

*Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East; The Nineteenth Century*, edited by William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers. (Publications of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Number 1, The University of Chicago). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968. Pp. X + 427.

This book is a symposium of twenty papers first read by American and foreign scholars at the Conference on the Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century which was convened by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Chicago in October 1965. In a lengthy introductory essay the editors discuss and illuminate the different papers but without any critical evaluations. This may be attributed to the relatively limited state of historical knowledge of the Middle East. To correct this situation, the Center has indicated that future meetings would be devoted to further exploration of specific themes covered in the present collection as well as to investigation of new subjects.

It will take too much space to list here all papers individually. It must suffice to note that they are grouped under six main headings (italicized below) covering among other things: the contributions of *notables and bureaucrats* (Part 1) to the process of modernization of the Ottoman Empire; the *ideological change* (Part 2) that influenced the Ottoman and the Iranian elites and leaders to promote political modernization of their countries; the *social movements* (Part 3), such as urbanization in Egypt and the changing position of women in that country following the French occupation under Napoleon Bonaparte, and the tragic 1860 upheaval in Damascus which resulted from opposition to reform and led to its imposition by the authorities determined to modernize the Empire; the *foreign intervention* (Part 4) in the economic life of Syria and of Egypt; the modernization of *education* (Part 5) in the Ottoman Empire and in Egypt; and some selected *problems in modernization* (Part 6), including the impact of modernization on Syrian politics; the consequences of asymmetrical economic development and transport in Egypt in the period 1800 - 1914, and the reaction in nineteenth century Sudan to economic and political modernization. As is usual with conference papers, also in this symposium some are of greater significance than others, in that they are based on original research (e. g., Allan Cunningham "Stratford Canning and the *Tanzimat*;" Richard L. Chambers, "Notes on the *Mekteb-i Osmani* in Paris 1857-1874;" Albert Hourani, "Ottoman

reform and the politics of notables”), or constitute a new synthesis of available materials (e.g., Roderic H. Davison, “The advent of the principles of representation in the government of the Ottoman Empire”). However, as I do not feel competent to discuss all the papers in the various fields, I will limit my comments to a few that are directly concerned with the Ottoman Empire.

Professor Stanford J. Shaw’s “Some aspects of the aims and achievements of the nineteenth century Ottoman reformers” is disturbing to me at least, because of its many historically unfounded assertions and arguments. Discussing the unsuccessful attempts to modernize the Empire in the pre-*Tanzimat* era, he ascribes the “conservative opposition” to reform to the “traditional limitations on the scope and depth of the Ottoman mind itself.” Educated in the “Ottoman Way,” even the most liberal of the ruling class were convinced of the inherent superiority of everything Ottoman and as a result they created “a stronger ‘iron curtain’ separating the Ottoman mind from the West than much of what we have known in recent times.” This charge of deliberate Ottoman isolation from outside contacts and influences is not supported by history, nor has the author attempted to document it. From Mehmed II, through Suleiman the Great and on, the Ottoman sultans — even those who were no longer equal in competence and stature to their predecessors — and the administrators of the vast Empire had been keenly interested in and concerned over political, military and other developments in Europe that might adversely affect the fortunes of their state. And a number of sultans in the post-Suleiman period had been reformers. No, it was not the “Ottoman mind” and “iron curtain” that were responsible for the later backwardness of the Empire vis-à-vis Europe, but its totally degenerated chief military institution — the Corps of the Janizaries which, in alliance with the Bektāshiyya order and supported by the powerful ultra orthodox ‘*Ulema*’, had opposed all military and other innovations and had thwarted the will of sultans and administrators through terror and murder. Attempts to reorganize the Ottoman armed forces did not begin with Selim III (1789-1807) but reached back to Osman II who was murdered in 1622 because he had planned to destroy the Janizaries in order to achieve that objective. And the abrogation of the *devşirme* ten years later (in 1632) manifested clearly the Ottoman conviction that the Corps was no longer the institution so admired by the Imperial ambassador Busbecq and others, and that a complete new army had to be created to halt the weakening and disintegration of the Empire. It is of histor-

ical significance that it was only *after* the Janizaries and the Bektāshiyya order had been destroyed by Mahmud II in 1826, now with support of the *ulema* who had come to be dominated by members of privileged families and favored the reforms proposed by the sultan, that modernization of the armed forces along European lines and the *Tanzimat* reforms could be carried out! (On the relation of the Janizaries to the rise and decline of the Ottoman Empire see my, "The Corps of the Janizaries," in *Military Affairs*, VIII [Fall 1944], 177-204).

Shaw's argument that a new Ottoman ruling class had to be created to administer the *Tanzimat* reforms is valid, but he does not give the reason for it. Also what he says about the qualifications which a person had to possess if he was to be a member of this new ruling class — to belong to the "Men of the *Tanzimat*" — is not so. Under the old Ottoman system, he asserts, a person "had to profess loyalty to the sultan and his state and devote his life to their service. He had to accept and practice the Muslim religion and the system of thought and action which was an integral part of it. And he had to know and practice the complicated system of customs, behavior, and language which was known as the 'Ottoman Way'. Now under the *Tanzimat*, a fourth essential qualification was added, one which largely excluded most of the older members of the ruling class. And this was that to be a ruler — an Ottoman — a man had to be educated in the new techniques of science or government and able in particular to read and understand at least one European language." But what Shaw fails to explain is that under the traditional Ottoman system the ruling class — the bureaucracy — had been recruited through the *devşirme* and through the admission of "renegades" into the Ottoman service. Its members were trained in the school and service of the Palace and not "in the schools attached to the mosques." The abolition of the *devşirme* was one of the major reforms of the Ottoman Empire. It heralded a change in the character of recruitment for the bureaucracy, which was facilitated by the advent of the Köprülü dynasty of grand vizirs (Albanian in origin) who began to draw Greeks and other *raya* as well as Turks into the Imperial service. Historically this coincided with the rising dangers to the Empire from without and the appearance on the scene of a group of Greek notables — the Fanariots, whose education and expertise could be utilized in the interest of the state. This aristocracy, comprised of businessmen, financiers, architects, physicians, writers and other professionals, many of whom were educated abroad and spoke foreign languages, soon assumed an important place in the Ottoman hierarchy by occupying

some of the highest positions in the bureaucracy, such as Chief Dragomans of the Fleet or Arsenal, as Chief Dragomans of the Sublime Porte, and as Hospodars of Valachia and of Moldavia, under the suzerainty of the sultan. They also served as advisers to grand vizirs, as peace negotiators, as ambassadors, and, what really was unique in the case of N. Mavroyéni, Hospodar of Valachia and of Moldavia, as commander-in-chief of all Ottoman armed forces in 1788. Earlier, Alexander Mavrocordato, Chief Dragoman of the Porte, who negotiated the treaty of Karlowitz (1699), had been rewarded by the sultan with the title of Privy Councilor (*Ex apporéton*), which gave him entry to the Council presided over by the sultan. And Fanariots had remained in the service of the Ottoman government long after the Greek independence (e. g., Karatheodori was the sultan's plenipotentiary at the Congress of Berlin. For a revealing study of this most interesting but little known subject see, P. A. Argyropoulos, "Les Grecs au service de l'Empire ottoman," in *Le Cinq-Centième Anniversaire de la Prise de Constantinople 1453-1953*, pp. 151-177. Athènes, 29 Mai 1953).

Shaw views the Ottoman Empire as a monolithic state. He completely overlooks the fact that it was a multinational empire, and that the *Tanzimat* reforms applied equally to Muslim Turks and all peoples in the various *millet*s. The reforms, beginning with the *Hatt-i Şerif* of Gülhane, of September 3, 1839, established equality of all subjects of the sultan before the law, and the entry into the armed forces and into the bureaucracy was open to all. (N. Vlachos, "La relation des Grecs asservis avec l'État Ottoman suzerain," in *Le Cinq-Centième...*, pp. 135-150). However, with the inauguration of Greek independence in 1821, the Fanariots, who had survived the massacre in Istanbul, moved into the service of the new Greek government, although, as already indicated, many stayed on in the Ottoman administration. This exodus had left a serious gap in the bureaucracy, and Turks who hitherto had played a minor role in it were encouraged to fill the vacuum through the modernized educational system (modeled on that of France. But it can justly be said that the qualifications which were now prescribed for those aspiring to membership in the new ruling class had in the earlier period been brought to the Ottoman service by the Fanariots!

An interesting episode in the education of the new ruling class was the establishment by the Ottoman government of a special school in Paris in 1857, with the cooperation of the French government. Known as *Mekteb-i Osmani* (Imperial Ottoman School), its initial purpose was to

train military officers, but later candidates for the civil bureaucracy were admitted. It was open to all subjects of the sultan. The story of this school, which lasted only about twenty years, is told by Professor Chambers, on the basis of original research, in his fine and lucidly written paper.

Professor Albert Hourani's admirable paper deals with the rise of notables (*ayan*) in the urban centers of the Ottoman provinces of Syria, Iraq and Egypt (in the period 1750-1860) and their attitude to modernization and reform. Although these *ayan* derived their wealth and prestige from the ownership of land, they exercised political power in the cities. They acted as "a focus for local forces and [were] able either to oppose the government or else oblige it to act through them." Opposed to reform because it threatened their interests, they gradually accommodated themselves to it voluntarily or through forced imposition of the reforms by the Ottoman authorities. In the last section of the paper, Hourani discusses the role aggrandized by the ambassadors and consuls of England, France and Russia as intermediaries between different *millet* people and the Ottoman government. But through their support of the *Tanzimat* reforms and modernization, those foreign representatives undermined the political power of the notables. The subject of the notables — so far little explored — engendered considerable discussion at the conference, and the Center has indicated that this topic will be considered in greater detail in a subsequent meeting.

However, I have been annoyed by the absence of any discussion of the rise of notables in the various *millets* and by the constant references to Greeks, Jews and Armenians as the monopolizers of the trade of the Ottoman Empire. As regards the first, there is some information on notables as intermediaries between the Greek community and the Porte during the period of Ottoman domination. One group of Fanariots had played this particular role — the Chief Dragomans of the Fleet. This high-ranking official was an adjunct to the Grand Admiral (*Kapudan Pasa*) who governed the maritime provinces of the sultan in the same way as in France the *Ministre de la Marine* had the colonies under his jurisdiction. The Chief Dragoman was in fact directly in charge of the isles under the jurisdiction of *eparchs* and of certain points on the continent, which permitted him to exercise surveillance and acquire local influence and control. He collected the tithes for the account of the sultan. He decided appeals from decisions of local tribunals, as the Greeks "preferred to carry their appeals to a compatriot" rather than to the Grand Admiral. The

Chief Dragoman submitted the petitions of the islanders to the Porte. The Dragomans of the Fleet, says Argyropoulos, "exercèrent une activité utile aux populations...Certains furent des hommes d'une profonde érudition et d'une parfaite honnêteté. Mais Mavroyéni (the later Hospodar) nous donne une image vivante de ce que furent ces Drogmans, de la variété de leurs interventions, de leur influence, des services qu'ils rendirent à la Nation..." This subject of *millet* notables deserves the attention of students of the Ottoman Empire.

Regarding the economic activities of Greeks, Jews and Armenians, it would appear that though they probably played an important role in the foreign trade of the Empire this was not their role or even the most important economic activity during the many centuries of Ottoman rule. To correct the erroneous impression which the reader gets from such writings, I refer him to a comprehensive study of the economic development and activities of the Greek orthodox *millet*, for example, during the long period of its subjugation: Mme. A. Hadjimichali's "Aspects de l'organisation économique des Grecs dans l'Empire ottoman" (in *Le Cinq-Centième...*, pp. 261-275). Based on an extensive literature, it traces the centuries-long activities of the various Greek corporations and workers associations which had originated in the Byzantine Empire and continued — with official approval — to flourish during the Ottoman rule. It may serve as a starting point for the much needed research on the economic life of the *millets* during the existence of the ancient Ottoman Empire.

Despite the foregoing comments, this symposium is a rich and valuable contribution to the meager literature and to the study of the Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century.

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ARTHUR LEON HORNIKER

Bogdan C. Novak, *Trieste, 1941-1954: The Ethnic, Political, and Ideological Struggle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970. xx+526 pp., Bibliography, Index.

Those who labor in the social sciences have long learned that more study and closer consideration of a given topic will not necessarily provide a final answer. While most people assume every problem has a solution buried somewhere among the facts of its creation, the researcher