

BOOK REVIEWS

The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Edited by Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage.) Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2013. 450 pp.

The volume under review was published as a result of the conference by the same title that was held in May 2009 in Dubrovnik (Croatia). The conference brought together scholars united by the goal of reassessing the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and its tributaries in the course of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The major success of the volume is that the authors managed to challenge an approach deeply enrooted in many national historiographies, in which the alleged statuses of the Early Modern states seem to reflect more the questions of national dignity that are articulated today by their successors than they do any reliable assessment of the available sources. The authors whose essays have been included in this volume have situated their research within the context of modern Ottoman studies in order to focus not on the struggles of the tributaries for self-governance associated with autonomy and, furthermore, with the independence of the respective states, but rather on peculiarities of their functioning within the Ottoman Empire.

In the introduction, the editors point out that the need to consider the legal status, military cooperation and diplomatic performance of the tributaries specifically from the Ottoman perspective gains its particular importance in part because of the fact that recently scholars of Ottoman history have been revising both the nature of the Ottoman Empire and its strategies of state-building. Specifically, recent scholarship stresses the composite nature of the Empire and suggests that it may prove important to analyze the performance of the central authorities as trend-setters, while the trends themselves shifted considerably in the process of adjusting to local conditions of the particular provinces or tribute-paying entities. At the same time, the editors of the volume emphasize the importance of not comparing each tributary state to some “ideal tributary,” which existed only in the bureaucratic reality of legal prescriptions, and exploring instead the actual statuses and performances on a case by case basis. They also suggest introducing a more substantial comparative perspective in order to move beyond judgment-based categories and considering the functioning of

the integral parts of the Empire. Thus, the essays are intended to offer a more nuanced comparative understanding of the tributary states to the Ottoman Empire and add an imperial perspective by using appropriate Ottoman sources.

The volume consists of four separate sections the first three of which address the legal status of the tributaries, diplomatic communication between the tributaries and the Empire, and military cooperation between the tributaries and the Empire. This is followed by a concluding section offering insights into how an understanding of these issues may enrich current discussions of broader topics within Ottoman studies.

The section devoted to the legal status of the Ottoman tributaries contains four articles dealing with (1) the cases of Crimean Khanate, (2) the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, (3) the principality of Transylvania and (4) the Cossack Ukraine. In the first of these articles, Viorel Panaite analyzes the cases of Moldavia and Wallachia. Developing a conceptual and terminological framework for his study, Panaite encourages scholars to abandon widely used inappropriate terminology borrowed from European practice, such as the “vassal–suzerain” relationship or “autonomy,” which have no parallels in the Ottoman legal practice. Instead, he suggests consulting wide range of Ottoman sources for both the appropriate conceptual apparatus and a better understanding of the nature of the relationships of the principalities to the Empire. Regarding the notion of the Empire as an entity permeated by the idea of universal sovereignty and composed of the lands both under direct Ottoman administration and the tributaries, Panaite affirms that the rule of the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was a dividing line in the history of the legal status of both Moldavia and Wallachia. He demonstrates that at this particular time the subordinate status of the principalities can be clearly identified in the Ottoman sources. Specifically, as of the mid-sixteenth century, the territories of the principalities are depicted as located within the borders of the House of Islam; the voivodes of both Moldavia and Wallachia were regarded as governors of the provinces within “Well-protected Domains,” and the terminology used in reference to the inhabitants of the principalities did not differ from the terms employed for the other non-Muslim subjects of the sultan. In the end, Panaite addresses the issue of the “old privileges,” which Moldavian and Romanian national historiographies cite as evidence of the alleged “semi-independent” status of Moldavia and Wallachia. According to Panaite, the “old privileges,” which were actively used in the political discourse of the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth in order to further

international recognition of the newly emerging Kingdom of Romania, were the result of the codification of customary practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in later periods.

In her article, Natalia Królikowska uses the case of the Crimean Khanate to explore the question of what it meant literally to be a tributary and whether the Crimean Khanate met the criteria to qualify as one. In her analysis, Królikowska considers the attributes of exclusive royal authority suggested by Hanafi jurists, such as the practice of mentioning the sultan's name in the Friday prayer, collecting poll-taxes, and distributing booty. Using Crimean chronicles as her major source, she demonstrates that the practices regarding these three indicative issues were rather ambiguous. The sources contain contradictory information regarding mention of the khan's and sultan's name in the *hutbe*; they provide no evidence that Crimea ever paid any sort of poll tax or sent a specified share of booty to the sultan. This ambiguity is further emphasized in the other important practices that could have been signs of the presence or lack of supreme authority over a subject. On one hand, the sultan was able to control accession to the Crimean throne, though the extent of this influence varied in different periods, ranging from merely approval to the actual authority to appoint the Crimean khans. On the other hand, Crimean khans enjoyed a number of privileges normally reserved for supreme sovereigns, such as maintaining their own diplomatic relations, minting coins, and keeping control over the network of post stations. This article is interesting in part because, alongside the author's careful analysis of the sources, it also provides discussion of important secondary questions that require further research. For example, did the Ottoman Empire perceive Muscovy as a tributary state because the latter paid "pominki" to the Crimean khan, and until when was "pominki" regarded as a tribute? Or when and under what circumstances was Ottoman suzerainty over the Crimean khanate established and what symbols and rituals (if any) played roles in this process?

Teréz Oborni suggests another set of criteria on the basis of which to address the same question about the meaning of being a tributary in the case of Transylvania. The first is the title used to address the ruler of Transylvania (voivode or prince), the second involves the terms employed to refer to the territory of Transylvania (province or country), and the third and last is the practice of accession of the Transylvanian ruler (appointed by the Ottomans or freely elected by the estates). To provide necessary context, Oborni examines the double-faced policy of Transylvania in the course of the sixteenth century and its simultaneous acknowledgment of the sovereignty of both the Ottomans and

the Habsburgs. The author draws particular attention to the issue of titles, which were used as political instruments and specifically employed by Transylvanian rulers to demonstrate their loyalty to both emperors. Oborni concludes that specific features of Transylvanian tributary status were the consequences of the double dependency of Transylvania, which managed to simultaneously find its place within two different legal systems: as a tributary of the Ottoman Empire on the one hand and as a province of the Kingdom of Hungary on the other.

Similarly, in his article on the legal status of Ragusa, Lovro Kunčević encourages historians to consider the integration of the Republic of Ragusa into two different international communities, that of *Res Publica Christiana* and that of the Ottoman Empire. In this respect, he urges his reader to disregard two simplistic views on the status of Ragusa as either a dependent state subordinated to the sultan or an independent entity that merely paid tributes for in exchange for trading privileges. He points out the very peculiar kind of Ragusan submission stipulated by its role as an intermediary in the relationship between sovereign Christian rulers and the Ottoman Empire. The author devotes considerable attention to the political vocabulary of Ragusa in his attempt to determine precisely when some of the terms conveyed actual meaning and when they were used as parts of polite formulae. Kunčević points out that the diplomatic strategies of the Ragusan envoys in Istanbul included avoiding open discussions of the status of the Republic and using a diplomatic vocabulary with a double meaning. Taking into account the fact that Ragusa belonged to both the European and the Ottoman international communities, the author concludes that the issue of the status of Ragusa cannot be productively discussed in the framework of a single legal tradition.

The section ends with an essay by Victor Ostapchuk, who attempts to arrive at a comprehensive explanation of *de jure* and *de facto* status of the Ukrainian Cossacks with regard to the Ottoman Empire. Regarding the payment of tribute as the major defining feature of a tributary, Ostapchuk claims that, as in the case of the Ukrainian Cossacks tribute was never imposed and there is little evidence that it was ever seriously discussed, technically Cossacks were not Ottoman tributaries. Providing wide political context, Ostapchuk addresses the reasons why Porte did not get fully involved in Ukraine and shows how this lack of involvement influenced the destiny of the emerging Cossack state.

The section devoted to the diplomacy of the tributary states in the Ottoman system consists of three articles. Geographically, it includes Transylvania, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Dubrovnik. It opens with an article by Gábor Kármán

on the diplomatic representation of tributary states (with specific focus on the principality of Transylvania) in Istanbul and the markers of sovereignty or subordination that were employed in the processes of diplomatic interaction. Specifically, Kármán explores the structure of diplomatic missions; the ranks of the diplomats who were sent as representatives and the respective titles used in Transylvanian and Ottoman practices; and diplomatic performance both in and out of the ceremonial space. The broad comparative perspective definitely adds value to his inquiry. Taking into account the limited control of the sultan over Ottoman borderlands, Kármán suggests including non-state actors in the study. In the end, he outlines common features of the diplomatic practices of the representatives of the tributaries and those of independent powers, as well as the distinctions that allow us to understand their different status in the diplomatic hierarchy of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, Kármán points out the differences between the treatment of tributaries and the imperial peripheries, stressing the complicated nature of the Ottoman diplomatic system, which does not allow one to use the simplistic terms “independent” or “fully subordinated” when referring to the status of any of the tributary states, including Transylvania.

Vesna Miović examines the complicated status of Ragusa, which enjoyed triple protection by the Porte, Spain, and the popes and until 1526 paid tribute to both the sultan and the king of Hungary. Under these circumstances, the activities of Ragusan diplomats were aimed at maintaining the existing balance in the Ottoman capital. They therefore tended to make extensive use of rhetorical figures that emphasized the difficulties Ragusa endured in order both to pay tribute and to offer the Porte the best of its services. Obviously, the purpose of these rhetorical figures was to raise the “price” of Ragusan loyalty in the diplomatic interchange with the Ottomans. Miović’s most significant contribution with this article is the reconstruction of Ragusan diplomat’s unofficial connections, which are usually extremely difficult to follow. Miović presents an elaborated diplomatic network, which extended far beyond the official consulates and involved confidants from the Ragusan community, who offered trading or medical services to the Ottoman officials. She also outlines the importance of the family connections of the Ragusan resident consuls with the important Levantine families that provided access to a far-reaching espionage network. No doubt an understanding of the channels of information flows and the instruments with which it was distributed can help further a better grasp of the general logic of official diplomatic activity.

In his article, Radu Păun attempts to comprehend the logics of the regular anti-Ottoman uprisings that took place in Moldavia and Wallachia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He analyzes the dynamics of the uprisings from a number of perspectives, taking into account the personal careers of the rebels, the relationship between the two principalities and the Porte at certain periods of time and general European attitudes (including military plans and ideas about the destiny of the Ottoman Empire based on predictions that were made at the time). With regards to the careers of the rebellious voivodes, Păun takes into account their networks, which extended far beyond local Moldavian and Wallachian elites to both Habsburg and Ottoman dominions. At the same time, Păun assesses the instruments that were used by the Ottoman Empire in order to integrate the principalities into its “Well-protected Dominions,” such as assertion and maintenance of the right to appoint and “rotate” voivodes and the practice of taking their close relatives as hostages. Indeed according to Păun, the practice of rotation was at the core of the voivodes’ growing sense of insecurity, and it was this that pushed them to rebel against Ottoman power. He emphasizes that the principle of “the more you do, the more you must be able to do” principle was applied, so were a voivode to demonstrate a greater degree of loyalty, this might well result in more pressure from the Ottoman side. In the end, Păun urges historians to keep in mind that when contemporaries assessed Ottoman power, their views were based not on any sort of reliable data, but rather on rumors of various origins and propagandistic statements and predictions that clearly asserted the temporary character of Ottoman power. In Moldavia and Wallachia, the hope for a triumph of the Christians over the Ottomans was reinforced by the wish of the elites to preserve their status in the face of the harsh politics of rotation.

The next section of the volume is devoted to military cooperation between the Ottoman Empire and its tributaries. Ovidiu Cristea explores how Moldavian and Wallachian voivodes participated in the Ottoman military campaigns. He poses a number of previously unexplored questions concerning, for instance, the kinds of wars in which Moldavia and Wallachia were expected to participate, the duration of this participation, the forms of their military contribution, and the political vocabulary used to describe the assistance that was given by the principalities. Cristea uses the available sources to arrive at estimates of the actual military potential of Moldavia and Wallachia and to address their strategies of avoiding participation in the Ottoman military campaigns. He points out that insecurity and threats posed by neighboring powers were presented as the major

reason for the unwillingness of the voivodes to leave their principalities, whether to join Ottoman military campaigns or to deliver tributes in person. By providing evidence concerning how Moldavian and Wallachian voivodes managed to avoid participating in Ottoman military campaigns and the significant differences between the actual situation and the conditions stipulated in *ahidnâmes*, Cristea indirectly raises one more important issue, namely the role and function of *ahidnâme* (paragraphs of which were often overlooked in practice) in regulating the relationships between the Porte and its tributaries.

Mária Ivanics presents the very different case of the Crimean khanate, which did not pay tributes but did participate in the important campaigns of the sultan in Central and Eastern Europe. Stressing the importance of the roles played by the large and mobile Crimean army in these Ottoman campaigns, she examines the procedures through which the khan was engaged in a campaign and the peculiarities of Crimean–Ottoman collaboration.

In his article, János Szabó stresses the mutual nature of cooperation between the Ottoman Empire and its tributaries by analyzing the case of Transylvania. Specifically, he explores the military assistance that was provided by Transylvania to the Zápolya dynasty and the voivodeships of Moldavia and Wallachia in an attempt to defend this part of the Well-protected Domains from the devastating attacks launched by the Cossacks. The author identifies the Long Turkish War as the watershed in this practice of employing Transylvanian forces to assist other Ottoman tributaries, because it led to the growing influence of the Transylvanian prince in both of the voivodeships and threw into question the supreme Ottoman control of all three of the principalities. Analyzing the military conflicts in which Transylvania was directly or indirectly in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, Szabó examines how Transylvania's geographical position and military strength influenced the regional political landscape, including Moldavia, Wallachia, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Hungary.

Finally, Domagoj Madunić suggests a new perspective from which to interpret Ragusa's strategies by adding a military component to the traditional view of Ragusa as the republic that was able literally to buy peace and resolve conflicts by purely diplomatic means. Madunić assesses Ragusa's military strength (including sea and land forces) and its defensive system (including fortifications and supporting infrastructure, such as arsenals and armories) at the turn of the seventeenth century. He contends that the Ragusan armed forces were significantly inferior to the armies of its mighty neighbors, and he arrives at the conclusion that the relative military weakness of Ragusa was one of the

key factors that kept it distant from the conflicts. In the end, he states that the major value of Ragusa in military terms lay in its facilities, such as arsenals and armories, as well as the system of fortifications, which surpassed those found in Venice.

The final section of the volume, which consists of the contributions by Sándor Papp and Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, demonstrates how analyses of the relationship between the tributaries and the Porte can contribute to broader discussions in the field of the Ottoman studies. Acknowledging that the Ottoman Empire was a far less centralized state than one might think on the basis of the descriptions in modern scholarship, Papp sees the essence of the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and its tributaries in their offers of compulsory services, including paying tribute or ceding the right to appoint (and depose) rulers in exchange for the sultan's protection. He adopts a comparative perspective on the status of both the Christian and Muslim vassals by contrasting the documents that formalized relationship of the Porte with both the categories and the views of Islamic legal doctrines on the limits of their autonomies. In the end, he argues that differences in the treatment of Christian and Muslim entities blurred with time, and by the sixteenth century the Empire employed very similar chancery practices, formal instruments and political vocabulary for both groups of subordinates. Finally, examining the political vocabulary, legal criteria and set of obligations practically performed by various tributaries, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk emphasizes that it is not worth attempting to squeeze available source material into the framework of universal judgments. Instead, he contends that it would be more productive to acknowledge the shifting, situational character of the relationships between the Ottoman Empire and the tributary states.

I would conclude with a summary of the many merits of this volume as an outstanding contribution to the field of Ottoman studies, as well as a few observations concerning its shortcomings. The most important strength of the volume is its clear conceptual framework. The editors and authors of the volume aim to challenge traditional attempts (recurrent in many national historiographies) to organize Early Modern source material according to modern logics of analysis and within modern conceptual frameworks, i.e. the notion that submission and independence should be regarded as complete antonyms and that practice was supposed to function strictly in the framework of the existing legal basis. Instead, the contributors to this volume seek to demonstrate both sides of the coin. On the one hand, the reader can once again raise questions

concerning the criteria on which to base the contention that any given state should be regarded as a “tributary,” as well as the sources on the basis of which these criteria could be established. On the other hand, one notes that the actual practices used by the Ottomans when dealing with their tributaries cannot be easily shrunk to fit into the framework suggested by the prescriptions of Islamic law. At the same time, a number of contributors put considerable effort into the job of reconstruction in order to get away from the “ideal picture” and show how political and diplomatic relationships functioned at the level of personalities and informal networks.

However, while they point out that the nature of the relationships between the Ottoman Empire and the state entities which are characterized as its tributaries was not stable and shifted over the course of time, the contributors pay little to no attention to the respective developments in the functioning of the Ottoman Empire itself. As explicitly stated in the introduction, it is vital, if one wishes to provide a meaningful context in which to understand the practices and strategies of the Ottoman tributaries, to consider developments in the state-building strategies of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the question “what did it mean to be tributary?” is inseparable from the question “what did it mean to be imperial?” So one cannot but agree that paying more attention both to the developments initiated by the central government and those which happened as a matter of fact within integral parts of the Empire would add considerable depth to the analysis of both legal status and the practices of interaction between the tributaries and the Empire. The next issue is related to the declared aim of the volume to contribute to an assessment of the performance of the tributary states from the Ottoman perspective and with the use of the relevant Ottoman sources. In the end, in a number of cases this task remains to be done. Finally, I would make a remark concerning the conclusion suggested by the contributors, according to which the complex, semi-dependent (as well as semi-independent), vague status of the tributaries raises the question as to whether one can talk of the missions dispatched to (or residing in) Istanbul as “diplomatic” and their activity as “diplomacy.” The approach of assigning representatives of tributary states diplomatic functions can be justified when one takes into account the fact that modern scholarship avoids the term “diplomacy,” with its strong reference to modern practices when dealing with the Early Modern period, and instead prefers the phrase “diplomatic communication,” which seems more flexible. Nevertheless, a clarification of the concept of “diplomacy” in the Early Modern context would make the methodology of the volume more precise.

These critical remarks notwithstanding, the volume provides its readers with a unique opportunity to compare and contrast cases concerning a wide range of Ottoman tributaries and learn more about their distinctive features such as legal status, diplomatic performances, and military cooperation with the Ottoman Empire. One can observe how the Ottoman Empire developed a relationship with each of the tributaries on a situational basis and taking into account the background of the dynasty (as in the case of the Crimean Khanate), the practice of double submission (as in the case of Transylvania and Cossack Ukraine), the role of mediator in relations with the sovereign Christian rulers (as in the case of Ragusa), and the imposition of different sets of obligations under the pressure of circumstances (as in the case of Moldavia and Wallachia). Finally, the contributions clearly illustrate that there was no single international community, united by common principles. Rather, several international systems existed, each of which functioned according to its own peculiar rules. Many of the tributary states seem simultaneously to have belonged to more than one of these international systems, making it quite senseless to pose questions concerning which system of values might have been more “objective” and might help better define the “real” status of any of the tributary states.

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