proud of this excellent monograph, which will clearly be indispensable to Mesopotamianists, near eastern archaeologists, and historians of the Roman Empire for many years to come. He has established himself as the interpreter of the archaeology of Roman Mesopotamia for his generation.

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The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe

By Gabor Agoston. pp. xv, 664. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2021.

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Gabor Agoston's *The Last Muslim Conquest: the Ottoman Empire and its Wars in Europe* is a highly detailed account of Ottoman military expansion into the Balkans and the subsequent conflict with the Hungarian kingdom and the Habsburgs of Vienna. Its greatest strength is in its simultaneous incorporation of the Ottoman, Hungarian, and Habsburg archives and secondary scholarship hitherto underused in English language scholarship.

Agoston intends in Part One, "Emergence," to show how "Ottoman conquest shaped European history, especially that of southeastern and central Europe, the main theater of Ottoman expansion." (p. 6). This part of the book was originally intended to be a short introduction the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands but Agoston later decided it should be a broader study (p.7). He begins with a chapter on the Early Ottomans in which he discusses the beginnings of the Ottoman state growing from a war band surrounding a successful leader to a small frontier principality. Agoston emphasizes the importance of both religious motivations—*ghaza*, or raiding for the faith—and booty as motivating factors for Ottoman expansion in this period. Although he brings up historian Paul Wittek's focus on *ghaza* as the motivation for the early Ottomans and the subsequent literature complicating that idea, Agoston does not deeply engage with this important debate on the

Ottoman's ideology of expansion. This may be connected to his desire to show the "continued significance of religion" (p. 7) in understanding the early Ottoman state. Agoston does point out the importance of historical contingency in the rise of the Ottomans. Lucky accidents together with extremely pragmatic leaders allowed the Ottomans to exploit many situations to their advantage. This chapter ends with a section placing the Ottomans in the larger contemporary political context of the Balkans and the failed Crusade and Nikopol.

The next chapter includes narrative accounts of the Central Asian conqueror Timur's defeat of the Ottoman sultan Beyazid and Hungarian King Sigismund's efforts to create buffer states and the Crusade of Varna interspersed with sections describing basic institutions of the Ottoman state. These institutions include the *timar* land grant system, the Janissary corps, and Ottoman use of bows and firearms. Agoston follows with a chapter devoted to the conquest of Constantinople. Here again there is a narrative section on the battle for the city followed by explications of the new more imperial ideology and institutions that came along with the acquisition of a world city as the new capital. The chapter ends with a discussion of growing Venetian-Ottoman relations after the conquest of Constantinople emphasizing the new Ottoman control of the East-West trade routes.

Chapter 4, "Conquests", discusses Ottoman conquests in the Balkans and the Middle East. Agoston begins with the Ottoman defeat at Belgrade in 1456 and dynastic rivalries in the Balkans. He then turns to the East and the Ottoman conflict with the Akkoyunlu confederation. Agoston also describes the military successes of Sultan Selim defeating the Safavid Shah Ismail at Chaldiran in 1514 and the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk state in Syria and Egypt in 1516-17. He includes a section on the Ottoman involvement combatting the expansion of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, which Agoston sees as ultimately unsuccessful and calls a "failed opportunity". In this section and elsewhere in the book Agoston appears to be critiquing the work of Giancarlo Casale, who has written about the expansion of Ottoman soft power into the Indian Ocean in this period. This critique mostly appears in the footnotes. It would have been good had Agoston fully engaged with Casale's ideas in the text.

Part Two of the book tries to "demonstrate the impact of this [Ottoman-Habsburg] rivalry on both European and Ottoman policy-making and diplomacy" (p. 6). Chapter 5 focusses on Sultan Süleyman's conquests in Hungary including a detailed discussion of the 1526 Battle of Mohacs and the consequent wrangling between Habsburg and Szapolyai claimants to the Hungarian crown. The next chapter, 'Imperial Rivalries' focusses on the competing claims of Charles V and Süleyman to universal kingship. After a very brief discussion of Ottoman-Safavid conflict in this period, Agoston details the complex issues of sovereignty in Transylvania. The chapter ends with Süleyman's death on campaign at Szigetvar in 1566.

This part of the book ends with a chapter, called "Overreach", that discusses the Ottoman presence in the Indian Ocean, relations and conflict with Muscovy, The battle of Lepanto and its aftermath, warfare along the Bosnian frontier, the Long War in Hungary against the Habsburgs, and relations with the Safavids on the Ottoman Eastern frontier. This reads as a transitional chapter designed to set the stage for the next part of the book which focusses on the sixteenth century height of Ottoman power.

Part Three, "Sinews of Empire" intends to "examine the shifting military and soft power of the Ottomans and their regional rivals". This is in some ways the centerpiece of the book. Agoston examines Ottoman and Habsburg military institutions individually and comparatively. The chapters here show the deep and careful engagement with archival records that characterise Agoston's best work. The chapters in this section give detailed assessments of the size and nature of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires,

particularly in light of the Military Revolution of the sixteenth century, when armies grew in size as they both adopted more complex gunpowder weapons and built fortresses to counter the new technologies. There is a substantial literature on the effects of the Military Revolution and in this section Agoston does a great job of placing both the Ottomans and Habsburgs in the mainstream of those developments.

Agoston also provides a chapter on Ottoman “lawfare” and diplomacy, exploring Ottoman and Habsburg terminologies of competing sovereignty as seen in treaties and the larger development of diplomacy in this era. This was a period in which both Habsburg and Ottoman rulers both viewed and wanted to project themselves as legitimate sovereigns of world empire. His chapter, ‘Embassies, Dragomans, and Intelligence’ gives a strong explication of the nature of intelligence gathering in this period with a lengthy discussion of the role of dragomans, official translators, in trade and diplomacy. The details on the careers of several dragomans working for Venice and the Habsburgs is a real contribution to the historiography of the topic.

The final part of the book, ‘Frontiers and Wars of Exhaustion’, begins with a short chapter on Ottoman ‘Borders and Border Provinces’ which discusses how surveys were conducted in newly conquered territories as a way to assert sovereignty and establish borders. Agoston focusses on Hungary and the Balkans, although he points out the same structures were found on other Ottoman frontiers. Chapter 13, ‘Contested Bulwark of Islam’ draws on Agoston’s strong early work on the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier in the seventeenth century. Here he covers the building and staffing of Ottoman frontier fortresses and the methods the state used to finance this defense system. Agoston uses a great deal of archival documentation to draw his conclusions in this chapter. He also discusses how Habsburgs and Ottomans had *de facto* shared rule in parts of Hungary, with both empires collecting taxes often from the same villages.

The final chapter, ‘Wars of Exhaustion’, returns to narrative history detailing Ottoman warfare in the Balkans in the seventeenth century. There are accounts of the Ottoman-Venetian conflict in Dalmatia and the drawn-out war in Crete, ending with the Ottoman final conquest of Candia. Agoston goes into further detail in his telling of Ottoman military action in Transylvania and Hungary. He details the Ottoman efforts to bring the rebellious vassal Rakoczi under control as well as wars with the Habsburgs, including the second ill-fated siege of Vienna in 1683. He closes the chapter with the War of the Holy League that pushed the Ottomans out of Hungary and formalised those losses in the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. After Karlowitz the dynamic in the Balkans was permanently changed, with the Ottomans no longer threatening expansion into Europe. In an epilogue Agoston considers the large-scale changes that Ottoman conquests in the Balkans prompted in both Istanbul and Vienna. By the end of the seventeenth century the Ottomans were no longer a conquering power, but rather a receding one. As Agoston points out, this did not go unnoticed by Ottoman bureaucrats and there are a number of Ottoman political treatises that try to explain this situation and posit a return to imperial vigour.

This book has great strengths. Agoston gives us a wonderfully detailed account of military and political developments in Southeast Europe from the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries. He does this by drawing on both Ottoman, Hungarian, and Habsburg archival materials and puts them in conversation with each other. He also uses secondary sources, primarily Hungarian, that have not been incorporated in English language scholarship previously. This itself is a major contribution to the field.

The depth of detail may sometimes be a bit daunting—something Agoston points out himself in the Prologue—but I agree with him that this detail helps to move beyond superficial conclusions. Despite the great detail, however, the book is a bit limited in its range. The long narrative sections are entirely focused on military and political developments.

Although there is some discussion of taxation as it affects military and administrative structures there is very little economic or social history here. Such a significant narrative of the rise and expansion of the Ottoman Empire would benefit from some consideration of the broader Ottoman society and economy. This is particularly important given Agoston's stated desire that this section "serve as a synthetic narrative of the emergence of the Ottoman Empire in its European context" (p. 7). A "synthetic narrative" should look beyond the purely military and political.

Similarly, the focus of this volume is on the Balkans and Ottoman conflict with Hungary and the Habsburgs. Developments in the structure of the Ottoman administration are presented almost entirely as a result of these interactions. Although mentioned briefly the important conflicts to the East—first with other Turkic *beyliks*, then with the Mamluks and Safavids—are only minimally integrated into the larger arguments of the book. Many of the issues he raises in reference to development to the West, such as dynastic marriage, administrative structures, and state ideology, have equally important precedents in the East. Further, Agoston says he wants to show the "continued significance of religion" (p. 7) in the expansion of the empire and does discuss the rhetoric of *ghaza* in the early Ottoman state and Hungarian and Habsburg self-depictions as the bulwark of Christendom. This argument though, remains in the rhetorical realm of treaties and would be bolstered in drawing more on Ottoman narratives. It also would have strengthened the argument to delve into the use of religion in conflict with other Muslim states. Despite these few issues, this volume is a substantial contribution to Ottoman military history and will be useful for both Ottomanists and Europeanists.

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Afghanistan: a history from 1260 to the present

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An old Afghan story narrates that when God made the world, whatever was left over was put together to create Afghanistan. Jonathan L. Lee's magnum opus enables us to fully understand this old saying. Starting with 1260 and coming up to about 2017, this nearly 800-page work is a remarkable effort in narrating the story of perhaps one of the world's most complex countries. Lee's long association with Afghanistan gives him the depth and breadth to assess sharply and, without veering away from the main subject, weave together a long, yet fast-paced and engaging narrative.

Starting with a topographical and sociological survey of Afghanistan, Lee introduces the various ethnicities, tribes and loyalties which make Afghanistan such a complicated country. The first chapter then, rather quickly, covers the period from 1260 to 1732. Lee's main purpose here is to show that Afghan history does not begin with the oft-repeated story of Ahmed Shah, but that it has its antecedents in the period dating back to the Ghaznavids and Ghurids in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In fact, Lee argues "The Ghurids incorporated the Khalaj *ghulams* into their army and it was during