

THE EDITOR'S DESK

During the long centuries of Middle Eastern history, the primary determinant of social as well as political organization traditionally was the balance of power and function between the small group of slaves, relatives, and servants of the ruler, who comprised the Ruling Class, and the large mass of the subjects. The former's control of the military and tax systems was at least partially counteracted by a system which left large areas of authority and function to the groups, guilds, and orders which comprised and organized the substratum of Middle Eastern society. Perhaps the most important change brought by the advocates of modernization during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been the increasing centralization of authority in the hands of the ruling group with a concomitant reduction of the autonomy formerly left to the subjects. The distinction of interest and background between the rulers and the people has been increased immeasurably as the former have come to be composed of a new technical *élite* which is far more dominant and far more distant from the mass of the people than ever was the case in traditional times.

But how much of this was only façade? To what extent were the old dominant groups and families replaced by the new technocrats and to what extent were the latter infiltrated by the former? Mrs Nikki R. Keddie, Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles, discusses this question in 'The Iranian Power Structure and Social Change, 1800-1969: an overview', showing that while the *ulama* and tribal leaders of Iran have lost much of their power in the twentieth century, they have been replaced not only by the reforming technocrats, but also by members of the older landed families, who took advantage of the centralizing policies of reform to gain even more authority than that held by their ancestors in the past. Mrs Keddie also describes the means by which the central government has gradually eroded away the power and authority of these elements of Persian society which maintained their strength well into the present century.

Dr Avigdor Levy, Senior Lecturer in History at Tel-Aviv University, Israel, discusses one important constituent of the new reforming technocracy in nineteenth-century Turkey, 'The Officer Corps in Sultan Mahmud II's New Ottoman Army, 1826-9'. Here also it is shown how the established families of the traditional Ottoman Ruling Class managed to preserve their position in the officer corps created by Mahmud II, even that which came from the new officers' school created in 1834, so that the military leadership which emerged following his reign to modernize the Ottoman army in the *Tanzimat* period 'was fully integrated with the older Ruling Class'. Dr Levy demonstrates that the survival of the old Ruling Class in the new actually promoted the

long-term success of the *Tanzimat* reforms, for the 'new Ottoman military leadership remained an indigenous element deeply rooted in the culture of the society it was to lead'. Perhaps this was an important clue to the relative success of the nineteenth-century Ottoman reformers in comparison with those who attempted more radical social changes in other parts of the Middle East at the time and in the twentieth century.

Turning to the contemporary Middle East, the political, economic and social consequences of development in the different states of the Arabian Peninsula are analysed by Dr Yusif A. Sayigh, Professor of Economics at the American University of Beirut. He concludes that some sort of federal unity among all the political entities in the Peninsula would offer the best opportunity for long-term success in using its natural resources for the benefit of all. The same, of course, could be said for the entire Arab world and, even more, for the entire Middle East, whose economic, geographic, and demographic composition has for centuries stimulated its many different groups to accept the political unity offered by great empires.

Dr Paul Forand, Associate Professor of Arabic at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, analyses 'The Relation of the Slave and the Client to the Master or Patron in Medieval Islam', demonstrating the emotional, psychological and economic interdependence which remained between master and freedman long after the latter achieved his freedom. The patterns presented offer striking parallels with the interrelationships which existed not only between former slaves and masters, but also protégées and their patrons, called *intisâb*, which played an important part in the political life of the Middle East in the centuries which followed, both in Ottoman and modern times.

Finally, Dr Lenn E. Goodman, Assistant Professor of Islamic Philosophy at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, begins a two-part study of al-Ghazâlî's effort to deny the concept that the world existed eternally and that it was self-sufficient, in order to prove the eternal existence of the all-powerful God. To Professor Goodman, 'Ghazâlî's Argument from Creation' was the most important element in his argument that God did, indeed, exist and was necessary for creation.

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