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0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

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## **Guns for the Sultan**

*Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire*

Gábor Ágoston's book contributes to an emerging strand of military history, which examines organized violence as a challenge to early modern states, their societies and economies. His is the first to examine the weapons technology and armaments industries of the Ottoman Empire, the only Islamic empire that threatened Europe on its own territory in the age of the Gunpowder Revolution. Based on extensive research in the Turkish archives, the book affords new insights regarding the early success and subsequent failure of an Islamic empire against European adversaries. It demonstrates Ottoman flexibility and the existence of an early modern arms market and information exchange across the cultural divide, as well as Ottoman self-sufficiency in weapons and arms production well into the eighteenth century. Challenging the sweeping statements of Eurocentric and Orientalist scholarship, the book disputes the notion of Islamic conservatism, the Ottomans' supposed technological inferiority and the alleged insufficiencies in production capacity. This is a provocative, intelligent and penetrating analysis which successfully contends traditional perceptions of Ottoman and Islamic history. It is certain to become a classic in the field.

**Gábor Ágoston** is Associate Professor in the Department of History, Georgetown University. His previous publications include *Hungary in the Seventeenth Century* (with Teréz Oborni, 2000).

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# Guns for the Sultan

Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

GÁBOR ÁGOSTON

*Georgetown University*



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521843138](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521843138)

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First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Ágoston, Gábor.

Guns for the sultan: military power and the weapons industry in the Ottoman Empire / Gábor Ágoston.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization)

Includes bibliographical references (p. 248) and index.

ISBN 0 521 84313 8 (hbk. : alk. paper) – ISBN 0 521 60391 9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Weapons industry – Turkey – History. 2. Turkey – History, Military. I. Title. II. Series.

HD9743.T92A36 2004 338.4'76234'09560903 – dc22 2004051106

ISBN-13 978-0-521-84313-3 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-84313-8 hardback

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Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

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---

*To my family with love and gratitude*

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Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Without these munitions and artillery one cannot preserve any state, nor defend it, nor attack the enemy.

Venetian senate minute, June 16, 1489

(Quoted in English by Michael Mallett, "Siegecraft in Late Fifteenth-Century Italy," in Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe eds., *The Medieval City under Siege* [Woodbridge, 1995], p. 247).

My Blissful Padishah. As your great lord knows, the main support of the Sultanic campaigns is gunpowder. Without gunpowder, the campaign is completely impossible . . . Gunpowder is not like other things. If we fail to take measures concerning it and it is not produced in time, where there is a shortage of gunpowder, even if we have 100,000 gold coins, the amount shall be of no benefit. Where there is a shortage of gunpowder, even if there is a sea of gold coins, it cannot take the place of gunpowder. The defense of the fortresses and warfare takes place with gunpowder.

Grand Vizier Yemişçi Hasan Pasha's petition (*telhis*) from 1603  
(Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı Tarihine Aid Belgeler: Telhisler* [1597–1607] [Istanbul, 1970], pp. 19–20).

## Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of maps</i>	x
<i>List of tables</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
<i>Notes on transliteration and place names</i>	xv
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xvi
1 Introduction: firearms and armaments industries	1
2 Gunpowder technology and the Ottomans	15
3 Cannons and muskets	61
4 Saltpeter industries	96
5 Gunpowder industries	128
6 Munitions and ordnance industries	164
7 Conclusions: guns and empire	190
Appendix	207
<i>Notes on weights and measurements</i>	242
<i>Bibliography</i>	248
<i>Index</i>	260

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Illustrations

### Figures

Jacket illustration: The Imperial Cannon Foundry (Tophane) in Istanbul. Mahmud Raif Efendi, *Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman*, Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library)

- |   |  |        |
|---|--|--------|
| 1 | The <i>trace italienne</i> in Hungary: Komárom, 1594 by Johann Sibmacher (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)   | page 4 |
| 2 | The pavilion of Sultan Mehmed III at Eger, 1596 by Franco Giacomo (Giovanni) (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)   | 32     |
| 3 | Ottoman army transport from Luigi Marsigli, <i>L'état militaire de l'empire ottoman</i> , 1732 (By permission of the Special Collections of Lauinger Memorial Library, Georgetown University)                                | 34     |
| 4 | The Siege of Szigetvár, 1566, by an unknown Italian artist (A. Lafreri?) (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)   | 36     |
| 5 | The Siege of Eger, 1596 by Johann Sibmacher (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)  | 37     |
| 6 | The Siege of Komárom, 1594 by Franco Giacomo (Giovanni) (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)  | 41     |
| 7 | Esztergom, by Gaspar Bouttats (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)  | 50     |
| 8 | Fifteenth-century Ottoman bombard. Military Museum, Istanbul (Photograph by the author)  | 66     |
| 9 | Ottoman mortar on its carriage. Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library) | 68     |

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## List of illustrations ix

- |    |  |     |
|----|--|-----|
| 10 | Ottoman bronze mortar. Military Museum, Istanbul (Photograph by the author)  | 71  |
| 11 | Large Ottoman siege cannon ( <i>balyemez</i> ). Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library)               | 78  |
| 12 | Old Ottoman field piece on its carriage. Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library)                      | 82  |
| 13 | Ottoman gun on camel. Luigi Marsigli, <i>L'état militaire de l'empire ottoman</i> , 1732 (By permission of the Special Collections of Lauinger Memorial Library, Georgetown University)  | 84  |
| 14 | Janissary muskets. Military Museum, Istanbul (Photograph by the author)  | 92  |
| 15 | The old gunpowder works in Istanbul. Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library)                          | 134 |
| 16 | The new gunpowder works at Azadlı (Istanbul). Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library)                 | 161 |
| 17 | The interior of the Azadlı gunpowder works. Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library)                   | 162 |
| 18 | “Turkish booty,” Unknown German artist (Courtesy of the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum)   | 188 |
| 19 | Ottoman 12-pounder. Luigi Marsigli, <i>L'état militaire de l'empire ottoman</i> , 1732 (by permission of the Special Collections of Lauinger Memorial Library, Georgetown University)  | 196 |
| 20 | Late eighteenth-century large Ottoman cannon on new carriage. Mahmud Raif Efendi, <i>Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'empire ottoman</i> , Constantinople, 1798 (By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library) | 197 |

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Maps

1 Naval arsenals and shipbuilding sites in the Ottoman Empire	<i>page</i> 51
2 Gunpowder works in the Ottoman Empire	130
3 War industry plants in Istanbul	133
4 Cannon foundries in the Ottoman Empire	179

## Tables

2.1	Increase in the number of Janissaries	page 26
2.2	The size of the Ottoman artillery corps, 1514–1769	30
2.3	Ottoman oar-ships and shipboard artillery	53
2.4	Ottoman sailing ships and shipboard artillery	54
3.1	Large wrought-iron bombards in fifteenth-century Western Europe	65
3.2	Ottoman and Habsburg mortars in the 1680s and 1690s	72
3.3	Ottoman, Spanish and Austrian siege cannons	74
3.4	Types and calibers of <i>şayka</i> guns, 1560s–1740s	75
3.5	<i>Balyemez</i> guns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries	77
3.6	<i>Bacaluşka</i> guns in the sixteenth century	79
3.7	<i>Kolunburnas</i> in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries	82
3.8	<i>Darbzens</i> in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries	85
3.9	<i>Şâhî</i> guns, sixteenth through eighteenth centuries	86
3.10	Heavy Janissary trench guns	90
3.11	Janissary <i>tüfenks</i>	91
4.1	Purchases ( <i>iştira</i> and <i>mübayaa</i> ) of saltpeter at fixed price	123
5.1	Output of the Istanbul gunpowder works	135
5.2	Output of the <i>baruthane</i> of Selanik	139
5.3	Output of the <i>baruthane</i> of Gelibolu	142
5.4	Output of the <i>baruthane</i> of Bor	144
5.5	Output of the <i>baruthane</i> of Izmir	145
5.6	Estimated output of the Ottoman powder works, 1570s–1590s	152
5.7	Estimated output of the Ottoman powder works in the 1680s	153
5.8	Mixture of gunpowder in selected European countries and in the Ottoman Empire, 1546–1795	156
6.1	Copper production in Asia Minor and copper shipments to the Tophane	173
6.2	Estimated levels of annual iron production in selected ironworks	177
6.3	Output of the Imperial Cannon Foundry in Istanbul, 1513–28	180
6.4	Output of selected provincial cannon foundries	182
6.5	Output of the Imperial Cannon Foundry in Istanbul, 1596–1798	183
6.6	Distribution of Ottoman guns cast or kept in the Tophane	186
6.7	Composition of Ottoman bronze cannons	187

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgments

This book has been researched, planned and written over a period of years and I owe a considerable debt to my teachers, friends and colleagues. Gyula Káldy-Nagy and Géza Dávid introduced me to the study of Ottoman history and paleography. Gyula Káldy-Nagy also played an important role in directing my interest towards the topic of the present book by drawing my attention to Abdülkadir Efendi's seventeenth-century manuscript, an unusually rich source for contemporaneous Ottoman military history. I cherish the memory of the late István Mándoky-Kongur, the last "nomad" of the Hungarian Turkologists, whose love and deep knowledge of everything related to the Turkic peoples profoundly shaped my professional life. The friendship of Pál Fodor and that of the late Ferenc Szakály have meant so much to me, and I miss their gentle criticism and encouragement. Teréz Oborni occupies a special place among my Hungarian friends. She was the first reader and critic of an earlier version of the book and her friendship has been precious ever since. I also thank Klára Hegyi, Ágnes Várkonyi and the late Géza Perjés for their comments on the dissertation which dealt with some of the issues examined in the book. The present book, however, is a rather different work.

In the past decade it has been my good fortune to have had the opportunity to return regularly to my beloved Istanbul and to carry on follow-up research in the archives that not only broadened and deepened the source base of the book but also raised important new questions. In the archives Mehmet Genç, İbrahim Sahillioğlu and the late Nejat Göyünç were generous with their time and knowledge when I faced difficulties in deciphering Ottoman documents. The companionship of my colleagues working in the archives made research an enjoyable daily activity and it is a pleasure to acknowledge them: İdris Bostan, Selim Deringil, Feridun Emecen, Caroline Finkel, İlber Ortaylı, Victor Ostapchuk, Ariel Salzmann and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr. I have spent long hours in the bookshops of Muhittin S. Eren and Rasim Yüksel who have been instrumental in locating old and new Turkish publications and who shared with me their knowledge, as well as the news and gossip, of Turkish academia and Ottoman studies. I am indebted to Hüseyin Özdeğer for the long conversations we have had on Ottoman history. Tuba Çavdar, Nejat Dinçel and Cemil Öztürk made sure that I did not lose touch with everyday life and that I felt at home in Istanbul.

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgments xiii

I am also grateful to Jacob Roodenberg and Ted Largo, directors of the Dutch Historical and Archeological Institute in Istanbul, and to Tony Greenwood, director of the American Research Institute in Turkey, for the pleasant working conditions they provided. In England, I benefited from the friendship and hospitality of Kate Fleet (Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies, Newnham College, Cambridge) and Colin Heywood (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London).

I have discussed some of the results of my research with colleagues and friends and I am indebted to my fellow-researchers in the archives and to Virginia Aksan, Jeremy Black, Colin Heywood, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Rhoads Murphey and Brett Steele for their support and stimulating comments. I am especially indebted to Colin Heywood for sharing with me his knowledge on the subject as well as his anecdotes regarding his mentor, Vernon J. Parry, whose ground-breaking studies inspired my research.

The book was written during my Georgetown years. The friendship of Dina and Alfred Khoury and the welcome extended to me by Georgetown University's History Department smoothed the transition from Budapest to Washington, D.C. I have been fortunate to meet new friends at Georgetown. The companionship and support of Jim Collins, Catherine Evtuhov, Andrzej Kamiński, John McNeill and Jim Shedel means a great deal to me. Many of them have read parts of the book at some stage of its life and offered valuable comments. Jim Collins and Andrzej Kamiński have read and critiqued the entire manuscript and I have immensely benefited from their insight and suggestions.

The positive reports and helpful comments of the two anonymous readers of Cambridge University Press are much appreciated. I am most grateful to my editor, Marigold Acland, for her early interest in this project and for being an ideal editor. I also thank my copy-editor, Carol Fellingham Webb, for her professionalism and careful work, as well as Andrew Timothy Gane, Jean Ranallo and Nadya Sbaiti who, at different stages of this work, labored to improve its language and style. Of course, any remaining flaws of the book are entirely mine.

Parts of the material used in the book were delivered as a paper at a conference held in 1999 at MIT's Dibner Institute for the History of Science and Technology and will appear in Brett Steele and Tamera Dorland eds., *The Heirs of Archimedes: Science and the Art of War through the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, forthcoming 2005), whereas other smaller sections were published in my "Ottoman Warfare in Europe, 1453–1826," in Jeremy Black ed., *European Warfare, 1453–1815* (London: Macmillan, 1999). I would like to thank the editors as well as MIT Press and Macmillan Press for permissions to use these materials in the book.

I am indebted to the staff of the following institutions: the Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives of Istanbul, the British Library, the libraries of Eötvös Loránd University, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Cambridge University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, and above all Georgetown University's Lauinger Memorial Library. Special thanks are due to the staff of the Interlibrary Loan Division of the latter who handled my requests expeditiously. Illustrations were

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

xiv Acknowledgments

provided by the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum, the Special Collections of Lauinger Memorial Library, Georgetown University and the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection of Brown University Library. I thank the directors, curators and staff of these institutions for the permissions to reproduce the illustrations in the book.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance of several institutions and foundations. Fellowships and grants from the Eötvös Loránd University and the George Soros Foundation, the Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation supported my research in Istanbul, London and Cambridge. A junior sabbatical and several Summer Academic Research Grants awarded by the Graduate School of Georgetown University greatly facilitated the completion of the book. To all of these institutions I offer my sincere gratitude.

It has been my parents' caring love that allowed me to pursue my dreams and turn them into my profession. They have supported my choices and let me go when my studies, research and profession took me to ever further lands: hard decisions on their parts and a token of true love for which I am grateful. My sister and her children have constantly reminded me that there exists another world outside the archives and libraries. This book could not have been completed without the support of my wife, Alíz, who not only managed our life almost single-handedly during our major transition from Hungary to the United States, but also read and commented on versions of the manuscript. It was the birth of our son that helped me put things into perspective and his crying at two in the morning that signaled the end of my busy days during the final revision of the book. This book is dedicated to my family with love and gratitude.

Cambridge University Press

0521843138 - Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire

Gabor Agoston

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Notes on transliteration and place names

Ottoman terms have been rendered in their Ottoman Turkish spelling using the modern Turkish alphabet. Diacritical marks have been omitted. Words that have found their way into the English language (e.g., pasha) are used in their common English spelling. Regarding place names, I preferred the Ottoman forms used in the sources. However, internationally accepted place names (e.g., Belgrade) have been retained. Place names before the Ottoman conquest are used in their contemporary Hungarian, Slavic, etc. forms. To locate place names and their equivalents readers are referred to the index and to Donald Edgar Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden, 1973).

## Abbreviations

AK	Topçular Katibi Abdülkadir Efendi, <i>Tarih-i Al-i Osman</i> . Vienna, ÖNB, Handschriftensammlung, Codex Vindobonensis Palatinus Mxt. 130
AOH	<i>Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
ArchOtt	<i>Archivum Ottomanicum</i>
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives, Istanbul)
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BTTD	<i>Belgelerle Türk Tarih Dergisi</i>
CA	Cevdet Askeri
DBŞM	Bâb-i Defteri Başmuhasebe Kalemi Defterleri collection in the BOA
DBŞM BRG	Bâb-i Defteri Başmuhasebe Kalemi Defterleri Gelibolu Baruthânesi collection in the BOA
DBŞM BRİ	Bâb-i Defteri Başmuhasebe Kalemi Defterleri İstanbul Baruthânesi collection in the BOA
DBŞM BRS	Bâb-i Defteri Başmuhasebe Kalemi Defterleri Selanik Baruthânesi collection in the BOA
DBŞM TPH	Bâb-i Defteri Başmuhasebe Kalemi Defterleri Tophane-i Âmire collection in the BOA
DMKF	Bâb-i Defteri Mevkufat Kalemi collection in the BOA
DPYM	Bâb-i Defteri Piyade Mukabelesi Kalemi collection in the BOA
EI	<i>Encyclopedia of Islam</i> (new edition, Leiden and London, 1960–2002)
HK	<i>Hadtörténelmi Közlemények</i>
İA	<i>İslam Ansiklopedisi</i> (13 vols., Istanbul, 1965–1974)
İED	<i>İstanbul Enstitüsü Dergisi</i>
İFM	<i>İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası</i>
IHR	<i>International History Review</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Military History</i>

<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Turkish Studies</i>
<i>Kavanin</i>	“Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân-i Dergah-i Ali” in Ahmed Akgündüz ed., <i>Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri</i> , vol. 9/1 (Istanbul, 1996), pp. 127–268, facsimile, <i>ibid.</i> , pp. 269–366.
KK	Kâmil Kepeci collection in the BOA
MAD	Maliyeden Müdevver Defterleri collection in the BOA
MD	Mühimme Defterleri collection in the BOA
<i>OsmAr</i>	<i>Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies</i>
ÖNB	Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
<i>POF</i>	<i>Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi</i>
<i>TDVİA</i>	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi</i> (25 vols., Istanbul, 1988–)
<i>TED</i>	<i>İstanbul Üniversitesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi</i>
<i>TSAB</i>	<i>Turkish Studies Association Bulletin</i>
TSMK	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi
<i>Turcica</i>	<i>Turcica. Revue d'études turques</i>
<i>VVM</i>	<i>Vesnik Vojnog Muzeja</i>