ATTITUDES TOWARD THE OTTOMANS IN EGYPTIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY DURING THE OTTOMAN RULE

PROF. DR. MICHAEL WINTER
YITAVIV UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN HISTORY / ISRAEL

After the overthrow of the Mamluk Empire by the Ottomans in late 1516 and early 1517, Egypt ceased to be the center of a great empire as it had been for centuries, and was incorporated into the Ottoman state as a tax-paying province for the next three centuries. The change from Mamluk rule should have been relatively smooth, since like the Ottoman Empire, Egypt was a Sunni country, and had been accustomed to be ruled by Turkish-speaking men, who had been abroad. Yet the differences in traditions, neutrality and temperament between the Egyptians and their new masters were too wide to overlook. Egypt has always had a strong distinct personality, and could not be easily absorbed in the conquerors' culture. Egyptians have always had a strong sense of identity and patriotism, which deepened the gaps between the people and outsiders. It is true that the Mamluks were also foreigners, but their regime had become thoroughly familiar, and they were a localized ruling class, unlike the Ottomans, who administered the province from Istanbul. For example, although the Mamluks themselves were Turkish, the language of the administration under their rule was Arabic. Under the new regime, the Mamluks were not replaced by other groups. While the language of administration continued to be Arabic, the Mamluks' role as local administrators was replaced by the Ottomans, who took over the responsibilities of local governance. However, the foreign presence in Egypt was much more massive than it had been before.

Research work on the subject of the history of Ottoman Egypt has been progressing in recent years, and there is a better appreciation of the richness of Egyptian historiography during that period, mostly in Arabic, but also in Turkish and Hebrew.

It is important to study Egyptian attitudes toward their Ottoman rulers, yet one must not generalize. The power of the Ottoman Empire was at its peak during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), and afterwards there were signs of decline, although not uninterrupted and certainly not a collapse. Yet clearly Istanbul's control of its provinces weakened, and inevitably, the way the Empire was perceived by the Egyptians changed drastically. Naturally, those Egyptians who wrote history came from very different backgrounds and had different education social connections, views, and interests, all of which are reflected in their historical writings. I have chosen a representative sample of chroniclers.

As could be expected, Egyptian writers had paid attention to its mighty neighbor in the north, but for a long time there was no friction between the Mamluks and the Ottomans, and references to the Ottomans in the works of al-Qalqashandi, Ibn Taghiburi, Ibn Iyus and others are fragmentary. During the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (1451-1481), the conqueror of Constantinople, the tension rose, as the Ottomans were consolidating their dominance over Anatolia, thus becoming the Mamluks' immediate neighbors. The issue of buffer zones in Anatolia caused later a series of battles between the two empires (1485-91).

Although this war ended well for the Mamluks, their fears of their stronger neighbor were not allayed.

This war was fought between Sultan Bayezid II and Qaiqubay, both cautious rulers and basically men of peace. The sources on both sides show that both won the respect of the other side. Bayezid's ready and generous assistance to the Mamluk state, when it faced the Portuguese challenge, was appreciated in Cairo. Upon his death, Bayezid was eulogized by Ibn Iyus, the most important chronicler of the time, as "al-`adil, the just, and al-mujahid, warrior for the faith." Selim, Bayezid's son and successor, invaded terror. Ibn Iyus was convinced that throughout the negotiations that preceded the decisive war between Qansuh al-Gawri, the Mamluk Sultan, and Selim, the Ottoman Sultan was acting in bad faith, his sole purpose being to put the Mamluks off guard by deception and trickery. Indeed, when Selim decided to go to war, al-Gawri's envoy was badly misrepresented and was even threatened with death.

It is not the place to relate the development leading to the final clash and the end of the Mamluk state. First Syria, and within a few months Egypt, were annexed by Selim. What concerns us here is the unhinging of the Ottoman regime in Egypt. This is superbly narrated by Muhammad Ibn Iyus in the fifth volume of his chronicle Badr. Al-`usur fi wujud al-dawla. He tells in detail and accurately the whole story—the political, diplomatic and military events leading to the occupation, and then the first years of Ottoman rule. This is a most valuable work, and has few equivalents in Middle Eastern history or elsewhere in describing day by day how a new regime steps in the shoes of the old one. Ibn Iyus's contemporary, the Damascene `alim Ibn Tulun, also wrote an eyewitness's report of the Ottoman occupation of Damascus. It is an important and honest report, but not as well written and dramatic as that of Ibn Iyus. The nearest parallel that comes to mind is al-Jabarti's description of the French occupation 300 years later. Ibn Iyus does not only report the decisions and moves undertaken by the Ottomans in Egypt (primarily in Cairo), but his writing reflects the people's attitudes and feelings toward their new masters.

Ibn Iyus's hostility toward the Ottomans is obvious from almost every page of his chronicle. Once he admits that they were known for their justice in their own land! Yet his verdict of their regime and behavior in Cairo is negative in the extreme. Of course, no one is free from bias, and Ibn Iyus identified with the fallen Mamluks. He was one of the `usuli al-tas, "the sons of the (important) people," namely the Mamluks. While they were not allowed to serve in the army except for the lowest ranks, the `usuli al-tas enjoyed pensions and certain privileges, and naturally identified with the interests of their families. As a chronicler, Ibn Iyus did not hesitate to criticize the Mamluks and their government harshly when they were in power, but still he believed their regime to be far better than that which replaced it. His opinions of the Ottomans cannot be described here in detail, but these can be summarized as follows:

The Ottomans are depicted as bad Muslims generally, and in comparison with the Mamluks in particular. This indeed says it all. Of all them-Sultan Selim himself, his officers, his qadis, and the soldiers, prove themselves to be had Mamluks by their personal behavior and by the manner in which they treated the civilian population of Egypt. They are barbarians, who are not capable of appreciating the treasures and civilization that fell into their hands. The army is a rabble, and one cannot tell an officer from a simple soldier. The Ottomans neglected the festivities and generosity which the people of Cairo were accustomed to under the Mamluks on occasions such as mawlid al-nabi, the Prophet's birthday. The Egyptians missed the colorful parades of the Mamluk army with the equestrian exercises. It did not occur to Ibn Iyus that the Mamluks' pomp was a symptom of degeneration, as against the battle-tested Ottoman troops.

Sultan Selim is described as a bloodthirsty tyrant, a drunkard and a pervert. He does not dispense justice and does not keep his word. He put Mamluks to death, often despite promises of safe-conduct. He lacks the "etiquette of kings" (nisaa al-muluk). The majority of the Ottoman soldiers do not fast du-
ring the month of Ramazan and do not pray. They molest women and young boys. The Ottomans qadis are ignorant. Ibn Ilyas calls a chief judge "more ignorant than an ass, he understands nothing about the religious law." Generally, the writer complains that the standing of the shari'a has never been so low. The Ottomans do not apply the shari'a, and their administrative law, the qanun and yasaq, is of extra-Islamic origin. The Egyptians were also shackled by the sultan, the forced banishment to Istanbul of local notables and artisans.

After Selim’s departure and death (in 1520), and the advent of his son Suleiman to the throne, the harshness of the regime seems to have lessened, and even Ibn Ilyas softened somewhat his criticism. He remarks: "It is said that Sultan Suleyman is a wise man."

The problem with the chronicle is that it is almost isolated. There are no other contemporary Egyptian chronicles against whom Ibn Ilyas’s work could be studied. Even worse, he has no continuator. Our chronicle was one of the best, but also the last, representative of the great Mahmud historiography. This tradition stops abruptly and completely after the occupation and it will take a full century before Egyptian historiography will resume, and even then it will do so on a smaller scale and lower level.

It is worth discussing briefly the terminology used in the Arabic historical sources to designate the Ottoman Empire and the land of Egypt. In pre-modern political thinking there was no place for the abstract idea of a state. As is well known, the term dawla designates a dynasty, a concrete line of rulers. I would like to add that in context it also means rule or government, which is, of course, abstract, but without its institutional connotation implied by ‘state’. Ibn Ilyas calls the Ottoman ruler Ibn Uthman, his subjects are "Abūlamina", "Farahān" (Turcomans), while the Mamluks are called by Ibn Ilyas and other Arab historians of the period "Arab", because they spoke Turkish, although in that period they were predominantly Circassians. Later, the Ottoman state is called in Egyptian chronicles al-dawla al-Uthmanīyya, usually in laudatory contexts, or just al-dawla, the (central) government. Often the term used is al-Diyar al-Rumayyiyya, "the land of the Turks". In other contexts, especially when reporting wars between the Ottomans Empire and Christian or Persian (Shī'a) enemies, the state is predictably identical with the whole Islam: "The Persians (Aljum) attacked the territories of Isfahan", or "Islam was victorious against the infidels".

When history-writing after Ibn Ilyas resumes, the image of the Ottomans improves beyond recognition. As has been pointed out, Ibn Ilyas was personally close to the Mamluks, and there was understandably the initial shock of the military occupation. The Egyptians (and the Syrians before them) had never seen an army of the size of the Ottomans, and the experience of the occupation must have been traumatic. In later decades, the Ottomans had to accept reality. This was not too difficult, since the Ottomans adjusted their policies to the conditions in Egypt and the Empire, or at least its ruling dynasty, was conceived as impeccably Islamic. It is certain that by annexing the holy cities in the Hejaz and Palestine and coming in close contact with the venerable centers of Islamic learning and worship in Cairo and Damascus, the Empire itself was becoming more orthodox. Also, the Ottoman regime under Suleyman was at its best. The great sultan is called "majiddd al-din fil-qudra al-tahir", "the renewer of the religion of Islam in the tenth hijri century". 12 "Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha’tani, the important mystic, who was also a historian of Sufism and a major social commentator, calls Suleyman al-qubb al-tahir, "the visible Axis", a most significant Sufi term.13

It is important to note that many of those who were hostile in the past were men of religion, ulama and Safis, and these had little reason to complain of the Ottoman autocrats, who supported them generously.

Perhaps the most influential Arabic-writing historian in the sixteenth century was Qubil al-Din al-Nahhasī (d.1582). He was of Indian origin and lived in Mecca, yet he was familiar with the developments in Egypt, the Hijaz, and to a certain extent even in Istanbul. He wrote a detailed account of the Ottomans’ exploits in the Yemen, and also a lengthy history of the Ottomans up to his time, which comprises a great part of his book about the history of Mecca. His works provided information for Egyptian historians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even later. No doubt, his admiration for the Empire had a strong impact on other writers. Mar’s ibn Yusuf al-Karmi al-Hanbali, a Palestinian ulim, who lived in Egypt, and wrote a history of that country, as well as a panegyric of the Ottoman dynasty, clearly borrowed from al-Nahasī’s history of the Ottomans.

It is worth looking briefly at Mar’s praises of the Ottoman dynasty, since these recur in chronicles of the same period (the first half of the seventeenth century). The Ottomans are lauded as the most religious dynasty in the annals of Islam. They earned this by their strict adherence to the rule of the shari’a, and by treating their subjects with justice, defending and expanding the lands of Islam, respecting and supporting men of religion by establishing waqaf, taking great care of the ka‘bah, courtesies, and sending food and financial support to the residents of Mecca and Medina, building mosques, and generally acting as ideal Muslim rulers. One knows that Mar’s ibn Yusuf does not atone to the Ottomans, nor were they claiming it at the time, was the title of caliph. The writer says that the Ottomans were ruling over wider territories than any other Islamic state in history. Then he adds, as in an afterthought, that the Umayyads and the ‘Abbasids had vast empires, but they were caliphs (unlike the Ottomans, who are not).

Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mu’ti‘ al-Ishāqi, another chronicler from the same period, writes in a similar vein.14 He tells about the corruption that had been spreading in the Mamluk state toward the end of the century. God answered the prayers of the oppressed and sent them the Ottomans as liberators. Then he speaks about the merits of the Ottomans. Constantinople is now the source of pride and excellence. It has the most accomplished people in every trade. Its alima are the greatest in Islam (sic). He goes on giving detailed information concerning the quarters, houses, mosques, etc., in the Ottoman capital. Says al-Ishāqi: “We have looked in the history of past states and kings and have not found another state that has the perfect order of the Ottomans, and none was more careful in keeping the Holy Law and more respectful of alima and in providing for the poor and the residents of the two Noble Sanctuaries (al-masayyam al-sharafiyun). We ask God to preserve the Ottoman dynasty to the end of time.”

Sultan Selim is described as a man of lustful character; this was too240 tooA good Muslim, who listened to his religious guides, and a cultured man, who wrote poetry in Turkish; Persian, and Arabic. (Supposedly, he left an Arabic verse which he wrote with his own hand on a wall in the palace where the Nileskier, mīyās, was located.) After winning Syria on the battlefield of Marj Dabiq, Selim visited a few places in Syria and Palestine, and wherever he arrived, he was kind to the people. He did not abolish the waqaf of the Mamluks, his defeated enemies, ignoring the advice of his vizier to do so.16

That Suleyman is highly praised is hardly surprising, but even his successors, Selim II, Mehemed III, Mehemed IV and Ahmed I, who by all accounts were much weaker sultans, were presented as great rulers, who fought for Islam, supported religious causes, notably the Holy Cities and the pilgrimage.17

The historiography of the period divides the coverage of events into what has been called by scholars “the Sultan-Pasha” type of chronicle. After introducing the information about the sultan, there comes an account of the governors of Egypt whom he appointed. Owing to the strategic and economical importance of Egypt, the pashas who were sent to administer the country were mostly high-ranking and able rulers and military commanders. The chroniclers characterize each governor according to personality, (popular or unpopular, just, efficient in handling crime, and the like), and religious profile (the pashas were Pasha or afaq). The majority of the pashas in the sixteenth century apparently satisfied the
The writer emphasizes the strong orthodoxy of the Ottomans. For example, he describes Hadji Bektar, the founder and eponym of the notoriously heterodox dervish order of the Bektašis as absolutely pious, despite the fact that inf dels attributed themselves to him later. Ibn Abîl-Surur also praises those tayyibs around Sultan Mehmed II who put to death, with the Sultan’s apparent approval, a Hanafî mystic, who was a pro-Shi‘i heretic.53

The writer tells the story, which he read probably in al-Nahrawání’s book, about the fall of the Mamlikus. A Mamlikus soldier chased and then beat a merchant in the marketplace. A saniyya man (sali), who witnessed the scene, cursed the whole Mamlikus regime. Then he had a dream that angels were sweeping the Mamlikus with brooms into the Nile. He woke up to the sound of the Mamlikus army getting ready to march to northern Syria, where it would be wiped out by the Ottomans.54

Al-Bakrî’s Sultan Selim is, like Iskand’s, an ideal ruler. The author mentions that after the conquest, Selim reappointed the four chief qâdis, each representing one of the orthodox madhâbih.55 Al-Bakrî should have known that the Sultan’s measure, even if it took place in reality, was only temporary. Throughout the Ottoman period there was only one chief qâdi in Egypt (as well as in other provinces), and he was invariably Hanafî and Turkish-speaking, and was sent from Istanbul. Sîleymân is specially praised for designating the zimmis jâwâlî for the benefit of poor ulama and pious residents (mujâhidin) of the Haramayn. This arrangement was almost nonexistent under the Mamlikus, says al-Bakrî.56 Sultan Ahmed is portrayed almost as a saint. It is mentioned that he was ready to sacrifice everything he owned rather than make peace with the Persians. It is told on the authority of diarists who had been present at that sultan’s deathbed that he saw Abu Bakr and other Rasûlîn caliphs before he died.57

Again, Sîleymân’s successors are getting the credit for the conquests which the Empire won during their reign, such as Cyprus, Yemen, Tunis, etc. Of course, the fact that after Sîleymân the sultans no longer led their armies personally is passed over in silence.

Among the paths which governed Egypt, al-Bakrî has the highest esteem for Mehmed Pasha (1607-11), whose resolve suppression of the unruly soldiers won him the epithet Qul Qurban, “the breaker of the (rebellious) soldiers”. He punished the soldiers, who had killed a governor, and abolished the illegal tâlla tax, which they levied from the fellahin. After restoring the sultan’s authority, he reorganized the army and reformed the tax system to be more equitable. Al-Bakrî wrote a lengthy and valuable account of these events.58

Of special interest is the Hebraic historiography of Egypt in that period. There are very few works on Jews in that period were not written by the Jews—two works stand out. One is a chronicle by Rabbi Eliahu Capali, who lived in Candia in the 16th century, and therefore does not belong, properly speaking, to Egyptian historiography.59 Yet the information for chapters concerning developments in Egypt must have been given to him by a source or sources on the spot, and reflect direct and genuine reactions of Egyptian Jewry. Capali regarded the Ottoman victories against the Mamlikus, and also the Venetians, as heaven-sent; the Ottoman occupation of Palestine and Egypt had messianic overtones in Jewish perception. The Circassians are expressly called “enemies to the Jews” and the Ottomans are described as “gracious, or charitable, kings” (malîkh be’dôl). Naturally, the Ottomans, Sultan Bayezid II in particular, are praised for granting asylum to those Jews who had been exiled from the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily: What Capali, and many other writers, as well as modern historians, tend to overlook, is that Qâlibay, the Mamlikus sultan, gave the refugees the same kind of asylum in his dominion. This brought an influx of Sephardi Jews into Egypt who greatly invigorated that community.

The suppression of the rebellion of Ahmed Pasha, “the Traitor” (al-Kha‘în), which was put down during the festival of Purim, was celebrated by the Jews as the Egyptian Purim, in which the community was again delivered from the persecution of a vicious vizier by a friendly king, this time, young Sultan Süleyman. The loyalty of the Jews to the Ottoman state is also discernible in the Rabbinical responsa of the period.60

Writing approximately one century and a half after Capali, Rabbi Yosef Sambah, an Egyptian historian, wrote the story of Islam up to 1672.61 Sambah surveys quickly the various Islamic dynasties, but his historical coverage is detailed only in the chapters discussing the Ottoman Empire, especially since the Ottoman conquest of Egypt. It is clear that the author had access to the main Arabi sources, and that he also consulted Capali’s chronicle. He also repeats many of the latter’s laudatory expressions for the Ottomans. Yet, as Shimon Shohet, the editor of the text, rightly points out, after a century and a half of Ottoman rule in Egypt and the decline that had set in in that country and affected also the Jewish community, gone were the messianic hopes, and several incidents of persecution and harassment of Jews are reported. Of course, it is realized that the Ottoman government was the ultimate protector against persecution and bigotry, but the enthusiasm is no longer there.62

So far we have discussed historic works written by religious scholars. There were historical writings by men who were in the service of the army as scribes and bureaucrats. These date from the 17th and 18th centuries. Of course, the political setting had profoundly changed by then. The Empire was past its peak, and its ability to control the province closely all but dissipated. The pathas, who were to powerful in the 16th century, had to share their power with the bey and other army officers in the next century. The patha was still a strong figure (if he had the right personality), and he could tip the balance in the struggles between political factions, by making an appointment, or putting to death a military grandee, with or without Istanbul’s permission. In the 18th century, however, the patha was usually a mere figurehead, representing the authority of Istanbul.

Two Turkish manuscripts dating from the mid-17th century reveal the political approach. The writers no longer identify with the Empire or
with Egypt. Their true interests lie with the army that is stationed in Egypt that has an identity and interests of its own that are not always compatible with those of the imperial army. One writer is ‘Ali Elaefi, an obscure scribe in one of the Egyptian regiments, and the other a short chronology. Both works do not enrich us with information unknown from other sources, but the writers’ political and historical views are interesting. They express the ethos and interests of the Egyptian troops (Mussil-quallari) as opposed to the Qapo-quallari, the military slaves of the Sultan. It must be emphasized again that both groups are loyal to the sultan and both are Turcophone. The differences are in interests, lifestyle, and mentality: For example, the so-called ‘Egyptians’ considered themselves better Muslims.

Of far greater importance as an historical source is the chronicle of a military officer, al-Dimashqi Ahmad al-Dam hardwood Kerbland ‘Azeban, the author of al-Durra al-maksama fi albab al-khulafa on the political events in Egypt and the power struggles among the various military units and their officers. The Ottomans in Egypt is called al-dawla, the (central) government, its al-dawla al-Rumayyaa, which is perhaps not a disrespectful expression, but it does underline the distance between the writer’s world and the remote center of power. It is no coincidence that earlier advocates of the Ottomans, like al-Baki al-Suleymani or al-Razavi, did not use this name. The regime in Egypt is called by Damhardili as the Mamluk state, al-dawla al-Mamluk, as it appears in the book’s title: fi alaba ma waa qa’a bi-imir fi al-dawla al-Mamluk. The Egyptian soldiers are referred to as abl Mir, the people of Egypt.

One can say that Ahmad Shalah al-Din, the important chronicler in the first half of the 18th century, who had the background of an alien, and not a military man, identifies more clearly with Egyptian society in a broader sense. He reconsiders, of course, the role of the sultan as the leading force of Islam. This is clear not only in expressing joy about the victory of ‘Islam’, but perhaps, more significantly, in the total lack of objection to obey the periodic orders from Istanbul to send a few thousand soldiers to the Empire’s wars. Yet, the text reveals at times the tension between Cairo and Istanbul, the weakening of Ottoman power with regards to Egypt, and clearer signs of friction between Arabic-speaking people and Turks. For example: When the spokesmen for the Egyptians protested against certain taxes proposed by the famous financial advisor, Yaqub al-Yahudi; they declared they would not accept such an act of injustice, the way it is applied in Syria (al-Mamluk). “That is not going to happen in our Egypt” (wa-aqaba la tamaanatu bi-Misr). A certain sergeant Ottoman chief qad, declared upon his arrival to Cairo that he would renew (rjada-al) the Egyptian religion. Later, when he got into some kind of trouble, the Egyptians said to him in his absence: “Oh, Sayfqi al-Islam, were you the one who came to Egypt to renew the people’s religion for them?”

By the 18th century, it became routine that the bey would dismiss the pasha, force him to descend from his residence in the Citadel, appoint one of them as the acting governor, and ask the sultan for a new pasha. This awkward situation was known in Istanbul, of course. Ahmad Shalahi quotes an edict sent from the sultan to the Egyptian military grandees. The sultan accuses them (rightly) of getting into the habit of dismissing his vassals (namely, their governors), thereby showing lack of respect toward himself, as ‘if you were kings and sultans and we the poor subjects. This time we have forgiven you, but beware not to repeat this behavior. If you do it again, you will have only yourselves to blame”.

The chronicler, who publishes this pivotal text, must have been aware of the depth to which the sultan’s authority had sunk. No wonder that a newly-appointed pasha told the bey: “Don’t worry about a thing and don’t fear. God willing, everything will be in order, since you are the sultan’s trustees in his land and I am only your guest. You are the only one responsible for the sultan’s land.”

Finally, there is al-Jabarti’s monumental work written during the transition of Egypt from an Ottoman province into a semi-independent country, although al-Jabarti could not have known it yet. In al-Jabarti’s chronicles there are clear expressions of deep dissatisfaction with the Ottoman state as it was in his time; but also the awareness that there was no alternative to lend the realm of Islam, as the French occupation made abundantly clear. Yet he was sharply critical of the behavior of the Ottoman troops, whom he considered as bad Muslims, like Ibn Jyn, 300 years earlier. He regarded Mheimel ‘Ali’s troops as Ottoman, and disliked them accordingly. Reporting the massacre of the Mamluks by the pasha’s troops, al-Jabarti’s sympathy is entirely with the farmers. He also prescribes the Wahhabis to the Empire’s forces, believing that they were better Muslims. As is well known, after the French withdrawal from Egypt and the return of the Ottomans, al-Jabarti wrote his hadith at-tairaqis, in which he flatters them. For a religious Muslim like him, everything seemed better compared to the French infidels.

Let us move another century forward and speak briefly about another Egyptian history of the Ottoman Empire, written, of course, under entirely different circumstances. The author is Muhammad Farid, the leader of the Egyptian Nationalist party, al-Hash al-Walid. The book appeared in two editions, in 1909 and 1912 and bears the title Tarath al-dawla al-Alya’yya al-Usham. The ideology of the Nationalist movement was among other things pro-Ottoman and Islamic. Egypt was under British occupation since 1882, and was formally a part of the Ottoman Empire. In the words of the author, the Empire was a source of pride for every Egyptian. Eternity was also a dominant ideology these days), for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It defended the faith of Islam against the ambitions of the European powers. All its subjects, regardless of religion or race enjoyed equality and peace, more than the subjects of the so-called civilized states.

Farid criticizes the early Ottomans for their practice of princely fricentric. Instead of killing the princes, the Ottomans should have followed the example of the European royal houses, where the princes were assigned military commands. Instead, the Ottomans relied on their defense on European or Circassian converts to Islam, who had never been loyal, and continued to serve the interests of their native countries.

Discussing Ottoman rule in Egypt, Farid continues the same line of thought. The Ottomans’ big mistake was allowing the purchase and the importation of Mamluks into Egypt. This brought about a system of injustice and exploitation, and forced many Egyptians to emigrate, which in turn caused the decline of agriculture. It is not surprising, therefore, that Farid hardly praises Mheimel ‘Ali for exterminating the Mamluks, as described as the source of all evil.

In the first edition, in 1909, the author calls Sultan Abdulhamid II by all his lofty titles—gazi, caliph, etc. When the book mentions the killing of Osman II by his soldiers, in 1622, Farid does not mince words to denounce this terrible, unpunishable crime. It stands to reason that what was on his mind was not merely the historic precedent but Sultan Abdulhamid’s paranoia of political assassination. The second edition, however, was published in 1912, after the fall of Abdulhamid. Now Farid calls him a tyrant and bestows all the possible honorary titles on his successor, “the constitutional caliph, the just, Amir al-walidin, Mehmed Reshad V, who has restored Islam to the days of ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-Aziz; the just the just caliph.”

As is known, Muhammad Farid’s life was tragic and he died in exile, bitter and disappointed. He supported the Ottoman war effort, and hoped that the Empire would liberate Egypt from the British. Yet, when he arrived in Istanbul as a refugee, he overestimated his own importance and his ability to persuade the Turkish government to make another effort for Egypt. In his memoirs he expressed his bitterness at the Turks, and his suspicions about their motives and plans for Egypt. Thus ended Farid’s unfortunate love affair with the Ottomans.

There was a tendency in modern Arab, and also Egyptian historiography to attribute the decline of the world of Islam in the late Middle Ages (approx-
mately the second half of the 11th century) to the Turks. Since the Ottoman Empire absorbed the Arab Middle East in the 16th century, it has often been accused as being responsible for the region's troubles. In recent years, with the progress of the study of the Ottoman Empire everywhere, including the Arab world, the former attitudes have been greatly corrected and nuanced.¹⁵


The Great
Ottoman - Turkish
Civilisation
The Great
Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation
3
PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND INSTITUTIONS

Editor-in-chief
PROF. KEMAL ÇİÇEK

Co-editors
PROF. ERCÜMENT KURAN
PROF. NEJAT GÖYÜNÇ
PROF. İLBER ORTAYLI

Executive editor
GÜLER EREN

YENİ TÜRKİYE
PREFACE

The incredible fact that the Ottoman frontier beylik became an Empire over such a short period of time has attracted many Western researchers and scholars to delve into the history of the Ottoman State. It could be argued that there are miscellaneous determinants and dimensions that actually created the possibility for such an incredible feat to be accomplished. This volume has been edited with the aim of focussing on the main factors that gave rise to such a great civilisation. In the first place, the institutional character of the Ottoman State is of utmost importance. In order to understand the basis of Ottoman civilisation, the different patterns of its institutions should be studied, as the comprehensive analysis of the institutional structure of the Ottoman Empire might enable us to conceive how a small beylik was able to turn into one of the greatest Empires in the world. In this volume, the administrative, judiciary and military institutions of the Empire are set out as the main subject titles. In addition, there are various subjects which have been analysed, under such subtopics as bureaucracy, religion and law, shedding light on the main characteristics of Ottoman institutions.

In appreciation of the highly developed institutional structure of the Ottoman Empire, the ideational and philosophical sources cannot be underrated. Unless these sources are taken into consideration, it is impossible to grasp the various dynamics of Ottoman institutions. Therefore, this volume is entitled “Philosophy, Science and Institutions”, due to the close correlation and importance of these subjects to one another.

Contrary to conventional Euro-centric and Orientalist assumptions, which hold “science” as the peculiar praxis of the Renaissance and Enlightenment in
the West, in this volume it is generally argued that the Ottomans had a number of successes in scientific activities (ilm ü fen). The Ottoman State not only promoted the development of science within the borders of the Empire, but also facilitated several interactions with scientific activities outside of its territories. During this interaction, it both benefited from and contributed to the scientific improvements made in Europe.

Additionally, this volume dedicates an important place to the development of philosophy and thought in the Ottoman Empire; although in the Ottoman Empire such major philosophical "eschats" as developed in Europe were not formed, rather the Ottomans focused mainly on Islamic philosophy. Yet this situation does not arise from the fact that the Ottomans lagged behind in speculative matters. On the contrary, they were not interested in philosophical issues that were outside the realm of Islamic tradition. From their point of view, Islam encompassed all ontological and epistemological matters, making any other philosophical concern dysfunctional.

Yeni Türkiye

CONTENTS

---

volume 3

PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND INSTITUTIONS

PART I: PHILOSOPHY

Ottoman Thought Of World Domination

ottoman thought in the classical age


early reforms

AN UNKNOWN ENLIGHTENMENT MOVEMENT IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE / ASSOC. PROF. DR. KAZIM SARIKAYA / 77 ■ MÜTEFİKARAS PRINTING PRESS: SOME OBSERVATIONS / DR. HİDAYET DUHĞU / 83 ■ SULTAN MAHMUD II AND THE FİZ REVOLUTION / MEHMET LALE / 91

tanzimat: breaking with the tradition


from absolutist monarchy to meşrutiyet

THE COMMITTEE OF THE NEW OTTOMANS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE DEBATE ON THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM IN TURKEY / ASSOC. PROF. DR. AZMİ ÜZAN / 143 ■ "INTERNATIONALS" WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OTTOMAN CONSTITUTIONALISM / PROF. DR. RÜZİNT TANGIR / 155 ■ OTTOMAN MODERNIZATION AND TUNUSLU HAYRİDIN PASHA / DR. MEHMET AKIF KİREİÇİ / 162 ■ SOME NOTES ON THE ROOTS OF TURKISH CONSTITUTIONALISM / DR. ZÜHTÜ ARLAN / 166
From “Osmanli” To National Identity
emergence of pan-islamism, pan-turkism and
turkish nationalism

THE OTTOMANS AND THE CALIPHATE / ASSOC. PROF. DR. AZMI ÖZCAN / 181 ■ CULTURAL AND POLITICAL
PAN-TURKISM / PROF. DR. JAKOB LANDAU / 192 ■ THE EMERGENCE OF TURKISH NATIONALISM
UNDER THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE / ASTE PROF. DR. YUSUF SARIMAY / 196 ■ ILLEGAL YOUNG TURKS
PUBLICIST WRITINGS (LATE 19TH-EARLY 20TH CENTURIES) / PROF. DR. YURI A. PETSYAN / 207

Ottoman Legacy and The Turkish Republic
ottoman legacy

THE OTTOMAN ROOTS OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC / PROF. DR. BERNARD LEWIS / 221 ■ MODERN TURKEY
AND THE OTTOMAN LEGACY / PROF. DR. EMEL ELEBDENİ sucklu / 229 ■ THE BALKANS AND THE
OTTOMAN INHERITANCE / PROF. DR. İLBER İRTAÇI / 241 ■ OTTOMAN LEGACY IN TURKEY /
PROF. DR. ERCÜMENT KURTAR / 246 ■ THE MOST IMPORTANT OTTOMAN INHERITANCE: TURKISH SOCIETY /
PROF. DR. BABAŞOĞLU YEDİOLSUC / 256 ■ THE ANATOMY OF AN ECONOMIC HERITAGE FROM
THE OTTOMAN STATE TO THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY / PROF. DR. AHMET GÜNLER SAYAR / 257 ■ ISLAM, THE
TROUBLESOME HERITAGE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (A TRIAL OF A PROBLEMATIC APPROACH) /
PROF. DR. AHMET YAŞAR ÇAKAR / 259 ■ THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THE OTTOMANS IN THE PERIOD OF
RECESSION AND COLLAPSE / DR. NEDİM BILGIN / 271

present historiography on the ottoman state

THE PLACE OF THE OTTOMANS IN WORLD HISTORY: METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS AND A REINTERPRETA-
TION OF OTTOMAN HISTORY / PROF. DR. AHMET DAVUTOĞLU / 281 ■ ATTITUDES TOWARD THE
OTTOMANS IN EGYPTIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY DURING THE OTTOMAN RULE / PROF. DR. MICHAEL WINTER /
284 ■ THE OTTOMAN HERITAGE AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE BALKAN HISTORIOGRAPHIES (FORMA-
TION OF MUSLIM BALKAN COMMUNITIES) / ASSOC. PROF. DR. ANTONINA ZHELYAZKOVA / 286

PART II: SCIENCE

An Overview of Ottoman History of Science

AN OVERVIEW OF OTTOMAN SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES / PROF. DR. EMEL ELEBDENİ sucklu / 309 ■ THE
EVOLUTION OF THE GOCULTURAL SPACE OF OTTOMAN SCIENCE (ITS EXTENSION, DIFFERENTIATION, AND
THE MAGNIFICENT / PROF. DR. HÜSEYİN GAZİ YENİCAVI / 342 ■ ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP BETWEEN IMPE-
RIAL CENTER AND PROVINCES IN THE 18TH CENTURY: THE CASE OF MURADA AL-ZABİDI (D. 1205/1791) AND
HIS OTTOMAN CONTACTS / PROF. DR. STEFAN REICHMUTH / 357

Historiography and Geography
THE OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY / PROF. DR. MİHMET İŞİRÇ / 189 ■ ON OTTOMAN HISTORY TEXT-
BOOKS AND REFORM (1839-1918) / DR. ÚSTÜN BAYRAK-ALPÇAN / 379 ■ OTTOMAN STATE AND
AHMET ÇEVİRT PASHA'S HISTORY / PROF. DR. BÜŞRE AYDAL / 381 ■ GEOGRAPHY IN
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE / PROF. DR. RAMAZAN ŞIŞİ / 405

Mathematics, Astronomy, Biology
MATHEMATICS IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE / PROF. DR. MİHMET İŞİRÇ ÖZycler / 413 ■ DECIMAL TRIGONOMETRIC
BOTANY IN THE OTTOMAN TURKEY / PROF. DR. ASİFAN BAYTOP / 451

Medical Sciences
WITHIN THE OTTOMAN HEALTH SYSTEM / PROF. DR. ILYAÇ KOMAIŞOĞLU / 457

Technology
THREE SCIENCES, THREE OPTIONS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IN THE LATE OTTOMAN TURKEY:
ZOOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, GEOGRAPHY / PROF. DR. KLAUS KREISSER / 482 ■ THE METRIC SYSTEM IN TURKEY / PROF. DR. PEZA GÜNLÜK / 487

PART III: INSTITUTIONS

Ottoman Administrative History
ottoman central administration
FROM THE DEVAN l HÜMAYUN (IMPERIAL COUNCIL) TO THE MECLİS l MEUSAN (HOUSE OF DEPUTIES)
LEGISLATION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE / ASSOC. PROF. DR. MİHMET V. ÝRDAMOĞLU / 509 ■ THE
INSTITUTIONS OF THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL (DEVAN l HÜMAYUN) / DR. RECEP AYDIN / 506

ottoman peripheral organisation
PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN PRE-TANZIMAT PERIOD / PROF. DR. NEŞAT
GÖYÇÜC / 519 ■ THE ANATOLIAN PROVINCE GENERAL: THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE HISTORICAL
EVOLUTION / PROF. DR. M. ÇETİN VARLIK / 532 ■ THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE USE OF ‘KURİŞTAŞ’ AS A
GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION AND THE INCORPORATION OF THIS REGION INTO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
IN THE 16TH CENTURY / BAKIR TEZCAN / 540 ■ THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WEAKENING OF CENTRALIZED
STATE STRUCTURE: AVANLIK SYSTEM AND GREAT DYNASTIES / PROF. DR. YÜCE İÇERKAYA / 554 ■ THE AGE
OF AVANS IN THE HISTORY OF THE OTTOMAN STATE / PROF. DR. OZCAN MERT / 563
administrative reforms in the tanzimat period

TANZIMAT / PROF. DR. AUSA ÇADIRCI / 573  ■ MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BEFORE THE PERIOD OF TANZIMAT (REFORMS) / ASSOC. PROF. DR. İLİHAN YERLİKAYA / 590

the bureaucracy in the ottoman state


Ottoman Legal System

an overview of ottoman legal system


ottoman law and its transformation


Ottoman Military

ottoman military organization, arms, war industry and technology


Ottoman Wakf System