

**Richard Knolles'**  
***The Generall Historie of the Turkes***  
**as a Reflection of Christian**  
**Historiography**

**Hıristiyan Tarihçiliğinin bir Yansıması olarak**  
**Richard Knolles'un *The Generall Historie of the***  
***Turkes* Adlı Eseri**

*Sıla Şenlen \**

***Abstract***

The *Generall Historie of the Turkes* by Richard Knolles, is the first British chronicle written on the military and political aspects of the Ottoman Empire in the medium of English, instead of Latin. This is a clear indication that knowledge about the 'terror of the World' was becoming essential not only for the sophisticated reader who could read Latin, but also for the general reading public. Thus, meaning a greater circulation compared to a text in Latin.

The popularity of the text can be inferred from the numerous reprints it went through. This chronicle, composed of 1200 folio pages, was first published in 1603, and reprinted with additional information and documents in 1610, 1621, 1631, 1638, 1679, 1687-1700 (in three volumes), and 1701 (abridged).

Chroniclers of the Renaissance period generally did not examine their sources with an eye for historical causality. They believed that the hand of God moved behind the course of human history, and that good fortune and adversity were the deserved reward or punishment from the just Lord. Accordingly, Turks success was not connected to their military power, but instead, was God's judgement on the wicked generation of Christians everywhere.

In this respect, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* is an example of Christian historiography with a narrative intended specifically for Christian readers. Knolles' introduction addressed specifically to the "Christian Reader", use of biblical images and archetypes from Christian myth, and illustrations of the Ottomans as infidels, heretics, princess of darkness, common enemy of Christianity, reflection of their prophet

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'Mahomet' as a 'false' Prophet and 'Mahommedanism' as a superstition, are all examples that support this view. Perhaps it is not common to praise an enemy, but this text goes beyond the boundaries of subjectivity, by portraying manipulative descriptions of personages and historical events.

**Keywords:** Richard Knolles, The Historie of the Turkes, Anglo-Ottoman Relations, The Renaissance Period, Christian Historiography

### Özet

Avrupa'da, Rönesans Dönemi'nde Osmanlı tarihiyle ilgili birçok kitap ve çeviri yayımlandı. Bunlar arasında, İngiliz tarihçi Richard Knolles'un yazmış olduğu *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, farklı bir konuma ve niteliğe sahiptir. Bunun sebebi, Osmanlı'nın askeri ve siyasi tarihçesiyle ilgili yazılmış ilk İngilizce kitap olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Knolles'un bu kroniğinin Latince yerine İngilizce yazılmış olması, Osmanlıların bir tehlike olarak algılanmasının ve bu yüzden genel halkın Osmanlılar hakkında bilgilendirilmesine gerek duyulduğunun açık bir göstergesidir. Bu eser toplumun her kesiminde büyük bir rağbet görmüştür. Bu durum daha sonra tekrarlanan baskılarının çokluğundan da anlaşılmaktadır. İlk olarak 1603 yılında basılan kronik, ek belgelerle 1610, 1621, 1631, 1638, 1679, 1687-1700 (3 cilt), ve 1701 (kısaltılmış versiyon) olarak yeniden yayımlanmıştır.

*The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, Hristiyan tarihçiliğine bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Kitapta, Hristiyan okurlara hitaben yazılmış "Hristiyan Okur'a" bölümünün bulunması, tarihi bilgiler aktarılırken Osmanlıların 'karanlığın savaşçıları', 'dinsizler' gibi vasıflarla tanımlanması ve Osmanlıların kazandıkları zaferlerin askeri güçlerinden ziyade, Tanrının Hristiyanları cezalandırması olarak addedilmesi ve bunun gibi birçok dini öğeler kullanılması açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. Bu kronik, Osmanlılarla ilgili bir eser olarak görünmekle birlikte, gerçekte Hristiyanların kendi aralarında çatışmalarını, ortak din düşmanları olan Osmanlılara karşı birleşerek kaybedilen toprakları yeniden kazanmak için Haçlı seferleri düzenlememelerini eleştirmekte ve böyle bir sefer için çağrıda bulunmaktadır.

**Anabtar Kelimeler:** Richard Knolles, The Historie of the Turkes, Osmanlı-İngiliz İlişkileri, Rönesans Dönemi, Hristiyan Tarihçiliği

This paper aims to present *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603) by Richard Knolles, the first British chronicle written on the military and political aspects of the Ottoman Empire in the medium of English, together with its various editions. It will also consider the distinctively Christian narrative style employed by Knolles, with reference to Anglo-Ottoman relations during the Renaissance period.

Anglo-Ottoman relations during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James I (1603-1625) had developed slowly and relatively late in the Renaissance

Period. In fact, until the sixteenth century, the trade between England, and the Ottoman Empire was carried out by Venetians, and the Ottoman Turks did not even recognize the 'English'. In *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1600) William Biddulph wrote that the Ottoman Turks "know not what you meane by the worde Englishmen"<sup>1</sup>. The first Ottoman document concerning an Englishman was issued in 1553 by Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent about Anthony Jenkinson, giving him rights to trade independently throughout the Ottoman Empire<sup>2</sup>. However, the English continued to trade in the Levant under the protection of France until the grant of their national charter of privileges by Murad III in 1580<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, knowledge about the Ottomans was based on secondary sources from Venetian and French merchants, similar to information previously brought back by the travellers of the Middle Ages such as the pilgrims and the Crusaders.

Attitudes towards the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century were dual, and they were represented in chronicles as both 'ideal', with such qualities as 'unity'<sup>4</sup>, 'loyalty'<sup>5</sup>, 'chivalry', 'tolerance', a well organized army, just monarchs and high standard of government, and as 'non-ideal' with qualities as 'barbarism', 'tyranny', 'incivility', 'infidels' and 'enemies of Christianity'. The 'ideal' and 'non-ideal' qualities were defined in accordance with European and Christian doctrine, ideology, culture and religion, to which the Ottomans were contrasted with and against. Even the descriptions of the Turks as 'noble', 'great warriors' and 'brave fighters', while appearing to affirm Ottoman civilization as fundamentally praiseworthy, are in fact other variations upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain: 1558-1685*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Nabil Matar. *Islam in Britain: 1558-1685*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Queen Elizabeth I's first letter to the Sultan is dated 1579, asking him to grant English tradesmen permission to trade in the Levant. S.A. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey: A documentary study of the first Anglo-Ottoman relations*, Document X., (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.69.

<sup>4</sup> More significantly, it was 'Turkish' unity that principally attracted the West to the Turks for two reasons. Firstly, the chief reason that the Turks posed such a threat to Christendom was because Europe was not completely united. And secondly, the ideas of 'unity' and 'harmony' were important for Elizabethans and was repeatedly emphasized by English historians.

<sup>5</sup> In chapter IV of *The Prince* (1513) Niccolo Machiavelli discusses European principalities, by compares the 'Ottoman' Monarchy with the French and praises the loyalty of the Ottoman Sultan's subjects and the unity of the Ottoman army. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), p.8.

status of the Turks as ‘warriors of darkness’, ‘savages’ and as ‘God’s enemies’<sup>6</sup>. Thus, creating a binary, of the ‘ideal’ and the ‘non-ideal’, aiding the containment of the Ottoman personage in chronicles.

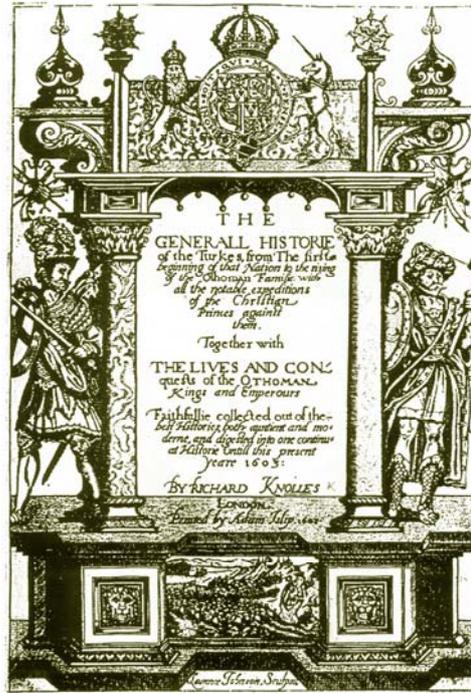
In this context, the Renaissance period was both fascinated and threatened by the Ottoman Empire which combined the features of a diabolical omen with those of a remarkably efficient political-military organization. Although, the interaction between Christians and Muslims was not primarily oppositional, and there were also cultural, intellectual and missionary engagements between them, the majority of accounts about the Ottomans were primarily negative.

The sixteenth century saw numerous European writings about the Ottoman Turks translated into English<sup>7</sup>. Three times as many books were written in French on the Turks, and translated into English, compared to those about the New World. There was one chronicle, however, that was of significant importance during the Renaissance period. The full title of the first edition composed by Richard Knolles (1550-1610 (?)) is *The Generall Historie of the Turkes, from the first beginning of that Nation to the rising of the Othoman Familie: with all the notable expeditions of the Christian Princes against them. Together with the Lives and Conquests of the Othoman Kings and Emperors. Faithfully collected out of the best Histories, both ancient and moderne, and digested into one continual Historie until this present yeare 1603.*

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<sup>6</sup> William Caxton, *Sonnes of Anymon XIV*, p.348, states “We shall were styl [still] on goddys[gods] enmyes as ben[been] turques & sarrasins” (1489) cited in “J. A Sampson”, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. IX. Caxton was England’s first publisher and also a translator who influenced English literature a great deal.

<sup>7</sup> Detailed information about the image of the Ottoman Turks in Italy can be found in Mustafa Soykut, *Image of the “Turk” in Italy: a history of the “other” in early modern Europe, 1453-1683*. (Berlin: K. Schmarz, 2001), Also, Clarence Dana Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought, and Literature (1520-1660)*. (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Furne Boivin & Cie, Editeurs 1940) contain information about their representation in French history and thought, while Carl Göllner, *Turcica. Die Türkenfrage in der öffentlichen Meinung Europas im 16. Jahrhundert*, (București: Editura Acedemiei, 1978) presents their portrayal in Germany.



Richard Knolles' *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*

Knolles' text is considered the 'greatest of English works of the Renaissance period dealing with Turkey [Ottomans]'. Doctor Johnson states that Knolles displays all the 'excellencies' of narration, artful arrangement of a wonderful multiplicity of events, the purity and elevation in style, and clarity in his descriptions and characterizations. However, Edward Gibbon was doubted whether partial and verbose material compiled from Latin writers would amuse an enlightened age<sup>8</sup>. *Historie of the Turkes* is considered important because it is the first text written about the military and political history of the Ottomans in the medium of English, and not Latin, indicating that knowledge about the 'terror of the World' was becoming essential not only for the sophisticated reader who could read Latin, but also for the general reading public. Also, it meant that it had a greater circulation within the public, compared to other texts in Latin.

The popularity of the text can be inferred from the numerous reprints it went through. This chronicle was first published in 1603, and reprinted with

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Chew, *The Shadow and the Crescent*, (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1977), p.111-112.

additional information and documents in 1610, 1621, 1631, 1638, 1679, 1687-1700 (in three volumes), and 1701 (abridged)<sup>9</sup>.

The work was entered in the *Stationers' Registers* in the name of the printer, Adam Islip<sup>10</sup>, on 5 December 1602<sup>11</sup>. However, it is not possible for Knolles to have completed the text on this date, because the introduction of the chronicle is dated 30 September 1603. It might be possible that he completed the text, and then wrote the introduction after it was registered. Another possibility is that he revised the introduction sometime during the period between its registration and its publication. It is not certain how many copies of the first edition were printed, but V. J. Parry in *Richard Knolles' History of the Turks* (2003), presumes that Islip conformed to a regulation of 1587, declaring that no book should "excede the number of 1250 or 1500 at one ympression [impression]"<sup>12</sup>.

The first<sup>13</sup> edition of the chronicle is composed of 1200 pages, is made up of three main sections, "The Generall Historie of the Turkes", "The Lives and Conquests of the Othoman Kings and Emperours", and "A Briefe Discourse of the Greatness of the Turkish Empire". The first section provides information about the origin of the Ottomans starting from the "first kingdome of the Turkes erected in Persia by Tangrolipix, Chiefetaine of the Selzuccian Familie"<sup>14</sup>. The second part contains the lives and conquests of the Ottoman Kings and Emperors, while the third one contains information about the aspects which contributed to the Empire's success. In "The Lives and Conquests of the Othoman Kings and Emperours", the life of each Sultan or Emperor begins with a portrait of the ruler, and Latin verses about the ruler which are also translated into English. The First of these verses is on "The Rising of the Great And Mightie Empire of the Turkes under Othoman [Osman I], first Founder Thereof, with his Life and Doings":

With endless wars the Asian state farre spent and overworne,  
By Sarasins and Tartars force, is all in pieces torne.

The Christians draw Their bloody swords, where with themselves to wound:

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<sup>9</sup> Copies of all the editions, except for the 1679 version, are held at the British Library in London.

<sup>10</sup> Massive folio volumes of this kind were expensive to produce, thus Islip shared the publication expenses with some of his fellow printers, G. Bysshop and John Norton.

<sup>11</sup> V. J. Parry, *Richard Knolles' History on the Turks*. Edited by Salih Özbaran. (Istanbul: The Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, September 2003).

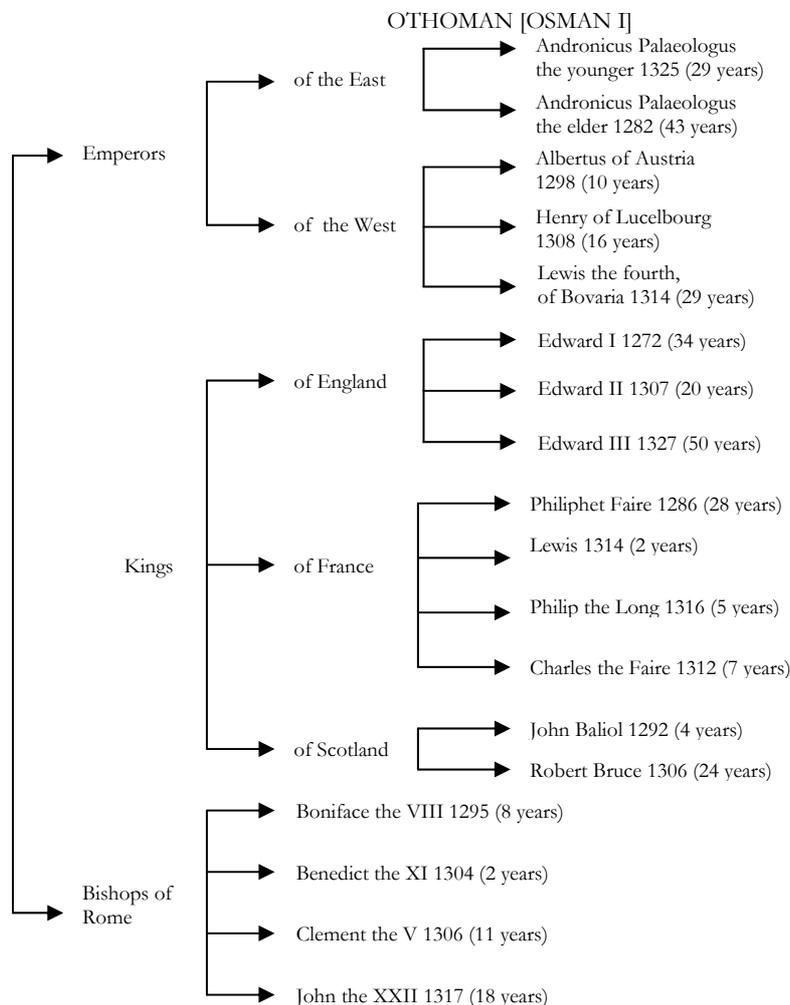
<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47-57

<sup>13</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*. (London: A. Islip, 1603). All the quotations in this paper are taken from the 1603 version of the text.

<sup>14</sup> Knolles, p.3.

And Greece with the warlike Othomans, new counsels doth devise,  
 And with a crue of Martiall men doth up in armes arise:  
 And layers the fatall plot whereon the wastfull Turkes should raigne,  
 And bathes his scepter in much blood of people by him slaine<sup>15</sup>.

These verses relate a summary of the significance, or doings of the Sultans, or Emperors. Then, each personage is followed by a chart composed of the Emperors of the East and West, the Bishops of Rome, and the Kings of England, France and Scotland who governed during the same period as the relevant Ottoman Sultan or Emperor, together with the total duration of their rule. The chart accompanying 'Othoman' [Osman I] is as follows:



<sup>15</sup> Knolles, p.131.

The second<sup>16</sup> edition was produced in 1610. It is not certain whether or not Knolles witnessed its publication because it is uncertain whether he died in 1603, or 1610. In addition to the material in the first edition, this version includes accounts of the last years of the Hungarian War (1603-6) and accounts of the religious troubles in Hansburg. In the third edition (1621)<sup>17</sup> Edward Grimston, wrote a continuation of the period from 1610-1620. The fourth edition (1631)<sup>18</sup> is a reissue of the 1621 edition, with additional new material by M.B from 1620-1629 collected from the papers of Thomas Roe<sup>19</sup>, containing 28 documents on various subjects. The fifth edition (1638)<sup>20</sup>, printed for the last time by Adam Islip, is a reprint of the text of 1631 with a new continuation from 1629 unto 1638 collected out of the dispatches of Sr. P. Wyche, and others by the dramatist Thomas Nabbes.

The sixth edition was (1679) revised and enlarged by Sir Paul Rycaut, an agent of the Levant company, with a "continuation to the present year MDCLXXXVIII"<sup>21</sup>. The seventh edition was further expanded and contained a survey of the present state of the Ottoman Empire by Rycaut (first published separately in 1668), which appeared in three folio volumes between 1687 and 1700<sup>22</sup>. In 1701 an abridged version appeared in two volumes, in which the history was continued by Sir P. Ricaut, to the peace at Carlowitz in 1699, and abridged by John Savage<sup>23</sup>. Also, an abridged Dutch version appeared in 1670-1671, entitled *d'Algemeene historie der Turken, van hun eerste oorspronck af, tot den opgangh van't Ottomannisch Huys: nevens der Christen-prinssen aanmerkenswaardige optochten tegens de selve. Eertijts in't Engelsch beschreven .. En nu vertaalt door J(obannes G(rindallus))*, published in two volumes, of which the second one is dated 1671<sup>24</sup>.

Most of the English writers, such as Knolles, relied on earlier works by European writers both for their information and their views, and thus the

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<sup>16</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*. (London: A. Islip, 1610).

<sup>17</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*, (Edward Grimstone) (London: A. Islip, 1621).

<sup>18</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*, (London: A. Islip, 1631).

<sup>19</sup> Sir Thomas Roe, *The Negotiations of Sir T. Roe in his embassy to the Ottoman Porte, from the year 1621 to 1628 inclusive*, containing a great variety of curious and important matters relating not only to the affairs of the Turkish Empire, but also to those of the other states of Europe. Edited by S. Richardson. Strahan: London, 1740.

<sup>20</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*, (London: A. Islip, 1638).

<sup>21</sup> Knolles, 1679.

<sup>22</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*, (London: printed for Tho. Basset, 1687, 1700).

<sup>23</sup> Knolles, Richard, *The General Historie of the Turkes*, (2 volumes).(London: Sir P. Ricaut, 1701).

<sup>24</sup> Knolles, Richard, *d'Algemeene historie der Turkes, van hun eerste oorspron, af, tot den opgangh van't Ottomannisch*, ( Amsterdam: Jacob Benjamin, 1670-71).

English opinion of the Ottomans, was formed from the descriptions of foreign writers. That is why he specifically mentions that his book is “Faithfully collected out of the best Histories, both ancient and moderne, and digested into one continual Historie” in the title page. During the 12 years he spent writing the chronicle, Knolles used numerous sources about the Ottomans which he mentions in his introduction. He gave special emphasis to the “History of the Greek Empire (for the better understanding of the rising of the Turkes in this History)[...] gathered out of the doings of Nicetas Choniates, Nicephorus Gregoras, and Laonicus Chalcocondiles”. He relied on Marinus Barletius for accounts of “the wonderfull and almost incredible wars betwixt old Amurath the Second, and his foster childe the fortunate Prince of Epiruc, of the Turks commonly called Scanderbeg”, Leonardus Chiensis for the captivity of Constantinople, death of Constantinus Palaeologus and “the fatall ruine of the Greeke Empire”, Iacobus Fontanus for “the lamentable History of Rhodes”, Nicholas Nicholay for “History of the taking of the ancient city of Tripolis”, and “History of Bajazet, Solyman’s youngest son, collected out of the notable Epistles of” Augerius Busbequius. Other than these, he relied on texts by writers such as Petrus Bizara Antonius Bonfinius, Martinus Chromerus, Caelius Secundus Curio, David Chytreus, Blondus Foroliviensis, Bartolomeo Georgievitz, Bernard de Girard, Paulus Giovius, Leonardus Goretius, Antonius Guarnerius, Nicholaus Honigerus, Paulus Iovius, Ioannes Leunclavius, Philippus Lonicerus, Thomas Minadoi, Sebastianus Monsterus, Abrahamus Ortelius, Henricus Pantaleon, Antonius Pigafetta, Nicholaus Reusnerus, Aeneas Sylvius Pont, Franciscus Sansovinus, Antonius Sebellicus, Lazarus Soranzi, Theodorus Spanduginus, Achillis Traducci, and Alcoranum Turcicum<sup>25</sup>.

This massive chronicle contains extremely detailed information about the Sultans, including passages about their physical appearance, personality, personal interests, and religious faith. It is evident that Knolles wrote this text to acquaint Christians with their mortal enemy, the enemy of their faith. It appears to attack Latin Christendom’s pacifist policies of not uniting against the Ottoman Turk, in a series of Crusades. The capture of Jerusalem by the Seljuk Turks in 1071 was one of the events that had triggered the First Crusade in 1095, and subsequently, there were seven more crusades formed till the late 1270s in order to regain land lost to Muslims (mainly the Ottomans)<sup>26</sup>. Although, the Ottoman Turks conquered cities such as Rhodes, Cyprus, and Constantinople after this date, and remained a threat till late-seventeenth century, surprisingly a holy crusade was not formed against the Ottomans. This disinterest caused upset and criticism in England as in the rest of Europe.

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<sup>25</sup> Knolles, “Introduction”.

<sup>26</sup> The First Crusade: 1095-99; Second: 1147-48; Third: 1189-92; Forth: 1202-1204; Fifth: 1218-21; Sixth: 1228-9; Seventh: 1248-54; Eight: 1270-12??.

In the Renaissance period, the struggle between East and West was not only a conflict of competing powers but also a conflict of ideologies and contrasting social, economic and political systems. Both Latin Christendom and the Ottoman Turks believed they were engaged in a struggle for survival. Both sides claimed they were charged with a divine mission and that “their respective regimes offered the best hope for humanity”<sup>27</sup>.

In this respect, the chronicle is an example of Christian historiography with a narrative intended specifically for Christian readers. In his introduction to his “Christian Reader” Knolles illustrates the Ottomans as ‘infidels’, ‘heretics’, ‘princes of darkness’ and an enemy not just to the country they attacked but a “common enemy of Christianity”<sup>28</sup>. Also, Knolles defines ‘Mahomet’, as a ‘false’ Prophet and ‘Mahommedanism’ as a ‘supersition’ (superstition)<sup>29</sup>. Perhaps it “is not common,[...] to imbue one’s mortal enemy with praiseworthy attributes”<sup>30</sup>, but this text goes beyond the boundaries of subjectivity by using manipulative descriptions of personages and historical events.

There is a great deal of rhetoric employed in his description of events such as the conquest of Constantinople. Knolles’ Constantine VIII and Christians are put forth as the ‘poore’ King and Christians. Thus, presenting the Christians as the side the reader should have sympathy for. In contrast, Mehmet II is the ‘young tyrant’, the Emperor of the ‘invading Turks’, who are the ‘scourge of Christendome’, especially for forcing or employing Christians to fight against Christians, as janissaries: “the Turkish Kings have growne so great, and their kingdome so mightily enlarged, by inforcing and alluring Christians to fight against Christians, to the utter confusion of themselves”<sup>31</sup>.

Another example of such narrative is about ‘Mohamet II’ [Mehmet II]. The accounts in the chronicle also include unnecessary details concerning the Sultans’ religious faith:

The report of the death of old Amurath the late King, was in short time blowne thorow most parts of Christendome, to the great joy of many; but especially of the Greekes and other poore Christians which bordered upon the tyrants Kingdome; who were now in hope, together with the change of the Turkish king, to make exchange also of their bad estate and fortune: and the rather, for that it was thought, that his eldest sonne Mahomet, after the death of his father, would have imbraced the Christian Religion, being in his childhood instructed therein (as was supposed) by his mother the daughter of

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<sup>27</sup> Schwobel, p.10.

<sup>28</sup> Knolles, “To the Christian Reader unto the Historie following”.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>30</sup> Schwobel, p.13.

<sup>31</sup> Knolles, p. 340.

Prince of Servia, a Christian [...] But he embraced the “mahometan religion, abhorring the Christian, but indeed making no great reckoning either of the one or the other, but as a mere Atheist [...] worshiping no other god but good Fortune...he thought all things lawfull that agreed with his lust, and making conscience of nothing, kept no league, promise, or oath, longer than stood with his profit or pleasure<sup>32</sup>.

Knolles presents the positive aspect of the ‘Ottoman’ Turks, commenting:

This Othoman monarchy [...] which at first scarce of the World perceived, or of themselves regarded, in short time so prospered, as that the power and glory thereof obscured not their former kingdomes only (nothing, in comparison of this) but even the greatest monarchies of the World; over a great part of which, it now so proudly triumpheth, as if it should never have end; at the beauty whereof the world wondereth, and at the power thereof quaketh: within the greatnesse whereof are contained no small portions of Asia, Europe, and Africke, but even the most famous and fruitfull kingdomes thereof: no part of the world left untouched but America onely; not more fortunate with her rich mines, than in that she is so farre from so great and dangerous an enemy. The foundation of this so great a kingdome (and now so mighty an empire, as holdeth the world in awe)...<sup>33</sup>

Knolles also illustrates the reasons for the general criticism of Christendom and Europe’s fascination with the Ottoman Turks. Also, in the general introduction, he summarizes the reasons for the ‘Othoman’ success. Knolles states that the Christian soldiers were ‘untrained’ serving rather for “shew and filling up of number” than for use and “in no respect could be compared with the Turk Janizaries [Janissaries]”. Other than this, the Christians fought among themselves instead of the Turks. However, there were also qualities on the part of the Turks that contributed to their success:

First, in them is to be noted an ardent and infinite desire of sovereignty [sovereignty], where with they have long since promised unto themselves the monarchie [monarchy] of the whole world[...]Then, such a rare unitie [unity] and agreement amongst them, as well as in the mammer of their religion(if it be so to bee[be] called) as in matter concerning their state [...] joyne [join] unto this their courage, conceived by the wonderfull successe[wonderful success] of their perpetuall fortune; their notable vigilancie, in taking the advantage of every occasion for the inlarging of their Monarchie; their frugalitie and temperatenesse in their diet and other manner of living; their carefull observing of their ancient Military Discipline, their cheerfull and almost

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.337

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.132.

incredible obedience unto their Princes and Sultans; such, as in that point no Nation in the world was to be worthily compared unto them[...] whereunto may be added the two strongest finewes of every well governed Commonwealth; Reward propounded to the good, and punishment threatened unto the offender.<sup>34</sup>

At first, aspects such as unity, agreement in religious affairs, courage, obedience, manner of living seem to bestow positive qualities on the Ottomans Turks. However, they are not stated to honour the Ottomans, but to instruct and criticize the Christians. Knolles is actually implying that the Christians have been unsuccessful because they are not united, fight among themselves, have disagreements in the manner of their religion, probably implying Catholics and Protestants.

The Humanist historians who dealt with Ottoman history, combined the tradition of their antique models with biblical allusions. Chroniclers of the period generally did not examine their sources with an eye for historical causality. They believed that the hand of God moved behind the course of human history, and that good fortune and adversity were the deserved reward or punishment from the just Lord. In *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy*, J. Douglas Canfield stated that in the tradition of Tudor Historiography, history was viewed as “the working out of God’s plan”<sup>35</sup>. Inevitably, many Christians saw the rise of the Ottoman Turks as God’s judgement on the wicked generation of Christians everywhere. In Knolles’ dedication to King James he says:

Whereof the first and greatest, is the just and secret judgement of the Almighty [God], who in justice delivereth into the hands of these mercilesse miscreates [Ottomans], nation after nation, and Kingdome upon Kingdome, as unto the most terrible executioner of his [God] dreadfull wrath, to be punished for their [Christians] sin<sup>36</sup>

According to the passage, it is not the Ottomans’ military skills but the secret judgement of God who has delivered the Christians into the hands of the Ottomans, in order to punish them for their sins. Although most Europeans interpreted Ottoman’s military power as the divine power of God, to punish Christendom, some historians such as Barbaro, Tedaldi, Machiavelli and others testified to the bravery, loyalty, and attributed their success directly to the well-organized and highly disciplined army of the Sultan.

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<sup>34</sup> Knolles, (1603) “Introduction”.

<sup>35</sup> Douglas J. Canfields, *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy* (Florida: Gainesville, 1977). p.47.

<sup>36</sup> Knolles, dedication to King James in *Historie of the Turkes*.

Another example of such biblical imagery is seen in the description of the capture of Bajazet by Tamerlane reflected as God's will:

And so causing him [Bajazet] to be taken out of his presence [Tamerlane], turning unto his followers, said, behold a proud and cruell man, he deserveth to be chastised accordingly, and to be made an example to all the proud and cruell of the world of the just wrath of God against them. I acknowledge, that God hath this day delivered into my hands a great enemy; to whom we must therefore give thanks<sup>37</sup>.

In his descriptions, Knolles has implicitly made Tamerlane a figure of the Messiah and Bajazet a figure of Satan who is "now the scorn of fortune"<sup>38</sup> serving as an example to everyone who is proud and cruel. Also, Tamerlane gives thanks to God for delivering such a great enemy into his hands. Through use of implied analogy, Tamerlane's victory over Bajazeth is seen as a manifestation of provincial justice. Knolles relates his characters and their conflict to archetypes in the Christian myth.

The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries were filled with battles between the Turks and Christian powers. There was a certain antipathy felt towards the Turks since the First Crusades, but it reached a climax with the capture of Constantinople in 1453. This conquest marked the threat that the Ottoman Turks seemed to pose to Christianity and the culture of Latin Christendom. Also it sharpened the instinct for subjective historiography. Historians such as Kemal H. Karpat<sup>39</sup> and Robert Schwobel have stated that "the fall of Constantinople and the ensuing fear that the Turks would attack the West and destroy Christianity, was the most powerful stimulus conditioning the formation of the Western image about Turks"<sup>40</sup>.

Accordingly, Knolles gives a highly illustrated description of the capture of Constantinople:

In this fury of the Barbarians, perished many thousands of men, women, and children, without respect of age, sex, or condition. Many for safegard of their lives, fled into the Temple of Sophia, where they were all without pity slain, except some few reserved by the barbarous victors, to purposes more grivous than death itself. The rich and beautiful ornaments and jewels[...]of the magnificent Church of that most sumptuous and pluckt down and carried away by the Turks: and the Church it selfe built for God to be honoured in, for the present

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.220.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>39</sup> Karpat, Kemal H. (ed.), *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History*, (Belgium: E. J. Brill, 1974).

<sup>40</sup> Schwobel, p.10.

converted into a stable for their horses, or a place for the execution of their abominable and unspeakeable filthinesse: the image of the crucifix was also by them taken downe, and a Turk cap upon the head [...] and calling it the God of the Christians<sup>41</sup>.

Such 'picturesque' descriptions of the actions of the Turks were quite popular in Elizabethan chronicles. In these chronicles, the inhumanity of the Turks was emphasized above all else, and the stereotyped Turk, villainous, savage and bloodthirsty, swooping down upon innocent Christians, and massacring them indiscriminately, was firmly established in the historical traditions of the West.

Samuel Chew states that Knolles could not avoid prejudice in his accounts, for his purpose was in part propagandist. He seeks to account for the disasters, and the declining of the Christian Commonwealth. In this respect, the blame is attached to the frequently appearing image of Satan, and its various synonyms, and then to those ancient heretics and "Mahomet, born in an unhappy hour", and his "gross and blasphemous Doctrines [Islam]". Furthermore, the "Will of God has permitted Turkish greatness to expand; and various lesser causes have contributed to the catastrophe; the uncertainty of worldly affairs, the lack of unity in Christendom, the Turks' ardent desire for sovereignty, and their unity and agreement among themselves, their courage, frugality, and temperance"<sup>42</sup>.

It should be noted that such chronicles were initially composed for propaganda purposes. Their aim was to unite all Christians to fight against the Turks, and obviously cannot be treated as true representations of the Ottoman Turks. To sum up, Knolles' massive and detailed account of the Ottoman Turks was popular and widely read in the Renaissance period. Also, it served as a major source for many historical and literary texts, composed subsequent to this text. Western chroniclers repeated tales of wickedness and cruelty inflicted by the 'scourge of God' that portrayed the inhuman cruelties practiced by the Turks<sup>43</sup>. As a result, English texts frequently allude to the Turks and Muslims as the 'barbarous Turk' 'terror of Europe', 'Scourge of the Islands', 'whip of the Christian World' and 'Scourge of Christendome'<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Knolles, p. 347.

<sup>42</sup> Chew, p.115.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Knolles, *Historie of the Turkes*, (London: printed by Adam Islip, 1603; reprinted 1638), p.42.

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