Ottoman Cyprus: New Studies in an Obscure Field

Kyriakos N. Demetriou, University of Cyprus

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/kyriakos_demetriou/3/
Mannheimer Beiträge
zur
Klassischen Archäologie
und Geschichte
Griechenlands und Zyperns

Herausgegeben von
Reinhard Stupperich und Heinz A. Richter

Band 16/17
Mannheim 2010
Ottoman Cyprus: New Studies on an Obscure Field
A Review∗
Kyriakos N. Demetriou

Historical writing on the Ottoman Empire is presently undergoing a large-scale revision that affects significantly our perceptions of Ottoman politics and culture.1 These studies embrace a wide range of presentations, including not only political but also social and economic history, with due attention to civil mechanisms and social institutions that functioned outside the imperial central government. Recent revisionist literature is vast, specialised and diversified, and there is a growing interest by scholars world-wide. And justifiably so: the Ottoman Empire was one of the most long-lasting Empires of the world, geographically extending to a vast region of the globe. When it destroyed Byzantium with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, it was transformed from a regional power into a World Empire. When it disappeared it left a living legacy. The Ottomans achieved their own political and institutional synthesis out of Turkish nomadic culture, Islam and Balkan influences, and practised a system in which the state controlled the clergy. In the Ottoman judiciary courts, the judges were appointed by members of the religious class, thus exercising direct control over the religious establishment. To a great extent, the Ottoman Empire (especially at its early phases) practised religious toleration on the basis of fundamental Islamic principles that protected Christians and Jews.2 Tolerating religious diversity was of vital significance in a multi-cultural environment, acting as a mediator and consolidator of inter-communal interests and values.

The main desideratum for such studies is to enlighten us on the influence of Ottoman life and politics on European tradition. To what extent Western ideas and ideals were assimilated into Ottoman culture, converted to Ottoman tradition, and vice versa? In what (variety of) ways did Ottoman culture interact with European norms and ideas, and how it affected the course of history and cultural transformations in the West, that is to say politically, ideologically or/and culturally?3 Revisionist academic approaches and perspectives are emblematic of a postmodern turn in scholarship, where the dominant trend is to challenge “Western wisdom” and mono-culturalism; Western culture is often criticized for being patriarchal and absolutist, sexist and exclusive. In this way, the new generation of scholars rethink European heritage from a global standpoint, distancing themselves from parochialism and conventions of particularised contexts. Postmodernist discourse also questions central political ideologies since Machiavelli – the legacy of the Enlightenment – (often equated with state absolutism and aggressive forms of nationalism). Eurocentrism and its intellectual and political package are replaced by the ideas of multiculturalism, global dialogue, multifunctional authority, racial sensitivity, gender and diversity.4 Hence the Ottoman imperial system, long condemned in European conscience as despotic and anti-rational, having remained for so many years in the dark as “an obscure field” for European civilization, seems to provide a fertile field for research.

In this general re-conceptualized context of developments in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire, radically departed from pre-existing patterns of nationalist historiography, the editors of the present volume are confronted with a significant challenge: to examine, from a variety of outlooks and within a fresh research agenda, a most important and long neglected era in Cyprus history: the Ottoman rule (1570/71-1878). A large apparatus of documentary sources, archival material, historical testimonials, and a good brunt of expertise are called to implement the ambitious project. According to the editors, the volume has a twofold aim. First, to enrich the variety of studies on the Ottoman era in Cyprus by presenting works on a thematic multiplicity, ranging from “primarily historical” works to explorations in the domains of “art, folklore and literature” (Preface). Second, the volume aims to “offer new approaches [to] the history of institutions and developments in Cyprus during the Ottoman period, in an attempt to propose a new interpretative framework and a more analytical reading of the historical part” (Preface). Having set the framework the volume is accordingly divided in four parts – the historical, following a chronological order, the historical with no chronological order, the literary (including folklore and art), and finally the bibliographical, which provides both an extensive bibliographical guide and a catalogue of archives and archival material relating to Ottoman Cyprus. This section also includes chronological lists of important officials.

The Introduction by Michalis N. Michael is an attempt to clarify issues of methodology, mainly by turning attention to the “divisive” elements exemplified in the post-Ottoman Cypriot (especially Greek Cypriot) historiography. In doing so, Michael wants to reclaim the autonomy of the broadly historical body of knowledge on Ottoman Cyprus, set against the deployment of hermetically ethnocentric and nationalist readings. He argues that the past is blurred by the spectacles of nationalist ideologies, in as much as “the present is projected on the past”. Nationalist historians had invented an imaginary past by projecting unifying ethnic concepts and racial stereotypes. Thus, in delineating the history of the period, they were unable to follow Eric Hobsbawm’s warning that historians should overcome their passions and set aside their political identifications and ethnic affiliations if a reliable historical account is to be produced (p. 14). “The national political identity of the Greek and the Turk, the national political ensembles of the Greek and Turks, realities of the post-Ottoman period in Cyprus are projected on the past of the 16th century” (p. 14). Traditional Greek Cypriot historiography, Michael claims, mistakenly refers to the period of Ottoman rule in Cyprus as “Turkish rule” and Turkish government, in conformity to the modern national identity of Turks.5 Moreover, the

3 There is close analogy of this trend in the domain of classical studies. See Victor D. Hanson and John Heath, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001). The criticism addresses the modernist deconstruction of the classical past and its political/ethical apparatus in favour of academically trendy “multicultural ideals”; applies to a certain extent to the domain of historiographical studies.
4 I found, however, that this is a recurring name in old and modern bibliography, where “Ottoman Turks” is a common denomination.


3 There is close analogy of this trend in the domain of classical studies. See Victor D. Hanson and John Heath, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001). The criticism addresses the modernist deconstruction of the classical past and its political/ethical apparatus in favour of academically trendy “multicultural ideals”; applies to a certain extent to the domain of historiographical studies.
4 I found, however, that this is a recurring name in old and modern bibliography, where “Ottoman Turks” is a common denomination.
conquered people of Cyprus are given a national identity (that of the Greeks), hence set in stark confrontation with the Turkish. “Traditional historiographers” thus invented the ethnocentric, nationalist mythologies, and their accounts are enveloped within mystificatory sagas, sentimental rhetoric and misinterpreted facts (like the “heroic” role of the Prelates throughout the period).

The interpretative approach expounded programmatically by Michael is, of course, a common topos in modern sociological theories of utopian nationalism and “imagined communities”. The school of historical materialism and social constructionism dominated theoretical debates over nationalism from the early 1960s, exploring the multiplicity of sources that led to the invention of nationhood and nationalist ideology. National pasts, we learn, were invented or “constructed” under the influence of modernity – they are not to be traced back to older ethnic roots. By defining nationhood in terms of cultural homogeneity and by thus identifying people in terms of sealed territorial units, nationalist historiography spread division and fostered hatred among different ethnic groups and cultures. Ontologically unreal, traditional historiography led to “a distorted reading of history while the cover up of every development or better its interpretation through an ethnocentric lens of perceiving history denotes any other existing identities” (p. 16). It is in these lines, according to Michael, that Greek Cypriot historiography states that during the Turkish rule “the spirit of the inhabitants fell to a pitiful point and poverty and misery and extreme ignorance, and depression of the national morale covered the island” (p. 14, Michael translates from Frangoudis).

There is much truth in Michael’s exegetical account of “traditional historiography”, whether one approves or disapproves of nationalist interventions in the formation of nationhood. However, there are two issues open to discussion. The first is largely methodological (it concerns the “epistemology of history”); the second is in the form of a query: whether traditional ethnic-nationalist accounts are untrue by virtue of being programatically propagandist. First, let us comment briefly on the epistemological-methodological issue. The methodological question is raised here because, in my view, it is accountable for a number of important omissions in this volume – omissions that eventually did not allow a full picture of Ottoman Cyprus.

The historicized and largely mythologized naiveté of 19th-century nationalist accounts granted, modern revisionist approaches to the past, based on an exceptionally improved factual apparatus – utilizing new methodological and interpretative frameworks provided by an explosion in sociological and historiographical studies during the entire 20th century – should not be considered as the epitome of neutral and value-free historical knowledge. Historians are intrinsically bound by the actualities of their own times; they are part of the present, and their vision goes back in history in order to understand that “present”. Every historical account is inescapably a dialogue between the historian and the past – the past being variously manifested and reproduced in numerous sources), namely that life and the national morale covered the island of Cyprus, but not one to be envied for any considerable progress in the fields of agriculture, innovation, economy and political administration.

This body of interpretations is yet to be tested in the future (possibly in light of a new version of contextualist paradigms), and criticized in light of new premises, dominant ideological trends and new methods of historical enquiry. Today, we live in a highly professionalized academic and global environment where everyday experience depends on intercultural connections and cosmopolitan values. The development of “intercultural competence” involves the so-called relativity of values, norms and beliefs within an endlessly changing fragmented reality. Does modernity qua modernity imply that we have reached objectivity in political or historical science? In short, modern deconstructionism cannot escape the historicist relativism of deconstructionist theory itself, being susceptible to the involuntary constrains of the “historicity of the historian” correlation. My underlying suggestion is that to approach history with preconceived paradigms is partly to impose our ideas upon it.

What is the implication of this discussion for a study like **Ottoman Cyprus? Historical determinism and the contextual nature of understanding human experience, integrally associated with modern political historiography, prescribes that individual acts of past people and the artifacts they had produced are best understood if related to their purpose through their own historical context and ideological context. Accordingly, if the historian is to alleviate the formative influences of the present, must try to sympathise (or associate mentally) with the object he has chosen to analyse. These acts and artifacts are the products of the age under examination and they should be understood and assessed in terms of their own contextual standards. Rejectionist accounts of traditional historiography, condescendingly emphasizing the pathological character of nationalism, confuse present ideas with the ideological rudiments of the past, and in doing so they end up dismissing from the historian’s palette indispensable means of understanding the totality of human experience.

The second issue raised above is whether a major thesis of “traditional historiographers” (and actually a notion reproduced in numerous sources), namely that life and general conditions on the island deteriorated dramatically after the fall to the Ottomans (especially in the latter periods) can be substantiated by independent evidence, or if that gloomy picture of “decline” had derived from historiographical narratives that intentionally misrepresented reality. The answer to this question should be sought in the present volume. Is the “traditional” verdict on the rejected state of indigenous Cypriots during the Ottoman occupation of the island incorrect? Was it simply an unduly gloomy picture deriving out of nationalist rhetoric and separatist aphorisms serving political interests? Based on the hypothesis that traditional historiography had disseminated “stereotyped perceptions”, one would expect that the present volume would provide sufficient material to invalidate the traditional verdict. To what extent do contributors in this volume succeed in overturning the conventional depressing picture? The answer is they don’t. **Ottoman Cyprus shows clearly that it was a period of regression; there was no intellectual movement or political progress – in terms of establishing civil and political liberties. There were no artistic novelties; infrastructure works are numbered and generally wanting; people remained illiterate and in a state of poverty and misery. They lived under a system of insecurity, corruption and despotism (exercised jointly by the local officials and the Church). Ottoman Cyprus appears to be a barren, intellectually desolate, unattractive island, the whole Ottoman period within their original social and political framework, of Cyprus, but not one to be envied for any considerable progress in the fields of agriculture, innovation, economy and political administration.
In effect, there is a long-established tradition on the progressively degraded social status and the economic hardship under which indigenous Cypriots lived during the Ottoman administration. The “decadent tradition” is present not only in literary works, like poems, songs, myths and sagas, chronicles, and semi-imaginary historiographical plots, but it can be also found in the accounts of various official sources, like consulate reports, diplomatic archives, travel narratives, etc. The idea that the three hundred years of Ottoman rule comprised a period of suffering and degradation for the less privileged inhabitants on the island, and that the period marked an era of cultural suffering and infrastructure underdevelopment, is standard among Greek Cypriot “traditional historiographers”, therefore one does not have to reproduce any representative sources. Only one source would suffice, as it encapsulates the standard and, perhaps less impassionate, representations: that of the British Harry Charles Luke. In his 1921 book entitled Cyprus under the Turks, 1571-1878, Luke contrasted sharply the Lusignan and the Venetian period with “Turkish rule” on the island. While the three hundred years preceding the Ottomans was “the most brilliant epoch of its varied history”, the history of Ottoman dominion is “a story of provincialism and decay, of contracting commerce and unenterprising administration”. Yet it should be remembered, Luke writes, that the Ottomans at the very onset of their administration liberated the “Orthodox inhabitants” from serfdom (which had its roots in the Byzantine era) and restored the Orthodox Archbishopric, thus moderately outweighing “oppressive taxation and partial administration of justice”. Luke’s last observation is incorporated in several accounts, even of a nationalist orientation. At the beginning the Ottoman rulers granted rights to Cypriot millets to exercise their religion, thus reinforcing the position of the Orthodox Church and the ethnic cohesion of the Greek population. Yet, over-taxation, natural disasters, famines, epidemics and principally the arbitrary exercised by temperamental local officials, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, contributed to the island’s general condition of contraction and decay.\(^6\)

The standard declinist view is unequivocally reproduced in recent studies, like Paschalis Kitromilides’ dispassionate Κυπριακή Λογισύνη 1571-1878. In his insightful introduction, Kitromilides explicitly deplores the “abrupt and violent termination of Renaissance civilization on the island … and the concomitant extinction of intellectual activity” that led the Greek speaking Cypriot litterati to the Diaspora. Kitromilides expands on the “Lost Renaissance” – the end of a cultural movement – following the Ottoman occupation of the island. During the Venetian rule, there was a flourishing civilization on Renaissance modes, vividly embodied in art and letters and the wider spectrum of cultural experience. A marvellous cultural production reflected the ongoing osmosis between the East and West, as well as a refined synthesis of “tendencies, quests and traditions”. It is at that time that the Cypriots discovered the relationship of the island with Greek antiquity, a revelation which initiated a process of an arising self-consciousness. That movement died out soon after the fall of Cyprus to the Ottomans. As Kitromilides states, “the creative osmosis of civilization in 16th-century Cyprus was violently terminated by the Conquest”. And the more we search into the various cultural manifestations of the so-called Cyprus Renaissance, thus enhancing and deepening our knowledge as regards its achievements, the harsher the destruction caused by the Ottoman conquest of the island would appear to us. The Renaissance current dissolved “violently, abruptly and permanently”\(^7\). The Cypriot litterati, like thousands of poor peasants deserted the island, immigrating to congenial regions (the litterati to the West, the poor peasants to the East). For the masses of the people, who had no way out, it was a period of poverty and strained-blood taxation; under the new despotic regime the island sank slowly but steadily into economic decline, maladministration and depopulation; for the educated and the intellectual elite it was a period of uneasiness and restlessness, which gave new forms of literary production in remote destinations.

The first chapter is a translation of an extract of Katip Çelebi (1609-1657), an influential Ottoman encyclopaedist, geographer and scholar. Ethlios Gavriel takes a long passage from Çelebi’s Precious Gifts from the Expeditions in the Seas [elsewhere commonly rendered in English as The Gift to the Great Ones on Naval Campaigns]. Çelebi’s work is partly a history of Ottoman maritime warfare and partly a description of naval affairs, from administration and offices to shipbuilding. Gavriel introduces Çelebi as a “spiritual person”, a realist, and a prolific polymath. Indeed he makes an almost idealizing picture of one whose work is “important and valuable” manifesting “his agony for searching and finding the truth, his ability to elaborate disputable matters as an [sic] neutral judge, in a period in which fanaticism and blind obedience to religious dogmas prevailed” (p. 26). For the othomaniast, Çelebi is unquestionably an important figure in Islamic civilization and literary tradition of the 17th century. But the general reader is not very familiar with his life and work. One would expect a few more pieces of information on the intellectual settings and influences on Çelebi’s work in order to appreciate the innovative tenor of his writings as well as to understand how these are interconnected to the wider Muslim heritage on the one hand and to the specific intellectual circumstances of late (17th-century) Islamic world on the other. Is Çelebi connected to any stream of European secularist philosophical and scientific ideas that period, as those expounded in the post-Machiavellian period? The translated passage is in fact a 5-page chronicle and commentary on the war for the conquest of Cyprus, filled with moral and edifying didacticism which reminds us of a similar European literary genre. The text itself is a treasure of original information about the besieging of Nicosia, its conquest, the submission of Kyrenia and Paphos and the battle of Famagusta. The text per se is profoundly imbued with religious overtones (Cypriots are never called but ‘infidels’ as was typical in the literary genre which Matthias Kappler calls “gazī tradition” – the Muslim warrior against infidels) and contains tactical and strategic lessons emanating from the misjudgements of generals which resulted in the protraction of the island’s conquest. As an isolated extract, this text does not match with the introductory encomium, neither does it make credit to the widely acknowledged scholarly credentials of Çelebi. Even though the Ottoman text is here in its own right, as a primary source on the Conquest, a study on the various Venetian narratives of the siege of Cyprus in 1570/71 would have enriched this chapter considerably. Pieces of this corpus have already been published in the classic cypriological compendium of C. D. Cobham (1908).

Benjamin Arbel’s is a solidly informative piece on “Cyprus on the Eve of the Ottoman Conquest”. In effect, it presents a general outline of the condition in Cyprus

---


shortly before the Ottoman conquest. A huge amount of historical quantitative data justify the conclusion that the century of Venetian rule in Cyprus (1473-1571) was “characterized by an impressive rise in the island’s population” (p. 37), among the highest in the Mediterranean region and Western Europe. Following the Ottoman conquest, “the island’s population declined drastically, and only towards the end of the nineteenth century, under British administration, would it reach again the level of the late Venetian period” (p. 37). More specifically, on the eve of the Ottoman conquest population is estimated at around 190,000 souls; Famagusta had around 10,000, impressively comparable to the population of Norwich, the second biggest town in England. Most importantly, Arbel finds a significant current of “rural settlement” which led to the development of big villages (Lapithos is called a “mega-village”). This impressive increase in population is primarily attributed to internal factors. Rural and demographic expansion must have been related to the volume and dynamics of agricultural production in a pre-industrial society. Another factor that contributed towards food abundance in the early stages of Venetian rule was rather accidental in character and is related to the possible absence of natural calamities, like droughts and locusts which normally destroyed the crops. That changed afterwards. Arbel goes on to examine the “differences in legal and social status of various groups constituting Cypriot society”, an important issue if we don’t want to succumb to a mere arithmetical counting of food production. The basic social divisions were inherited from the Lusignan regime, and remained feudal and seigniorial. Venice became master of all feudal estates on the island, which in turn were hereditary. Cypriot peasants (around 95,000 people), whether serfs or free tenants, carried the main burden of fiscal taxation. Normally they did not possess the cultivated lands, which were part of seigniorial estates held by feudal noblemen or leaseholders of crown lands. On the institutional level, Arbel writes that Cypriot urban society during the Venetian period differed from earlier and later phases of its history, in that “local groups, including noblemen, burghers and craftsmen, were allowed to have their own representative councils” (p. 41). Nicosia had two such councils and Famagusta one. “By the end of the Venetian period these councils had obtained a series of rights”, such as, election of their own representatives, voting of demands, election of district governors, election of candidates for the Greek bishoprics, etc. For Venice, Cyprus was the main emporium of maritime trade in the eastern Mediterranean, and as such it provided great profits to famous Venetian houses and magistrates, but also to a few traditional Cypriot nobles. Cypriot nobility was loyal to Venice and contributed generously towards the fortification of Nicosia on the eve of the Ottoman siege. Following the Ottoman conquest Cypriot noble families were either killed or taken into slavery, and those who survived the ordeal left themselves in exile.

Arbel presents a favourable picture of Venetian administration, especially as regards works in infrastructure, restoration, water-supply system, fortification etc. Even in the countryside a great number of churches were built and decorated, a fact Arbel associates with the “economic well-being of village lords and members of the upper echelons of village society, expressed in the form of ecclesiastical and artistic patronage” (p. 42). Arbel most importantly links this variegated artistic production with dominant trends of Venetian culture on the island. He refers to the Cyprus logioti, the intermediaries who “functioned as cultures mediators”, like Boustronios.

The last years of Venetian dominion on the island were filled with tensions, mainly due to limited food supplies but most importantly owing to frictions created by religious rivalries. During the period of Catholic Reformation the old-established co-habitation between the Greek Church and the Latin was suspended. Earlier, the Greek bishops and clerics enjoyed “a considerable amount of autonomy” and “continued to control the spiritual life of most Cypriots and also enjoyed juridical authority in certain spheres” (p. 46). Once the relationship broke, in the 1560s, religious and social tensions were intensified and the whole system of ruling and government was in need of radical reformation. The peaceful era that transformed Cyprus into “a populous province” ended dramatically giving its place to the Ottoman dominion, a totally different system of exercising power.

In her luminous “Lost Prosperity”, Vera Costantini explores through an examination of imperial documents (financial, diplomatic and administrative), the “intermediary status of Venetian Cyprus” – as a tributary island to the Sublime Court – prior to the Conquest. She shows, in her well-balanced historical and speculative account, that Venetian Cyprus was in effect integrated into the Ottoman Empire through mercantile and economic means. By examining Ottoman imperial documents and budgets, it becomes evident that Venetians had to pay a considerable tribute to the Ottoman treasurers well before the Conquest of the island, a fact that should be seen in the context of Ottoman broadening “horizons of imperial political hegemony”, as a prelude to future territorial claims (p. 50). The hegemonic tone and the terminology used in Suleiman’s the Magnificent documents, addressed to the Venetian authorities in 1560, is, according to Costantini “surprising, almost as though to underline that the unusual status of Cyprus rendered the Venetian authorities on the island completely indistinguishable from provincial functionaries under the Sultan’s direct authority, even though they were part of a sovereign state that was independent of the Ottoman Court” (p. 51). This is explicable if one considers the island’s geographical position in the eastern Mediterranean. Venetian Cyprus, it should be remembered, exerted a forceful maritime patrolling of the sea against the brigands and pirates in the region. One can speculate that the Sublime Court “entrusted the safety of the waters, with Cyprus as the privileged observatory, to the Venetian fleet in exchange for the possibility of maintaining its sovereignty of the islands, fortresses and coastlines under the sphere of imperial influence” (p. 53). This intermediary status of Venetian Cyprus was politically a “truce” status that ended when the Sultan had to alter his relations with Venice, hence reclaiming full ownership of Cyprus. For the Venetian economic hegemony in the Levant the conquest of Cyprus by the Ottomans was a most decisive blow.

In the second section of her paper, Costantini examined Cyprus as the province of the Sultan. The surrender of the island to Lala Mustafa Pasha made it “the theatre of a conflict that had a devastating impact on the Cypriot population on local agricultural production” (p. 55). The war affected the island’s “environmental sustainability” and the “Cypriot population faced its new Ottoman future after being decimated or dispersed both by the war and the pestilence and poverty that followed” (p. 55). In the aftermath of the conquest the Ottomans proceeded to legislate reforms (including taxation and a census) with an eye to the recovery of the island’s old Venetian prosperity. But it was in fact a “rough transposition” of taxation concepts and revival of older administrative divisions. This process, Costantini remarks, “clashed with phenomena such as ‘puberlite’ Cypriot society of elements…that were considered incompatible with the new regime, and the post-war demographic and economic crisis” (p. 57). In the last part of her study, Costantini examines the new trading system
in the Eastern Mediterranean following the establishment of the new regime and its effect on Venetian economic policies, like the radical transformation of the structure of Venetian consul missions.

Consolidation of the “Cypro-Ottoman Elite, 1650-1750” is a theme explored by Marios Hadjianastasis, who underlines the paucity of existing studies due to modern ideological and political rivalries that affected the level of accessibility to documentary sources. Like Michael, in the introductory section of this book, Hadjianastasis reminds us that Cypriot historians followed an old-fashioned historiographical model to serve a nationalist agenda, thus accentuating the divisive categories of the past. Thus for the “Greek Cypriots the history of the Ottoman period revolves around the activity of certain personalities, such as Archbishop Kyprianos and Dragoman Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios” and the Ottoman period is squarely characterized as a period of slavery and tyranny, thus giving a “retrospective understanding of the past” (pp. 63-4). These historiographical “retrospective” models have affected the study of eminent personalities and virtually left “aspects of social and economic history” unexamined. Thus Hadjianastasis embarks on a threefold project, inspired by an overarching aim: first, to explore the economic realities of the period within the wider regional economic context; second, to survey “social realities” within a “socioeconomic framework” from a cohesive – as contrasted to the conventional “divisive” – point of view; and last, to assess “the place of Cyprus within the Ottoman context”. This project he accomplishes successfully, showing how the one hundred years between 1650-1750 was a period of consolidation of Cypriot elites. On the one hand, the new Ottoman military elite – increasingly taking roots in the local economy and trade – became cypriotized, ultimately revolting against sultanic power and claiming authority over the island (1680-90). This military class, being effectively integrated in local society, embarked on manifold property and commercial activities. The second elite group, the higher Orthodox clergy, strived to gain legitimacy within the Ottoman system of power. The Church, during the Ottoman period, experienced a huge expansion in wealth and land ownership. Hence it played a major role in the economy of the island, something which – combined with the politics of the imperial power – brought the prelates significant political power. Orthodox clergy was recognised as the representative of the Christians on the island. “The Cypriot higher clergy, led by the Archibishop”, gained a crucially auxiliary administrative role on the island and especially in the domain of tax collection, “which allowed to [sic] Church to gradually become the most important agent of Ottoman authority and legitimisation of the island” (p. 81). The Church itself suffered from internal conflicts over dominion. Both groups (Ottoman military elite and Orthodox clergy) were united under the aegis of new order, interchangeably competing or collaborating in the context of economic interests, like land ownership, taxation, trade, etc. A third elite, that of foreign merchants and consular representatives is shown to have been actively involved in the business, having collaborated with members of the local administration thus securing and promoting their interests.

In the next chapter T. Stavrides thoughtfully examines aspects of administration and Society for the period extending from mid-eighteenth century to 1850. This period, according to Stavrides, marks the “ascendancy for the Church of Cyprus” and the growing political role of the office of Dragoman, as shown by the “mighty Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios”. On the social level, however, “this period is characterized by adverse conditions, which prevented the increase of the population, but also by the rise of external trade, which led to important changes in land tenure and production” (p. 89). As far as administration is concerned Stavrides argues that “the three authorities which vied for supremacy in the island were the local Ottoman Governor, the Church of Cyprus and the Dragoman; they sometimes co-operated or clashed, while at times one could prevail over the others”. For five years in the middle of the eighteenth century Cyprus was an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, and it was at that period Stavrides writes that “important public works were undertaken”. In 1750, however, the island returned to its regular administrative status, “as part of the hase of the Grand Vizier, who farmed out its income to the highest bidder” and the momentum was lost. In what follows Stavrides analyses the administrative structures and hierarchies on the island, noticing the single change in the administration model that occurred in 1785, when “the island passed from the Grand Vizier to the Divan-i Hümayun” (p. 90). Stavrides observes that the Ottoman Governors on the island remained in office for very short periods of time, a fact he attributes to both the administrative pattern revived in 1750 as well as to the increasing authority of the “Orthodox prelates” who could only gain a visit to the Porte and the Supreme Council of the Porte to control the province. To achieve control the Porte appointed the prelates as “the goja-bashis or guardians and representatives of the rayahs, with the perpetual right of presenting directly to the Porte petitions and complaints on their behalf” (p. 91). This authority, often antagonistic to the local Governors, gave the Church of Cyprus a distinctive role on matters relating to the removal of the latter and on spiritual affairs. The author writes about “a spiritual blooming”, due to the political and economic power of the Church. That “blooming” however is related to a few short-lived schools and a number of publications. Archbishop Kyprianos, formerly Economos, was an example of an enlightened scholar, who had lived in the Danubian Principalities and brought with him the traditions of the Orthodox Phanariotes. According to Stavrides, “Kyprianos aspired to put into action grandiose plans for the spiritual regeneration of Cyprus”, and his actions were emblematic of his ambition “to create in Cyprus an enlightened administration similar to that of the Principalities” (p. 93). At this period, marked by the reign of Kyprianos, according to Stavrides, the Church reached the peak of its power and the Archbishop practically overshadowed the local Ottoman Governor. The tragic events of 1821, with the execution of Kyprianos together with many other notables put an end to the increasing authority of the Church, despite some signs of revival during the next decades.

Another pole of authority on the island was the Dragoman of the Saray. That office existed from the beginning of the 17th century, but only at the time of Kornesios that office expanded from being a mediator between the Ottoman authorities and its subjects to having administrative and fiscal duties. But the function of that office and the role of the Dragoman must have been carried out with difficulties. The Dragomans, as shown by Stavrides’ own sources, had been influential Cypriots who attained to power usually with the support and patronage of Ottoman officials. They have the discretion in an environment full of intrigues and jealousy, and usually they were executed or assassinated. Kornesios, who obtained that office through similar paths became so
powerful that he was “responsible for all public affairs, and his political authority overshadowed not only that of the local Ottoman Governor, but also that of Archbishop Chrysanthos” (p. 97). Kornesios, however, reached the “peak of hubris” in 1804, being involved in a scandal, which led to his execution in 1809.

While there is ample evidence that both the Church and Dragonman’s office formed a major nucleus of power during the period under examination, one cannot ignore a major antinomy in the overall presentation, not fully worked out: Holding power and being influential was ineluctably tied to a deadly fate. As judged by the terrible ends of Kyprianos, Kornesios and other influential men, local people who accumulated wealth and power did so in the context of a “web of intrigue”, corruption and patronage, always at the risk of their lives and security. Their power was short-lived and their death violent. It was not the typical ascendency to power by leading public persons or oligarchs, through free and open competition, but it was a process within an imperialist and oppressive administrative framework; consequently, rise to power normally brought with it the seeds of self-destruction. When one refers to “political power” and “political authority” exercised by local notables during the Ottoman dominion one has to qualify these terms by re-contextualising them within the unique environment of Ottoman administration. Otherwise the political vocabulary (anachronistically) used to describe “power and authority” result in an essentially distorted picture as it normalizes abusive power relationships.

This pragmatic aspect of holding political power is not paid due attention. That omission is largely due to the fact that the various influences that shape modern historical understanding are not only at variance with nationalist interpretations (discussed above), but besides they are inescapably historicist in their own ideological and political envelopes. Thus, some articles in this volume demonstrate that the profound political influence and economic status of the Church during the Ottoman period, as contrasted to the poverty and misery of the populace, was due to its subservient role as an appendage to the imperial ruler, an idea which apparently collides with “the stereotyped view” that idealized the Church in nationalist narratives (see Michael, p. 15). Nevertheless sometimes authors begin by an assumption that defeats their own programmatic methodology: they inconsistently start reading the past by invoking present actualities, evident in their insinuations about contemporary perceptions over the role of Orthodox Church in politics. But if one starts with a factual statement, which is also a pragmatic judgment, namely that the Church of Cyprus still exercises an overly self-illuminating political role, then inevitably one would investigate the past to discover the roots of this democratic anomaly. It is in this way that the Church might be overloaded with a species of political authority it never really possessed or actually exercised. Stavrides’ analysis, needless to say, is in all probability correct, and the conclusions drawn are right, yet they demonstrate the weakness and futility of any historiographical enterprise that aspires to be severed from the present, and read the past objectively, just for its own sake.

In the remaining parts of his article Stavrides offers some useful documentation about the population and living conditions, and examines briefly economic changes on the island. The numbers provided confirm that Cypriot population suffered a decrease up to 50% during the 18th century, due to “adverse living conditions” (p. 98), such as epidemics, famines, years of locusts and severe droughts. Furthermore the “condition of the population was aggravated due to the fiscal policies of the local administration” (p. 99), which in conformity with the changes of 1750 farmed the island out to the highest bidder. It was a gloomy period of rapid social decline and misery, attested in several sources (p. 100), aggravated further by unruly despotism as that exemplified in the politics of Osman Aga. “The story of the following decades in one of hardship due to wars, revolts, taxation and maladministration” (p. 101). The break of the Greek Revolution in 1821 had its echoes on the island, both on the political and the social level; the general condition being deteriorated many Cypriots immigrated to Europe and the newly liberated Greece. For the people of Cyprus it was a period of hardship, destitution, and utmost misery. Backed with the despotism of ruthless tyrants, it is not to be wondered that there were no works of development and importance in the 18th century.

Marc Aymes explores another period, the Tanzimat or “Reforms”, and examines its effect on local politics. After contextualizing Tanzimat within the workings of Ottoman Empire, as a means at re-organizing government procedures during the nineteenth century, Aymes admits the difficulty of studying how the Tanzimat took place in Cyprus. In the possession of historians are some distanced “laws and edicts” issued in the metropolis, Constantinople (Istanbul). Local information is meagre and inconsistent. The author quotes Sir George Hill, who in his monumental History of Cyprus wrote that changes in Cyprus were only on paper. This assertion, that “there occurred no such thing as an (effective) application of the reforms in Cyprus” the author sets out to contend, by focusing on the “Tanzimat as a discursive configuration, conflating the semantics of history-writing and the turns of phrase of Ottoman administration” (p. 108). In other words, if I understood the postmodernist vocabulary of this author, what is important here is to avoid the “truisms” which “cripple our attempts at privinciliasing the Tanzimat” and which laid emphasis on the implementation of reforms and rather examine how the Tanzimat took place “through the coming into use of such a ‘discourse of modernity’ [and not modernization per se]” (p. 116). Signs of reform should not be sought in the formation of embodied political features but in the signs of “discursive transformation”. In this interpretative postmodernist framework, deliberately speculative, Aymes collects letters, declarations, “imperial rescripts”, etc. that exemplify this reform discourse. His hypothesis is that “Ottoman statecraft produced and diffused, in Cyprus as in other provinces, a certain discourse of reform; and that, while close reading these maxims and catchwords proclaimed loud and clear, one can grasp a lot about how the Tanzimat took hold in the island” (p. 112, my italics). It is not a question of formal and institutional aspects of reform – it is an inspired liberalism revolving around a set of principles such as personal rights, respectability, security, property which even if not applied yet are testimony of a discourse that collides with traditional Ottoman political ethics. Viewed in a broader perspective, Aymes’ article may be useful to anyone attracted by the impact of postmodernism on modern historiography, yet to the extent the book is on Ottoman Cyprus one would perhaps prefer to miss the author’s point and pose the “truisms”: what practical effect did the Tanzimat on the lives of the people of Cyprus at the time? After all, political history is about “truisms” – people who really existed and actions that really took place.8 It seems that we don’t get any answer to this “hoary truism”.

The "Vakf Institution in Ottoman Cyprus" is a useful and informative piece by Netice Yildiz. Its aim is "to enlighten the cultural history of the Islamic society of the island" and "is based on a research from several documents dating back from the last quarter of the sixteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century" (p. 117). Unlike the previous article this work examines in admirably tangible detail the practical application of the Turkish Cypriot institutional religious administration "which survive" to the present. The author informs us on the various vakfs that had been established "as religious or philanthropic foundations like all historical buildings of Ottoman origin, such as mosques, tekkes, medreses, imaretos ..., aqueducts, bridges, libraries, hans ..., custom houses, administrative and military buildings" (p. 118). After categorizing the various types of vakfs, Yildiz provides meticulous information on the conversion of Agia Sophia [Aya Sofya] into a mosque, in accordance to the tradition that every conquered land should have turned the most precious Latin Christian monument into an Islamic shrine. Following the conquest there took place a rapid administrative reorganization, in order to diffuse a climate of security to the Islamic people and encourage "a settlement policy on the island". In this regard, "imperial orders were issued for forced migration from the conquest". It is shown that most of the sixteenth century vakfs were considered as the property of the Sultan under the "Aya Sofya Evkaf". Besides those, however, there were other noteworthy vakfs established during the early years of the Ottoman period, which the author quotes in detail. Some notable vakfs were established by women, mainly estates consisting of rich agricultural fields, like those in Paphos district (Kukla), which were planted with various trees and had mills and large residential houses. There were several types of vakfs, those established for the "wellfare of the citizens", "Military buildings", "Public buildings", "water Vakfs" as well as vakfs for educational purposes (Schools and libraries). Yildiz provides a detailed account on the latter, which enrich our information about Cyprus's Islamic cultural heritage during this period. Vakf institutions managed to survive the British arrival on the island, but with considerable decrease of property "as well as cultural heritage" (p. 151). British modernising policy, exemplified in the destruction of existing architecture, the ill management of the Vakf Administration during the British rule, and the diffusion of westernized culture following the founding to the Republic of Turkey, together with the division of the island in 1974, resulted in considerable losses. Yet, today, "the Vakf Administration of Turkey is greatly contributing to and supporting all the maintenance of the Islamic building in the Northern part of Cyprus, which have historical and religious character. It is also pleasing to see that the vakf monuments in the South of the island are carefully restored and maintained with the finance of United nation’s UNDP branch" (p. 151).

Erica Ianiro offers "Notes on Venetian Commerce on Cyprus in the 18th Century", an article that shows light mostly on Venetian finances and politics rather than on Cypriot life. She shows that certain political events (like the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 and the treaty of Passarowitz in 1718), economic changes and contingencies at the beginning of the eighteenth century enhanced the position of Cyprus as a regional trade and commercial centre, operating routes to both surrounding coasts and longs routes such as Lisbon. From "extremely incomplete data", Ianiro concludes that the two main Cypriot (export) "good par excellence" (p. 192) were cotton and wine. Ianiro finally speculates that "it is possible to affirm that the island was an integral part of the European economic system, partly thanks to the reciprocal exchange of goods, including the goods fundamental for the European economy, such as those involved in the manufacture of various kinds of fabric" (p. 196). It is exactly that position that accounts for the presence of state functionaries -- the various consuls on the island -- who had to watch and secure the trading interests of their countries in this "important mercantile and logistical junction of the eastern Mediterranean" (p. 196).

The produce of the island during the Ottoman period is examined by Ali Efdal Özkul, who embarks on studying "tradesmen’s organizations and fixed price systems". One is confused by the word "organizations" when the exact
meaning, referred to below, is “trade groups” or “profession groups”. According to the records there were around one hundred trade groups in Cyprus during the Ottoman period. In examining these sources it becomes obvious, according to Özkul, that “the non-Muslims and the Muslims worked together in almost all professional branches on the island”. The list of branches is regrettably given only in Turkish, like a lengthy quotation in pp. 206-7, even though some of the “occupations” are explained in more detailed later on. Some of these professions no longer exist, as they exercised their mission within a historical medium, addressing contemporary social needs. Butchers, sellers of ice, pouleters, shoemakers, tanners, bakers, barbers, are listed as well as their shops and locations.

Michalis Michael who wrote the Introduction to this volume, contributes an individual chapter on the Church of Cyprus, labelled “An Orthodox Institution of Ottoman Political Authority”. This chapter is rather misplaced; it would make a good companion to Stavrides’ “Administration and Society”, where there is also a significant section on the Church of Cyprus. Michael opens his study by stating that “the most important perhaps change that was brought about by the Ottoman occupation of the island was the organisation of the Church of Cyprus” (p. 209). What sort of reorganisation did it bring about? Whereas it remained autochephalous (it is in fact one of the oldest Orthodox “independent” churches), we learnt that its “reestablishment” practically meant its integration into the administrative mechanisms of the Ottoman system, like the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. Following the conquest, the prelates are bestowed with authority (rights and duties) drawn directly from the Sultan and their status thus became both legal and legitimate. During the years 1660 to 1754, almost for a century, the political responsibilities of the high-ranking clergy were expanded, Michael writes, to include fiscal administration of the Christians and tax-collection. By upgrading the prelates to be the leaders of the Orthodox population on the island the Ottomans had dexterously secured their cooperation in running and operating central administrative institutions of the Empire. The prelates had direct consultations with the Sublime Porte, a fact that had far-reaching consequences. The Porte got gradual control over the Church and played a dominant role in the removal of prelates from their thrones (like Archbishop Chrysanthos, in the early nineteenth century) and the enthronement of others. The Ecumenical Patriarchate was asked to ratify ecclesiastically the actions of the Sublime Porte, something which betrays both its weakness but also an insinuation of an “agreement that seemed to exist between Kyriakos and the Sublime Porte” (p. 216).

In what follows Michael recounts the story of Archbishop Kyriakos as a “Phanariote ruler”, his ascendancy to power and his ideological commitments which were closely associated with central Enlightenment tenets. Being appointed to the archbishopric throne while Chrysanthos was still alive, Kyriakos embarked on the dissemination of Greek letters on the island. Yet his aspirations, Michael observes “should not be confused with the national conscience that the 1821 rebels were formulating and which ultimately aimed at overturning the Ottoman authority” (p. 220). Michael in effect deconstructs a central nationalist conviction, which long idealized and converted Kyriakos into a proclaimed saint for the liberation of Cyprus from the Ottoman yoke. He points out that the celebration was the Kyriakos understood very well his political role within the Ottoman administration, which he defended against any revolutionary aspirations or “antichristian” rebels (see his circular of February 1815). His execution in July 1821 must not be related to any specific involvement of Kyriakos with PhlikiEtaireia – “this does not seem to be documented” (p. 224). The massacre of 1821 was partly attributed to the violent character of Küçük Mehmet. “The completely undocumented and unjustified mass slaughter of 1821 places the island in the group of areas that have known the most cruel form of Ottoman abuse of power and violence on behalf of the Sublime Porte. July 1821 was so cruel and violent on behalf of the Ottoman administration that many newspapers in European nations printed extensive articles about the slaughters and the destruction that followed” (p. 225).

In conclusion, the Ottoman reforms brought about radical changes in the Church of Cyprus, the most important being the politicization of its role, i.e. the expansion of its religious authority to the political domain. Thus the Church of Cyprus, representing the Orthodox millet (religious community) on the island, became part and parcel of an imperialist mechanism, truly political in nature, yet not truly secularised. In effect the religious and the political are interwoven, and the Church becomes only peculiarly secularised. Elevated to be a leader of the island’s Orthodox subjects, the Church would have conceived itself, in the nineteenth century, as “a national leader since the Cyprus Orthodox [subjects] are now self-determined on the basis of their national identity and not their religious faith” (p. 229). Yet, the nationalist orientation of the Church was not translated into a struggle for liberation, as quoted in traditional historiography. The “high clergy of the Church of Cyprus operated as a group of state officers in the oriental despotic framework of the Ottoman state and the Church was elevated to the most powerful political body on the island. At the same time, the high clergy was a group that remained vigilant and are the ornaments of the existing order and social class in the Ottoman state” (p. 230). In other words, the Church was a down-to-earth institution that not only aided materially the stability and vitality of Ottoman sovereignty on the island but it also resisted change and counteracted revolutionary uprisings. It was an appendage to Ottoman despotism and part of an administrative system of corruption and exploitation. The historic role of the Church of Cyprus, viewed in light of Michael’s deconstructionist perspective, against the “traditional nationalist historiography” (as an exponent and spirited advocate of Greek nationalism) is certainly not one for which it can boast itself.

The next two articles focus on cultural production, decorative arts and craftsmanship. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou provides an expert account of “Traditional Craftsmen in Cyprus” by examining the property lists of deceased persons codified by the Holy Archbishops of Cyprus. Various arts and crafts of very high standards flourished in Cyprus under Frankish and Venetian rule. The products of these arts served the needs of peasants and the ordinary population as well as those of the ruling classes and the nobility. The conquest by the Ottomans brought fundamental changes, and as Cyprus was now detached from the Latin West and economy, production and administration were reorganised to meet the customs and needs of the new Empire. During that period “craftsmen of different nationalities, Ottoman Turks, Greeks, Armenians, had their workshops in the bazaars, where each craft had its special place or street” (p. 234). Further, we learnt that Sultan Selim II ordered that immigrants from Anatolia should permanently settle on the island, and amongst those immigrants transferred there in 1572 there were “twenty carders, two boot-makers, one locksmith, one cook, five blacksmiths, four batters, nine shoemakers, one gunsmith, five tanners, two merchants, seven tailors, two felt-makers, one farrier and one carpen-
ter" (p. 234). The lists of properties and belongings of deceased persons provide an interesting picture (and anthropological map) of individual craftsmanship (raw materials used, tools of each craft, etc.), and most importantly reveal aspects of daily professional activities and transactions, household economy, social relations, habits and dispositions of Cypriot people.

Josif Hadjikyriakos introduces us to the decorative arts of this period as an embodiment of the ways Cypriots during the Ottoman dominion expressed their “need for art” (p. 259). Decorative arts, this authors argues, is a direct and straight “text”, which “unaffected by the elegant mannerisms of ‘high art’”, will help us clearly “perceive the elements of the intercultural dialogue which met, co-existed and were created together on this island” (p. 259), but also enlighten us on the forms of aesthetic and cultural amalgamation that took place along with the sensitivities, receptiveness and local tradition that persisted in the arts of the indigenous population. An example is the decoration (decorative motifs, stylistic shapes and elements) of ceramic objects which changes “through the centuries and adapts itself to the tastes of the times” (p. 265); these include simple in form ceramics for everyday use, but also more complex decorative items, like vessels, multiple-handled jars, floral and human forms, etc. Other forms of decorative art examined by Hadjikyriakos include metalwork, goldsmithery, silver-smithery, woodcarving, embroidery and textile decoration. His account is informed by a geographical distribution of the various decorative arts in Cyprus under Ottoman rule, which is impregnated with multifaceted cultural elements and social relationships, down from the local peasantry to the high-ranking officials and elites.

Matthias Kappler closes the main body of this volume with a chapter entitled “Toward a Common Turkish and Greek Literary History in Ottoman Cyprus”. One would instantly ask, “what kind of a commonality is to be found?” Turkish and Greek literature were written (or orally transmitted) in the dialectal forms of each community’s linguistic commitments to its motherland (the Greeks using a Greek dialect, the Turkish the Ottoman). And not only that, as Kappler shows Turkish and Greek literature, in their various forms (folk literature, chronicles, stories, etc.) were divided not only linguistically but also emotionally: Ottoman Cypriot literature praised the conquerors of Nicosia and Famagusta, panegyrised the glorious events and underlined heroism. Greek Cypriot literature on the other hand was a genre of “Lament”, focussing on loss, death and destruction because of the conquest. Indeed, thematically, the conquest offered a focal point of literary reference for both Turkish and Greek literature. “Both kinds of texts deal with the theme of ‘conquest’, on the one hand the loss, on the other the gain, and both of them are linked to the same centre Istanbul, as outgoing or ruling Capital, both narrating—praising or deploring—the transposition of the symbols of central power” (p. 291). The roots of the literary commonality is to found exactly in Kappler’s methodological approach, namely “an attempt to consider the literary expression in the two languages during Ottoman supremacy on the island as one and the same expression from a peripheral context toward the centre(s)” (p. 286). For the Greeks the centres being Constantinople, in the first place, and subsequently the metropolis, Athens – Istanbul for the Turkish Cypriots. For the Greeks Constantinople was a cultural and ecclesiastical core of Hellenism: for the Turks it was the Imperial centre. So, the commonality is to be found in the “common strategy in Ottoman Cypriot, both Greek and Turkish, namely to deal with] literature as an expression in literary terms from a periphery (both socially and geographically) to a centre (of local power but related to the Imperial centre)” (p. 289).

Conclusion

The present volume is a valuable contribution to an exploration of the many phases of Ottoman rule. But there are obvious gaps in the contents. First, one is intrigued by the title “Ottoman Cyprus” which broadly refers to a period of 300 years of life on the island. Based on the title, one is naturally disposed to expect a much fuller picture of the “Cypriots”, and especially of the Greek speaking people who after three hundred years of oppressive rule managed (through various mechanisms, not examined in this volume) to preserve a relatively high level of cohesion, religious and cultural identity. For example, one misses a chapter on Cypriot peasant life and on aspects of socio-cultural anthropology; social class and mentalities; movements, letters and ideologies (nationalism included). The role of the Orthodox Church is utterly restricted to its political dimensions, unlike the Evkaf institutions which are examined as broadly cultural units. We would expect a study of the Church not only as an institution possessing “political authority” but also as a religious establishment lato sensu; a chapter on Orthodox monastic life during the Ottoman period; of the changes that took place in the architecture of convents and monasteries; their organisation and agricultural production. Further, since “traditional historiography” records that the Church contributed to the preservation of “faith” and reinforced national identity by providing some sort of education to the Greek population, we would be interested to see this point tested by scholarly research. There is ample archival information and an influence of travel books that would definitely shed light, like the accounts of the Russian monk and traveller Basil Grigorovich Barskii, who visited the monasteries in the 1730s and left extended notes on contemporary architecture, landscape and monastic life. One also misses a chapter on the outsiders’ view, i.e. travel literature, that despite its distinctive ideological and contextualised traits, typical to this genre in Western literature, provides insights into the state of affairs, social ethos, and natural resources of the island during the Ottoman period.

The emphasis in the book is naturally and by implication on the diversity of Ottoman elements and influences on the island, but the indigenous population (apart from an eclectic account of the Church and merchants) is not given its rightful place in the overall picture. This failure is, in my view, to be attributed to the preconceptions and intellectual commitments implicit in the revisionist historiographical approaches, especially in their premeditated contrariety with traditional historiographical genres (examined above). The historiographical paradigm programmatically adopted in the “Introduction” led to an a priori dismissal of a rich subject-matter ingrained in the so-called “traditional historiography”. Traditional historiography should have been viewed in terms of an accessory towards unfolding the lively chain of ideas and events of remote ages and not as eclectically antagonistic to modern scholarly reconstructions. On the other hand, the emphasis on the Ottoman elements per se is legitimately related to the revisionist approaches to Ottoman imperialism that aim to reverse negative representations and customary dichotomies between East and West, and to rehabilitate its reputation in European culture. As Goffman argues European imperialism cultivated the idea that the West brought civilization to the Orient and not vice versa.

versa, and the growing nationalism of post Ottoman territo-
ries “have demanded imagined pasts that centered the iden-
tities of their own nations at the expense of rival identities
such as the Ottoman one”\textsuperscript{10}. This idea is now being chal-
lenged, and it is effectively challenged in this volume too.

In conclusion, this collection of studies succeeds in
offering fresh perspectives on a number of issues while
utilizing a new set of interpretative tools. The chapters are
not all of equally high quality, but they all contribute, to
a greater or lesser degree, to the exploration of Ottoman
Cyprus and to the discovery of new research possibilities
in this area. On the technical side, the book is not entirely
free of typographical errors, at some places English is ob-
scure and syntax peculiar, and at some times Turkish is
regrettably not translated into English. The bibliographi-
cal section and the Archival Guide on Ottoman Cyprus are
most helpful and would certainly encourage the study of
the period. Overall, the volume is a useful companion to
the politics and culture of Ottoman Cyprus.

\textsuperscript{10} Daniel Goffman, \textit{The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe}