

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Physical and Historiographic Space

What if the Ottomans had discovered America? Or, more to the point, what if the Ottomans had colonized America? Naval supremacy, gunpowder, talent, resources, that intangible ethos of empire—all the factors assembled which comprise the historiographic success formula were the Ottomans' preserve at the turn of the sixteenth century. Yet, this is not a study of the New World or even of the Age of Discovery in its usual sense because in 1503, as the first Portuguese traders traced their tentative path back to Lisbon, their holds full of Indian pepper, the dominant power in the Euro-Asian world turned its hegemonic ambitions and formidable navy not west after the Atlantic fantasy but east.¹ The Ottoman Empire in less than twenty years expanded its territorial control south and eastward, there to engage the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. This work takes as its focus the processes by which that expansion occurred. Its topic is not so much the physical clash of empires, but its prelude—the political, economic, and rhetorical mechanisms by which Ottoman competitors, one by one, were removed from contention for control of the Levant.

The sixteenth century has been called the “Age of Discovery,” a period when the voyaging empires of western Europe endeavored to capture the revenues of the oriental trade and, in the process, came upon and conquered the Americans. The term Age of Discovery is, of course, no longer much in vogue. Historians and history department class offerings have now turned their attentions to the recipients as well as the bearers of this particularly European form of “discovery.” Yet, the weight of Age of Discovery vintage histo-

riography has continued to focus disproportionate attention on certain discoveries, or conquerors and imperialists, and on certain rhetorics of conquest in certain geographic spheres, at the expense of others.

European historiography on the sixteenth century has been overwhelmingly structured in terms of the Age of Discovery, and the increasing power of Western Europe that it announced; Columbus' voyages are its central drama, and the spectre of the coming Industrial Revolution sets its tone. In that framework, the Ottoman Empire has been not a protagonist but something to be circumvented as the globe was to be circumnavigated: an obstacle, though not an insurmountable one, to the shift of the balance of power inexorably westward. Although the Age of Discovery paradigm is currently being deconstructed, the story of early sixteenth-century Ottoman hegemony in the Levant remains firmly under the shadow of what the empire would become, the late nineteenth century "Sick Man of Europe," a colonized and imperialized dependent of latter day European dominance. This study is intended to tell a story less structured by later outcomes. It assumes a different world map, centering not on Lisbon, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Paris, or London, but on Istanbul, Cairo, and Tabriz. The objectives of Ottoman expansion in the sixteenth century were the same as those of the European voyages of discovery: wealth, power, glory, religious legitimation. The territories promised to King Emmanuel of Portugal by the pope were the same as those coveted by the Ottomans; the only dilemma was whether one sailed west or east to reach them. Here, too, there was an obstacle, but the obstacle was Safavid Iran, not the Muslim alter ego of the European accounts, but a fellow pretender to the Ottoman claims to empire.

The sixteenth century was indeed a pivotal period in which shipping and gunpowder technologies along with accumulations of wealth brought the achievement of world hegemony closer to realization for a select few monarchs. The turn of the sixteenth century signaled a recasting of the boundaries of "world" sovereignty in terms of seapower; for four centuries thereafter naval hegemons would contend to expand their spheres of influence within that recast world. Accompanying the rearticulation of boundaries in the sixteenth century world order came a rearticulation of the language of diplomacy and the rhetoric of empire. Command of the sea drew the claims of rulers well beyond the limits circumscribed by the march of their armies in a single campaign season. Seapower

meant that the feats of Alexander or of the Caesars no longer marked the outer limits of imaginable conquest.

Moving out in four great sweeping arcs from Lisbon, London, Amsterdam, and Antwerp, the monarchs of the Atlantic seafaring empires set out in four directions to journey to southeastern Asia: one route arced northeast (heading overland through Muscovy and Iran); a second moved northwest (across the Atlantic and toward the Arctic, seeking a northwest passage); a third arc went southeast (around the horn of Africa and into the Indian Ocean); while a fourth arc went southwest (around the tip of South America and across the Pacific). Ultimately, only the routes tracing the two southern arcs were successful, bringing the Portuguese, the English, and the Dutch naval control in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific. No sea route materialized through the northwest passage. Distance, inhospitable climate, and the English failure to negotiate favorable trading conditions with Iranian monarchs, made the long overland route through Muscovy unprofitable. Conversely, the southern seaborne arcs brought to the western European voyaging empires the wealth and far flung bases that they used to support their claims to world hegemony.

Within the bounds of the two arcs that swept eastward lay Euro-Asia, a territory stretching from the Balkans to South Asia, governed by Muslim rulers who controlled the traditional land-based routes and the Mediterranean outlets of the eastern trade.² For the west European merchant states, this territory was something to be circumvented, a land mass dominated by Turkic dynasties and slave states, commercial middlemen between the source areas of the eastern trade and the European consumers. But historically it was not a closed block, cut off and distinct from the commercial, political, and cultural spheres of interconnected empires in Europe, Africa, and East Asia. This study concerns itself with this region between the eastern arcs—the playing out there of the tensions between contending claims to universal sovereignty, the articulation of state policy, and the mechanisms of conquest and of trade by which a new sixteenth-century world order was forged.

The intent of this study is to alter the boundaries of historiography on the Euro-Asian sphere and on the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into constructions of the sixteenth-century world order. The following premises are essential to that analysis: the Ottoman state was a merchant state endowed with economic intentionality; the development of Ottoman seapower was a crucial

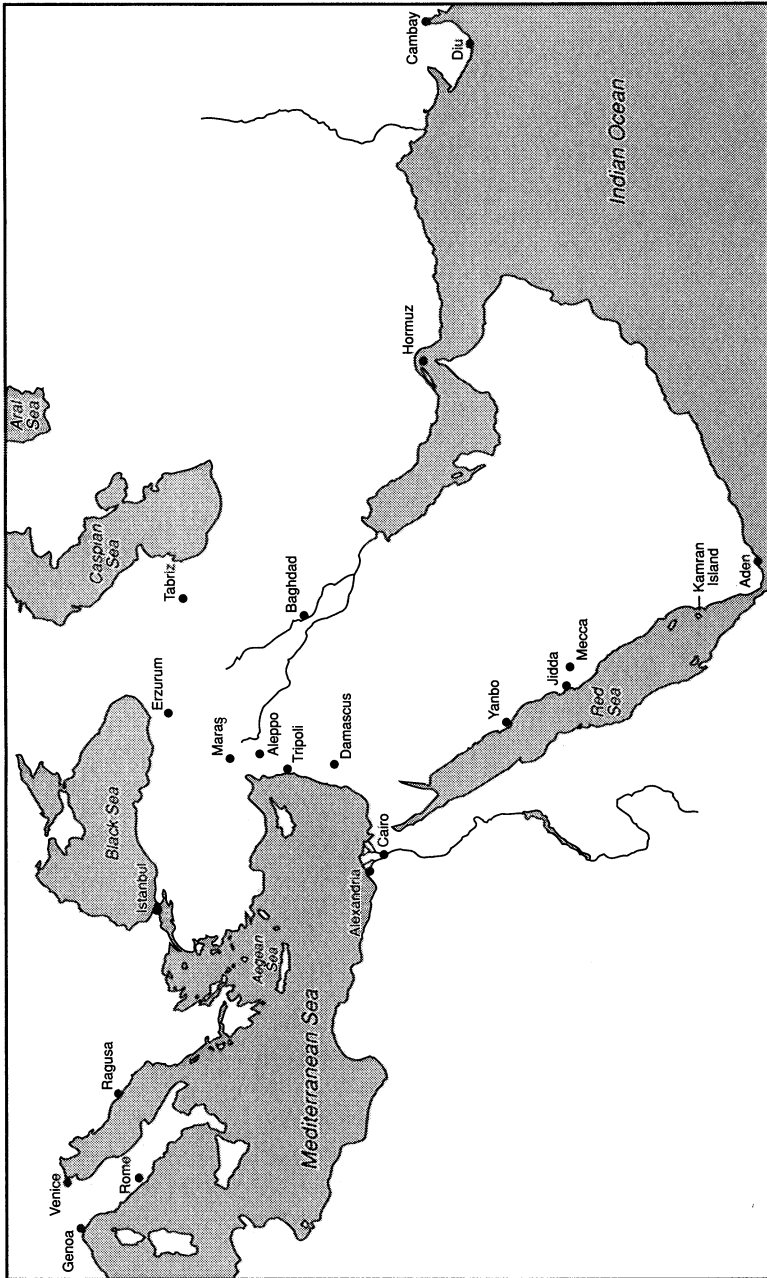


Figure 1. The Euro-Asian World.

factor in the reconfiguration of the early sixteenth-century balance of power; the Ottomans were inheritors of Euro-Asian commercial patterns and cannot be assessed as a separate and isolationist block set apart by Islamic philosophy or slave state military ethos; and, finally, analysis of the political and economic processes of the Age of Discovery cannot assume the later outcomes of western European world hegemony as inevitable. By merchant state, here, is meant a state which invests part of its accumulated wealth in trading ventures for profit and whose elite military classes do likewise; it consciously attempts to compete with other states for the control of commercial revenues; it designs its foreign policy with the clear intention of acquiring control of sources of commercial revenue rather than simply acquiring land for purposes of colonization and agricultural exploitation.

Much has been written about the ambitions of the Atlantic seafaring states. The universalist claims of the Portuguese and Spanish were guaranteed by a papal bull of 1493 granting title in rather flamboyant fashion to: “. . . all islands or mainlands whatever, found or to be found . . . in sailing towards the west and south.”³ The scope of European ambition, then, appeared limited, at any rate to the west, only by the bounds of papal imagination. In fact, it was limited, as were the ambitions of its Asian counterparts, by the range of its navies, number of its cannon, and extent of its economic resources.

Claims of universal sovereignty were not an invention of the late medieval world. Christianity and Islam had posed claims to universal sovereignty and world community for their god-kings. Before the advent of Islam and the conversion of Europe to Christianity, Alexander the Great and the Caesars had become favored models for leaders with somewhat less spiritual claims. The Ottoman sultans and the Hapsburg emperors in the sixteenth century would aspire to resurrect the Roman Empire. Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (d. 1481) had claimed that imperial glory in 1453 when he took the old eastern Roman capital, Constantinople. Rome had long since lost its position as western hegemon. But Constantinople/Istanbul, under the Ottoman dynasty, was the capital of an empire which came to control a greater territory, from Belgrade to the Yemen and from the Crimea to North Africa, than it had under the Byzantines.⁴ Then, Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent (ruled 1520–1566), whose reign is generally considered the golden age of Ottoman power and prestige, would challenge the Hapsburg emperor's claim to the title of Caesar.⁵ This competition for title signified the struggle of

European and Asian potentates for the rhetorical terrain of public image. The nature of the Ottoman expansion in the sixteenth century, however, suggests that it was not only the conquests of Julius or Augustus that Süleiman and his father and grandfather wished to duplicate but also the unfulfilled ambitions of Alexander.⁶ Once Constantinople and Cairo fell, the lands of India and China, too, came within the purview of Ottoman ambitions.⁷

Once Constantinople had been conquered and rebuilt, and Ottoman control consolidated in the southern Balkan peninsula, Mehmed II's successors turned their attention to conquest on their eastern frontiers. It was not rich agricultural lands and commercial entrepôts alone that attracted the Ottoman gaze eastwards.⁸ The sultan required imperial and religious legitimation to match his imperial capital. Hegemony in the Muslim world demanded not papal endorsement but control over Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem and the title, "Protector of the Holy Cities." It was this title to which the sovereigns of Muslim states aspired and for which they contended: the Ottoman sultans Bayezid II (1481–1512) and Selim I (1512–1520), the Safavid Shah Ismail (1501–1524) in Iran, and the Uzbek Shaibāni Khān (1500–1510) in Transoxania. In the early years of the sixteenth century, the Mamluk sultans, who were in the final years of their long reign over Egypt and Syria, and suffering both internal revolt and the incursions of the infidel Portuguese into the Red Sea, were still the nominal overlords of the Islamic world. They were the protectors of the Holy Cities and harbored a claimant to the long defunct Abbasid caliphate. The caliphs, still formally honored as successors to the prophet Muhammad, had lost temporal power by the thirteenth century and the spiritual allegiance of segments of the Muslim community long before that. Abbasid puppets during the Mamluk regime, however, still provided a seal of religious legitimacy on the reigns of monarchs who otherwise lacked the legitimation either of piety or of descent. Many Muslim dynasties, including the Ottoman and Safavid, constructed false genealogies linking them to the Prophet Muhammad, but they also coveted the Mamluk claims which derived from control of the Holy Cities and of the puppet caliph. The Mamluks bore the insults of these other contenders who each proposed his own entitlement and fitness to protect the routes of the pilgrimage (*hajj*), and assume the legacy of the Prophet's rule. For the Ottomans, a felicitous combination of commercial and political ambitions could be fulfilled through deposing the Mamluks, and gaining title not only to the Holy Cities but also to the customs

posts for the eastern trade. The Mamluks, however, were only the intermediaries for this trade. Once they were conquered, the Ottomans could attempt directly the conquest of the Indian Ocean. The pilgrim routes to Mecca, after all, traversed not only Syria and North Africa but the sea routes from India as well. Ottoman ships launched from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf would be charged with defending the *hajjis* enroute from South Asia.⁹ Thus, both the lure of trading profits and the clear direction of conquest indicated by the dictates of legitimacy in the Muslim world drew the Ottomans eastwards through the Euro-Asian commercial corridors. There Ottoman universalist claims would intersect with those of the Portuguese—one mighty seaborne empire against another.

Empire building, in this era, was dependent upon the ability to mobilize irresistible armies and navies. Seaborne states expanded at the expense of those without ships. Naval power in turn was dependent upon access to the resources for shipbuilding, cannon founding, crew mobilization, and provisioning. Once these resources were secured, other factors became decisive for the expansionist enterprise. These were: the successful prevention of enemy coalitions through shrewd alliances and the securing of domestic tranquility through a combination of force, administrative expertise, and legitimation of sovereignty. Where the latter was lacking it was eagerly sought after in the forms of military success, and religious sanction. Lacking then were only the opportunity and occasion to attack neighboring states. Attacks on Muslim competitors were legitimized by means of a *fatwa* (statement of concurrence with *shariat* Islamic law) and by accusations of “heresy” against the designated enemy. Forays against Christian competitors were justified as *jihād* or war against the infidel. For Christian states intent on going to war, the same purposes were served respectively by papal bulls and by declarations of “holy war.”

Much of the eastern Mediterranean region had been lost to the direct control of European states in the drawn out and spasmodic conflicts of the Crusades.¹⁰ In 1453, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror’s long anticipated capture of Constantinople ended European visions of a reconstructed eastern Roman Empire. The shock waves this conquest sent through European Christendom found expression in the papacy’s renewal of crusading rhetoric. But no coalition of European states would emerge to challenge the Ottoman Turks. Political and economic imperatives dictated otherwise, and the rhetoric of holy war would not suffice to articulate the image of empire in the sixteenth-century world order.

The Ottoman state became the irresistible force of the early sixteenth-century Levantine world. It accomplished its objectives (control of trade and territory plus the humiliation of its foes) through a combination of carefully formulated alliances, formidable firepower, and precisely applied naval action. These factors eventually secured the defeats of its Muslim competitors, Ismail Safavi in Iran in 1514 and the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria in 1516–1517, while gaining for the Ottomans access to control of the eastern trade and the routes of the *hajj*. With conquest came wealth and legitimacy. Control of commerce, however, was a prerequisite as well as an effect of Ottoman conquest. By securing and manipulating the mechanisms of trade in the eastern Mediterranean the Ottomans paved the way for their actual incursions, beginning in 1505, east to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. The power to control commerce was as much a factor in the expansion of the Ottoman state as the power to forge cannon.

The participants in the struggle for hegemony in the Euro-Asian sphere were not equal in power, resources, range of action, or governmental organization. Expanded possibilities, actual and rhetorical, were granted to states which commanded seapower. The primary competitors here were the Ottomans in Anatolia and the Balkans, the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria, the Safavids in Iran and Iraq, the Portuguese, and the Venetians. Of these, Venice is of particular significance in this study because it was Venice that the Ottoman state replaced as the dominant naval power in the eastern Mediterranean. All of these contenders but the Safavids in the early sixteenth century were merchant states with economies, in greater or lesser part, organized to develop and exploit customs revenues. The Mamluks and Safavids were not naval powers. Iran had never developed as a seapower in the Persian Gulf, and the Mamluks had failed to maintain the reputation for naval dominance in the Mediterranean established by their predecessors, the Fatimids, during the Middle Ages. Venice was a seafaring republic whose success derived from well ordered merchant fleets and the energetic exploitation of its Mediterranean middleman position in the East-West trade. But Venice lacked the economic and military resources to dominate the eastern Mediterranean basin. The Portuguese and Ottoman empires, in contrast, were merchant states with resources to match their expansionist ambitions. Their development of navies and artillery, combined with wealth in the form of commercial, manpower, agricultural, mineral, and timber re-

sources, permitted them to compete, as dominant powers, for control of the Euro-Asian sea frontiers.

The context for this study is the period of Ottoman expansion, during the reigns of sultans Bayezid II (1481–1512) and Selim I (1512–1520), beginning with the Ottoman-Venetian wars of 1499–1503 and culminating in the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1516–1517, which ended two and a half centuries of Mamluk rule. While the Ottomans were concluding a period of protracted warfare with Venice and its allies, a new challenger for the role of Euro-Asian hegemon was gaining power in Iran. Shah Ismail Safavi, sheikh of the Safavid order of dervishes and charismatic military leader, conquered Tabriz in 1501 and, within ten years, had seized Baghdad, united Iran, and begun the process of converting predominantly Sunni Iran to Shi'ism. The ascendancy of Ismail coincided temporally with the Portuguese navigations to East Africa and India, which constituted a military and economic challenge to Mamluk control of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean outlets of the oriental trade. The Mamluks, based in Cairo and claiming sovereignty over Arabia as well as Egypt and Syria, held a monopoly on the spice trade and controlled the caravan routes north through the Hijaz and west from the Persian Gulf into Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut.¹¹ Mamluk commercial interests, however, were only part of the complex network of economic exchange which transferred goods from the Indian Ocean to northern and western Europe. The Portuguese assault on the Asian trade also threatened the revenues of Venice and the Ottoman state, primary intermediaries after the Mamluks in the conduct of the East-West trade.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Ottoman expansion was blocked on their southeastern frontiers by longtime rivals, the Mamluks, and by new challengers, the Safavids and the Portuguese. The Ottoman western frontiers at the same time can be divided roughly into a sea zone, where Ottoman preeminence in the eastern Mediterranean had been demonstrated decisively during the Ottoman-Venetian wars (1499–1503), and a land zone where Ottoman armies were actively extending the sultan's control over Balkan territory until a stalemate was reached in the later sixteenth century. No concerted resistance to Ottoman expansion coalesced in either the sea or land frontier zones during the period under discussion. Conditions on the Austro-Hungarian front were chaotic, and Hapsburg power was not consolidated in Hungary until after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt. On the eastern salient,

Sultan Selim, in the course of his short but illustrious reign, defeated Ismail, in 1514 at Çaldıran in eastern Anatolia, and conquered the Mamluk territories in 1516–1517, thereby bringing Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina into Ottoman hands. Under Selim's successor, Süleiman the Magnificent (d. 1566), the Ottomans pursued the quest for control of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean but ultimately failed. It was not until the second half of the sixteenth century, however, that this outcome, like that of the eventual stalling of Ottoman western expansion, would become apparent. Thus, this work considers the period 1503–1517 as one in which Ottoman commercial and military spheres were expanding to satisfy Ottoman ambitions for “world” hegemony. Hindsight regarding the eventual limitations of that expansion should not distort the assessment of its processes. Thus, for example, the superiority of Atlantic type merchantmen over galleys had yet to be determined, and the decision, made eventually by Sultan Süleiman to make Vienna the preeminent objective of Ottoman campaigns, had yet to be made. The primary thrust of Ottoman ambitions in the early sixteenth century was eastward, proceeding through economic zones which predated Ottoman rule, and engaging the mechanisms of Ottoman diplomacy and conquest to establish control over the revenues of the eastern trade.

European historiography, anachronistically, has focused on the Hapsburg and even Russian challenges to Ottoman hegemony. An analysis of Ottoman empire building in the Age of Discovery is better served by an assessment of the struggles between the Ottomans and Venice on the one hand and the Ottomans, Mamluks, and Safavids on the other. By the time the East became an important terrain of struggle for Russia, its competitors would be the British and not the Ottomans. The Hapsburgs (claiming the title of Holy Roman Emperor), characterized as the European bulwark against the “Terrible Turks,” played only a secondary role in the Ottoman expansion eastwards.¹² Timing, within the sixteenth-century framework here, is crucial to an understanding of the balance of power in the Euro-Asian sphere. The Hapsburg power, which eventually accrued to the emperor, Charles V (1519–1558), cannot be projected back into the early decades of the century when his grandfather Maximilian I (1493–1519) contended with King Wladislas II of Hungary (1471–1516) and others for control of the Balkans. Their struggle is characteristic of the forces within Europe which militated against the presentation of a united Christian-state front against the Ottomans. For the Ottoman rulers be-

fore Sultan Süleiman I, the Hapsburgs were one of several forces on their second front which enjoined caution and the signing of a peace treaty before operations eastward could be conducted. The Ottoman first front at the turn of the sixteenth century was the eastern salient. No single ruler in Europe could contend with the military power of the Ottoman sultan in the early sixteenth century. The European states, mindful of the Ottoman landing at Otranto on the Italian coast in 1480, feared a "Muslim invasion" from the east, much more than Bayezid II or Selim I feared any joint Christian operation from the west.

European states in the early sixteenth century endeavored to form alliances that would maintain the balance of power and contain Ottoman expansion. Yet these attempts were often purely rhetorical, lacking in men and arms. They were thwarted by the active pursuit of individual political aspirations on the part of the monarchs of Europe. Coalitions of Christian monarchs eyed each other's territories. In 1508, for example, the League of Cambrai was formed to annex Venetian territory. The Hapsburg Maximilian I allied with Pope Julius II, Ferdinand of Aragon, Louis of France, and the city-states of Mantua and Ferrara, hoping to advance his own territorial ambitions on the Italian mainland at the expense of Venice. Wladislas II of Hungary supported Venice. Three short years later Maximilian was again allied with the pope in the Holy League, against their erstwhile ally, Louis of France. These rivalries for European territory, wealth, and prestige sapped the resources of all the contending monarchs. None provided substantial financial support for an alliance against the Ottomans. Communal loyalties could not stand in the way of more immediate territorial and commercial ambitions.

While the struggle for European dominance was hotly contested with rhetoric and arms by the pope, the emperor, France, Spain, and the Italian city-states, a similar realignment of power was transforming the political terrain on the eastern borders of the Ottoman state. At the beginning of the century, just as the Portuguese began to use their ship-mounted cannon to dominate the coasts of Africa and India, the Safavid Shah Ismail initiated the series of land campaigns which would reunite Iran. Shah Ismail, who, like the Ottomans, was interested in controlling the revenues of the eastern trade, was the lynchpin of early sixteenth-century Levantine diplomacy. He negotiated with the Portuguese, Venetians, the French, the Holy Roman emperor, the pope, and the Mamluks, in pursuit of his own claims to universal sovereignty.

His military victories and the success of Safavid religious proselytizing deterred the Ottoman expansion eastward and helped define the parameters of the succession struggle for the Ottoman throne. European monarchs hastened to explore the possibilities for political and commercial relations with his militarily successful Muslim state. States like Venice looked to Ismail to contain Ottoman power where the efforts of European competitors had failed to do so. The consolidation of Ismail's power in Iran, a region which had been politically fragmented for two centuries, combined with the expanding of the Ottoman and Portuguese empires into the Euro-Asian space, required new political and rhetorical configurations—expressed in the formation of alliances and the conduct of diplomacy. Such configurations had never been based strictly on polarizations of Christian-Muslim, or orient-occident. They had, however, always been determined by economic interest and by the organization of the commercial space.

Boundaries

The boundaries dealt with in this work are both physical and historiographic: the extent and nature of sovereign claims, and the nature, process, and intentions of conquest. Territory and borders are relative terms when applied to the sixteenth century. Like images of universal sovereignty, they are not readily reducible to specific spaces and exact lines. A state's territory was that area from which taxes could be collected and troops levied until another state seized those prerogatives. But territory was also imagined—the areas to which a sovereign laid claim or to which imperial edicts were sent without any firm guarantees that their authority would be respected. Territory could be a rhetorical construct designed to ward off or intimidate competing claimants. It did not necessarily reflect a ruler's ability to command obedience. The organization of day-to-day government and commerce functioned essentially on a local level, administered by provincial governors, chieftains, headmen, and judges (*kadis*). These governors could withdraw their allegiance from one sovereign and give it to another or proclaim their own autonomy. If they did, depending upon their distance from the center, it might be some time before the offended ruler could or did respond. Conquest was also relative. Conquest was defined not in terms of chunks of territory but in terms of routes defended and fortresses garrisoned. It meant the occupying of

towns, the setting up of customs posts, and the sending of central government agents. Frontiers then were large and porous, the borders of one empire melding into those of another with many independent or semi-independent governors in between. Contention for authority within these frontier zones is an important indicator of the nature and ambitions of sixteenth-century empires. The significance of such frontiers has been illustrated by Andrew Hess in his pioneering work on the Ibero-African frontier, a work which has not received due recognition because of the undue privileging of certain frontiers, like the American and Indian Ocean frontiers, at the expense of others within the Age of Discovery framework.¹³ Sixteenth-century monarchs were not preoccupied with drawing boundaries so much as they were with controlling agricultural and mineral resources, taxing trade, and demanding the submission of subordinates and opponents (whether or not that submission was accompanied by financial gain). These acts of submission provided both a basis for territorial claims, and security, however temporary, against the threat of attack. They also lent honor to the name of the sovereign, legitimizing in concrete fashion his exercise of authority. Sixteenth-century boundaries, then, might better be measured in troops, taxes, and acts of submission than in lines on a map.

The amorphous nature of late medieval boundaries notwithstanding, some terms are needed to discuss the range of armies and of traders and the sixteenth-century monarchs' consciousness of their limits. Travel accounts of this period focus on descriptions of cities and trade routes, generally neglecting their hinterlands. These narratives suggest the ways in which empire was imagined. This study, too, focuses on trade routes to conceptualize zones by which the Ottoman economies of conquest and of trade can be analyzed. The zones of commerce through which the Ottomans operated stretched from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, drawing on the resources and personnel of a series of interconnected regions. For purposes of this study, which links Ottoman expansion eastward and Ottoman naval development to the attempt to control international trade, three commercial zones can be delineated.¹⁴ The first is the island-coast zone, which comprised the trade from the Ottoman coast westward through the Aegean and into the Adriatic. The hallmark commodity of this zone was grain. The second zone is the Anatolia-Syria zone, which comprised the east-west overland caravan, and eastern Mediterranean sea trades from Iran, into eastern Anatolia and Syria and on to west Anatolia.¹⁵

This zone stretched from Istanbul to Aleppo to Tabriz to the head of the Persian Gulf. The hallmark commodities of this zone were silk, spices, and lumber. The third zone is the eastern Mediterranean-Indian Ocean zone. It stretched from Istanbul to Alexandria to Jidda to the coasts of India and Malacca.¹⁶ Its primary avenues were the sea-lanes and its hallmark commodities were spices and copper. The boundaries of these zones are overlapping. They correspond not to political borders but, rather, to markets, to the limitations of transport, and to the energies and relationships of traders.

While the energies of states like the Ottoman and Portuguese were directed at garrisoning commercial entrepôts and transit points in order to collect customs taxes, the energies of individual traders were directed at circumventing the boundaries imposed by political overlords, and overcoming the limits posed by technology, by weather, and by predators whose only investment was in arms. State rationale was not necessarily merchant rationale. The organization of commercial activity was usually outside the immediate control of the state. Commerce survived between state controls. This is not to say that the Ottoman state and the members of the ruling military class behaved without commercial motivation or that they never acted as merchants. The boundaries delineating state servants from commercial entrepreneurs were not fixed. Often individual state agents themselves, in order to make a profit, were integrated into the commercial networks. At issue are the ways that members of the *askeri* (military-administrative) class disposed of the capital they accumulated and the meaning of that disposition for assessing the nature of the Ottoman economy. The Ottoman state, traditionally, has been portrayed as a land-based military state whose motivation for expansion can be explained solely in terms of the acquisition of arable land to broaden the tax base which in turn was used to support the ruling elites. Its concerns, then, are assumed to have been limited to political rather than commercial boundaries.¹⁷ Rather, the Ottoman state was a sea based power whose conquests were directed not only at the acquisition of arable land but also at dominating or controlling the trade entrepôts and commercial networks across the zones described above. As a commercial power, the Ottoman state produced a ruling class whose members, (including the sultan, his sons, and the pashas) accumulated wealth that could be and was invested in commercial endeavor.¹⁸

Participation of the Ottoman state in trade was tied to the nature of transport facilities and to the initiative of various individ-

uals within the state system. Agricultural hinterlands controlled by *askeri* provided not only the raw materials but also part of the capital for investments in trade across and between economic zones. To the extent that governments (such as the Ottoman, Mamluk, and Venetian) and their ruling military classes controlled shipping, food commodities (especially grain), and the revenues from landed estates, the adoption of trading functions by these governments and their functionaries was a logical extension of the accumulation of wealth.¹⁹ By monopolizing trade (in certain commodities) and the distribution of agricultural revenues and surpluses, these governments became, in effect, big traders. Further, naval power gave some of these states the ability to limit or manipulate the long distance commercial ventures of competing states or individuals in a manner inconceivable when land-based military power alone was employed. Navies were visible when in port, but their movements were not readily charted as were those of cumbersome and slow moving armies. Fleets could appear offshore or at the side of a merchant vessel without warning. Their force was one of intimidation as well as firepower.

Ottoman expansion eastward and the development of foreign policy in the Levant proceeded by stages of negotiation and conquest, which correspond in their area of focus to the intersecting zones of trade described above. Each stage of Ottoman expansion (coastal-Aegean, Egypt and Syria, the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean) was mediated by naval supremacy. Analysis of each stage, in this work, will correspond to an assessment of the commercial policy and characteristic commodity of each trading zone. This essential linking of economic intent to offensive action and to the conduct of diplomacy exposes the nature of the Ottoman state in the context of the struggle for world power that characterized the early sixteenth century.

Historiography

Historiography generally has excluded the Oriental empires from the competition for world economic power. The Chinese sailed to Africa in the early fifteenth century. Then one day the ships apparently just stopped coming.²⁰ The Mongols "swept" across the steppes for the love of conquest, pastures, and space. The Ottoman armies marched to Yemen, Tabriz, Vienna. Yet this marching seems somehow merely instinctual, a reaction of blood, training, or

temperament. One might suppose that this apparent Oriental failure to be an economic contender was a state of mind rather than an act of will, a matter of naiveté or arrogance rather than of power and its limits. Eurocentric historiography has not disarmed the Ottomans, instead it has mentally incapacitated them, thereby dispensing with the need to evaluate economies of conquest and disposing of the issue of competition with European states for markets rather than territory.²¹

This study, instead, proposes that the Ottoman state or components thereof had a plan that extended beyond the mobilization of troops, the organization of bureaus, and the assignment of military fiefs (*timars*); and that this plan imagined world hegemony, intended to exploit the customs revenues of the Indian Ocean ports, and envisioned a condition of dominance founded on naval supremacy among merchant competitors. These chapters explore some of those possibilities, linking Levantine commercial activity to Ottoman ambitions for world power and to the ramifying effects of those ambitions on its merchant competitors. The implications for further debate and research are: (a) a reassessment of the impact of Ottoman naval development on the world economy; (b) a revision of analyses of Ottoman economic policy in the context of mercantile ambitions; and (c) an examination of the details of participation by the Ottoman state, its merchants, and the Ottoman *askeri* class in the trade of the Levant and beyond.²²

What exactly do we know about the economy of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire? The documentation in the Ottoman archives increases dramatically for the latter half of the sixteenth century and this is reflected in the scholarship of historians like Mehmed Genç, Bruce McGowan, Daniel Goffman, and Suraiya Faroqhi.²³ The pioneering work of Halil İnalcık on the fifteenth-century organization of commerce has not been followed up by the development of a systematic analytical and theoretical framework for the assessment of Ottoman commerce, and the integration of regional and international trading activity into the broader context of Ottoman agriculture, labor, and taxation systems. Here the work done on other areas such as India can provide some guidelines for the development of a comprehensive economic history premised on the notion that there existed a world economic system in the fifteenth century and that states and state agents were motivated to active participation in, and assertion of control over, commercial networks.²⁴

Some research has been done on the early sixteenth century

since the great European historian, Wilhelm Heyd, characterized it as the period of "two great catastrophes": the Portuguese navigations and the Ottoman conquest of Cairo. In particular the works of Vittorino Godinho, Frederic C. Lane, Niels Steensgaard, and Eliyahu Ashtor have demonstrated that the Indian Ocean spice trade to the Levant was not destroyed by the Portuguese.²⁵ These works however, have not dealt with the transition period from Mamluk to Ottoman dominance. Rather they have documented the volume of spice trade in the fifteenth century and then in the reign of Süleiman I and after to show that the trade revived. This focus on *revival* perpetuates the assumption that the Portuguese cut off the eastern Mediterranean trade in the early decades of the sixteenth century. One result of this framing of the Levant trade is the minimization of the importance of the Ottoman conquests.²⁶ They become significant when attention is shifted away from western Europe and the New World discoveries, and back to the Euro-Asian sphere. There, the most important aspect of the Portuguese navigations was their contribution, through the consequent realignment of power, to the establishment of Ottoman political and commercial hegemony.

As long as the eastern Mediterranean trade in the early sixteenth century is viewed uni-dimensionally, as a direct outcome of Portuguese naval activity, the Ottoman naval expansion has no commercial significance. Fernand Braudel, for example, wrote that only when the great discoveries had robbed the Levant of much of its appeal did the Ottomans extend their influence into that area, noting that the occupation of Egypt did not occur until twenty years after Vasco da Gama's voyage.²⁷ He proposed that Ottoman hegemony developed only when Europe lost interest, thereby simultaneously discounting both Ottoman naval supremacy and the generally keen interest in the eastern Mediterranean trade evidenced among European states long after the advent of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. Analyses of the Ottoman state are still dominated by the assumption that naval and commercial affairs were tangential to the central state concerns of military-agricultural organization.²⁸ The Ottoman navy, however, played a considerable role in shaping Ottoman foreign affairs. It was a major determining factor in Venetian, Rhodian, and Mamluk foreign policy considerations. Ottoman naval power forced Venice and Rhodes into dependency relationships with the Ottomans in order to ensure the provisioning of their territories with grain and other commodities. Rhodes, for example, geared its military and economic

activities to Ottoman naval maneuvers. Food stockpiling, licensing of ships, mobilization of noncombatant citizens, and even corsair activities were regulated according to the perceived threat of the Ottoman fleet.²⁹ The Mamluks placed themselves in another form of dependency relationship, also based on naval potential, with the Ottomans. In the Mamluk case, the need was for ships, shipbuilders, artillery, materials, and seamen to man a fleet against the Portuguese. Both power politics and the organization of trade on the east-west axis from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean were thus a function of the nature of Ottoman naval power in the early sixteenth century.

Imagining the Ottoman state as a commercial entity requires a reconceptualization of both the state itself and its typical modes of action. The notion of the Ottoman "state" has tended to be coterminous either with sultanic authority or with the operations of the central government. The latter is the usage employed here. "State," however, must be broken down into its separate relations and functions and must be understood as only one nexus of power. Failure to do so results, among other things, in the equation of the ideal of sultanic edict (*kanun*) with the actual processes of day-to-day legal and commercial operations. The state is then represented as acting only in a unitary fashion. This model obscures the complex interactions of notables, dynasty, and the merchant classes. It also contributes to the image of the Ottomans as somehow unique, not engaged in the commercial behaviors that characterized both their predecessors and their neighbors.

The avenues for exploring the relationships between Ottoman policy and the mechanisms of trade are limited by the nature and availability of Ottoman sources for the early sixteenth century. The *mühimme* (important affairs) registers do not cover the early decades of this century and *gümriük* (customs) registers, where available, do not break down trade revenues by commodity in most cases. Some pioneering work has been done using court records, but those, too, are restricted to certain cities for certain years. The questions, however, can be framed even though some must remain unanswered, and that framing alters the evaluation of the Ottoman state and its contextualization within the frameworks of European and world history. How was the state concerned with markets and could it increase profits? What were supply, demand, prices, raw materials, capital, products, technology, organization, mercantile institutions, profit? What was the level of consumption, of agricultural surpluses, and the extent of commandeering? What

was the relationship between agriculture and commercial capital? Who exploited surpluses and how? What was the extent of pasha, notable family, and state agents' involvement as merchants?³⁰ Notable here will refer to members of the *askeri* class or to members of the Ottoman dynasty, who had access to power through the accumulation of wealth and political influence. The *askeri* class controlled the bulk of the wealth in Ottoman society although not all *askeri* were wealthy. Non-*askeri* members of the merchant class, money changers, and tax farmers might amass large fortunes as well. Contemporary scholarship on European notables, in Italy, for example, and on patron-client relations, provides theoretical models by which these relationships can be approached. If the Ottoman state discouraged initiative by confiscating estates, how consistent was that policy and how often and by what means was it circumvented? Were the goods of the "political classes" recycled into commerce instead of pious endowments (*evkaf*) or, through confiscation, into the state treasury? Can one distinguish between state commerce, partnership commerce, and individual commerce?³¹ Neither the intersection of merchant, state, and notable interests nor the participation by various classes in large-scale investment in trade have been carefully investigated for the Ottoman Empire in the pre-seventeenth century period. How flexible were commercial systems (changes of route, bidding for products, campaign requisitions, production), and to what extent did the Ottoman state actually control trade within its borders? The traditional model of sixteenth-century absolutism tends to presume that Ottoman state control of trade was pervasive, but that was clearly not the case. What exactly were the mechanisms of trade and the distinctions between absolute and relative decline in trade? What were the rhythms of dramatic change? That is, which factors significantly altered the conduct of trade and which did not, for example: war, the Portuguese navigations, the Ottoman succession struggles? These questions are much more difficult to answer for the early sixteenth than for the eighteenth century. Yet their answers have often been predetermined by assumptions about the nature of early modern Muslim states rather than by an analysis of the texts and the actions of those who controlled and engaged in trade. The scope of information available allows speculation on the Ottoman state as an economic actor based on state policy and action, the responses of competing states, the conduct of diplomacy, the rhetoric of legitimation, and the patterns of Levantine commercial behavior. These patterns, reflected in sources on Italian city-state or

Mamluk economic organization and merchant relations, should be employed as suitable options for analyzing Ottoman behavior. Historiographic evaluation of states in Europe has long equated political action with economic motivation; but similar connections generally have not been applied to the Ottoman Empire whose emergence as hegemon in the eastern Mediterranean region coincided temporally with the Italian Renaissance.³²

In this study, the political and commercial expansion of the Ottoman Empire are inextricably linked. The economies of conquest are not detached from the economies of trade, and the state is granted commercial intentionality as well as a navy to enforce its intentions. A further objective of this work is to present the Ottoman and Safavid states, not as isolated and isolationist blocks cut off from the processes of world trade, but as entities thoroughly incorporated into the Euro-Asian commercial networks that predated the establishment of both these empires.³³ These networks, embodied in the medieval Afro-Eurasian circulation of such commodities as copper and grain, were a powerful force in shaping the foreign policies, diplomatic relations, and expansionist philosophies of the Muslim gunpowder empires of the sixteenth century.