

THE EDITOR'S DESK

Throughout the centuries of Ottoman existence the Ottomans, and through them all of the Islamic world, suffered what may be called a 'bad press' in Europe. Religious prejudice, magnified by the anti-Muslim thrust of the Reformation, combined with ignorance and jealousy to produce an image of the Middle East, its leaders, people, and civilization, which was very distant from reality. Within the Ottoman Empire a similar situation existed among the subjects of the Sultan, isolated as they were into religiously oriented *millets* whose primary purpose was to prevent contact and conflict in a highly heterogeneous society. Each *millet*, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, developed in its own way a healthy disdain for the other component groups in Ottoman society. The *millet* system in turn served to fortify Europe's ignorance of and scorn for Islamic society since those Europeans who did come to the Middle East chose to associate only with members of non-Muslim *millets*, who in turn transmitted all the hatred and scorn for their Muslim brothers which had built up over the centuries, culminating in the nineteenth century in what amounted to a concentrated propaganda campaign to convince the rest of the world that the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire could not possibly modernize the Empire and that its break-up was the only solution. So it has been that Europe generally, and most scholars who depend on European sources, have assumed that the nineteenth-century reforms were little more than a fraud – window dressing – without meaningful content or results. Only in recent years has research into Ottoman sources shown that there were, indeed, major reforms, benefiting Muslim and non-Muslim, which were brought to fruition during what previously were thought to be the reactionary periods of Abd ul-Hamid II (1876–1909) and the Young Turks (1909–18).

Of course, understanding of Islam and its civilization has been developed in the West for a century by a long series of pioneering Islamicists, of whom two of the most eminent, Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb and Gustav E. von Grunebaum, died only recently. *IJMES* is pleased to present a discussion of their contributions by William R. Polk, University of Chicago, and Amin Banani, University of California, Los Angeles. Understanding of the Ottoman reformers in particular has been furthered in recent years by a number of young scholars exploiting the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, some of whose work on the early nineteenth century has appeared in our earlier volumes. Now I am pleased to present the first of what promises to be a flood of research about the Ottoman reforms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a discussion of the modernization of Ottoman agriculture, mainly during the reign of Abd ul-Hamid II, by Donald Quataert, University of Houston. Kamal Abu-Deeb, St John's College, Oxford, and Near East Center, University of Pennsylvania, also provides an analytical

study of the structure of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Ya'akov Firestone, Harvard University, discusses the problems faced by the Ottoman reformers and their successors in developing modern systems of business in Palestine in the century that followed the Crimean War. George Makdisi, University of Pennsylvania, analyzes the relationship that existed in Seljuk times between the secular and religious rulers of Islam, the Sultan and the Caliph. In our Notes and Communications section Dr Alford Carleton, a leading American educator in the Middle East for over a half century, discusses the development of the problem of what the area should be called. Ivar Spector, University of Washington, replies to Feroz Ahmad's recent critique of his discussion of the role of Ali Fuat Cebesoy in the Turkish Revolution. And Gabrael Baer, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, replies to various criticisms that have been made of his monograph on 'The Dissolution of the Egyptian Village Community'.

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