



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A Level History A

Y309/01 The Ascendancy of the Ottoman Empire 1453–1606

Friday 9 June 2017 – Morning

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet
(OCR12 sent with general stationery)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Answer Question 1 in Section A and any **two** questions in Section B.
- Write your answer to each question on the Answer Booklet.
- Do **not** write in the barcodes.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended responses will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document consists of **4** pages.

SECTION A

Read the two passages and then answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of why the Ottomans won the Battle of Mohacs in 1526. [30]

Passage A

It is next to impossible to assess the situation at Mohacs in 1526 correctly. When approaching from the point of view of the Ottoman chronicles, it seems that the Hungarian troops were defeated at both flanks, but then concentrated all their strength and launched a last desperate attack against the court guards of Suleiman in the centre of the Ottoman order of battle. The report of a Bohemian eyewitness, however, indicates that the Hungarian commanders might have reached the conclusion that Ottoman cavalry had been put to flight at both flanks and so an attack against the centre could have been launched, which might have decided the battle for the Hungarians had it met with success. This charge of the heavy cavalry must have been partly successful, as certain sources give account of the breakthrough of the line of janissaries defending the Sultan. However, Suleiman did not attempt to flee and there were so few cavalymen that reached near him that he was not killed. Neither was the order and fighting morale of the Ottoman troops shaken. After this event, Turkish superiority dominated the battlefield. Owing to the increasing number of casualties, the Hungarian army, which had been smaller right from the beginning, ceased to represent considerable power anymore. Its remaining segments were surrounded and eliminated by the Ottomans.

It is hard to judge the real significance of the often-mentioned Ottoman firearms. Had the military of King Louis II not been inexperienced, the great number of Turkish cannons, per se, would not have considerably influenced the outcome of the battle. The failure of the Hungarian attacks against the Ottoman infantry that defended the fortified artillery positions at the Turkish left flank was not a result of the modernity of Ottoman military technology. This type of defence could be just as much effective when there were only bow men or crossbow archers in the positions. It should not be ignored either that some of the janissaries were still equipped with bows or halberds and shields.

Adapted from J. B. Szabo, *The Battle of Mohacs and the Military Revolution*, published in 2006.

Passage B

On the field of battle the more astute among the Hungarian commanders counselled a strategic retreat in the direction of Buda, luring the Turks to follow them and thus lengthen their lines of communication, moreover benefitting in the process by reinforcements from the army of Zapolya, now only a few days distant, and from a Bohemian contingent already on the western frontier. But the majority of the Hungarians were overconfident and impatient and cherished dreams of instant martial glory. Led by the belligerent Magyar nobility, who were at once distrustful of the King and jealous of Zapolya, they clamoured for an immediate battle, taking the offensive on the spot. Their counsels prevailed and it was fought on a marshy, six mile plain to the west of the Danube, ground chosen to give scope to the Hungarian cavalry but giving it likewise to the superior and more numerous cavalry of the Turks.

Impatient in tactics as in strategy, the Hungarians opened the battle with a needless head-on charge of their heavily-armed cavalry, led by King Louis himself and directed right at the centre of the Turkish line. When this appeared to succeed it was quickly followed by a general advance of all the Hungarian forces. But the Turks hoping thus to deceive their enemy and lead him on to destruction, had planned the defence in depth, placing its main line farther to the rear, with a hillside at the back of it. Thus presently the Hungarian cavalry, still galloping forward, came up against the hard core of the Janissaries grouped around the Sultan and his standard. There were furious hand-to-hand fights, and Suleiman himself was at one moment in danger, from arrows and lances that struck his cuirass [armour]. But the far superior Turkish artillery, carefully concentrated and skilfully handled as usual, decided the issue. It mowed the Hungarians down in their thousands and enabled the Turks to encircle and break the concentration of Hungarian troops in the centre, slaughtering and scattering the enemy until survivors were fleeing in total disorder to north and to east. Thus within an hour and a half the battle was won.

Adapted from Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*,
published in 1977.

SECTION B

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2*** 'The main reason for Ottoman imperial expansion in the period from 1453 to 1606 was to develop trade in the Levant.' How far do you agree? **[25]**
- 3*** How effective was the system of Ottoman provincial administration in maintaining peace and stability in the Empire in the period from 1453 to 1606? **[25]**
- 4*** 'The Siege of Vienna (1529) was the most important turning point in the Ottoman expansion in Europe from 1453 to 1606.' How far do you agree? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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