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The Battle for Central Europe

*The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of
Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*

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The Ottoman Conquest in Hungary: Decisive Events (Belgrade 1521, Mohács 1526, Vienna 1529, Buda 1541) and Results

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The Logic of Conqueror

Parts of *Alexander the Great* by Karel Čapek, 1 May 1937 (translated by Norma Comrada):

"I thought that I was following in the footsteps of Achilles and would conquer a new Ilium from the glory of the Greeks; in reality, as I see it today, it was of utmost necessity to drive the Persian from the Aegean Sea; and I drove them back so efficiently, my dear teacher, that I seized all of Bithinia, Phrygia and Cappadocia, plundered Cilicia, and did not stop until we reached Tarsus. Asia Minor was ours. ... You might say, my dear Aristotle, that my paramount political and strategic goal, namely, the final expulsion of Persia from Hellenic waters, had now been achieved in full. With the conquest of Asia Minor, however, a new situation arose: our new shoreline could be threatened from the south, that is, from Venice or Egypt; Persia could procure reinforcements and supplies from there for waging further wars against us. Consequently, it was essential that we occupy the Tyrian coasts and control Egypt, and this way we became masters of the entire seaboard. Yet a new danger arose at one and the same time: that Darius, relying on the resources of his rich Mesopotamia, might sweep into Syria and thereby cut off our Egyptian domains from our base in Asia Minor. Thus I had to crush Darius at any cost, and I succeeded in so doing at Gaugamela; as you know, Babylon as well as Susa, Persepolis [as] well as Pasargadae fell to their knees before us. By this action we gained control of the Persian Gulf, but in order to safeguard these new holdings against possible incursions from the north, it was necessary to march northwards... While our territory now extended from the Caspian

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Dimensions of Transformation in the Ottoman Empire from the Late Medieval Age to Modernity

In Memory of Metin Kunt

Edited by

Seyfi Kenan
Selçuk Akşin Somel

Bu kitabın araştırmacılarına teşekkür ederim ve
benim için de 1989'dan beri istifa
ettim. 75. yaş kutuphanesi ise kişisel bir
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CHAPTER 13

Between a 'Brilliant Retreat' and a 'Tragic Defeat': Ottoman Narratives of the 1529 and 1683 Sieges of Vienna

N. Zeynep Yelçe

"Kara Mustafa Pasha's retreat from Vienna has been a very grievous and bloody affair. It is true that one and a half century ago the Turkish army had retreated from the [gates] of Vienna; but the difference between that brilliant retreat and this tragic defeat was tremendous."¹ This is how the romanticizing historian Ahmet Refik (Altınay, d. 1937) starts his epoch-naming work, *The Tulip Age*. Judging from the book on the 1529 campaign, however, it is hard to say that Sultan Süleyman's soldiers would have agreed with Ahmet Refik. In either case, both campaigns followed a similar trajectory and were concluded in a similar manner. Depending on which side of the coin one is looking at, it is possible to say that both campaigns ended in a failed siege, or that both resulted in a successful manifestation of devastation and terror imposed on the enemy.

This chapter is an attempt to decontextualize the two sieges in order to see the tree for itself, perhaps initially at the expense of the forest. While examining works of art, art historians sometimes feel the need to isolate themselves from the context and concentrate on the stylistic features of the work itself. Following their lead, I take the two campaigns as individual works on the art of war. Trying to alienate myself from the debates and paradigms dominating the periods concerned, including those on decline and on military revolution, I shall look at the two campaigns on their own to delineate their basic underlying motives and dynamics as projected by contemporary Ottomans. Detaching the two historical events from the intellectual and theoretical baggage of periodization that they have long carried, I believe, gives one an opportunity not only to take a fresh look at these events but also to question some conventional assumptions about periodization.

1. Ahmed Refik [Altınay], *Lâle Devri*, 2nd edn (Istanbul: Muhtar Hâlid Kitabhânesi, 1331/1912).
2. "Kara Mustafa Paşa'nın Viyana önünden ric'atı pek elem verici ve pek kanlı olmuştu. Vâkı'a, bir buçuk 'aşır evvel Süleymân-ı Kânûni ordusu da Viyana önünden çekilmişdi; fakat ol şâhâne ric'atla bu zelilâne hezimet beyninde pek büyük fark vardı."

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Hungary, Vienna and the Defence System against the Ottomans in the Age of Süleyman

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Süleyman I

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Two Turning Points in the History of Hungary
and East Central Europe: 1521 and 1566

The reign of Süleyman the Magnificent can be considered an outstanding era in the history of the Ottoman Empire – as indicated by several essays in this volume. The sultan's first and last Hungarian campaigns are turning points from the perspectives of Hungary, Vienna and the defence system against the Ottomans as well. Between 1521 and 1566, primarily due to the sultan's seven campaigns in Hungary (1521, 1526, 1529, 1532, 1541, 1543, 1566, see Map 1), fundamental changes happened that, in the long run, profoundly influenced the defence and fate of Central Europe.

Let us observe these fateful changes from the perspectives of the protagonists of this study: the sultan, Hungary, Vienna and the defence system itself. Süleyman inflicted a severe blow on the great old rival, Hungary, and its border defence system with his very first campaign (1521). The fall of Belgrade (Nándorfehérvár/Beograd) was indeed the beginning of the end for the mediaeval Kingdom of Hungary – as the Hungarian historian, Ferenc Szakály pointed out nearly three decades ago.¹ In the immediate aftermath of 1521, almost all the important border fortresses that protected Hungary on the Danube and the Sava were captured by the Ottomans. The only exceptions were Jajce and Banja Luka in Bosnia which held out until 1528 when they also fell to Süleyman's troops.²

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- 1 Ferenc Szakály, 'Nándorfehérvár, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom', in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian-Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*. Budapest, 1994, 44–76.
- 2 Gábor Barta, 'A Forgotten Theatre of War 1526–1528 (Historical Events Preceding the Ottoman-Hungarian Alliance of 1528)', in Dávid and Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian-Ottoman*, 93–130.