

Devereux, Robert, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963, 310 pp.

Since the American War of Independence and the French Revolution the world has been deluged by a torrent of written constitutions—a phenomenon that is still going on in our own era of decolonization. In the Balkans, the first such constitutions were the revolutionary Greek ones—five in number starting with the one of Epidaurus of 1822—then, after Greece attained its independence in 1830, the Constitution of 1844. Robert Devereux, in his *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, subtitled “A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament,” describes the genesis and brief life of the first written constitution of the Ottoman Empire—an effort to transform the Empire from a despotic autocracy into a constitutional monarchy, which lasted fourteen months (December 23, 1876 - February 14, 1878). This thorough study in the English language of the first Turkish experiment with constitutionalism examines the situation that led toward the decision to try out constitutional government, and surveys the problems of drafting the constitution and the reaction to its promulgation in the Empire and abroad. Also studied are the elections and the Chamber of Deputies that emerged from them, as is the Senate. The book concludes with an analysis of the reasons why this experiment failed and seeks to appraise the significance of this first constitution period in Ottoman history—the penultimate one, as matters turned out.

Filling a gap in Western historiography about the Ottoman Empire, this study corrects certain inaccuracies and distortions that have crept into works briefly mentioning this episode. Midhat's effort, though it ended in failure, had certain long range consequences, as the author points out. And it was not merely a subterfuge—as far as Midhat and likeminded Ottoman Turks were concerned—for dealing with a critical situation stemming from a conjunction of internal discontent, especially among the Empire's Balkan subjects, and of European pressures on the Osmanli estate, but also the manifestation of certain liberalizing trends among the Ottoman elite.

In this reviewer's opinion, the author might have mentioned, among the influences of this experiment, the fact that the Persian Constitution of 1907 was largely modeled on the Midhat Constitution of 1876. He might also have given information about the precise European model for the Midhat Constitution, which, like the French Charte after the restoration of the Bourbons, and the Greek Constitution of 1844 was based on the principle of the monarch's, not the people's sovereignty. This reviewer would also have liked more research about the reaction to this constitution's promulgation in neighboring Balkan countries such as Serbia or Greece—for the author has restricted himself to an account of the Great Power reaction to this event, though under the subtitle “Reaction in the Empire” he gives some interesting details about the attitude of the Rumanian principalities

of Moldavia and Wallachia, which technically were under the Sultan's suzerainty. Finally, a more penetrating analysis of the activities—and motivations behind them—of the non-Muslim members of the shortlived Chamber of Deputies elected under the Midhat Constitution, might have been in order. Lumping together all Christians in one group, for example, tends to obscure the differences existing between the Greek Orthodox, the American Gregorians, the Roman Catholics, and the Maronite Catholics who lived in various regions of the Ottoman Empire—differences which explain certain inter-Christian disagreements that arose in debates in the Chamber of Deputies, for example over the draft of the Provincial Administration Law's provision for a 50/50 representation of Muslims and non-Muslims on the communal administrative councils.

It should be added that, although the author has used for this interesting study the relevant archives of the Department of State, he was not able to study also the Foreign Office Archives for unpublished materials which are available to scholars. This is a pity. For research in the British archives would surely have shed more light on the role of Britain in this constitutional experiment which the Young Turks would revive in 1908.

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Alexis Kyrrou, *Oi Balkanikoí γείτονές μας [Our Balkan neighbours]*, Athens 1962, pp. 248.

Ambassador Alexis Kyrrou is not only one of the most brilliant Greek diplomats, but also the author of valuable historical works, which are a successful combination of deep historical knowledge and great political experience. The present extremely interesting book deals with developments in Albania, in Bulgaria and in Yugoslavia. That means that Turkey is not included which is justified by the limited Turkish interests in the Balkans.

Developments within foreign countries concern Greece only as far as they influence her foreign policy. Bulgaria may be considered as the nation with which Greece had to fight more often than with any other country except of Turkey. On the other hand the relations between Greece and Serbia and now with Yugoslavia have nearly never led to an open war. Of course this does not mean that relations between the two countries have always been cloudless. As a matter of fact Ambassador Alexis Kyrrou who was for nearly four years with the Greek legation in Belgrade, stresses these often strained relations comprehensively, objectively and friendly. They were very unfavourably affected for a time by Yugoslav claims for a "Macedonian minority" in Greece. Everybody knows that there is no Macedonian nationality, but only an area, called Macedonia, which following the Balkan wars has been divided among Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. In the statistics