

## BOOK REVIEWS

PALMIRA BRUMMETT, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty, Territory, and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Pp. 383. \$54.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781107090774

REVIEWED BY GIANCARLO CASALE, Department of History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.; e-mail: [casale@umn.edu](mailto:casale@umn.edu)  
doi:[10.1017/S0020743816000921](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743816000921)

Over the past few decades, few areas of early modern cultural studies have provided more fertile terrain for researchers than European maps and Western representations of “the Turkish Other.” Now, in this impressively researched and sumptuously illustrated book, Palmira Brummett proposes to bring these two strands of scholarship together, an effort that—surprisingly—has hitherto not been attempted in any systematic way. The result is a convincing and multifaceted exposition of the centrality of “mapping,” in both a physical and metaphoric sense, to the project of inscribing, describing, and circumscribing early modern Europe’s Ottoman neighbors.

Ambitious in scope, the book spans the period from the mid-16th to the late 18th century, a quarter millennium neatly bookended by the publication of Giovanni Battista Ramusio’s *Navigazioni et Viaggi* on one side and the Napoleonic *Description de l’Égypte* on the other. But unlike most comparable studies of early modern *Turcica*, Brummett’s work is not organized chronologically, and self-consciously resists the urge to reproduce a familiar narrative arc connecting an early period of unstable identities and shifting borders to a later one in which these become increasingly stable and precise. Instead, *Mapping the Ottomans* is structured thematically, with individual chapters devoted to topics such as “Borders” and “Sovereign Space,” each exploring the full range of continuities, ruptures, and recombinations of cultural production across several centuries of history. Within this frame, a particular strength of the book is that it employs a capacious definition of “map,” thereby allowing Brummett to combine traditional cartographic material with an array of very different visual and textual sources, from travel and captivity narratives to portraits and costume albums, sometimes in surprising and highly innovative ways.

A particularly clear example of this is Chapter 5, “Heads and Skins,” arguably the book’s most original and provocative, which focuses on the taking of heads as a symbol of victory, justice, and masculine honor. The author begins with a wide-ranging discussion of head-taking in text and image across premodern Eurasia, from the chronicle of the classical Chinese historian Sima Qian to the memoirs of the Mughal conqueror Babur. From there, she turns to Ottoman examples, highlighting a pair of particularly evocative late 16th-century miniatures in which the Ottoman grand vizier, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, flush from a victory over the Habsburgs, is shown seated in his war pavilion surrounded by piles of heads from the vanquished Christian army. Fascinatingly, Brummett then places these images in direct conversation with an engraving, by the Dutch artist Romeyn de Hooge, commemorating the Habsburg victory over Kara Mustapha Pasha at the Second Siege of Vienna a century later. Here, a similar depiction of the grand vizier’s war pavilion once again serves as the centerpiece, but with a curious inversion: a triumphant Emperor Leopold now stands in the grand vizier’s place, with veiled ladies and eunuchs bowing in subjugation, and the bodies of fallen Turks littering the ground before him. Through deep contextualization, Brummett thus transforms what might otherwise seem a standard Orientalist depiction of the triumph of European civilization over Ottoman savagery into something much more multifaceted: a European reappropriation of a

© Cambridge University Press 2016 0020-7438/16

visual motif that was originally Ottoman, and intended as a powerful self-representation of Ottoman sovereignty.

Similar examples, in various media, appear throughout the book. And while Brummett is modest in drawing out their theoretical implications, in their ensemble they gesture towards an important Ottomanist corrective to a great deal of existing scholarship on early European Orientalism. To wit: in the decades since Edward Said's powerful critique of Orientalism first began to filter into early modern studies, one of its more frustrating consequences (at least for this reviewer) has been to impose an insistent one-dimensionality on the study of European representations of the Ottoman "Other," based on the now orthodox view that the reality behind these representations is both unknowable and, in a certain basic sense, irrelevant. This new orthodoxy has provided scholars in the field with useful cover from the charge of reproducing Orientalist discourses by studying them, a necessary precondition for the enormous and constantly expanding number of books and articles on early modern Orientalism that have appeared in recent years. But in the process, it has also relieved specialists in European cultural history of an obligation to engage seriously with the work of Ottomanists, even as Ottoman studies has undergone, over the same time frame, a period of intense and dynamic self-reappraisal and reinvention.

As a trained Ottomanist writing a book on European mapping, Brummett is ideally placed to make an intervention in precisely this area, and examples such as the one described above speak to this directly. Rather than presenting the Ottoman Empire as an inert *tabula rasa* upon which Europeans could craft images of an imagined other at will, the most exciting moments of *Mapping the Ottomans* are those that point to ways in which European mapping could, at least in some instances, reflect the Ottomans' own discursive strategies for the representation of self and others.

Equally important, Brummett's focus on "mapping" comes at a moment in which, within Ottoman studies, maps have become a particularly productive site for exploring the dynamics of Ottoman cultural life. Recent work by Cigdem Kafesçioğlu (on city views), Karen Pinto (on world maps), and Baki Tezcan (on the *Tarih-i Hindi Garbi* or "History of the West Indies"), among others, have all interrogated ways in which Ottoman intellectuals blended the creative appropriation of certain European mapping practices in image and text with the selective rejection of others. And in doing so, their research has shown how the Ottomans ultimately forged a new visual language for the representation of space and place that, despite its interactive relationship with European mapping, became an emphatic expression of Ottoman Islam, with a conceptual distinctiveness that remains immediately recognizable to this day.

Admittedly, Brummett's study engages with this new literature on Ottoman mapping only obliquely, and generally avoids delving deeply into the ways in which—and the reason why—Ottoman mapping practices developed differently from their European counterparts (the "borderless" character of Ottoman maps, and the Ottomans' comparative lack of enthusiasm for narratives of travel, being two examples of such divergence that Brummett notes in passing but does not pursue). Instead, when she invokes Ottoman authors, texts, and maps, it is typically for the purpose of asserting a kind of one-to-one equivalency between her European materials and the cultural production of contemporary Ottoman authors, a tendency that in some ways serves to deflect some of the most important potential questions raised by her book.

Even so, *Mapping the Ottomans* is an impressive work, and provides an extremely useful platform upon which scholars of both Ottoman and European cultural studies can find common ground, and begin to build a genuinely dialogic history of early modern mapping across boundaries of space, language, and intellectual tradition. It is sure to serve as a reference point for many years to come.