This carefully written examination of Ottoman policy in Yemen is based on an exhaustive mining of imperial sources now located in Istanbul. In addition, the author has made good use of memoirs written by key Ottoman officials as well as the appropriate Arabic-language chronicles compiled in Yemen. Unfortunately, as Kuehn points out, while judicial court documents apparently exist in Yemen for the second Ottoman era, authorities there would not permit him to examine them. Despite this, the width of sources utilized for this study is impressive and commendable.

Perhaps especially notable are the author's comparative approach and methodological sophistication. He has situated this work within the general field of Ottoman provincial history and also draws specific attention to comparisons with such regions as the Hijaz and Tripolitania. Much of the book addresses the currently debated issue of whether the Ottoman Empire was imperialistic in the same sense as was the British Empire. Kuehn also usefully employs methodology drawn from several disciplines—an important example is his discussion of categories of knowledge and the impact of these on administration.

Despite the numerous strengths of this book, a few weaknesses could be mentioned. One problem is the slightly misleading end date provided in the title: the book basically ends with 1911 rather than 1919. A far greater difficulty is the high cost established by the publisher, which is likely to limit availability of the book. Lengthy footnotes providing biographical information should be incorporated into the main text.

In summary, this excellent study of Ottoman administration in Yemen makes a valuable contribution to understanding the history of Ottoman politics and provincial policies as well as the history of modern Yemen. While too specialized and expensive to be used in teaching undergraduates, the book should be consulted by Ottomanists, those interested in Yemen, and scholars studying comparative imperial administration.

ISA BLUMI, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912* (New York: Palgrave, 2011). Pp. 272. $ 85.00 cloth.

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Until recently there were very few English-language studies on the nineteenth-century Ottoman Balkans. Even with emergent new work this tumultuous period

remains on the margins of western scholarship on Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Isa Blumi's *Reinstating the Ottomans* is a welcome addition to the new work that engages a number of important questions in relation to this period in the region's history. Blumi deftly weaves fresh research with secondary literature from the last decade to provide ample empirical detail, outlined by a provocative conceptual framework. He invites the reader to rethink a century of Ottoman Balkan transformation and violence, reform and political negation, in the shadow of intense European political, diplomatic and economic involvement in the region. Two concepts are particularly critical to the author's adroit historiographical intervention, namely, nationalism and modernity. First, Blumi questions the notion that Balkan nationalisms (or even collective identities such as religion or *millet*) were key factors in driving events of the nineteenth century. Second, he provokes the reader to rethink the place and role of the region in the generalized development of global "modernity."

Blumi's arguments unfold in the course of a remarkably complicated and fascinating story of intrigue and negotiations of power in the Western Balkans, with a focus on the territories now inhabited by Albanian populations. Careful not to employ national terms anachronistically, Blumi uses the term "Albanian" and other such identifiers in quotes, rightly arguing that identities were primarily local in this period. He succeeds in telling the nineteenth- century "Albanian" story in an exceedingly sophisticated way, convincingly showing the significance of "Albanians" for Ottoman history, while proving the importance of Ottoman (and Balkan) developments for European history. This is an important corrective to modern European history, in particular, which tends to see the "declining" Ottoman Empire as outside mainstream patterns of European modernity. Blumi, however, occasionally pushes the envelope a little far in his attempt to "break out" of a Eurocentric teleology of modernity. His argument that Ottoman modernizing reforms were "independent" of and even in some respects "pre-dated" similar state projects in the West contradicts his own insistence on constant European interventions in the economy, politics, religion, education and elsewhere. Here I am not suggesting that Blumi's use of the notion of Ottoman-Balkan "alternative modernities" is incorrect but that modernity—West and East—was a product of very intensive interactions that make its teleology and genealogy a complex equation. As Blumi himself asserts—though in reference to state and local interaction—modernity was a product of (or perhaps indicative of) constantly shifting bases of interaction and the creative adjustments this required.

Nationalism in a certain sense was one of these bases, one that Blumi argues was employed as a "practice" rather than a category, expressing local realities. Blumi repeatedly argues against the "national" (here mostly Albanian) character of virtually every event and individual of the century, including many that have become sacred in the canon of Albanian "national revival" heroes and events. Ali Pasha of Janina, Ali of Gusli, Sami, Naim and Abdyl Frasheri, and the League of Prizren are all reconsidered as complex and multivalent figures and events that reflect the "range of options" available at the time to local actors. Blumi casts particular scrutiny on the Albanian "national heroes" from the South—the Tosks.

Though lauded as able reformers within the Ottoman and local bureaucracy, prominent Tosks are also depicted as "ethnic entrepreneurs," who routinely consolidated their own power and resources at the expense of Albanian-speaking Gegs of the North. Blumi rightly argues that the use of national, racial, and even religious categories was a product of the grafting of *European* categories of identity onto much more complex local realities. It was advantageous to do so for locals who stood to gain direct monetary support, schools, or other forms of resources from interested European patrons. But such appropriations, he argues, continued to exist side by side with Ottoman and other loyalties.

Undoubtedly I applaud Blumi's approach to nationalism and see his book as a must read for students with interests in Ottoman-Balkan history. At the same time, I have to call Blumi to task for his rather repetitive claim that the "vast majority of accounts" or "conventional historiography" on the nineteenth-century Balkans is "reductive" and relies on fixed national categories or on the notion of "natural" ethno-religious enmities (pp. 2-3, 15, 33). This is certainly true in relation to accounts written in the national languages by locals in the region, which are addressed more directly in Blumi's conclusion. If this is Blumi's target then perhaps one can see the need to drive home this point. In terms of popular, global-type histories, and even to a certain extent the Ottoman historiography this may also be the case. Yet in the newer work on the Balkans—much of which is cited by Blumi—there has long been a consensus that Balkan identities are constructs and that one has to write about the nineteenth (and even the twentieth) century and earlier with a good deal of caution. Still, more in-depth work like Blumi's is needed to show the non-national as well as national parameters of local agency.

In addition, Blumi leaves us with a useful way of questioning the notion of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Balkans as a period of stagnation, decline, and failure. Rather, Blumi's long nineteenth century is marked by Ottoman dynamism, institutional change, and the rise and fall of resourceful and motivated local and imperial leaders. If anyone or anything is the culprit in the final fall of the Ottoman Empire or its loss of Balkan territories it is Europe, whose diplomatic, political and, in particular, economic meddling proved crippling. According to Blumi, the Ottomans were quite good at negotiating with local power-brokers and "trouble-makers," for they were colonizers par excellence. In the end, however, the European powers beat them at their own game and the Balkan territories were the first to go.

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