Afterword: From patrimonialization to the post-imperial uncanny

Jeremy F. Walton (University of Rijeka)[1]

Abstract: *This afterword interrogates the conceptual and political limitations of patrimonialization in order to foster appreciation for what I call the 'post-imperial uncanny', while also providing a loose review of the preceding chapters. To begin, I discuss the 'double movement' of patrimonialization as both a revitalization of neglected histories and a matter of capitalizing on the past for present aims. I then consider dynamics of how nationalism and Orientalism have shaped post-Ottoman patrimonialization in reference to the volume's contributions. Following this, I focus on the role of experts in determining the definitions of patrimony and the projects of heritagization that the authors delineate. Finally, I situate patrimonialization in relation to its inverse, ruination, before concluding with a call to consider other post-imperial temporalities, encapsulated by the concept of the post-imperial uncanny.*

The double movement of patrimonialization

Across central and southeast Europe, along the shores of the Black Sea, and throughout the Middle East, patrimonialization of the Ottoman past has gained staggering momentum in recent years. As the contributions to this volume attest, patrimonialization comprises a double movement: It is simultaneously a matter of resuscitating neglected legacies and capitalizing on the past for the purposes of the present. One of this collection's great virtues is its keen attention to this double movement, with its entangled opportunities and

1 Research group leader "REVENANT – Revivals of Empire: Amnesia, Nostalgia, Tribulation" (ERC#101002908), Department of Cultural Studies.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

foreclosures. Patrimonialization makes the Ottoman past speak, but in doing so, it silences other possible histories.[2]

As we have witnessed, patrimonialization's double movement extends across multiple forms of patrimony, including material structures such as mosques and tombs, institutions such as the *waqf* (charitable endowments), and discursive genres such as Ottoman *divan* literature. Our itinerary has included a variety of post-Ottoman contexts that are not typically juxtaposed to one another: the Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, in particular), Budapest, Crimea, and Cyprus, along with Turkey itself. Undoubtedly, comparable patterns of patrimonialization can be found in other post-Ottoman domains, including the Levant, Egypt, and North Africa. Nor is the Ottoman Empire unique – the ambivalent heritagization of imperial pasts, ranging from Mughal to Meiji, Roman to Romanov, is a fertile topic for comparison.

In what follows, I draw this discussion to an open-ended conclusion by highlighting the lessons that the patrimonialization of the Ottoman past, and imperial pasts generally, offer to scholarship on collective memories and legacies in the present. Patrimonialization provokes dilemmas over identity and difference in the post-imperial nation-state, especially in relation to persistent images of Oriental Otherness. In doing so, patrimonialization relies on the translation and amplification of frequently recondite modes of expertise into public knowledge and consensus. This teleological summoning of imperial heritage to national meaning obscures other relations between the past and the present, including ruination. Consequently, patrimonialization militates against uncanny, peculiar legacies, the curiosities of imperial pasts that the contributions frequently, vividly portray. This call to appreciation of the post-imperial uncanny serves as a fitting, inconclusive endpoint for the volume. In the spirit of Freud,[3] I offer the post-imperial uncanny as a placeholder for the 'unhomely' (*unheimlich*) manner in which imperial pasts and national presents intersect and blur in post-imperial contexts. The post-imperial uncanny entails unsettling confusions of imperial pasts and national presents. As such, it is an unsettling concept that is good to think with in post-imperial times and spaces.

2 Trouillot (1995).

3 Freud (2003).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

Formations of national identity and Oriental-imperial alterity

Whether in Bakhchisaray or Famagusta or Tuzla, post-Ottoman patrimonialization contends with both the demands of nationalized collective memory and the exoticizing effects of Orientalism. In many of the contexts that this volume explores, the Ottoman past has been refracted and evaluated through the lens of national imagined communities. Ottoman heritage is more 'difficult', in Sharon MacDonald's sense,[4] in some successor nation-states than others. Simultaneously, longstanding Orientalist discourses intersect with nationalism to situate Ottoman heritage in relation to the present. Nor can Ottoman patrimony be severed from the surrounding, competing sites of imperial heritage that act as its constitutive others, including the Romanov in Crimea, the Habsburg in the Balkans, and the British in Cyprus. Accordingly, patrimonialization is frequently a process of both national self-narration and Orientalist Othering, both identification and differentiation in relation to the Ottoman past.

The volume's three essays on Crimea, by Stefaniia Demchuk, Anna Guboglo, and Nicole Kançal-Ferrari, dramatically exhibit the dynamics of national identity and Orientalist alterity. For centuries, Crimea was an imperial borderland, a periphery first for the Ottomans, then for the Romanovs and the Soviets, before becoming an object of territorial cupidity for Vladimir Putin's Russia. Crimea makes little sense according to nationalist geographies, whether Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, or Turkish. As Demchuk writes in relation to Ukrainian art history, Crimea's status as a figure of alterity, "the exotic Other of Ukrainian culture," has persevered despite gestures toward "a different canon … acknowledging the plurality of art histories on Ukrainian territory." The terms of Crimea's identity and alterity were established during the 19th century, shortly after its annexation by St. Petersburg in the 1780s. As imperial successors, the Romanovs found uses for the peninsula's distant pasts as foils to its more recent Ottoman character. For instance, Guboglo discusses how ancient Greek sites in Crimea were interpreted to "implicitly confirm … Russia's legitimacy in the region" at the fin de siècle. Such patterns persist – as Kançal-Ferrari notes, the Genoan legacy of Kefe/Feodosiia is "omnipresent" today, partially because this legacy is more attractive to a Europhilic gaze. By contrast, Crimean Tatar heritage – above all, the Palace at Bakhchisaray – remained an Orientalist bequest throughout the Romanov and Soviet eras,

4 MacDonald (2008).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

fixed as Other by Pushkin's famous exoticization in his poem, "The Fountain at Bakhchisaray."[5] More recently, however, Orientalist aesthetics and Tatar national aspirations have achieved unanticipated, ironic syntheses in Crimea, as Kançal-Ferrari shows. Neo-Ottoman mosques, built by Turkish construction firms, have sprung up across Crimea in recent decades, "a strange situation where efforts to articulate the cultural heritage of local Muslim communities are carried out through reference to a former imperial (for Crimea) or an entirely distinct (for Chechnya) cultural and ideological context, the classical Ottoman past."

Crimea's contradictions have taken shape in comparable yet distinct ways in other post-Ottoman domains. In Cyprus, Reyhan Sabri describes how the Orientalist vision of 19th century British colonial administrators privileged the island's medieval architectural heritage, Gothic Crusader-era churches and cathedrals that were converted into mosques during the subsequent Ottoman era. Although the institutional bedrock for such churches-cum-mosques was the same as that for other mosques and Ottoman public buildings – the *waqf*, or *vakıf* – only the former were valued: "[The] *waqf* properties with medieval-Latin origins were brought under statutory protection, [while] those with Ottoman origins were excluded." For the British administrators, the Ottoman past was simply a matter of discredit, "devoid of originality or evidence of progress" in Sabri's apt phrase, and therefore not eligible for patrimonialization, unlike the island's Crusader remainders.

While the Ottoman era was merely an object of Orientalist scorn for the British Empire, matters were not so simple in the early years of Turkish Republic, when Ottoman legacies complicated emergent ethnolinguistic Turkish nationalism. Both Ercan Akyol and Ayşe Dilsiz Hartmuth convey the early Republic's nationalist and Orientalist anxieties over the Ottomans in relation to literature and processes of institutional reform, respectively. Akyol interprets sociologist and historian Mehmet Fuat Köprülü's elevation of the central Asian epic poem *Dede Korkut* over Ottoman *divan* literature as the fount for a Herderian "pure Turkish linguistic vein in Ottoman literary history." Another semi-

5 As Kançal-Ferrari writes in her contribution to this volume, "[The] poem transformed the palace into an imaginary land of khans and harems. Today, visitors experience the palace through this 'Russian gaze': they are rushed straight to the Fountain of Tears, and to Pushkin's bust, arranged as the heart of the edifice's new interpretation as part of a Russian cultural canon instead of a Crimean Tatar canon." See also Pushkin (1982).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

nal literary historian of the early Republic, Ali Nihat Tarlan, "tried to prove that *dīvān* literature *was* a national literature to nationalists who claimed the opposite." In her analysis of the Republican transformation of the institution of the *vakıf* – in particular, its centralization within the Directorate of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*) – Dilsiz Hartmuth describes a similar moment of auto-Orientalist and nationalist repositioning, which traced "the history of the foundations to the [pre-Islamic] Uyghur Turks." In both cases, nascent Turkish nationalism sought identity in more distant pasts untainted by Ottoman-Orientalist alterity.

Orientalist aesthetics and imperial power achieved equally dramatic juxtapositions in the post-Ottoman Balkans. In Habsburg Bosnia, both Ajla Bajramović and Maximilian Hartmuth show how a deterritorialized architectural style, drawing upon elements from the Islamic architectural heritage of Spain and Egypt, was reterritorialized due to its ostensible appropriateness for the Austro-Hungarian Empire's new Muslim subjects, despite the historical disconnect between this style and Ottoman architecture and aesthetics.[6] As Hartmuth aptly writes, in Habsburg Bosnia, "style, perceived as an expression of a community's collective's culture, was foregrounded over material historicity." There are echoes of this privileging of style over historicity in the Neo-Ottoman mosques of Crimea today, as well as in the renovation of Tuzla's Behrambeg Mosque, where, Bajramović argues, "Orientalizing style as a common denominator … (re)create[s] narratives which have little in common with the actual building history." Meanwhile, in the nearby post-Ottoman Kingdom of Serbia, Orientalist reasoning resembled that of the British in post-Ottoman Cyprus, as Jelena Radovanović shows in relation to the institutional form of the *vakıf/vakuf*, which was transformed from a mode of charitable endowment that spanned denominations to a marker of Muslim-Ottoman Otherness.

An aesthetic rule of experts

Throughout post-Ottoman domains, imperial legacies, national imperatives, and Orientalist tastes relate to patrimonialization in a variety of ways, rang-

6 Maximilian Hartmuth's European Research Council research group, "Islamic architecture and Orientalizing style in Habsburg Bosnia," which sponsored this volume, represents a thorough interrogation of Austro-Hungarian Orientalism, architecture, and governance in Bosnia.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

ing from denials of the past to ahistorical interpolations. In Serbia and Cyprus at the fin de siècle, Ottoman and Oriental were synonyms, simple markers of stagnation and alterity that were only worthy of history's dustbin. In Bosnia, Crimea, and Turkey, matters were more fraught – in each, Ottoman-Oriental legacies retained or achieved value, but in troubled, even ironic ways in relation to new political considerations. All of these contexts, however, shared an important discursive feature: The dilemmas entailed by the Ottoman patrimony were articulated and resolved by cadres of academic and administrative specialists, an aesthetic "rule of experts."[7]

These essays effectively convey the multiple scales of expertise that established and coordinated Ottoman patrimony. Most immediately, experts have been responsible for the preservation and renovation (or, implicitly, disregard and degradation) of specific sites and structures. Gergő Máté Kovács offers an encyclopaedic account of the history of expert interventions on Budapest's Shrine to Gül Baba (*Gül Baba Türbesi*), a Bektashi dervish who perished shortly after the Ottoman conquest of Buda in 1541 CE, and whose mausoleum remains the city's most prominent Ottoman site. Bajramović's account of the Behram-beg Mosque in Tuzla is similar. In both cases, the deployment of architectural expertise was crucial to renovation and patrimonialization.

While individual experts continue to exert influence over such restorations, the role of expert institutions has increased dramatically in recent decades. In Tuzla, Turkey's Directorate of Endowments – the same institution analysed by Dilsiz Hartmuth – spearheaded the Behram-beg Mosque's recent renovation. More generally, the most enthusiastic institutional actor in the patrimonialization of the Ottoman legacy has undoubtedly been the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türkiye İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı*), known ubiquitously by its acronym, TİKA. TİKA was central to Gül Baba's restoration, as well as to work at many of the sites that Kançal-Ferrari describes in Crimea. TİKA's restorative endeavours reliably conclude with a photographic tableau featuring prominent Turkish politicians, often including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself – Gül Baba was a case in point – and the agency has been a central player in the geopolitics of Neo-Ottoman patrimonialization in recent decades.[8]

The aesthetic rule of experts is not only a matter of specific restorations and moments of heritagization, however. Patrimonialization as a whole is an

7 Mitchell (2002).

8 Öktem (2012).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

expert discourse that has achieved public common sense. Orientalism, in Edward Said's capacious sense,[9] was a key precursor to the patrimonialization of the Ottoman past, and Orientalist experts appear throughout these pages. In Cyprus, Sabri describes the outsized influence of George Jeffrey, the architect and Orientalist who held the post of Curator of Antiquities between 1903 and 1934, and was principally responsible for the denigration of the island's Ottoman architecture. Radovanović relates a similar figure in the Kingdom of Serbia, Kosta Cukić, a German-trained political economist and Minister of Finance for the nascent state, who argued forcefully for a new, secularized definition of the *vakıf/vakuf* as 'mosque property'. In the field of literature, scholars such as Mehmet Fuat Köprülü and Ali Nihat Tarlan, whom Akyol describes, were crucial to an auto-Orientalist discourse in Turkey that fixed Ottoman literature as definitively past, and of secondary importance to the Turkish nation. Outside of Turkey, poets such as Pushkin and Béla Tóth – the Hungarian folklorist who, Kovács tells us, collected legends about Gül Baba and his mausoleum – helped to embed Ottoman sites in an atmosphere of Oriental romance, and thus recast them as exotic patrimony. The Habsburg *Kronzprinzenwerk* that Hartmuth analyses is a monument to Orientalist expertise – an author of the volume on Bosnia, Johann Kellner, decisively established architecture as "the one fine art in which … Ottoman culture produced the most notable results." The history of Orientalism as an expert discourse that paved the way for patrimonialization in the former Ottoman world, and beyond, has yet to be fully narrated. These essays together constitute a provocative point of departure for such a history.

Patrimonialization, ruination, other times

At this time of ascendant heritagization of imperial legacies, what might constitute the opposite of patrimonialization? In other words, how might we think against the grain of patrimonialization? The volume's authors have much to say on this score. Jelena Radovanović, invoking Edin Hajdarpašić,[10] stresses that the "ruins of empire" were literal, rather than metaphorical, in the post-Ottoman Balkans. As records of both material and discursive upheavals, post-

9 Said (1979).

10 Hajdarpašić (2008).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

imperial ruins are a poignant reminder that the recent romanticization of ruination on the part of much scholarship risks silencing histories of violence.[11] Crimea and Cyprus, too, are prominent sites of post-Ottoman ruination; examples from elsewhere could easily be multiplied.

Ruination, with its emphasis on decline, disappearance, and violence, is a key, antithetical concept to patrimonialization, but it also has limitations. Patrimonialization and ruination are opposite sides of a teleological coin – the first envisions the present as a redemption of the past, while the second projects the present as its betrayal. Surely, the possibilities of post-imperial legacies extend beyond the teleological dichotomy of preservation and annihilation. How might we think of other post-imperial times, beyond both patrimonialization and ruination? Ivo Andrić offers guidance, as he often does:

> With the Turkish retreat from Hungary there remained outside of the Empire also those properties of the *vakuf* (the religious endowment) from the revenues of which the caravanserai at Višegrad was maintained. Both the people of the town and the travellers who had made use of the Stone Han for the past 100 years had become accustomed to it and had never even considered by what means it had been maintained, how the revenues had been founded, or from what source they came. All had made use of it, profiting by it as from a blessed and fertile roadside orchard which was both nobody's and everybody's; they repeated mechanically 'peace to the Vezir's soul' but did not stop to think that the Vezir had died 100 years before, nor did they ask who now preserved and defended the imperial lands and the *vakuf*. Who could ever have dreamt that the affairs of the world were in such dependence upon one another and were linked together across so great a distance?[12]

In this passage from *The bridge on the Drina*, Andrić captures a moment and an institution that is paramount to many of this collection's discussions: the *waqf/vakıf/vakuf* in its post-imperial but non-patrimonial form. The charitable endowment is a temporal strategy to ensure the persistence of good deeds into

11 Svetlana Boym (2011) provides an eloquent example: "'Ruin' literally means 'collapse' – but actually, ruins are more about remainders and reminders. A tour of 'ruin' leads you into a labyrinth of ambivalent temporal adverbs – 'no longer' and 'not yet,' 'nevertheless' and 'albeit' – that play tricks with causality. Ruins make us think of the past that could have been and the future that never took place, tantalizing us with utopian dreams of escaping the irreversibility of time."

12 Andrić (1977), pp. 76–7.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

an open-ended, uncertain future. As such, *waqf*s are bridges – figuratively, and sometimes literally – across eras because they foster material continuity across and through political and social change. Consequently, the *waqf* is both a resource for and a foil to patrimonialization.

Radovanović captures this ambivalence superbly in her analysis of post-Ottoman Serbia's secularization of the *vakuf*. Against "a soul-saving act (Serbian *za dušu*, for the soul), whether performed by the Muslim Bosnian beys, or the Christian medieval kings," the concept of the charitable endowment was removed from "the traditional Islamic legal definition in which it belonged to God, and reformulated … into the private property of mosque as legal subject, the property-holding mosque." Radovanović illustrates that this secularization of the *waqf* also involves a reduction of its previous temporal multiplicity, which spanned "across multiple temporalities, connecting the past generations of kings and beys with the humans of the present."

Toward the post-imperial uncanny

With their appreciation of the uncertain, open-ended temporality of the *waqf* in its non-patrimonialized form, Andrić and Radovanović suggest a fitting point of inconclusive conclusion for our volume. Against the motifs of both patrimonialization and ruination, we might call this, for shorthand, the post-imperial uncanny. In contrast to both the optimistic temporal closure of patrimonialization and the pessimistic resignation of ruination, the post-imperial uncanny foregrounds the unanticipated, even unrecognizable forms that the imperial past may take in the present. Post-imperial contexts frequently entail uncanny, 'unhomely' confusions between imperial legacies and nationalized memories. Simultaneously, the uncanny post-imperial entails a commitment to narrating disavowed 'connected histories', Sanjay Subrahmanyam's influential concept which Demchuk invokes in her essay on Ukrainian art history and Crimean heritage.

Uncanny post-imperial sites suffuse these pages. Examples that immediately come to mind include the *Valide-i Şerif Camii*, a late imperial-Romanov mosque dedicated to Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna in Akmescit/Simferopol, mentioned by Kançal-Ferrari; Gül Baba's tomb, which Kovács at one point describes as "an Ottoman shrine with features of a Baroque Jesuit chapel in the garden of a Historicist mansion"; and, Cyprus's medieval churches recast as mosques, as rendered by Sabri. Each of these sites, and myriad others, artic-

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

ulate aesthetic, temporal, and political "constellations"[13] that defy the singular vision of patrimonialization. They exude the post-imperial uncanny, and offer an invitation to as yet unanticipated futures.

Works cited

Andrić. Ivo. *The bridge on the Drina*, trans. Lovett F. Edwards. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977.

Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the philosophy of history," in: *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Boym, Svetlana. "Ruinophilia: Appreciation of ruins." *Atlas of Transformation* (2011). Accessed 20 April 2023. http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/r/ruinophilia/ruinophilia-appreciation-of-ruins-svetlana-boym.html

Freud, Sigmund. *The uncanny*, trans. David McClintock. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Hajdarpašić, Edin. "Out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire: Reflections on the Ottoman legacy in South-Eastern Europe," *Middle Eastern Studies* XLIV/5 (2008), pp. 715–34.

MacDonald., Susan. *Difficult heritage: Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremburg and beyond*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Öktem, Kerem. "Global Diyanet and multiple networks: Turkey's new presence in the Balkans," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1 (2012), pp. 27–58.

Pushkin, Alexander. *The bronze horseman: Selected poems of Alexander Pushkin*, trans. D. M. Thomas. New York: Viking, 1982.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Trouillot, Michel Rolph. *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history*. Boston: Beacon, 1995.

Walton, Jeremy F. "Introduction: Textured historicity and the ambivalence of imperial legacies," *History and Anthropology* XXX/4 (2019), pp. 353–365.

13 Benjamin (1968), p. 263; see also Walton (2019).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839471043-012 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC-ND