

and the Indian Ocean (his article is cited in the bibliography, though) and privilege a recent study by John Wright,² which raises doubts about certain estimates of the numbers of enslaved Africans crossing the Sahara. Here again, I confess that I doubt that we have been given a solid evidentiary basis in order to revise the view that nineteenth century Ottoman enslavement was overwhelmingly female and African, and that the numbers of Circassians and Georgians enslaved by the Ottomans were not high enough to offset the picture. For the Caucasus, too, the figures we have been using tell us that it was mainly a story about enslaved women, much less about men, much less about the continued recruitment of *kuls*, although that practice was still in existence then too.

All that notwithstanding, Madeline Zilfi's *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* is an important contribution to the

growing discourse about Ottoman enslavement. It is a scholar's book for scholars, not intended for undergraduates enrolled in introductory courses about the Middle East or slavery. This is due mainly to its frequent recourse to the specialist's toolbox and vocabulary, which require prior knowledge and familiarity with the historical literature, methodology, and background. However, all specialized libraries and historians of the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic Middle East and North Africa, and those working in Enslavement Studies should definitely own it; and the author should be commended on her accomplished and valuable work.

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Endnotes

1. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
2. *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London, 2007).

A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees

By *Reşat Kasaba*

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009, 194 pages, ISBN 9780295989488.

Reşat Kasaba is a well-established, highly competent social scientist with a profound interest in the study of socio-economic processes of change experienced in the Ottoman Empire. In this book that addresses the growing interest in migration as a social, and thus historical force, Kasaba offers his readers an excellent introductory study to human movement in the context of six hundred years of Ottoman rule. This book, in the end, is a valuable, but limited in its scope, textbook covering the Otto-

man Empire that can be used in the undergraduate classroom rather than a graduate seminar.

A Moveable Empire develops the theme of how migrants' and refugees contributed to human history in ways that allows social scientists to focus on institutions and their interrelationship with human communities in all their diversity. By placing his analysis within the larger context of the Ottoman Empire's development over centuries, Kasaba hones in on the evolution of

Ottoman's state management of its human communities. As a purely teaching tool, this approach is ideal to stimulate classroom discussions on a range of inter-related themes that are salient in today's world. As Kasaba's style of presentation is very accessible *A Moveable Empire* helps instil in the reader the need to appreciate the multiple functions of state policies and their unanticipated consequences when applied in the analysis of different conditions confronting the peoples of the empire. For the very fact that Kasaba highlights the diversity of experiences, as well as the multiple causes behind large scale migrations in the Ottoman Empire, this book is a valuable teaching supplement. Furthermore, he convincingly uses his examples of human movement to explain how such events actually helped the Ottoman Empire overwhelm neighboring powers.

Early on in the study, for instance, Kasaba highlights that "migratory habits became a constitutive element in making of modern states," (p.7) thereby successfully arguing that the fluidity and indeterminacy of Ottoman society, as it embraced a diverse range of peoples inhabiting the Eastern Mediterranean world, gave the empire an advantage over its historic rivals. This was reflected most clearly in the manner which peoples, conducting their spiritual lives in a heterogeneous environment, offered the Ottoman state effective tools in integrate rather than persecute newly "conquered," non-Muslim subjects. In this respect, as many of the empire's Muslim subjects consistently incorporated aspects of others' religious practices, such reconfigured associations with spiritual institutions translated into state policies that aimed to absorb human diversity, not oppress it. Such processes had important

implications for the manner in which the state encouraged diverse communities to cooperate with (and thus thrive under) Ottoman rule. Perhaps most importantly, according to this reviewer's reading of Kasaba's short book, was that the empire's ruling class adopted a plethora of laws protecting the rights of both its peasants against the incursions of nomads and their animals, as well as those same nomadic populations who, in other contexts in human history, have been treated as threats to state sovereignty. (p.29)

Here lies Kasaba's most valuable contribution to the study of human movement and how it helps interject possible comparative approaches to the analysis of world history. Kasaba's emphasis on the possibility for enduring, successful, and expansive empires to embrace human cultural and socio-economic diversity, ostensibly undermines the crude reductionism found today that equates cohabitation between peoples of different faiths as a recipe for violence. In making its areas secure upon conquering Byzantine, Habsburg, or various Arab emirate territories, Kasaba stresses that the process did not necessarily entail the creation of ethnically or religiously homogeneous communities and that the Ottoman state did not attempt to interact with the rest of the world behind the protection of militarized borders. To the contrary, as Kasaba reveals, the Ottomans made a point of maintaining largely open and mostly unmarked bordersthrough which merchants, nomads, and other itinerant groups and individuals continued to move. (p.54) Again, this constitutes a valuable corrective to the often hostile representations of the Ottoman experience through the popular theme of migration.

More generally, the use of the theme of mobility during the Ottoman Empire is an excellent way to vividly demonstrate to students the complexities of the larger “Islamic world,” and bring back into the study of this world the pedagogically neglected Ottoman case. That being said, it is advisable to be vigilant as a teacher using this small book; terms are thrown out quite liberally without much consideration for how they can be misleadingly reductive in the hands of the reader. Loaded terms such as tribe, citizenship, ethnicity, and even “Ottomans” require deeper introspection than simply evoking them.

One of the book’s main weaknesses, especially for scholars, is that it does a poor job of synchronising its sweeping conclusions with the current literature on migration, both within the field of Ottoman studies and in many other disciplines. I could easily count two dozen recent monographs that were not mentioned in Kasaba’s study—far more if we include articles—that could (and should) have been included. The almost non-existent use of primary sources also proves bewildering. Kasaba relies on impressions of scholarship drawn in the 1970s and earlier reflections by nineteenth century British travellers to Anatolia or Kurdistan. (p.121) He, therefore, misses a golden opportunity to bring together recent and useful studies on related themes, emerging in a variety of fields, with a multiple set of case studies drawn from Ottoman sources. As a result of this failure to consult with the wide breadth of existing literature on migration—theoretical and case-based—some aspects of human mobility are thus neglected in the larger study

of the Ottoman “case” offered here. For example, Kasaba only briefly touched upon the theme of economic migration as a contributing factor to the periods of urbanization that clearly proved a major force in Ottoman history. This aspect of both migration and settlement, a theme covered in largely abstract ways in chapter 2, deserves more attention. More disappointing is the failure to consider how pilgrimage, regional markets, and military recruitment contributed to the larger issue of mobility in the Ottoman Empire.

In the end, Kasaba’s *A Moveable Empire* can serve the teacher of undergraduate courses as a vital, easily accessible, teaching supplement to stress larger points we all try to make about the diversity of peoples that the Ottoman experience encompassed. Unfortunately, Kasaba’s short book does not clearly show how the various societies, living and sharing the Ottoman territories were governed in quite distinct socio-economic settings. For instance, the effects of policies adopted by a constantly evolving ruling class associated with Istanbul and its institutions often complicated the issues of land ownership, manifested by the nineteenth century in the shifting global economy that led to the commoditisation of land and its produce. By neglecting to develop the larger theme of human mobility within the context of these transformations, I cannot recommend this book as a truly corrective bit of research that fully addresses how voluntary and involuntary migration impacted Ottoman state policies.

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