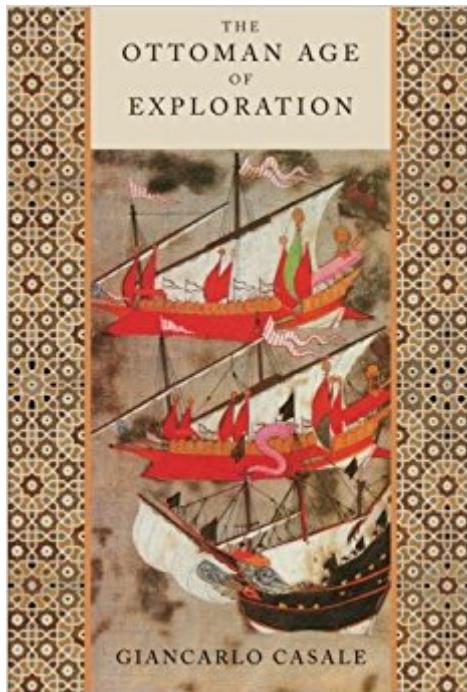


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The Ottoman Age Of Exploration



Synopsis

In 1517, the Ottoman Sultan Selim "the Grim" conquered Egypt and brought his empire for the first time in history into direct contact with the trading world of the Indian Ocean. During the decades that followed, the Ottomans became progressively more engaged in the affairs of this vast and previously unfamiliar region, eventually to the point of launching a systematic ideological, military and commercial challenge to the Portuguese Empire, their main rival for control of the lucrative trade routes of maritime Asia. The Ottoman Age of Exploration is the first comprehensive historical account of this century-long struggle for global dominance, a struggle that raged from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Straits of Malacca, and from the interior of Africa to the steppes of Central Asia. Based on extensive research in the archives of Turkey and Portugal, as well as materials written on three continents and in a half dozen languages, it presents an unprecedented picture of the global reach of the Ottoman state during the sixteenth century. It does so through a dramatic recounting of the lives of sultans and viziers, spies, corsairs, soldiers-of-fortune, and women from the imperial harem. Challenging traditional narratives of Western dominance, it argues that the Ottomans were not only active participants in the Age of Exploration, but ultimately bested the Portuguese in the game of global politics by using sea power, dynastic prestige, and commercial savoir faire to create their own imperial dominion throughout the Indian Ocean.

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Customer Reviews

"[A]n important work."--The Historian"Far from being bystanders, the Ottomans emerge from Giancarlo Casale's study as key actors in the sixteenth-century age of exploration. Their 1517 conquest of Egypt made the Empire into a major Red Sea power. It also made the Ottoman sultans

the Protectors of the Two Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina and gave them claims to being the most prestigious Muslim sovereigns. Exploding conventional opinions about the Ottomans as a land-based power, about their lack of prowess in seafaring, about their inward-looking commercial policy, and about their cultural introversion, Casale has produced a study of enduring significance for the history of the Ottoman Empire and of the whole sixteenth-century world."--Carter V. Findley, author of *The Turks in World History*"Casale has made a major contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of the Ottoman Empire. He shows that the Ottoman conquest of the Arab world was no mere acquisition of territory. Through the Arab lands, the Ottomans discovered the Indian Ocean and embarked on an intellectual journey through the previously unknown world of medieval Arab scholarship."--Molly Greene, Princeton University "This path-breaking account of Ottoman exploration of the Indian Ocean upends a number of assumptions about imperial aspirations, mercantile aptitudes, and modes of expansion and alliance-building. Giancarlo Casale gives us a wonderfully lively narrative of a century of Ottoman rivalry with the Portuguese, against whom the empire deployed technological know-how, persuasive rhetoric, effective political and geographic intelligence, and above all a series of gifted and daring statesmen and seamen."--Leslie Peirce, New York University "Giancarlo Casale challenges the master narrative that portrays Christian Europeans as the sole maritime explorers of the sixteenth century. Making room for the Ottoman Turks will discomfit world historians, but the power and elegance of Casale's argument and the weight of the evidence he presents cannot be denied."--Richard W. Bulliet, Columbia University "Once in a while, one has the opportunity to read a monograph that changes the way you envision a people, empire or event and, thus, changes the way you teach the particular subject in the classroom. Giancarlo Casale's book on the Ottomans in the sixteenth century accomplishes just that. His arguments are sure to spawn interesting debate and will also find their way into classrooms, providing scholars and students confirmation that the Ottomans were agents of change in the Indian Ocean and its spice trade."--Kathy Callahan, *World History Bulletin*

Giancarlo Casale is Assistant Professor of the History of the Islamic World and the 2009-2011 McKnight Land Grant Professor at the University of Minnesota.

Casale offers a refreshing view of an otherwise neglected period of exploration. While historians often focus on the accomplishments of Europeans starting in the 16th century, Casale focuses on the Ottoman Age of Exploration (as the title suggests). This is definitely worth a read for those interested in World History.

Easy to read and interesting, I was reading chapters ahead of where we were in class and continued reading past the required pages. It really sucks you in and holds your attention. Loved it!

the ottoman empire is my area of chief interest...and i have read many many books on the topic....and in this one i discovered a new aspect of ottoman history that i have been exposed to before...well written and keeps your attention...bravo

The story of the Ottoman entry should be better known.

Great book; met the author at a lecture, very knowledgeable and easy to talk to.

I thoroughly enjoyed this volume, finishing it in a little over a week (aided, admittedly, by the fact that I spent half of that time on a long weekend at a seaside resort where the weather was unseasonably chilly and wet). It is well-written and was handsomely produced by the Oxford University Press, with more than twenty carefully selected illustrations that help the reader to correctly envision the warships of the Turks and Portuguese and the trading ports and fortresses of the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century. There are also four useful but cartographically basic maps that help the reader to place the location of the ports and battles discussed. To the extent that most western readers know anything substantial about the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, we tend to think of it as a Mediterranean and Balkan power, gradually gobbling up the remaining Christian fortresses along the coasts of Greece and Cyprus while also pushing north up the Danube Valley. But Casale's book reminds us that the Empire's growth in western Asia and north Africa during the first four decades of the sixteenth century was even more explosive. In 1517, the Empire's eastern frontier ran across Asia Minor from roughly the Taurus Mountains in the south to Trebizon in the north. In that year, the Ottoman Sultan Selim "the Grim" went to war against the Mamluk Sultanate, another Islamic power that had dominated the eastern Mediterranean since the final defeat and expulsion of the crusaders two centuries earlier. Selim's army made short work of the Mamluks, incorporating their possessions in Syria, Palestine and Egypt into his empire and thereby more than doubling its size in less than a year. In 1534, the Ottomans seized Iraq from the Safavid rulers of Persia, acquiring a foothold on the Persian Gulf at Basra, and four years later they extended their conquests to Yemen, thereby securing the northern gate to the Red Sea. These moves brought the Ottomans into contact and then conflict with the Portuguese, who first reached India in their

carracks and caravels at the very end of the fifteenth century. Within a decade, the Portuguese began to establish a string of fortresses along its western coast and went to war with the Mamluk Empire. Casale suggests that their dual objective was to enrich themselves and impoverish the Mamluks by seizing control of the East Indian spice trade. They believed that accomplishing these objectives would make possible a renewed crusade that would recover the Holy Land and secure the shorter trade route from the Mediterranean across the isthmus of Suez, down the Red Sea, and then across the Indian Ocean. As Casale makes clear, the Ottomans likewise coveted the riches produced by the spice trade - pepper from India and Ceylon, cinnamon, cloves and camphor from the East Indies. They also had a religious-ideological objective of their own: that of ensuring the safe passage of Moslem pilgrims from India and the Indies to the Arabian holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and of protecting the holy cities themselves against possible attack by Portuguese forces sailing up the Red Sea. This great power competition between the Ottomans and the Portuguese for control of the Indian Ocean trade routes lasted from 1525-1589. Casale's account of this long-running conflict is dramatic and vividly presented. As he summarizes an early phase of the Ottoman-Portuguese wars: "[The years] from 1538 to 1546[] had been a period of bitter and almost continuous warfare between Istanbul and Lisbon, conducted across an enormous area spanning the full breadth of the Indian Ocean. On the high seas, Ottoman corsairs and their Muslim allies had faced off against the Portuguese fleet, staging coordinated attacks in theaters of operations from south India to the Arabian coast. In the Horn of Africa and in Southeast Asia, elite units of Ottoman and Portuguese musketeers - the sixteenth-century equivalent of commandos - had locked horns in guerrilla wars to prop up friendly local regimes and to destabilize their rivals. And from their main bases of supply in Suez and Goa, both sides had launched massive armadas, consisting of thousands of men and dozens of ships, against each other's most important maritime redoubts in Egypt and India." Casale ably recounts the major strokes and counterstrokes launched by each side - the Ottoman expedition against Diu in India in 1538, the retaliatory Portuguese attack on Suez in 1541, the Ottoman attempts to reduce the Portuguese fortress of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf in the 1550's, and the effort by the Ottoman corsair Mir Ali in 1589 to develop the island city of Mombasa as an advanced base from which to extend Ottoman power far south along the Swahili coast of east Africa. The latter expedition went disastrously awry when a marauding (and allegedly cannibalistic) army of 20,000 Zimba warriors suddenly appeared from out of the continent's interior at exactly the wrong moment. My only quibbles with Casale's book are that it would have been helpful if he had provided a little more detail on the origins and growth of Portugal's Indian Ocean Empire by way of background. And (perhaps understandably in light of the

book's focus, as evidenced by its title) the opposing Portuguese leaders remain shadowy, in contrast to the colorful succession of Ottoman corsairs and grand viziers who dominate his account. Also, to the extent the book's title may lead you to expect accounts of Ottoman explorations of lands previously unknown to Europeans comparable to those of the Spanish, French, and British in the New World, you won't find that here. Portuguese seafarers and Moslem merchants had already trailblazed the path to India and the Indies; this book is about the commercial, military and diplomatic competition between the Portuguese and the Ottomans that resulted.

I wanted a history of the Ottoman Empire. This book started the story from the 14th and 15th centuries when the Empire was fighting the Portuguese for domination of the spice trade in the Indian Ocean area. It was interesting reading, although not what I was looking for.

I had been meaning to read this book for a couple of years, and just got around to reading it this week. It's fairly short, barely 200 pages, so you can read it in less than a day. The writing is excellent, the maps fairly good and the illustrations interesting. I take some exception to the title; it was less an age of exploration than political and military adventuring into the Indian Ocean. These were rather large scale and it is surprising that the Portuguese survived; luck and ruthlessness, perhaps. Much of the story Casale relates concerns Ottoman viziers, appointees in Egypt and naval commanders. It's mostly from the Ottoman point of view, and anyone interested in Ottoman activities in the Red Sea, Yemen and beyond will find this book well worth the read. Casale's major point is that the "Age of Discovery" histories are usually told from the stance of European discoverers, with all the other "Others" seen as victims; this book shows, as intended, the Ottomans as no victims but a major player in the age. Casale has some discussion of how the Ottomans had little knowledge of wider world geography--not much of a large body of recent works in Arabic were available to them, and he argues that it was indeed an age of discovery rather similar to that of Portugal. I'll leave that aspect for a reader to decide. The book has much to offer aside from that thesis. The Ottomans took Egypt and became responsible for the safety of Mecca and Medina, and were as much pulled into the region of the Red Sea and impelled by an urge to discover. They used the Egyptian port of Suez as an armory and base, and managed to construct a number of fleets there, despite most naval resources (especially wood) having to be imported from rather far off. They found themselves in a contest with the Portuguese, and the confrontation lasted decades, and extended from the Red Sea to the coasts of India and even further, as Aceh on Sumatra was allied. Ottoman conquests included much of Yemen, some of Eritrea, and with their conquest of Iraq,

from Basra at the head of the Persian Gulf, expeditions were sent to combat the Portuguese in a number of areas. Casale argues that the Ottomans became principals in the spice trade (heirs to the earlier Egyptian Mamluk patterns). There were a lot of interesting sideshows. There was a proxy war with the Portuguese in Ethiopia, in which Portuguese aiding the Ethiopians fought against Turks in the service of Ahmed Gran, and Ottoman forces went to and some settled in areas in India, to affect local politics for some time. There were a couple of Ottoman expeditions down the Swahili coast, and Ottoman soldiers and artillery were sent to Aceh. Some of these adventures were fairly large scale: Hadim Sulieman Pasha's expedition to India (from Suez) had 10,000 soldiers and sailors and nearly seventy ships.

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