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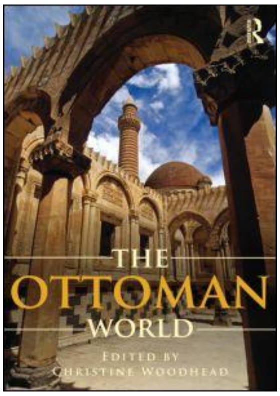

The Ottoman World

Christine Woodhead

Between Universalistic Claims and Reality

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PART III

THE WIDER EMPIRE

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

BETWEEN UNIVERSALISTIC CLAIMS AND REALITY*

Ottoman frontiers in the early modern period

Dariusz Kołodziejczyk

When studying the borders of any empire that claims to be universal, one must differentiate between its imaginary territorial ambitions, often encompassing the whole universe, and the real limit of influence, dictated by geopolitical as well as ecological concerns. In their best-selling neo-Marxist book *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri stress the crucial importance of borders in the making of any empire: 'the sovereignty of Empire itself is realized at the margins, where borders are flexible and identities are hybrid and fluid. It would be difficult to say which is more important to Empire, the center or the margins'.[1] The belief that a border is indispensable for any empire or civilization is also shared by a Polish author who can hardly be suspected of Marxist sympathies. In his essay on the eastern frontiers of Europe, Jan Kieniewicz writes: 'a border first reveals the extent of rule, designates the reach of strivings for hegemony, and is a necessary part of an empire. On the other hand, a border is the consequence of an axiological process of spatial identification'.[2]

Both quotations describe an empire or civilization which, by acknowledging its limits, has already lost its faith in the universality of its might and values. The other side of the coin is represented by Denys Hay's description of medieval Europe as an 'aggressive Christendom uncommitted to any single continent', which only with time limited itself to the Latin West: 'so long as th[is] notion was a living notion, Christendom was potentially the whole earth'.[3] Against this background we can consider Maria Pia Pedani's explanation of the Ottoman reluctance to conclude formal treaties with Christian neighbours: '[t]o accept the idea of a border with another country meant also to recognize the right of the other to exist',[4] and therefore of the Ottoman empire to have limits.

With the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and of the three holy cities of Islam – Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem – in 1516–17, the Ottomans appropriated the universalistic claims of both the Roman empire and the Muslim caliphate. Whether or not the Ottomans really believed that they could extend their civilization and religion to the utter limits of the inhabited world (some certainly did), such a claim was often expressed in their propaganda and political language. Even in the late seventeenth century, the Ottoman grand vezir Kara Mustafa Paşa challenged the Habsburg hegemony in Central Europe and deliberately humiliated the ambassadors of France, Poland–Lithuania and Russia by regarding their rulers as infidels and hence inferior to the Ottoman *padişah*. In relation to their Muslim neighbours, the Ottomans stressed their exclusive right to patronage over Mecca and vehemently denied it not only to the Shiite Persian Safavids, whom they regarded as heretics, but even to their Sunni Muslim brethren, the Moghuls of India.

OTTOMAN FRONTIERS IN THEORY

The once powerful vision of Paul Wittek, which credited the spirit of Holy War, shared by Muslim *gazi* warriors, for the Ottoman rise from a marchland principality to a three-continent empire, has been seriously challenged in recent decades, though not overturned entirely. Colin Heywood, while labelling Wittek's view as 'wildly romantic', admits that many Ottoman soldiers probably still believed in the ever-advancing, 'ever-victorious frontier' (*serhadd-i mansure*), at least until the war of 1683–99, and perhaps even longer.[5] The Ottoman term *uc*, like the earlier Islamic *sugur* (Arabic *thughur*), denoted a marchland or frontier zone bordering on non-Muslim territory. Its open, dynamic character stood in contrast to the type of precisely demarcated and recognized boundary known to the Ottomans as *hadd* (pl. *hudud*) or *sınır*.[6] Arguing that in the Ottoman Maghreb – the infamous Barbary coast – the *gazi* spirit survived even after the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, Heywood identifies such common elements of frontier realities as the abundance of unemployed young males, especially outlaws and recent converts, sharing the 'martial spirit' and the prominence of the slave trade and ransom/redemption systems in the local economy.[7]

Presenting themselves as good Muslims in order to gain religious legitimacy, the Ottoman rulers soon became the captives of their own policy. Muslim scholars did not hesitate openly to pronounce the ruler's obligations with regard to *cihad*. Even the most peacefully minded sultan was expected to widen the 'domain of Islam' (*darü'l-Islam*) at the cost of the 'domain of war' (*darü'l-harb*), inhabited by infidels and predestined for Muslim conquest sooner or later. Consequently, a lasting peace with non-Muslims, however politically rewarding, was difficult to attain without violating Muslim religious law. Apart from the 'domain of Islam' and 'domain of war', Muslim legal scholars, especially from the Shafi'i school, discerned two intermediary categories. The first was the 'domain of jihad' (*darü'l-cihad*), referring to territories already in Muslim hands but still insecure. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ottomans constantly referred to (Libyan) Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers as *darü'l-cihad ve'l-harb*. In the late seventeenth century this term applied also to Belgrade, endangered by Habsburg troops, and to the recently conquered Polish fortress of Kamieniec (today Kam'janec' in Ukraine).[8] In effect, the 'domain of jihad' could be identified with the early Ottoman *uc*.

The second intermediary category had a more practical value. This was the 'domain of covenant' (*darü'l-'ahd*). According to the Koran (9: 29), Christians and Jews were permitted to retain their religion and live in peace on the condition of paying a tribute (*cizye*) to a Muslim ruler and accepting his superiority. This applied both to non-Muslim subjects of Muslim rulers and to non-Muslims living under non-Muslim rulers, where the latter recognized a tributary status vis-à-vis a Muslim sovereign.[9] Today, textbooks of Ottoman history typically mention four Christian tributary states in south-eastern Europe as falling into this category, namely Wallachia, Moldavia, Transylvania and Ragusa (Dubrovnik). Yet, this group was much larger, to mention only several Christian tributary states in present-day Georgia. According to Gábor Ágoston, ‘a common feature of the frontier territories was the condominium that is the joint rule of the former power elite and the Ottoman authorities’.[10] In Ottoman eyes, such European countries as Venice, the part of Hungary controlled by the Habsburgs, Poland–Lithuania and Muscovy were seen, if temporarily, as tributary states. Demand for tribute – even if symbolically small – therefore figured prominently in diplomatic correspondence between Istanbul and neighbouring Christian rulers. If a Polish king or a Muscovite tsar refused to send tribute directly to the sultan, at least they were expected to send ‘gifts’ to his vassal, the Crimean khan.[11] The question why the famous French–Ottoman alliance of 1536 was never officially ratified by Süleyman might be easily explained by the fact that the sultan could not do so formally unless François I agreed to become his vassal.

The sultan’s claim to be caliph and political leader of all Sunni Muslims takes the question further. The ideology of *cihad* could be used not just against Christians, but also against the Shiite Safavids, regarded as heretics, and even against Hindu and Chinese rulers. In various periods, the Ottoman sultans were at least nominally regarded as sovereigns by numerous local Muslim rulers in Sumatra, India, sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. As late as 1875, the Muslim ruler of Kashgar, Yakub Bey, placed the name of Sultan Abdülaziz on his coins and pronounced it in the Friday prayer (*hutbe*).[12]

Judging by their religious principles and imperial propaganda, the early modern Ottomans seemed to claim the entire world, recognizing no fixed borders. Yet, conclusions drawn merely from ideological credos and based on ready-made theoretical models can be misleading. For instance, Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj combined Wittek’s view of the Ottoman state as an ever-expanding organism invigorated by the religious zeal of Muslim warriors with the application of the ‘open frontier’ concept, developed by the followers of Frederick Jackson Turner.[13] Stressing the state of perpetual warfare on the pre-Karlowitz Ottoman borders, Abou-el-Haj defined these as ‘rough, vague, indefinite military zones between the belligerent forces’, where neither the Ottomans, nor even the Europeans, were familiar with the idea of a linear boundary until after 1699.[14] Several critics have disagreed.[15] Maria Pia Pedani concluded that, since Ottoman–Venetian demarcations in Dalmatia dated back into the fifteenth century, by 1699 ‘the Ottomans had already had common borders with the Republic of Venice for two centuries’.[16] If there was any novelty in the post-Karlowitz demarcation, it was due to Marsigli (*alias* Marsili), the Habsburg head commissioner. As well as using modern cartography to delineate the Habsburg–Ottoman boundary, he envisioned a sanitary cordon, furnished with lazarettos, in order to protect Habsburg territories from future epidemics.[17]

A useful model of border development was proposed in 1928 by Lucien Febvre. He traced the change from a medieval uninhabited zone, separating sparse human communities, to an early modern fortified military line, to a mental ‘ditch between nationalities . . . a moral frontier’ characteristic of the post-1789 nationalist era.[18] However, perhaps the most sophisticated model of the historical development of European boundaries was proposed by Peter Sahlins with regard to the French–Spanish border in the Pyrenees. Sahlins proposes three rough stages in the development of ‘his’ Pyrenean border. In the first stage, which prevailed until the late seventeenth century, royal jurisdiction was over subjects and not over a delimited territory. Territorial boundaries remained unimportant compared to the boundaries of jurisdictional competency in the borderland.[19] The second stage was characterized by the creation of a military border, envisaged to reach 'natural', geographical limits, preferably mountains or rivers. Foreign enclaves were purged and sanitary cordons created, as during the War of the Pyrenees between 1718 and 1721.[20] For security reasons, borderlands remained undeveloped and depopulated; few paved roads were constructed, as the respective governments tried to prevent possible invasions of 'perfidious and duplicitous neighbors'.[21] The third and final stage meant, first, nationalization of the state border, and then politicization of national boundaries and national territory. Vaguely defined, 'natural' military borders gave way to precise demarcated ones; the border – established by commissioners – twisted, turned and zig-zagged, leaving everything 'French' on one hand and 'Spanish' on the other. The expression 'territorial violation' – and the associated formula of 'rape' used in reference to a border – properly belongs to the Age of Nationalism.[22]

Having in mind the models of Febvre and Sahlins, we can easily identify the first 'primitive' stage, characterized both by uninhabited zones, separating human communities, and by the state jurisdiction over subjects rather than a delimited territory, with the Ottoman *uc* or the Turnerian 'open frontier'. Yet, long before 1699 the Ottomans also knew the terms *hudud* and *sınır*, referring to demarcated linear boundaries. As well as the demarcations with Venice already mentioned, the first Ottoman demarcation with Moldavia originated in the late fifteenth century.[23] At the opposite extremity of the empire, the Ottomans likewise tried to define their borders. In 1619, following the pacification of 1618 with Shah Abbas, Osman II ordered the demarcation of the boundaries of the eastern provinces bordering on Safavid Iran, namely Basra, Baghdad, Şehrizul, Van and Erzurum, in accordance with the border established by the treaty of Amasya in 1555.[24] The Ottomans also recognized spatial limits to their power in the south, with Süleyman I referring to Yemen as 'one of the furthermost frontier areas of my well-protected dominions'.[25] By analogy, the port of Muskat was labelled 'the frontier fortress of the infidels' before its capture from the Portuguese in 1552.[26]

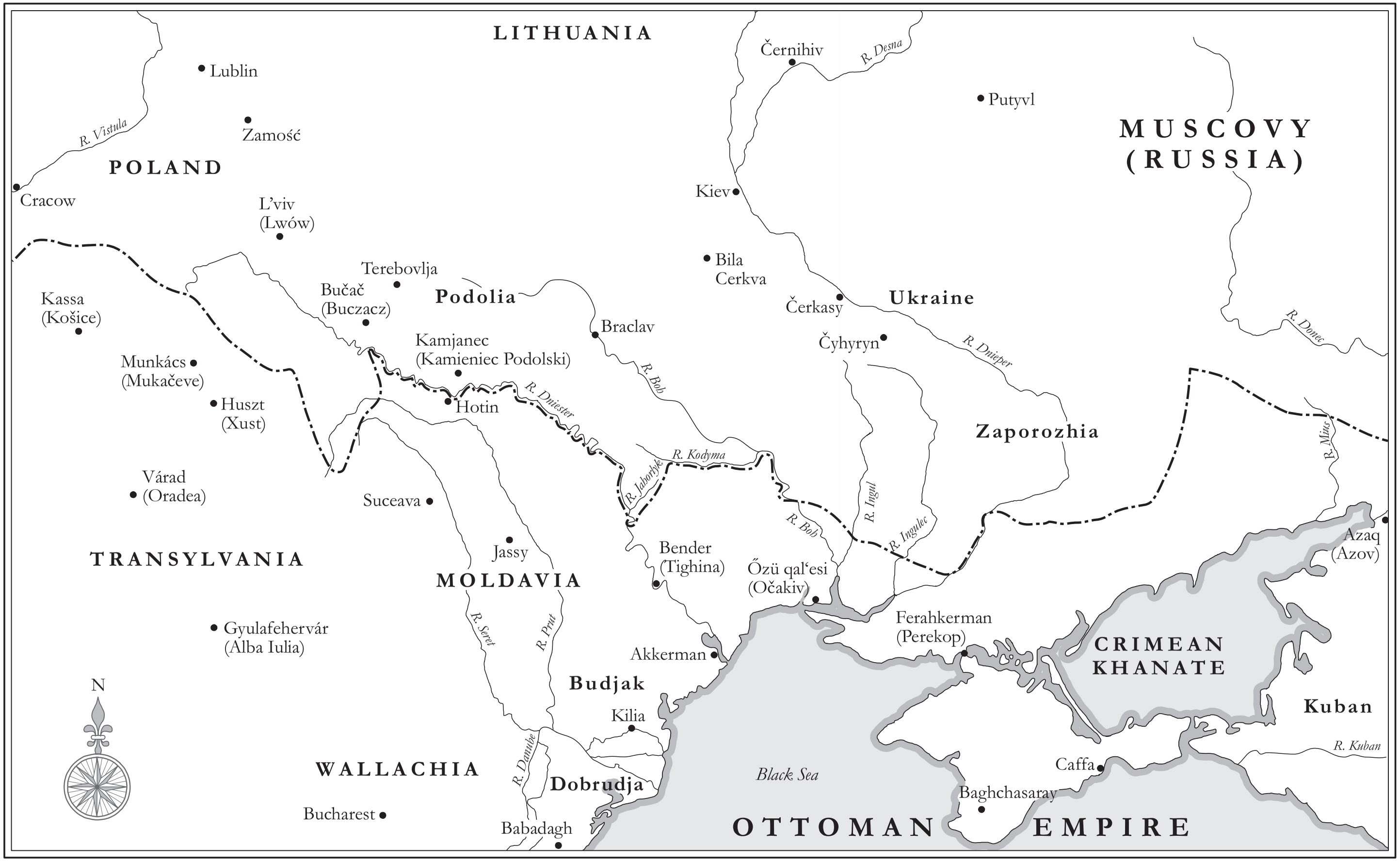
THE NORTHERN FRONTIER

Ottoman borders in the east and south are rarely discussed by historians.[27] Long scholarly neglect of the large area of Ottoman–Spanish confrontation in North Africa provoked Andrew Hess to term it 'the forgotten frontier'.[28] It was the Ottoman land frontiers with their Christian neighbours in Europe, especially the Ottoman–Habsburg frontier in Hungary, that mostly influenced scholarly imagination. Numerous narratives tell us that the almost permanent Habsburg–Ottoman confrontation had turned Hungarian lands into an area of constant warfare. Specialized paramilitary formations, such as the notorious *akıncı*s and *haydut*s, devastated and depopulated the country, leaving only Abou-el-Haj's 'rough, vague, indefinite military zones between the belligerent forces'.

Yet, there is clear evidence of another kind of frontier. Josef Blaškovič's map of the Ottoman province of Uyvar (today Nové Zámky in Slovakia) in 1664 was drawn on the basis of a contemporary Ottoman survey register. It clearly shows the Habsburg enclaves of Nitra and Leva (Levice) surrounded by Ottoman lands, and also many Ottoman enclaves dispersed within Habsburg territories.[29] Also, the Ottoman *kanunname* of the province of Uyvar lists specific tolls on the export of oxen, hides and salt to the Habsburg 'domain of war', and vice versa, on the import of pottery, glass and iron products as well as English cloth to the 'domain of Islam'. We learn that construction timber in Ottoman Hungary originated from the mountains in Habsburg Slovakia and was floated southward along the Vah river, and, conversely, that millstones in Habsburg territories originated from the Ottoman province of Uyvar.[30] It seems that 'constant warfare' left much space for everyday local trade. Certainly, the Habsburg–Ottoman border in Hungary was neither rough nor vague for the local inhabitants. A recent study by Mark Stein confirms that, 'despite the raids by garrison troops and the campaigns against the Habsburgs in 1663–64, as well as an official ideology of *gaza*, the century saw little change in the size of the territory controlled by the Porte'. In fact, the Ottomans substantially reduced border garrisons and even considered the liquidation of the post station (*menzil*) in Uyvar, as urgency of communication was not deemed particularly important in peacetime.[31]

A glance further to the Ottoman north-east brings another surprise. A first demarcation between the Ottoman empire and Poland–Lithuania was ordered in 1542, following the treaty of 1533, although the appointed commissioners failed to meet in the steppe due to mutual distrust. For almost another century, the border remained 'open', though both sides tacitly admitted that it ran along the rivers Dniester, Jahorlyk and Kodyma. Strangely, the lack of formal demarcation did not spoil the friendly relations which lasted for most of that period, with the exception of the Polish–Ottoman war of 1620–21. The first successful demarcation occurred shortly thereafter, in 1633, confirming the actual border and even moving its eastern section slightly southwards in favour of Poland–Lithuania.[32]

Most striking and seemingly unusual is the Polish–Ottoman demarcation of 1680. In 1672 the Ottoman army conquered the Polish fortress of Kamieniec, along with the province of Podolia. It took another eight years of campaigns and diplomatic disputes until both sides agreed to demarcate the new border. This demarcation, effected between August and October 1680, provides us with the richest documentation regarding border-making in the whole history of Polish–Ottoman relations. Both sides prepared in advance impressive documentary and historical evidence in order to further their claims.[33] Two official protocols survive, one in Turkish and one in Polish.[34] When compared with Sahlins's theoretical model of border development, this demarcation, though almost two centuries older, surprisingly fits the third, most advanced stage, embodied by the French–Spanish demarcation of 1868. In the Pyrenees in 1868: 'The first stone is situated on the northeast side of the road from Puigcerdà to Llívia, at the site called Pontarro de Xirosa, next to the old stone which had been the boundary of Llívia, Ur, and Càldegues'.[35] In Podolia in 1680: 'An earth mound was raised as a boundary marker on the top of a hill covered with an oak-grove, situated in the kıble direction from the road leading from Jazlivec' and passing at the said place'.[36] The only notable difference is that the nineteenth-century border stones were numbered and the distance between them was recorded in metres, while in the seventeenth century the distance between boundary mounds was measured in hours of walk. A memoir by a Polish participant provides a vivid description of this demarcation.


LITHUANIA
Lublin
Zamość
R. Vistula
POLAND
Cracow
L'viv
(Lwów)
Kassa
(Košice)
Terebovlja
Bučač
(Buczacz)
Podolia
Kamjanec
(Kamieniec Podolski)
Munkács
(Mukačeve)
Huszt
(Xust)
Hotin
Várad
(Oradea)
Suceava
TRANSYLVANIA
Jassy
MOLDAVIA
Gyulafehervár
(Alba Iulia)
R. Seret
R. Prut
N
WALLACHIA
Bucharest
R. Danube
Dobrudja
Babadagh
Budjak
Kilia
Akkerman
Bender
(Tighina)
R. Jabortyk
R. Kodyma
R. Dniester
R. Bob
Braclav
Černihiv
R. Desna
Putyvl
MUSCOVY
(RUSSIA)
Kiev
Bila
Cerkva
Čerkasy
Ukraine
Čyhyryn
R. Dnieper
R. Donec
Zaporozhia
R. Mius
R. Ingul
R. Ingulec
Özü qal'esi
(Očakiv)
Ferahkerman
(Perekop)
Azaq
(Azov)
CRIMEAN
KHANATE
Kuban
R. Kuban
Caffa
Baghchasaray
Black Sea
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Map 4 Ottoman north-eastern frontiers in Europe, *c.*1648

> When it came to raising a mound, the Turks, using spades attached to their saddles, in the twinkling of an eye raised a mound of turf after digging around a big oak trunk [that was] in the middle. Then, after finishing the job their superiors climbed on top of it and ululated like dogs with their faces turned up, praising God that they had conquered so much with the sword.[37]

The most precise demarcation in the long history of Polish–Ottoman relations therefore occurred not *after* the Karlowitz treaty, but *before*. The extant protocols of the post-Karlowitz 1703 demarcation, restoring Podolia to Poland, are much less precise than those from 1680. The commissioners agreed that settlement in the border area should be restricted. As in the Pyrenees around this time, there was a shared predilection towards 'natural frontiers', in this case the River Dniester.[38]

This apparent 'regress' observed between the Ottoman–Polish demarcations of 1680 and 1703 is not the only challenge to the neat, positivist model of border development. During the very same demarcation of 1680, while the western, Podolian section of the Polish–Ottoman border was meticulously delineated, its eastern section, dividing Poland from Dnieper Ukraine (ruled autonomously by the Cossacks, who had recently acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty), was left vague and open. This was not by accident. Writing to his envoy in Rome, the Polish king expressed his hope for a quick return of the Cossacks under Polish patronage, concluding that to demarcate Ukraine from Poland would be premature, as 'whomever the Cossacks choose, [that ruler] will keep the Ukraine as well'.[39] The notion that royal jurisdiction over subjects had primacy over territorial control, typical of the first, 'primitive' stage in Febvre's typology, coincided with elements typical for the second, 'military', or even the third, 'linear' stage within the very same demarcation.[40]

The above statement is also valid in respect of Ottoman demarcations with Russia. In 1681, when the first formal Ottoman–Russian treaty was negotiated in the Crimean capital Bahçesaray, neither side undertook any demarcation but deliberately left the border zone empty, forbidding settlement on either side of the bordering River Dnieper.[41] Only after the Ottoman–Russian negotiations of 1699–1700 was a demarcation successfully effected, in 1705. However, unlike the Ottoman post-Karlowitz demarcations with Venice, the Habsburgs and Poland–Lithuania, the demarcation with Russia did not leave any physical evidence in the terrain. In their final protocol the commissioners clearly stated: 'we have confirmed the border by no other signs but this written testimony'.[42] And yet, notwithstanding the apparently more 'primitive' character of Ottoman–Russian demarcations, already in 1680 both sides knew to further their arguments by such 'modern' devices as 'a printed map of German press', supplemented with handwritten corrections by a member of the Russian delegation.[43] Seventeenth-century Russians were also familiar with quarantine requirements that even affected the Russian embassy returning from the Crimea after the peace negotiations in 1681. While the envoys were detained for one month in the border town of Borysov-Gorodok, the contents of their papers were dictated through the wall of fire and smoke so that they could be immediately known in Moscow.[44]

The fact that in the very same year the Ottomans demarcated one section of their border (Podolia in 1680) and refrained from demarcating another section (Ukraine in 1680 from Poland and in 1681 from Russia), or that a meticulous border demarcation with Poland in 1680 was replaced twenty-three years later by a much less detailed one cannot be explained simply by a rise and fall of the 'spirit of holy war', or by a fluctuating level of maturity of Ottoman state structures. Perhaps an explanation lies in the ecology of the delimited lands. While more densely populated, agricultural areas such as Dalmatia, Hungary or Podolia were demarcated already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ukrainian Black Sea steppes waited for demarcation until the Russian conquest and colonization in the late eighteenth century.[45] The East European steppe, like North African deserts or Caucasian and Yemeni mountains, enjoyed looser state control which enabled the preservation of so-called tribalism, tolerated by the Ottomans.[46] Even in the nineteenth century, under 'modern' French administration, Algerian frontiers with Morocco were demarcated only as far as Teniet sidi-Sassi, around 120 km from the Mediterranean. Beyond this extended the barely controllable *pays du fusil*.[47]

The Ottomans' ability to effect demarcations did not rule out their attachment to the *gaza* spirit. Two Ottoman copies exist of the meticulous protocol of the Polish–Ottoman demarcation of 1680. One, provided with seals and signatures by the Ottoman commissioners, was given to their Polish peers.[48] The second was recorded in the survey register of the Ottoman province of Podolia.[49] Contrary to expectations, this second copy, intended 'merely' for domestic use, is much more rhetorical. Mehmed IV, for whom the conquest of Podolia in 1672 was the first campaign in which he took part in person, is referred to in the second copy as the 'father of victories and *gaza*s'. Moreover, the second copy begins with a religious preamble that is missing in the first copy. This expresses the omnipotence of God and the temporary character of all human borders, quoting a saying of the Prophet Muhammad which promises that sooner or later all the lands of unbelievers will be open to Muslim warriors. The implication is that one should not treat borders too seriously, since only God may hand out kingdoms to the rulers in this world.[50] The preamble omitted from the Polish copy also refers to 'giaours [who,] having perverse ideas and hostile to the manifest faith, flee consistently and incessantly from their solid castles, fortresses, and forts'. The ideological preamble could well serve internal Ottoman propaganda, but clearly was considered inappropriate when dealing with foreign partners.

A parallel example is provided by the document of the post-Karlowitz Ottoman–Venetian demarcation, dated 1703. This demarcation was the result of prolonged negotiations between the commissioners of the two states. Yet, the preamble of the Ottoman copy, produced by a chancery anxious to conceal the unpleasant contents of the Karlowitz treaties, gives the impression that this was a unilateral privilege granted by a benevolent sultan at the humble request of the Venetian infidels.[51] The *topos* of 'defeated barbarians', humbly asking for peace regardless of the actual power relationships, was not an Ottoman invention. The ancient Romans, when forced to pay tribute to the Huns, presented this tribute as a voluntary subsidy and even granted Attila the honorary title *magister utriusque militiae*.[52]

To sum up, while the ideology of holy war could still be alive, at least among some segments of Ottoman society, and served well internal propaganda, everyday praxis as well as political, logistical and geographical limitations obliged the Ottomans to adopt a pragmatic and flexible approach in their dealings with neighbouring states. Interestingly, such flexibility is also discernible in their dealings with subjected territories already situated *within* the Ottoman frontiers.[53]

THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER

One such territory was Yemen. Conquered between 1538 and 1547, and reconquered in 1569–70, it remained under loose Ottoman control only until the early seventeenth century, to be conquered again in the nineteenth century.[54] The Ottomans were very conscious of Yemen's distant location, and service there was extremely unpopular among Ottoman soldiers.[55] Numerous pious foundations, preserved today in Yemen, prove that the Ottoman governors tried hard to gain local support and popularity. In fact, the conquest of lowland Tihama, inhabited by Sunni Shafi'i Muslims, went easily after the Ottomans eliminated the local Tahirid dynasty. Yet, in the mountainous north they encountered the Zaydi imams, who claimed their own leadership over the people of Islam, and sometimes even the caliphate. Robert Serjeant, commenting on the troubles experienced in Yemen by all foreign invaders, from the Abbasids to the Egyptians in the 1960s, observed that 'one broad pattern easily discerned is the entry of foreign conquerors from the lowlands, their initial success but ultimate inability to conquer the northern highlands and their eventual retreat'.[56] An early seventeenth-century English traveller claimed that the Ottomans kept 30,000 soldiers in Yemen fighting 'continuously in the field against the Arab king in the mountains'.[57] To quote a modern French scholar, it was 'la rencontre de deux légitimités'.[58]

Ottoman Turkish as well as pro-Ottoman Arab chroniclers employed a rich vocabulary to prove the legitimacy of Ottoman claims to Yemen and to discredit and 'dehumanize' the enemy. The Zaydi imamate forces were referred to as 'bastards' (*haramzadeler*), 'the enemies of religion' (*a'da' al-din*), 'heretics' (*ahl al-ilhad*), 'idle troops of

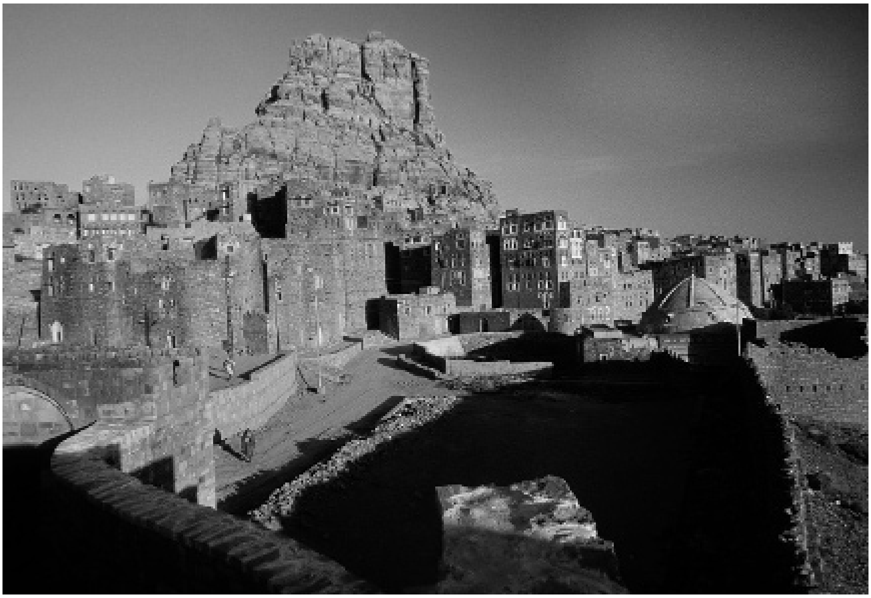


Figure 14.1 The mountain fortress of Thula, seat of the sixteenth-century Yemeni leader Imam al-Mutahhar. The mountain visible behind the walled town is topped with a fort provided with cisterns and a subterranean granary. The fortress proved off-limits for Ottoman troops of the period, even though they were equipped with heavy guns. © marcus wilson-smith/Alamy.

the devilish army' (*jaysh al-batil min al-jundi'l-shaytani*) and, perhaps most typically, 'insects' (*hasharat*).[59] Yet, sooner or later subsequent Ottoman commanders learned that Yemen was unconquerable. Then another policy and language had to be adopted. The pro-Ottoman Arab chronicler al-Nahrawali related the negotiations following the futile seven-month siege of the Yemeni fortress of Kawkaban by the Ottoman army between September 1569 and April 1570. After negotiations began, the Ottoman pasha entrusted his scribe with writing a letter to the local Zaydi commander, Muhammad bin Shams al-Din, addressing him as 'my brother' (*ya akhi*) and notifying him that, though the Ottomans 'are not in need of these lands', since they 'rule most of the inhabited world', they should still be obeyed. Therefore, continued the scribe, the pasha 'will not reject your request but will stipulate that the sermon and currency (*khutba wa sikka*) be in the name of the sultan'.[60] In the subsequent negotiations, Muhammad bin Shams al-Din was granted attributes of power: a standard and an imperial diploma (*berat*), according to whose tenor he admitted his error and prostrated himself before the Ottoman might, allowing the Ottoman pasha to 'make him subject to pacts and agreements and impose on him conditions and limits'.[61] In short, he was granted his own lands by the Ottoman sultan on the sole condition that he would officially accept Ottoman suzerainty. Similar agreement was then made with Muhammad's uncle, Imam al-Mutahhar.[62]

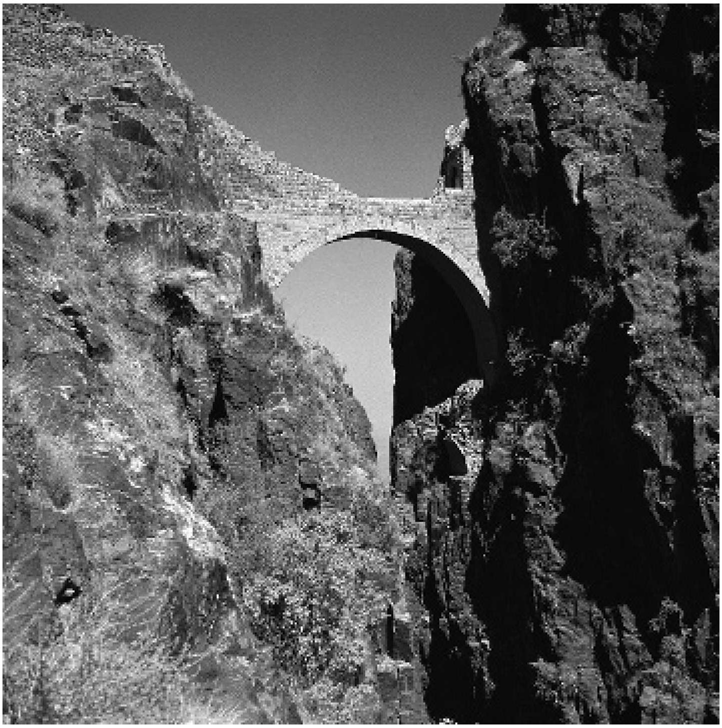


Figure 14.2 Shahara: suspended bridge leading to a mountain village-fortress, from which Imam al-Qasim successfully defied the Ottoman sultan's claim to control northern Yemen in the early seventeenth century. © Jack Jackson, Getty Images.

The pacification of Yemen did not last long, and soon another Zaydi pretender, Imam al-Qasim, rebelled. He concluded peace treaties with several Ottoman pashas, in 1602, 1608 and 1619.[63] His territories first encompassed only the mountain fortress of Shahara, but then also Saʿada and al-Hayma. His son, Imam al-Muʿayyad, continued the struggle against the Ottomans, and by 1635 the last Ottoman garrisons evacuated Yemen. Paradoxically, ‘at no time did [the Ottomans] abdicate their sovereign rights over the land, for Yemenis still looked to them and their agents for protection’ against foreign – especially European – danger: ‘ironically, the imam sought autonomy only’.[64]

Yemen was not alone. Baki Tezcan quotes a document of Süleyman from around 1536, granting hereditary rule, land property rights, tax exemptions, and wide autonomy to the Kurdish emirs in return for their loyalty to the Ottomans. The document is referred to as a *muʿahede* (identical with an *ʿahdname*, granted also to foreign rulers) and is corroborated by the sultan’s solemn oath.[65] Some Kurdish territories, which retained their autonomy until the nineteenth century, were situated deep inside the Ottoman domains and hence cannot be labelled as frontier zones. There were many more Muslim local rulers whose position was analogous. The Crimean khans, the sherifs of Mecca, Caucasian lords and some provincial notables, such as the Lebanese Maʿns, enjoyed local autonomy long before the eighteenth-century era of the *ayan*s. These minor rulers were often accused of duplicity as the Ottomans never accepted their full sovereignty.[66] Muslim Yemeni Arabs were labelled similarly to Christian Montenegrins, as ‘mountain bandits’ (*eşkiya-i cebeliye*).[67]

Maps depicting the early modern Ottoman empire also tend to leave a false impression that the Ottomans controlled much larger territories than they actually did. Did such desert lands as Fezzan, Nubia and Arabia really belong to the Ottoman empire? Or, rather, should the Ottoman control of these lands be compared with their ‘control’ of the seas? After the final Ottoman conquest of Crete in 1669, the Ottomans and Venetians agreed that sea waters belonged to a fortress within cannon range. On the other hand, the Ottomans claimed full control of the Sea of Marmara, the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Red Sea, and large sections of the eastern Mediterranean, though this control was often problematic in practice.[68]

REAL AND IMAGINED FRONTIERS

At first glance, Poland and Yemen do not seem to have much in common within the Ottoman worldview. Yet, at critical points in the seventeenth century, their history was interrelated. Haji ʿAli, the contemporary Ottoman chronicler of the last decades of Ottoman rule in Yemen, describes how in 1622 the Ottoman governor Fazli Paşa waited desperately for reinforcements from Istanbul. The chronicler explains that no help could arrive because of the janissary rebellion and the murder of Osman II, which was an indirect result of the latter’s unsuccessful Hotin campaign against Poland–Lithuania in 1621.[69] When assistance finally arrived, it was probably too late, and the province was evacuated by 1635. In 1672 the Porte contemplated a reconquest of Yemen.[70] Again, these plans were frustrated by a more urgent campaign against Poland.

There was another element that linked Yemen and Poland: their rulers concluded peace treaties with the Porte and obtained *ʿahdname*s from the Ottoman sultans. One is tempted to ask, somewhat provocatively: what makes a modern historian resolve that Yemen lay *inside* the Ottoman empire, while Poland – and perhaps Venice as well – lay *outside*? If judged by Ottoman propaganda, their rulers – the Yemeni imam, the Polish king and the Venetian doge – were all Ottoman vassals. If judged by the realities, all these countries preserved sovereignty but could not entirely ignore Ottoman diplomatic pressure and military threats. Ottoman influence was at best disputable, often negligible, though at times the rulers concerned knew how to use the Ottoman 'umbrella' against their other enemies.

Analogously, one could ask why modern historical maps depict the Kurdish principalities, such as Bitlis, as 'regular' Ottoman lands, while the Crimean khanate and Moldavia are depicted by stripes signifying their autonomy? In the seventeenth century all their rulers received Ottoman *berat*s, confirming their position. It seems that the more one studies the Ottoman realities, the more 'stripes' one sees. Like any other early modern rulers, the Ottoman sultans faced constant challenges to their legitimacy as distributors of justice, providers of security, and – last but not least – Muslim *gazi*s. Negotiation with his own subjects, not just with external monarchs, was a part of the sultan's *métier*.

We have tried to demonstrate the difference between the 'imagined Ottoman frontiers', promoted by Ottoman propaganda and reaching to the furthest corners of the inhabited world, and the real borders of Ottoman control, sometimes meticulously demarcated, sometimes not. Yet, there is one more aspect. In the models of boundary development formulated by Febvre and Sahlins, both authors stress the importance of emotional attitude towards one's own territory and its borders, characteristic of the third, most 'advanced' stage. Did the Ottomans have any emotional attitude towards their borders? Where did they feel 'at home'?

Certainly not in Yemen, labelled as the 'tomb of the Turks'.[71] Not in Podolia, where Ottoman soldiers cured their homesickness with opium and vodka, as evidenced by a poem left by one garrison member.[72] Interestingly, Ottoman Hungary was not considered a proper Ottoman land either, though it was directly ruled for almost one and a half centuries and densely garrisoned. The Ottoman chronicler Selaniki recorded a reported comment by the grand vezir Mehmed Sokollu upon returning from the Szigetvár campaign in 1566. Having crossed the River Sava, he announced: 'from now on it is again the inner land' (*şimden gerü iç-il dir*). In the French translation of Gilles Veinstein, the phrase sounds even more persuasive: '*maintenant, nous sommes rentrés chez nous*'.[73] For the seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi, not only Ottoman Hungary, but even Bosnia, situated on the 'hither' – i.e., southern – shore of the Sava, constituted the borderland, extending between Belgrade and the Habsburg lands.[74]

Moreover, in 1673 an Ottoman fiscal official from Uyvar reported the necessity of importing iron from another Ottoman fortress, Varad (today Oradea in Romania), assuring his superiors that transport was easy although the road passed through non-Muslim regions. Stein, who studied this report, concluded that the term 'non-Muslim regions' must refer to Transylvania.[75] Notwithstanding the fact that the ruler of Transylvania was an Ottoman vassal, maps show that the road from Varad to Uyvar did not run through Transylvania, but through the Ottoman provinces of Eger and Buda. Referring to them as 'non-Muslim regions' sounds quite odd and must reflect either the geographic ignorance of the writer or his feeling of alienation in 'outer' Ottoman provinces, apparently exotic for a Turkish-speaking Muslim newcomer.

It now seems that the borders of the 'Ottoman world' ran closer to the imperial centre than the furthest extent of Ottoman military conquests, and certainly much closer than the extent of Ottoman imperial claims. The Ottomans certainly tried to domesticate the surrounding space. Mushrooming foundations of mosques, *hammam*s, or simply fountains, built in the 'Istanbuli' style from Podolia to Yemen and from Algiers to Azov, not only served the imperial propaganda or self-promotion of their founders, but helped them to become accustomed to new surroundings, climate, customs and language encountered on the street – in short, to start feeling at home.

NOTES

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1 Hardt and Negri 2000: 39.
2 Kieniewicz 2007: 256.
3 Hay 1968: 55–7.
4 Pedani 2002: 140.
5 Heywood 1999: 239–40.
6 Ibid.: 233, 246.
7 Heywood 2004: 42–4.
8 Panaite 1997: 111; Heywood 2004: 44; Kołodziejczyk 2000: 275, 290, 308, 319, 339, 396, 412, 465, 484 (for Maghreb); Kołodziejczyk 2004: pt. I, 471, 481.
9 Mawardi 1853: 239; French trans. 1915: 291.
10 Ágoston 2003: 22.
11 Kołodziejczyk 2006.
12 Davison 1963: 273.
13 Turner 1921; Abou-el-Haj 1969.
14 Abou-el-Haj 1969: 467, and 467 n. 5.
15 Kołodziejczyk 2000: 57–8; Veinstein 2005a: 694; but see Heywood 1999: 233.
16 Pedani 2002: 140.
17 Gherardi 1999: 344; Marsili 1986; Stoye 1994: 164–215.
18 Febvre 1962: 15–19; English trans. 1973: 211–14.
19 Sahlins 1989: 5–7, 54, 63.
20 Ibid.: 69–77.
21 Ibid.: 96–7, 248–9.
22 Ibid.: 102, 240.
23 Gemil 1983.
24 Feridun Bey [1275] 1858–9: 263–5; Kılıç 2001: 231–3.
25 Blackburn 1995: 231. Also the province of Lahsa (al-Hasa) in the Persian Gulf was regarded as a frontier bulwark against the Portuguese and Safavids (Mandaville 1970: 489).
26 Orhonlu 1970: 242, 249, facs. 2. On the still under-researched south-eastern Ottoman provinces, see Özbaran 2004 and Casale 2010.
27 But see Peacock 2009, which appeared too late to be taken into account in the writing of the current essay. Although a number of articles in that collective volume intend to fill the gap, some by means of archaeological surveys, Peacock nonetheless admits in his introduction that, although 'the Ottomans' frontiers with the Hapsburgs are quite well known [. . .], the Otto-

man frontier with the Safavids and the Russians has been much less studied [. . .], while the Ottoman frontier with the Funj is almost entirely unknown' (Peacock 2009, 27). On Ottoman Hungary, see also the essay by Gabor Ágoston, chapter 15 in this volume.

28 Hess 1978.

29 Blaškovič 1977: map I.

30 Kabrda 1964: 197–8.

31 Stein 2007: 124, 145.

32 Kołodziejczyk 2000: 58–60, 432–5 and map 2.

33 In a letter to his envoy in Rome, the Polish king John III Sobieski mockingly compared Ottoman negotiating methods with the aggressive style of Louis XIV: letter to Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł dated in Jaworów on 21 August 1680; Warsaw, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Radziwiłłów, dział III, listy Jana III Sobieskiego, sygn. 16. I would like to thank Kirill Kočegarov for drawing my attention to this fragment.

34 Kołodziejczyk 2000: 61–6, 545–80 and map 3.

35 Sahlins 1989: 304.

36 Kołodziejczyk 2000: 571.

37 Ibid.: 62.

38 The Turkish protocol invokes the saying of a Polish commissioner: 'God (may He be exalted!) has separated the lands of Moldavia from our Polish lands by the River Dniester', while in the Polish protocol, composed in Latin, the same sentence reads: *Inter nos et Valachiam ipse Deus flumine Tyra dislimitavit* (Kołodziejczyk 2000: 66–7, 626–40 and map 2). Strikingly similar wording was used in 1684 by a member of the Aragonese Cortes, who maintained that 'God created the Pyrenees to free the Spaniards from the French' (Sahlins 1989: 35). Also the famous phrase '*Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées!*', reportedly exclaimed by Louis XIV after the death of the last Spanish Habsburg, fits perfectly within the above context.

39 Sobieski to Radziwiłł, dated in Jaworów on 8 August 1680 (see note 33 above).

40 A methodological proposal for solving the apparent contrast between linear and cyclical narratives of history was formulated by Reinhard Koselleck (2000: 19–26), who stressed the uneven pace of change in various areas of human experience (political, economic, psychological, etc.) and the simultaneous presence of different 'time strata' in any given period.

41 The original Ottoman document, drawn up in January and confirmed in February 1681 by Grand Vezir Kara Mustafa Paşa, is held in Moscow, Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj arxiv drevnix aktov, fond 89, opis 3, no. 2. The sultan's *'ahdname*, confirming the peace conditions, was issued in Edirne in late April or early May 1682; see ibid., fond 89, opis 3, no. 3; Feridun Bey [1275] 1858–9: 396–9, contains another copy.

42 *Ne inymi znakami, no tokmo* [. . .] *na six pismax tu granicu* [*esmy*] *utverdili*; the Russian text is published in *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii, s 1649 goda*, vol. IV: *1700–1713* (St Petersburg, 1830: 324–6, esp. 324); the contemporary Italian translation reads: *questo stabilimento non l'habbiamo determinato con montoni o qualch'altri segni, ma solamente con quest'instrumento di scrittura*; cf. Paris, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires et documents, Turquie, tome 1, fol. 148a–50b, esp. 149a.

43 'Spisok s statejnago spiska Velikago Gosudarja Ego Carskago Veličestva poslannikov: stol'nika i polkovnika i namestnika perejaslavskogo Vasil'ja Mixajlova syna Tjapkina, d'jaka Nikity Zotova', ed. N. Murzakevič, in *Zapiski Odesskago obščestva istorii i drevnostej*, vol. 2, otdelenie vtoroe i tretie (1850): 568–658, esp. 594.

44 Ibid., 652.

45 William McNeill's 'Turnerian' approach, crediting the successful taming and colonization of the Black Sea steppe for the rise of the Russian empire, is very convincing in this respect (McNeill 1964). Nevertheless, his treatment of Hungary as a part of the East European steppe was vehemently and with good reason opposed by Hungarian scholars (Dávid and Fodor 2000: xxii). It is precisely the difference between Hungary and the Black Sea steppe that resulted in the different character of Ottoman borders with the Habsburgs and Russia.

46 In India, dense forests played an analogous role to steppes, deserts or mountains in the Otto-

man context, preventing the expansion of early Muslim states in Bengal (Eaton 1993: xxiv).

47 Tayeb 2005: 197–8.

48 Kołodziejczyk 2000: 555–80 and facsimile XXIVa–e.

49 Kołodziejczyk 2004: pt. 1, 454–60, 495–504; pt. 2, 2–7.

50 Ibid.: pt. 1, 495.

51 Venice, Archivio di Stato, Documenti turchi, busta 15, doc. 1619; cf. Pedani 1994a: 442, no.1619; on the Ottoman chancery efforts to conceal the effects of military failure in 1699, see Kołodziejczyk 2003.

52 Whittaker 1994: 242.

53 Öz 2003: 145.

54 Farah 2002.

55 al-Maddah [1982]: 146; Soudan 1999: 263.

56 Serjeant and Lewcock 1983: 77.

57 Bidwell 1983: 109.

58 Blukacz 1993: 39; Van Donzel 1986: 84–5.

59 The epithet *haramzadeler* was constantly used by the sixteenth-century Ottoman chronicler Rumuzi (Hathaway 2003: 64–5). All the remaining epithets are taken from the Arabic chronicle of his Hijazi contemporary al-Nahrawali (al-Nahrawali [1387] 1967: 248, 274, 277 and 372; English trans. 2002: 41, 59, 61 – translated by Smith as 'devilish troops of the false army' – and 126); on *hasharat*, see also Farah 2002: 31.

60 al-Nahrawali [1387] 1967: 419; English trans. 2002: 161.

61 Ibid.: 423–5; English trans. 2002: 165–6.

62 Ibid.: 430–31; English trans. 2002: 170–1.

63 Soudan 1999: 270; Yahya bin al-Husayn, the seventeenth-century Yemeni chronicler and grandson of Imam al-Qasim, referred to all these treaties as *al-sulh*, a term equally fitting to the domestic or international 'peace'; see Yahya bin al-Husayn, *Gayat al-amani fi akhbari'l-qutri'l-yamani* (Cairo, [1388] 1968), pt. 2, 783, 794, 811.

64 Farah 2002: 1, 272.

65 Tezcan 2000: 547, 553. See also the essay by Nelida Fuccaro, chapter 16 in this volume.

66 Matthee 2003: 168–9. Analogously, the Tatars, Moldavians and Ukrainian Cossacks were often labelled as 'traitors' by the Ottoman, Polish and Russian authorities, each claiming to be their sovereign.

67 Reinkowski 2003: 242, n. 10.

68 Pedani 2002: 73–88 and 2005; Kołodziejczyk 2007.

69 Haji 'Ali, 'Ahbarü'l-yamani,' Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Hamidiye 886, fol. 205a; cf. Hathaway 2003: 86–7 and 221, n. 50.

70 Hathaway 2003: 91.

71 From a proverb referring to Shahara, the mountain seat of Imam al-Qasim (d. 1620) (recorded in the Lonely Planet guidebook *Arabian Peninsula*, Hong Kong, 2004, p. 390).

72 The poem by a certain Hasan was published from a British Library manuscript by Orhan Şaik Gökyay (1979); the term *horülka*, not known to Gökyay, was a Turkish loanword from the Ukrainian term for vodka. On the everyday life of garrison members in Ottoman Podolia, see Kołodziejczyk 1994: 181–7.

73 Veinstein 2005a: 694.

74 Moačanin 2006: 147.

75 Stein 2007: 148.