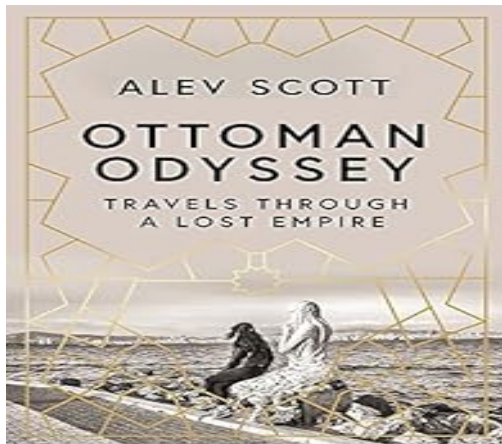


Ottoman Odyssey: Travels through a Lost Empire By Alev Scott Scott's effort to reconstruct an understanding of the Ottomans as a system making the best of a difficult situation and achieving great things given their fractious human resources—an understanding of why perfectly ordinary and sensible people in a vast arc of contemporary Europe and the Middle East might now look back on the Ottomans as a golden age—is commendable. Her tendency to get carried away with.



Barred from re-entering Turkey because of her criticism of the Turkish government Scott spends this book traveling around the country she took as her home exploring the former Ottoman territories in the Balkans and the Levant. The framing that required this book be written as it was (Scott would we get the sense much prefer to have been able to just go back to Turkey and write something else) is an object lesson in the old adage about creativity coming from restriction. Her rendering of the Ottoman world as a lost age of tolerance and intercultural dependence is useful and important complemented and buttressed by extensive reference to historians such as Eugene Rogan but occasionally falls short. There are few historical regimes more clouded with misunderstanding in the popular perception than the Ottoman Empire; almost no one looks back on it favourably for example descriptions of Sandzak Muslims as Serbs when they self-identify and are indeed recognised by the Serbian state as Bosniaks or talking about the Young Turks as a group of people who set out to do specific things or painting Mostar and Sarajevo as fundamentally Ottoman cities with a thin veneer of Balkan sensibility painted over them is more questionable. So why is it this book spoke to me so much? Is it because the place where I was born was once part of the Ottoman empire too? Or because many of my closest friends are scattered around it? Or the fact I am not living there at the moment and am part of diaspora? I don't know it could be one or all of those reasons but I know I will cherish and remember this one for a long time. English Largely enjoyed this far-ranging travelogue thanks to the accessible approach Scott adopts dropping in useful context while keeping the pace brisk as she trots across a substantial geographic range. First the breadth of the ambition—taking in the entire historical scope of the empire—isn't quite answered in the end results; Scott's intro sets out a broad treatise on the shaping of identity but her individual chapters are often waylaid in localised concerns that aren't clearly relatable to historical factors. Secondly more alarmingly Scott displays but never really deconstructs her own nationalist biases: some of her perspective on the Armenian Genocide is—by her own frank admission—shaped by the influence of Turkish politics. For example the decision of Beyazid II to let the Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula settle in the Empire is belittled as a symbiotic exchange not an act of pure altruism (merits are not discussed). In times when the Spanish rulers expelled the entire population under a bogus pretext the Cossacks of Bogdan Khmelnytsky massacred Jews en masse with impunity and pogroms were a fact of life across much of Europe this decision seems enlightened and ahead of its time no matter how self-serving. Sarajevo and Mostar are characterised as towns with mainly Ottoman heritage overrun by Turkish tourists revelling in the glory of their former empire and Turkish-born educators pursuing their missionary / imperial / Islamist agenda (seriously??). If the author bothered to do a little research about the region of Sandzak/Raska she would have learned about the mass murder looting expulsions (with the final destination Turkey) and everyday discrimination suffered at the hands of

local and state governments and not Turkey for at least 120 years. The book is also teeming with historical and political inaccuracies (Bosnia-Herzegovina gained its independence in 1908 (???); labelling the Sandzak-Muslims Serbs most of whom in fact declare themselves Bosniaks and have a recognised minority status in Serbia and Christian Social Union in Bavaria anti-immigrant a characterisation which grossly exaggerates the party's policies and dismisses Bavaria's great ethnic diversity). If you have plans to visit some of the former Ottoman provinces this book can serve you as a nice travel guide :) English I don't usually write reviews on goodreads but I couldn't stop myself from reviewing this amazing gem of a book. As someone who descends from a multicultural background I was able to connect with many of the stories I read in the book and was able to gain a better insight into my emotions as someone who grew up away from my ancestral homeland. What is a homeland a land or an idea? This is a paraphrased question from the book which forced me to stop reading and stare into the emptiness while thinking about its profound meanings and implications. Scott who is a half-British half-Turkish journalist had begun her looking for clues for her story in Turkey talking to the meld of populations that live there at the moment and whose ancestors had been drawn from the far reaches of the empire to the capital. But this journey is about the modern day as well as the past as she travels from the streets of Jerusalem to the villages of Cyprus through Bosnia and Serbia and onto Lebanon and the other peoples who have been scattered amongst the region some by choice and others forced to move from place to place for all manner of reasons. Some of these take her back to her childhood memories and others remind her that she is not at the moment allowed freedom of travel in the region because of her view and desire to ask questions that the authorities don't want to hear. Scott has a really nice style of writing and I really enjoyed reading this book however it would have been good to find out more about the people their hopes for the future and where they hoped to be at some point in the future. Their 800-year rule ended a century ago - and yet travelling through twelve countries from Kosovo to Greece to Palestine she uncovers a legacy that's vital and relevant; where medieval ethnic diversity meets 21st century nationalism and displaced people seek new identities:

And those who do get dismissed as retrograde conservatives and neo-imperialists bent on dismantling what tenuous order has been constructed in the Middle East: Or are retrograde conservatives and neo-imperialists bent on dismantling that tenuous order. Scott's Odyssey is evocative occasionally insightful and sometimes compelling, This is a travelogue and personal reflection though not an effort at historical and political analysis: Read for what it is rather than what it seems to want to be Ottoman Odyssey is thoroughly worthwhile, English If you like travel literature this book is excellent: If you want your travel literature to be a linear journey this book will disappoint since it jumps around, But the jumping around works well with the connecting thread of an analysis of the people and places today that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The connection to the former Ottoman Empire seems tenuous at times almost forced but it is wrapped up nicely at the end that makes it all work: I enjoyed it overall but I would've preferred a more cohesive narrative style of writing as opposed to the way the author breaks down each chapter into segments: Also her attitude towards some of her subjects often rubbed me the wrong way. English ottoman odyssey is the story of a journey across the former ottoman empire where alev scott interviews various people with some sort of connection to the empire or turkey. some of them were blatantly untrue others were overtly biased. this book may have been good had she not been the narrator which is why it gets 3 stars-but her voice absolutely ruined it for me. English I am still unsure what made me like this book so much: The main ideas the author is following while traveling around former empire are concepts of identity exile diaspora collective trauma and memory among others: Given the book's self-stated purpose the author's strange half-lean into rather than interrogation of this seems to me morally as well as artistically dubious, Fascinating history of the peoples of the original Ottoman empire and their diaspora: Turkey too is a great melting pot with many ethnic minorities and religions. English The book is just fine is you view it as a travelogue and an author's personal diary not as a serious political or historical analysis. I mostly enjoyed it before I got to

chapter Minarets in the West though I found some of the statements biased and out-of-context. The chapter Minarets in the West is uninformative selective and at moments outright malicious, The author tries to paint a balanced portrait of the Balkans by interviewing a multitude of characters, Unfortunately by choosing to interview eccentrics freaks and broadly people way beyond the mainstream what emerges is not a portrait but a cartoon: The author fails to take notice of both towns' other (arguably major) heritages historical co-existence and diversity, Alija Sahovic the most historically confused middle-aged fanboy is a deluded fanatic supposedly suffering from the Stockholm syndrome, As someone deeply rooted in the Balkans who has spent over 20 years living there I could recognise very little of the region I know from this account, It is an absolutely beautiful book which i'm so glad I found in my university's library: Tells some powerful stories on identity and exile with its effect on the long run. A must read for anyone interested in Turkey and its history, English It is 900 years since the Ottoman Empire began and just over a century since it ended, You'd think that after 100 years there wouldn't be much left to see of their legacy but you'd be surprised: Travelling through the twelve modern countries that make up what used to be their territory Alev Scott uncovers far more than she expects: Then one day she was banned from returning to Turkey just as she was beginning to consider it another home and an essential part of her identity: She ended up living on the Greek island of Lesbos which is so close to Turkey, By teasing out their stories she realises that what she thought would be only fragments of the empire are still very much visible in the people: It is also a personal journey of her own discovering roots to her identity: Scott feels at home in these places and she gives a perspective of a part of the world that I haven't yet been too: English Alev Scott's odyssey began when she looked beyond Turkey's borders for contemporary traces of the Ottoman Empire: An acolyte of Erdogan in Christian-majority Serbia confirms the wide-reaching appeal of his authoritarian leadership: A Druze warlord explains the secretive religious faction in the heart of the Middle East, The palimpsest-like streets of Jerusalem's Old Town hint at the Ottoman co-existence of Muslims and Jews: And in Turkish Cyprus Alev Scott rediscovers a childhood home. Faced by questions of exile diaspora and collective memory Alev Scott searches for answers from the cafes of Beirut to the refugee camps of Lesbos: She uncovers in Erdogan's nouveau-Ottoman Turkey a version of the nostalgic utopias sold to disillusioned voters in Europe and the U. And yet - as she relates with compassion insight and humour - diversity is the enduring endangered heart of this fascinating region. It has a few minor issues. English Probably a 3.5. the concept is wonerful; the execution however is not.scott essentially listed a bunch of facts and dates in order. Two things held me back though. English Geography does not confer identity. It makes us homesick but it does not define us. A phenomenal book and a highly recommended read. It's a story of surprises. In every community history is present as a dynamic force.S. Ottoman Odyssey: Travels through a Lost Empire.