THE EDITOR'S DESK

As the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire decayed throughout the Middle East during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, much of its func-tion, particularly on the local level, was assumed by the structure of institutions and hierarchies created by the religious/cultural institution of the Ottoman ruling class, the '*Ulemâ*'. In villages and towns throughout the Arab world, Anatolia, and the Balkans, local *Kadi*s and *Müfti*s and *Hoca*s took up such burdens as assessing and collecting taxes, regulating markets, organizing local security, and even maintaining irrigation systems and roads. And in the absence of all-powerful governors or *sancak bey*s to whom the local populace could look for authoritative leadership, the functions of moral and spiritual guidance long exercised by the '*Ulemâ*' were developed into the kind of political influence sought after, but rarely achieved, by civil authorities. As decay was followed by reform and revival in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, attention was paid particularly to establishing modern, centralized, authoritarian instruments of administration to restore the role of government. But what of the '*Ulemâ*' who had risen so high in the centuries of decay? Direct reform was difficult, because of their close associa-tion with the religion which remained the basis of Middle Eastern civilization. Their powers could be and were undermined through the establishment of secu-lar systems of education and justice, but much of their influence remained in steadfast opposition to the main tenets of reform. In reaction to this situation, there could be only two approaches: attack or accommodation.

In our feature article this month, Professor Şerif Arif Mardin, of the Political Science Faculty, University of Ankara, discusses the means by which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk attempted to eliminate the influence of the '*Ulemâ*' and, thus, the effect of their opposition to modernization, by secularizing society and ideology in the Turkish Republic. On the other hand, John O. Voll, Associate Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hamp-shire, shows how the British governors of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attempted to achieve reform by working through the orthodox '*Ulemâ*', and by using the influence of their more enlight-ened members to secure meaningful change. That the latter approach had considerable value in the long run may be evidenced by the fact that Atatürk's successors in Turkey at times have found it necessary to at least partially modify his strict secularist approach in order to appeal to the deep religious feelings of the masses to secure needed support for their policies.

During the centuries of decay, devolving power and authority to the local '*Ulemâ*' was only one means by which society adjusted to the disappearance of organized government. Another means, less common but still quite frequent, was

the process by which the political vacuum left by the Ottomans was filled by virtually independent notables, who ruled large segments of the Empire for varying periods of time. For all practical purposes, these notables took over, revived, and in some cases reformed the Ottoman institutions of government, administering them far more effectively than the declining Ottoman administrative apparatus could possibly do at the time. In many ways these notables, far more than the *timar*-holders of classical Ottoman times, provided the Middle Eastern equivalent of the great feudal lords of Medieval Europe. Professor Dennis Skiotis, of Harvard University, describes for us the process by which one of the greatest of these Ottoman notables, Ali Pasha of Janina, rose to power in Ottoman Greece and Albania – the first part of a study which Professor Skiotis is preparing on the remarkable career of this notable as well as on the social and economic conditions out of which he emerged.

One of the most important units forming the social substratum of Middle Eastern society from early times has been the *millet*, the religiously based community which has provided the basic center of social adhesion for all not considered to be members of the Ruling Class. Despite its importance, however, relatively little has been done to examine either the internal structure of individual *millet*s or their roles in government and society. Professor Harvey Goldberg, of the University of Iowa, here presents us with a small but significant introduction to the subject by examining the 'Ecologic and Demographic Aspects of Rural Tripolitanian Jewry: 1853–1949'. It is to be hoped that this contribution will stimulate others to examine not only other aspects of the Jewish *millet*, but also the many other religious communities which have comprised such an important part of Middle Eastern society and civilization over the centuries.

Finally, Professor Daniel Crecelius, of California State College, Los Angeles, introduces us to one of the most important collections of source materials available concerning Muslim institutions and society in the Middle East in his account of 'The Organization of *Waqf* Documents in Cairo'. It should be noted that most of the archival research which has been undertaken during the past twenty years in Cairo, Istanbul, and elsewhere in the Middle East, has been concentrated almost entirely on official government administrative records, which have naturally enough reflected government organizations, policies, opinions and the like. Relatively little has been found in these archives regarding the lives and conditions of the people themselves, as well as on the details of economic and social conditions throughout the Middle East. Such information is found primarily in the archives of the Sharia courts as well as the *Waqf* archives described here, and it is to be hoped that future researchers will make full use of the materials found in them so as to present more comprehensive accounts of Middle Eastern society than have been possible in the past.

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