

“They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery”: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate

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I was treated with respect by these savages, and subjected to the direst insults by this English race for which I had the greatest respect. Yet I am a reasonable man and I tried not to pass judgment on the whole of the English race on the basis of the misbehavior of a few officials.

——— Eşref Kuşçubaşı, Turkish POW in Egypt, 1917

The Ottoman Empire was the last great Muslim world empire to survive into the age of modernity. The Ottoman state, together with its contemporaries, Habsburg Austria and Romanov Russia, was engaged in a struggle for survival in a world where it no longer made the rules. As the nineteenth century approached its last quarter, these rules were increasingly determined by the successful and aggressive world powers, Britain, France, and after 1870, Germany. As external pressure on the Ottoman Empire mounted from the second half of the century, the Ottoman center found itself obliged to squeeze manpower resources it had hitherto not tapped. Particularly nomadic populations, armed and already possessing the military skills required, now became a primary target for mobilization. This study is an attempt to come to grips with the “civilizing mission” mentality of the late Ottomans and their “project of modernity” as reflected in their provincial administration. It is the view of this writer that sometime in the nineteenth century the Ottoman elite adopted the mindset of their enemies, the arch-imperialists, and came to conceive of its periphery as a colo-

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nial setting.¹ It is my contention that the Ottoman elite conflated the ideas of modernity and colonialism, and applied the latter as a means of survival against an increasingly hostile world: “Within its remaining territories, the Ottoman state began imitating the western colonial empires. The state consolidated the homogeneity of the core region, i.e.—the Anatolian peninsula and the eastern regions of Thrace . . . even as it pushed the periphery—principally the Arab provinces—into a colonial status.”² The novelty of the colonial idea meant that it had actually to be spelled out in books and pamphlets produced at the time. In a book entitled, “The New Africa” (*Yeni Afrika*), obviously written on an official commission, Mehmed İzzed, “one of the official interpreters for the Imperial Palace,” felt that he had to clarify the mechanics of colonialism: “The practice of ‘colonialism’ is one in which a civilized state sends settlers out to lands where people still live in a state of nomadism and savagery, developing these areas, and causing them to become a market for its goods.”³ Where Mehmed İzzed refers to peoples and tribes living to the south of Ottoman Libya, his attitude can pretty much be summed up as the White Man’s Burden wearing a *fez*: “[these people] who are savages and heretics can only be saved by an invitation into the True Faith.”⁴

Yet in their drive to achieve modernity, the Ottomans were not to build on a *tabula rasa*. In characteristically pragmatic fashion, the “Romans of the Muslim world,” in the unforgettable words of Albert Hourani, were to dip into a whole grab bag of concepts, methods and tools of statecraft, prejudices, and practices that had been filtered down the ages.⁵ It is this type of colonialism that I propose to call “borrowed colonialism.”⁶

THE EMPIRE THAT FELL BETWEEN THE CRACKS

Some of the themes in this article were taken up in my book, *The Well Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire*.⁷

¹ My definition of colonialism here closely follows the Leninist position as in “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism.” In my view, this is still one of the best and most succinct definitions of imperialism. After showing how the partition of the world accelerated in the 1880s, Lenin concludes, “It is beyond doubt therefore, that capitalism’s transition to the stage of monopoly capitalism, to finance capital, is connected with the intensification of the struggle for the partitioning of the world.” V. Lenin, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1977), 224.

² See Edhem Eldem, “Istanbul from Imperial to Peripheralized Capital,” in *The Ottoman City between the East and West*, Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, eds. (Cambridge 1999), 200.

³ Mehmed İzzed, Interpreter for the Imperial Palace (*Saray-ı Hümayun tercümanlarından*) *Yeni Afrika* (Der Saadet 1308/1890, p. 2).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵ Albert Hourani, “How Should We Write the History of the Middle East,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (1991):125–36.

⁶ I am adapting this term from Dietrich Geyer’s “borrowed imperialism,” which he uses for late imperial Russia. See Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism. The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy 1860–1914* (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York 1987), 124.

⁷ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London and Oxford 1998).

However, that work was necessarily more descriptive than theoretical. I had postponed dealing with many of the questions coming to my mind at the time. Therefore none of the present discussion of issues such as the relationship of Ottoman studies and the post-colonial debate appeared in that volume, nor does much of the archival material, particularly that relating to Ottoman Libya and Yemen. Similarly, the memoir literature and biographical studies incorporated here are not found there.

In this article I will argue that as the nineteenth century neared its end, the Ottomans adopted a colonial stance toward the peoples of the periphery of their empire. Colonialism came to be seen as a modern way of being. For the Ottomans, colonialism was a survival tactic, and in this sense the Ottoman Empire can hardly be compared to the aggressive industrial empires of the West. In a sense theirs was much closer to the “borrowed imperialism” of the Russian Empire, another “also ran” compared to the British and the French.⁸ It was a survival tactic because the Ottomans were fully aware that if they were not to become a colony themselves they had to at least qualify for such “also ran” status.⁹ It is this in-between status that I will refer to as the “borrowed colonialism” of the Ottoman nineteenth century.¹⁰

Although it covered a huge geography until its last days, and its study presents fruitful challenges to any student of colonialism and postcolonialism, the nineteenth-century Ottoman empire has been largely ignored by the literature covering these issues. Even in the work of as major a figure as Edward Said, the Ottoman Empire is dismissed as a sort of epiphenomenal, (and dare one say it, quintessentially ‘Oriental’) creature. He comments on Eric Auerbach’s presence in Istanbul as a, “critically important alienation from [Western cultural tradition]” and “Oriental, non-Occidental exile,” and by doing so Said falls into much the same trap as the writers he critiques in his epic “Orientalism.” Eric Auerbach writes in *Mimesis* that his lack of access to the libraries of Europe in fact enabled his writing of the work. For Said, that Auerbach is in exile in Istanbul is doubly poignant—not only is he in exile from his sources, he is exile in the city that was the capital of the “monster”: “For centuries Turkey and Islam hung over Europe like a gigantic composite monster, seeming to threaten

⁸ Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, particularly pp. 125–49.

⁹ It is significant that Lenin also saw the Ottoman plight: “I think it is useful, in order to present a complete picture of the division of the world, to add brief data on non-colonial and semi-colonial countries, in which category I place Persia, China and Turkey: the first of these countries is already almost completely a colony, the second and the third are becoming such.” V. Lenin, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 225.

¹⁰ The Russian Finance Minister, Sergei Ulevich Witte was to specifically define Russia’s position in the following words: “Russia’s economic relations with western Europe are still very similar to the relationship between colonies and their mother countries. . . . To a certain extent Russia is still one of these hospitable colonies for all the industrially developed states However there is one essential difference in comparison with the situation in the colonies: Russia is a powerful politically independent state. Russia itself wants to be a mother country (*metropoliya*) . . .” See Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 145–46.

Europe with destruction.”¹¹ That Auerbach was sitting in the city that was *the* seat of much of what stood for Western Civilization seems to have passed unnoticed by the authors of both *Mimesis* and *Orientalism*. Can it be that Homi Bhabha’s famous, “almost the same but not quite” dictum applies here in a way that he never imagined?¹² Dare one speculate that the reason the Ottoman phenomenon is ignored by both the Subalterns and their opponents is because it is precisely “almost the same but not quite”? And to go even further, may we venture that the “not quite” bit is the fact that it was a Muslim power?

The aim of this essay resonates with aspects of the postcolonial debate. The Subaltern Studies group as well as authors such as Benedict Anderson and Timothy Mitchell inevitably see nationalism as something that follows European colonialism. It is my view that in the case of Ottoman “borrowed colonialism” we have something that develops side-by-side with it.¹³

I would completely agree with Gyan Prakash in his assessment of the task the Subaltern Studies group: “These directions of postcolonial criticism make it an ambivalent practice, perched between traditional historiography and its failures, within the folds of dominant discourses and seeking to rearticulate their pregnant silence.”¹⁴ In a similar way the study of the Ottoman empire also finds itself “perched” between Western historiography on the one hand and the study of “Muslims/Middle Easterners who matter” (i.e., Arabs, Jews, Iranians, Indians,) on the other. In other words, what Prakash notes for subalterns, that they fall between the “fault lines” of the “cracks of colonial archeology of knowledge” is largely true for the Ottoman.¹⁵ Here I fully agree with Dipesh Chakrabarty when he states that European historians may (or rather used to in my view) get away with ignoring the historiography of Third World writers: “Third World historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any the need to reciprocate.” This he elegantly terms, “inequality of ignorance.”¹⁶ But I would have to say that the Subaltern group in its turn, locked in as it is on the ills of colonialism, completely ignores

¹¹ Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader* (New York 2000), 224–25. The quotations are from Edward Said’s essay *Secular Criticism*. I would like to thank Charles Sabatos for drawing my attention to this paradox. Sabatos is about to publish an article on this topic in the journal *New Perspectives on Turkey*.

¹² Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man. The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *The Location of Culture* (New York 1994), 85–92.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London 1991); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge 1991). I owe thanks to an anonymous CSSH reader for inviting me to emphasize this point.

¹⁴ Gyan Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994):1475–90.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1486. Even in studies that set out to be self-consciously “comparative,” the Ottoman empire gets short shrift. See for example: Michael Adas, “Imperialism and Colonialism in a Comparative Perspective,” *The International History Review* 20 (1998):253–388. Although the author mentions the “Ottomans” twice in the article, no sources are cited.

¹⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?” *Representations* 37 (1992):1–26.

that there existed a major non-Western sovereign state whose destinies were in many ways intertwined with the destinies of India.¹⁷ Even in a work by an Indian scholar which purports to be a study of “the making of Europe” the focus is Christianity. This is perhaps not surprising, but what *is* surprising, is that it is *Western* Christianity, as if the Great Schism somehow wiped eastern Christianity off the map of “Europe.”¹⁸ Although I agree with Chakrabarty that we are still a long way from “provincializing Europe,” and with Prakash that “there is no alternative but to inhabit the discipline,” I feel that some significant steps have been taken in the direction of putting Ottoman studies on the world historiographical map.¹⁹ One such example is Ussama Makdisi’s work which engages the very subaltern debate itself, and situates the Ottoman Tanzimat reform process and reactions to it in the subaltern discourse.²⁰ My aim in this essay is to rise to the challenge of A. Hopkins: “What is needed is a fundamental reappraisal of world history to bring out the extent to which, in recent centuries, it has been shaped by the interaction of several types of empire at various stages of development and decay. Such an approach would capture both the differences between empires and their dynamism, and would leave few parts of the globe untouched.”²¹

At this point a few observations are in order to contextualize the Ottoman colonial project, and to establish some preliminary markers that set it off from Western colonialism. First, the Ottomans rulers and ruled discussed in this essay were of the same religion, and the ultimate legitimation for Ottoman rule rested on the position of the Ottoman Sultan as the Caliph of all of the world’s Muslims. My query therefore is: at what point is common religion not enough of a differentiating factor in a comparative study of how Christian or Muslim powers relate to their respective subject peoples? At what points do the Ottoman version of colonialism and the Western version converge and diverge? In a sense, the Ottoman case is unique, since the Ottoman empire was the only sovereign Muslim state to survive into the height of the era of colonialism in the late nineteenth century, and to be recognized (albeit grudgingly) as member of

¹⁷ Witness the fact that there is no mention of the politics of pan-Islamism in *Subaltern Studies* vols. 1–10 (1982–1999). In all fairness, it must be admitted that Turkish historiography has also largely ignored India. After the legendary financial aid to the Kemalist movement during the 1919–1922 War of Liberation, which Indian Muslims sent to Turkish nationalists as a gesture of solidarity, and the interest of the Indian Muslims in the Caliphate (which in fact led to its demise), India (and even more surprisingly Pakistan) seem to drop off the map. On Indian Muslims and the nationalist cause see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford 1965), 241–43, 263.

¹⁸ Satish Saberwal, “On the Making of Europe: Reflections from Delhi,” *History Workshop Journal* (1992): 145–51.

¹⁹ Chakrabarty, op. cit., 20; Prakash op. cit., 1489.

²⁰ Ussama Makdisi, “Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate: The Revolt of Tanyus Shahin in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000): 180–208.

²¹ A. Hopkins, “Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History,” *Past and Present* (1999): 198–243.

the club of Great Powers. One half of this borrowed colonialism was based on tried and true practices of Islamic Ottoman empire building; the Caliphate, the Sharia', Hanefi Islamic jurisprudence, guilds, and Turkish/Islamic law (*kanun/yasa*). The other half, or 'new' half, was a creature of the nineteenth-century positivist, Enlightenment-inspired centralizing reforms.²² Particularly after the official declaration of the Tanzimat Edict of 1839, the state made it its business to permeate levels in society it had not reached before. Yet, a word of caution is in order here: These two halves were not hermeneutic compartments sealed off by the bulkheads of "reform." What makes Ottoman borrowed colonialism interesting is this interpenetrated nature itself, the interpenetration, that is, of the pre-modern and the modern. Ussama Makdisi points out that the classic Subaltern misperception—the tendency to assume that all phenomena such as religious sectarianism are "forms of colonialist knowledge" or are a throwback to some form of atavistic behavior—leads to a failure to understand that sectarianism was indeed an aspect of *modernity*.²³ His assessment is that sectarianism has to be evaluated at two different levels: "It is an intermingling of both precolonial (before the age of Ottoman reform) and postcolonial (during the age of reform) understandings, metaphors, and realities that has to be dissected at two overlapping and mutually reinforcing levels, of the elite and nonelite."²⁴ My contention in this study is that what is true for religious sectarianism at a local level is also true for the elite's perception of itself and its peripheral populations, the same "intermingling" is very much in evidence.

Nor do I mean to imply that the Ottoman state and society previous to 1839 were static monolithic entities. Some valuable recent research is showing us that much of what was synthesized into the Ottoman modernity project was the result of historical processes and trends which were taking place already in the eighteenth century.²⁵ The hybrid unique nature of Ottoman colonialism may very well be a useful mirror to hold up to Western colonialism as a way of deepening our understanding of what is at the bottom of it all: power and the en-

²² Although I take note of the comment of an anonymous reviewer of the manuscript who correctly points out that "a project of modernity is not necessarily a civilizing mission," in the case of the late Ottoman provincial administration in the Arab provinces, the two were virtually synonymous.

²³ Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism. Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 2000), 7. Makdisi is referring here to Gyanendra Pandey's *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi 1992).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See for example, Ariel Salzman, "An Ancien Regime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics and Society* 21 (1993):393–423. Salzman's major contribution was to show that many of the trends that had been depicted as negative "decentralizing" tendencies, such as the growth of locally powerful tax farmers, were in fact dynamic trends making for capital formation and the integration of a state elite into a new structure which was emerging. In this context see also Muge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Changes* (New York 1996). Also on the topic of Islamic origins of many of the modernizing trends see Butrus Abu Manneh, "The Islamic Origins of the Gülhane Rescript," *Die Welt Des Islams* 34 (1994):173–203.

forcement of rule over people who don't want you there in the first place. First, it will be useful to examine what the nineteenth-century Ottoman inherited from the past.

NOMADISM AS ANATHEMA FOR MODERNITY

The attitude of the late Ottoman statesman to nomadic populations in the periphery of the Empire was informed by a combination of traditional and modern factors. A classical Ibn-Khaldounian view that all civilization advances as a confrontation of nomadism with settled life was combined with a distinct "mission civilizatrice" that the Ottomans took right out of the *Troisième République*.²⁶ The two modes of life were irreconcilable: "The clash between nomads and urban dwellers generated the Ottoman cultivated man's stereotype that civilization was a contest between urbanization and nomadism, and that all things nomadic were only deserving of contempt."²⁷

This contempt could range from out and out enmity to a relatively mild paternalism. The latter could even shade into an admiration for the "noble savage." Yet the basic belief was always the same, as was stated in the capsule phrase when it came to nomadic populations: "they live in a state of nomadism and savagery" (*hal-i vahşet ve bedeviyette yaşarlar*.)²⁸ The term is inevitably the same with some mild variations such as "they live in a state of ignorance and nomadism" (*hal-i cehalet ve bedeviyette yaşarlar*). What had to be done, inevitably, was to "gradually include them in the circle of civilization" (*pey der pey daire-i medeniyete idhal*), or they had to have "civilization and progress brought to them" (*ürbanın temeddün ve terakkileri*). But these people were never actually bad, they were always, "simple folk who cannot tell good from evil" (*nik ve bed'i tefrik edemiyen sade dilan ahali*). The nomadic leaders or notables had to be treated carefully and all care was to be taken to avoid "provoking their wild nature and hatred" (*tavahhuş ve nefretlerini mucib olmak*).²⁹ The

²⁶ Ibn Khaldun's cyclical conception of state power, whereby settled states matured, grew senile, and were destined to be overwhelmed by more virile nomadic peoples, informed much of the basic formation of Ottoman statesmen. Yet, there is also a side to Ibn Khaldun which admires the nomad. I have used the Turkish translation of the *Mukaddimah*; see Ibn Khaldun, *Mukaddime* (Istanbul 1979), 103, 331, 364.

²⁷ Şerif Mardin, "Centre-Periphery Relations. A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102 (1973):170–71. This attitude is very similar also to that of Russian travelers in the "Orient" in the nineteenth century. For these men, keen to prove that Russians were much more "European" than Turks or Arabs, "[W]ild' meant the antithesis of European culture; where Europe penetrated 'wildness' retreated." See, Peter R Weisensel, "Russian Self-Identification and Travelers' Descriptions of the Ottoman Empire in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Central Asian Survey* 10 (1991):65–85. Weisensel calls this, "The deep-seated Russian bias of agriculturalists against pastoralists."

²⁸ I have kept a database drawn on hundreds of documents dealing with nomadic populations. See my *The Well Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London and Oxford 1998), "The Symbolism of Language in the Hamidian Era," 39–42.

²⁹ *Ibid.* *The Redhouse Turkish—English Lexicon* (Beirut 1895) defines *tevahhuş* as: "being or becoming timid like a wild beast."

Ottoman's constant use of the "civilizing motif" was similar to the White Man's Burden as applied by the British Raj in India, where all opposition to British rule was dubbed, as by nature, "fanatic" as in a "fanatic Moulvi" who "provoked the fanaticism of the natives."³⁰ If at all possible, the leaders of the nomads or the provincial notables were to be won over by "giving them a little something" (*bir mikdar şey*) and "flattering their leaders" (*elebaşlarını tat-yib*).³¹ This too resembles the British practice of "cajoling local leaders."³² Indeed the British themselves, when they came to apply their colonial rule to Egypt, felt that the Egyptian view of his new masters was that "the English are Turks with the faculty of justice added." The new masters were clear about who they were displacing, "[We] have only to reckon with the Osmanli of different degrees who have found a home in this country . . . These are the dominant races."³³ There is little doubt that many an Ottoman provincial official would have envied the British their easy arrogance and sheer power to work their will.

The "two faces" that Ussama Makdisi has noted in his study of the Ottoman Lebanon at mid-century are germane here: "The violence of the Ottoman state in the Lebanese periphery may also be understood to have 'two faces' in the sense that it invoked the language of an ideal Islamic order that clearly discriminated against non-Muslims, while it tacitly acknowledged the impossibility of realizing such an ideal order in a religiously diverse region of Mount Lebanon."³⁴ My point that builds on Makdisi here, is that the 'two faces'—official intolerance of diversity, and the reality of the need to tolerate such diversity—can be extended to those Muslims who "live in a state of nomadism and savagery." This is at the core of 'borrowed colonialism.' The face that had hitherto largely left the 'savage' to his own devices now, in a situation of dire need, turns into the face that will 'civilize' him and make him useful.

SULTAN ABDULHAMID II AND HIS PROJECT FOR MODERNITY IN OTTOMAN LIBYA

Ottoman Libya, consisting of the *Vilayet*, or province of Trablus Garb (Tripoli) and the *sancak*, or sub-province of Bingazi, had been re-incorporated into Ottoman domains in 1835.³⁵ The area remained an isolated outpost for much of the nineteenth century. Yet, it had important symbolic significance for Istanbul

³⁰ Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford 1988), 46, 48, 49.

³¹ Ibid. It was considered impolite to actually pronounce the word "money."

³² Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge 1972), 20.

³³ Francis W. Rowsell, "The English in Egypt" Cairo, 14 May 1883. *The Nineteenth Century* (1883), 1068

³⁴ Ussama Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate: The Revolt of Tanyus Shahin in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000):180–210.

³⁵ Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya 1830–1980*. (Princeton 1986), 72.

as the last remaining Ottoman foothold in Africa.³⁶ Also, as the “scramble for Africa” reached its peak after the 1880s, Istanbul felt that, she had to stake her claim if the area was to survive as an Ottoman dominion. The French invasions of Algeria in 1835 and Tunis in 1881, followed by the British invasion of Egypt in 1882, left the province in an increasingly isolated and precarious position. When the Ottoman reinforcements arrived in Libya, the new governor sent a circular to the foreign consuls staking the sultan’s claim by announcing that he had been sent, “to put an end to the disorders that have so long afflicted this country and to govern it with its dependencies so long as it pleases our August Master and Sovereign Sultan Mahmud.”³⁷

Even in this fragile conjuncture, no lesser a personage than the Sultan Abdulhamid II himself (r. 1876–1909) was to order the drafting of a memorandum dealing with measures to be taken to ensure the future of the province. The document is worth quoting *in extenso* because it is nothing other than a “project of modernity” for a distant land as envisaged by the highest power. Also, the document is invaluable as a glimpse of the “colonial project” as envisioned by the late Ottomans.³⁸ Not surprisingly, the first measures cited by the sultan are for the recruitment of the local population into regular military units. These were to become part of the Arab units called the Turbanned *Zühaf* Brigade. The *Zühaf* here are a clear reference to the French colonial troops, the *Zouaves*.³⁹

Article Three is concerned with “The winning of the affection of the local people so that in the event of external aggression, say from Italy, it will be possible to defend the province without recourse to the sending of troops from the centre.” A clearer reference to “winning the hearts and minds of the local population” as seen in French colonialism, could hardly be wished for.⁴⁰

³⁶ I have no pretensions to be giving exhaustive coverage to the topic, and my intention is simply to try to isolate aspects of the Ottoman modernity project as reflected in the area. For an excellent detailed discussion of Ottoman rule, see Michel Le Gal, *Pashas Bedouins and Notables: The Ottoman Administration in Tripoli and Bengazi 1881–1902*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University 1986); also Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation*, 17: “The autonomy of the tribes had eroded: they were no longer independent political units outside the control of the state.”

³⁷ Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation*, 71.

³⁸ Başbakanlık Arşivi (Prime Ministry Archives), Istanbul, hereafter BBA, Yıldız Esas Evrakı (YEE) Archives of the Imperial Palace at Yıldız, 1/156–35/156/3. Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat. “Directions given by His Imperial Majesty the August Personage and Caliph Regarding the Prosperity, Progress, and Reinforcement of the Province of Trablus Garb.” The document is undated, but from the context we can deduce that it would have been prepared sometime in the 1890s. It consists of thirty-two articles. I will not specifically discuss articles dealing with measures such as the institution of a fire brigade, the establishing of telegraph lines, roads, etc. These also are part of the project of modernity. What I am more interested in are aspects of the memorandum that reflect less obvious motifs and symbols which give us clues as to how the highest authority in the land envisioned modernity.

³⁹ On the incorporation of native regiments into the French armed forces, particularly the Senegalese infantry, see Jean Suret, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa* (London 1971), 83–86.

⁴⁰ On the subject of “winning the hearts and minds of the people” as believed by the *ecole coloniale*, see James Cooke, *New French Imperialism 1880–1910: The Third Republic and Colonial Expansion* (Hamden, Conn. 1973), 34.

Article Eight provides for, “The construction of a pier along the waterfront for the improvement of commercial conditions and providing for the evening entertainment of the people.” The idea, as seen in other civic projects of the time, was to provide a seaside *corniche* where the population would take their ease. This image of “gentile entertainment” was very much part of the civilizing motif as the evening promenade was an integral part of the *belle époque* in Europe.⁴¹

Article Eighteen provided for, “The putting into operation of an omnibus service in the town for the convenience of the population and to demonstrate the fruits of civilization.” The conceptualization of public transport as an aspect of modern urbanity and equating an omnibus service with “convenience” and “civilization” are yet more manifestations of the somewhat naïve civilizational mission.⁴²

More of the same was reflected in Article Nineteen, which stipulated “the construction of a clock tower in a suitable position which will show western time and automatically chime the hours.” Abdulhamid constructed clock towers throughout the empire on the occasion of his Twenty-fifth jubilee year, all of which followed twenty-four-hour time rather than Qur’anic prayer time.⁴³

A further cluster of articles in the memo provide for economic measures for the development of the province. Article Twenty provides for the employment of “experienced olive tree grafters from Crete to graft the wild olives in the province.” Article Twenty deals with, “esparto grass which grows wild here in great quantities.” The proposal was to cultivate this plant and export it to Europe.⁴⁴ Article Twenty-Two is concerned with other natural resources such as “ivory, mother of pearl, amber, tortoise shell, pearls, ostrich feathers, and coral.” It is noted that, “once the major source for all of these was this province but now the trade has moved elsewhere.” This was clear reference to the shifting of the trans-Sahara caravan trade to French Algeria and Tunis. Particularly tortoise shell and mother of pearl are singled out as revenue providers, and “if

⁴¹ For an excellent study of the promenade as a civilizing motif in a completely different context, see Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London and New York 1982), 186: “The essential purpose of this street [the Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg] which gives it its special character, is sociability: people come here to see and be seen, and to communicate their visions to one another, not for any ulterior purpose, without greed or competition, but as an end in itself.”

⁴² *Ibid.* On the development of the omnibus service at more or less the same time in Istanbul see, Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: The Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1993), 90–96.

⁴³ *Ibid.* See also my *Well Protected Domains*, particularly Chapter 1 “The Symbolism of Power in the Hamidian Regime.” For a similar project in another Ottoman city, Damascus, see, Stefan Weber, “Ottoman Damascus of the 19th Century: Artistic and Urban Development as an Expression of Changing Times,” in *Art Turc/Turkish Art 10th International Congress of Turkish Art. Geneva* (1999), 731–40, particularly p. 731: “There was an Osmanization in which modernization developed through Ottoman centralism.”

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Esparto grass was used in the production of high-quality paper. On this see Michel Le Gall, *Pashas, Bedouins and Notables*, 56.

modern methods are used and equipment is brought in from Europe, and if the local population can be trained in their use," these would become a considerable export commodity.⁴⁵

Trade is linked with *realpolitik* and strategic considerations in Article Twenty-Eight: "It is extremely important that care be taken to stress the claims of the Sublime State in the *hinterland* of the Province of Tripoli, and to ensure the gaining of the hearts of the population through the re-establishment of the trade. It is vital that the Ruler of Bornu be cultivated." This was a clear reference to the idea of an Imperial hinterland as put forward by Bismarck and much discussed by the participants of the Berlin Africa Conference in 1884. At the time the Ottoman position had been that "ancient precedent and the Principle of Hinterland" determined that the hinterland of the Ottoman province of Tripoli extended across the Sahara to Bornu.⁴⁶

Article Twenty-Seven deals with that omnipresent phenomenon of modern administration, the census: "If at all possible, without terrifying the population, a census should be carried out and the Bedouin should be classified." The first two modern censuses in Ottoman domains were carried out in 1885 and 1907. The censuses yielded uneven results as there was a marked resistance on the part of the population to being counted. The province of Tripoli never produced official census returns because of the difficulty of counting the nomadic populations of the desert. The reference in the sultan's memorandum to the avoidance of "terrifying the population" is a clear acknowledgment that the state knew that counting people alienated them.⁴⁷

Articles Twenty-Nine and Thirty deal with education, a recurrent theme in the provincial reform documents. They declare that "because at this point there is no need to establish secondary and higher schools in the area, primary schools in sufficient number should be established." Also vocational training would be provided in, "a building that would house three schools, these would be the schools of agriculture, manufactures and veterinarian training."⁴⁸

Article Thirty One is particularly significant. It deals with the provision for the foundation of a provincial press. After the necessary printing presses and writers were sent from Istanbul, "because there is nobody in Tripoli who is perfectly fluent in both Turkish and Arabic," three newspapers were to be published. Two were to bear the names "*Trablus Garb* (Tripoli)" and "*Terakki*

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Selim Deringil, "Les Ottomans et le Partage de l'Afrique 1880–1900," In *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, vol. 5, Sinan Kunalalp and Selim Deringil, eds. (Istanbul 1990), 121–33. The central African Kingdom of Bornu straddled the area that is today Chad and Niger.

⁴⁷ Ibid. For a very competent discussion of the 1885 and 1907 censuses, see Cem Behar, "Sources pour la Démographie Historique de l'Empire Ottoman. Les tahrirs (dénombrements) de 1885 et 1907." *Population* 1–2 (1998):161–78; and by the same author, "Qui compte? Recensements et statistiques démographiques dans l'Empire ottoman du XVIe au XX siècle," *Histoire and Mesure* 13 (1998):135–46.

⁴⁸ BBA YEE 1/156–35/156/3.

(Progress), respectively, and were to be dailies which would, “publish articles fortifying the loyalty and obedience of the local population to the August Caliphate and reinforce their sense of military duty and love of their fatherland (*vatana meyl ve muhabbettleri*). The third paper, which would appear monthly, would be “purely scientific dedicated to articles on agriculture, manufactures and trade, as well as the science of economics (*ilm-i servet*).⁴⁹

The final article, Article Thirty Two, said it all: “Although many of the measures detailed above can be realized through the agency of private firms, much money is still needed. As the actualization of the reforms is likely to bring great profits, it is necessary to float a loan of some four to five hundred thousand *liras* . . .”⁵⁰ As in all other reform projects, what were actually sensible proposals ran up against the brick wall of decrepit finances.

The memorandum is in many ways the Ottoman condition in microcosm. The most striking aspect of the document is the clear inclination to a colonial policy where it was no longer sufficient to leave the Bedouin to their own devices. In a world context where the French and Italians were squeezing the Ottomans out of North Africa, the tribes became a crucial factor in maintaining an Ottoman presence in Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa.⁵¹ By the mid-century, particularly after about 1860, the “central government’s presence was evident in the changing landscape of the hinterlands, as the government forts were built or restored in all the regions.”⁵² The policy of the Hamidian regime was to give the tribes military training, and provide them with arms, so that they would be able to resist any aggression until reinforcements could be brought from Istanbul. That at least was the official line. The reality was much more serious. Grand Vizier Said Paşa himself admitted that they did not have the gunboats or even the transports needed for such an operation.⁵³

The Porte therefore found that it had to rely on the local sheikhs, who would be organized along para-military lines, weapons and ammunition would be sent from Istanbul and they would receive the rudiments of military drill from regular officers. Part of the Ottoman plan was to enlist the support of the powerful Sanusi dervishes who would be expected to work their influence on the tribes.⁵⁴ On several occasions, the handing over of arms to local sheikhs became an occasion for Sanusi-officiated ceremonies.⁵⁵

The Sanusi sheikhs were seen by Istanbul as bearers of civilization to the tribes, ultimately working in favor of the center. The sheiks were said to “train [the tribesmen] in religious morals and, as much as is at all possible, abate their

⁴⁹ Ibid. ⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Engin Akarlı, “The Defence of the Libyan Provinces 1882–1858,” in *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, vol. 5, Sinan Kunalp and Selim Deringil, eds. (Istanbul 1990), 75–85.

⁵² Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation*, 72.

⁵³ Ibid., 81–82. ⁵⁴ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁵ BBA Yıldız Hususi Maruzat (Y.A HUS). 246/5; 14 Şaban 1308/25 Mar. 1891.

savagery.” The leaders of the dervishes were constantly, “evoking the Caliph’s name and making it clear to the “tribes that he was their master.” The sheikhs were also instrumental in resolving frequent violent disputes among the Bedouin, “because of their savage state this is bound to happen.” It was of the utmost importance that the sheikhs be cultivated and kept happy since, “it is well known that the foreigners, through their machinations and intrigues, are working on the tribes, to cause them to revert to their savage state so that they can lure them over to their side.”⁵⁶

Frequently the local Vali would recommend that appropriate gifts be sent to the influential Sanusi leaders, and this was all the more important because the sheikhs were being courted by the Italians, “who were sending them fine china tea sets worth a thousand liras.” The incongruity of “a thousand piece tea service” being trekked across the Sahara desert to the oasis at Caghubub was taken as a serious enough threat by Abdulhamid, who personally ordered that “illuminated presentation copies of the Qur’an, in suitably large writing” be sent as a counter measure.⁵⁷ It would appear that this cultivating of the Sanusi paid off in the long-term, since the order cooperated with the Ottoman policies and in fact proved instrumental in recruiting ‘local sons’ into the Libyan Ottoman bureaucracy.⁵⁸

As the “scramble for Africa” accelerated after the Berlin Africa Conference of 1884 and reached its peak in the 1890s, it became extremely important for the Ottoman Empire to stake its claim in Africa and to secure the strategic caravan routes, passing through the territory of the Ruler of Bornu and the Ottoman outpost at Ghat.⁵⁹ It is also significant that it was at the Berlin Conference that the Ottomans began to refer to “the rights and well-established positions of the Sublime State in its colonies in . . . Africa (*Devlet-i Aliyye’nin Afrika’da vaki müstemlekati*).”⁶⁰

By the 1890s it was becoming increasingly clear to Istanbul that international law and other international guarantees regarding Africa had no real meaning. In a memorandum prepared by the Yıldız Palace Secretariat, it was clearly stated that “the rival states are only awaiting the opportunity to benefit from the weakness of their rivals.” As the Ottoman dominions in Africa were so far away, the only realistic defense was the formation of local forces. Yet this was to be done through “gradual and moderate methods” since it was not desirable to frighten the tribal elements. This was particularly important in the carrying out of the census, which might cause the tribes to flee to areas held by the Chris-

⁵⁶ BBA Yıldız Resmi Maruzat (Y.A RES), 25/14; 2 Ağustos 1300/15 Aug. 1884.

⁵⁷ Ibid. ⁵⁸ Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation*, 95, 96.

⁵⁹ On the “scramble for Africa,” see R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, with A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism* (New York 1968).

⁶⁰ BBA Y.A RES 26/14; 23 Muharem 1302/13 Nov. 1884. Minutes of Council of Ministers regarding the participation of the Ottoman Empire in the Berlin Africa Conference.

tians. It was to be explained to the tribes that if they resisted conscription and were subsequently captured, “they were to be sent to distant parts of the Ottoman domains.”⁶¹ The memorandum ended with an explicit warning: “It is very clear that the European states have embarked upon a partitioning (*mukaseme*) of Africa. It is certain that the Sublime State has a share in these areas, and any delay now in the clear defense of our share and rights will prove impossible to recover in the future.”⁶²

Istanbul was therefore particularly keen to cultivate the Ruler of Bornu and the Touareg tribes. In a memorandum prepared by the Commission for Military Reform, it was clearly stated that, the Ottoman Empire was, “the last hope for the freedom of the millions of Muslims who live in Central Africa.”⁶³ The ruler of Bornu and the Touaregs in the area were to be “effectively integrated into the Well Protected Domains.” They were to be told that, “If they persisted in their present state they were going to be considered as independent primitive tribes by the Christians. Their present degree of allegiance to the Caliphate remains only at the spiritual level. This will not be enough to dispel the covetous regards and wiles of the Christian powers. The only way out is for them to openly declare that they are part of the Ottoman Empire, thus enabling them to benefit from the agreements concluded at the Berlin Conference and the Principle of Hinterland.”⁶⁴ This was a clear reference to the basic premise of late nineteenth-century colonialism, namely that the area which the colonial power chose to appropriate was “empty land.” The Ottoman position was more than vindicated by Henry Morton Stanley, the infamous explorer, who saw Africa as “empty”: “Unpeopled country! What a settlement one could have in this valley! See, it is broad enough to support a large population. Fancy a church spire rising where that tamarind rears its dark crown of foliage.”⁶⁵

The implication of what the Ottomans were telling the local people was clear: “collaborate with us or you will meet with a much worse fate.”⁶⁶ Also, even if the international agreements concluded remained on paper, at least the Ottomans would be able to claim that these areas were legally ‘theirs.’

⁶¹ BBA Y.MTV 51/74; 23 Zilkade 1308/30 June 1891. Memorandum by the Imperial Private Secretary Süreyya Paşa.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ BBA Y.MTV 59/15 Memorandum of Commission for Military Reform. 8 Receb 1309/7 Feb. 1892.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*. (New York 1999), 31, 101. King Leopold was indeed to bequeath the Congo to the Belgian state in his will, like any piece of property. “Leopold’s will treated the Congo as if it were just a piece of uninhabited real estate to be disposed of by its owner.”

⁶⁶ Ibid. This theme of “empty lands” was also a favorite motif of early Zionism; see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York 1997), 101: “In the early years of the Zionist movement, many of its European supporters . . . believed that Palestine was empty and sparsely cultivated.”



FIGURE 1. Osman Hamdi Bey at the Mount Nemrud archeological site with local assistant.

REFORM AND ADMINISTRATION IN HICAZ AND YEMEN

One thing that stands out in the reform literature in the Ottoman archives is its sense of urgency: “The nineteenth-century Ottoman reformer was more conscious of his mission than the eighteenth-century reformer, at least he was in more of a hurry.”⁶⁷ The documents all breathe a sense of time, time that is being wasted and should be seized. As put by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, “To avoid the dangers facing it the Sublime State must undertake the necessary reforms. If a genuine and sincere policy [of reform] is followed in some ten or fifteen years the Sublime State will be strong enough to face all the dangers. The essential thing is to find this policy.”⁶⁸

This emphasis on the “right path of reform” is the connecting thread in much of the reform literature. According to Osman Nuri Paşa, who served for many years as governor in the *vilayets* of Hicaz and Yemen, there were six major priorities “for the survival and flourishing of any state” at the level of provincial administration. These were, first, the “establishment of administrative and political divisions”; second, “the construction of government buildings and military establishments which would reflect the glory of the state”; third, the establishment of courts of law; fourth, “the spread of education and the procurement of progress in the trades and professions”; fifth, to increase revenues; and sixth, the building of roads.⁶⁹

The interesting aspect of the Paşa’s report is that it represents a view from the provinces, giving a first-hand account of the application of reform. Also, the specific character of the province of Hicaz, as the seat of the Caliphate, and the relationship of the state to the nomadic Bedouin population, are brought into focus. By giving “administrative and political division” first priority, Osman Nuri Paşa sought to bring the Bedouin under control and to “civilize” them: “If these administrative divisions are not established there is no way the state can bring any executive power to bear [on the Bedouin] . . . This will mean that they will continue to live according to their savage old customs which are against Sharia and modern laws. This will mean, in turn, that they will be bereft of the legal structure that would ease their path to civilization.” Thus for the Paşa, law

⁶⁷ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun en Uzun Yüzyılı* (The longest century of the Empire) (Istanbul 1983), 11.

⁶⁸ BBA YEE 18/1858/93/39, p. 8. I owe thanks to my colleague Dr. Christoph Neuman for his help in the transcription of this document.

⁶⁹ BBA YEE 14/292/126/8 Memorandum by Governor of Hicaz and Yemen Osman Nuri Paşa. Copy compiled by his secretary after his death. The report is dated 5 Temmuz 1301/18 July 1885. Osman Nuri Paşa was born in 1840, his father was Colonel Şükri Bey. He graduated from the Imperial Military Academy in 1862. In 1882 he was appointed as Vali to the *vilayet* of Hicaz. In the same year he was awarded the rank of *müşir*, the highest military rank in the empire. In 1886 he was appointed the Vali of Aleppo. In 1887 he was transferred to Yemen. In 1890 he was appointed as Vali of Hicaz for a second time. He died in January 1899. On him see *Sicil-i Osmani*, vol. 4, 1298.

and legality are the path to modernity and civilization: “tribes who are not given the benefit of such civilizing laws will remain in their savage state for centuries . . . which will be a great wound in the body of the state.”⁷⁰

Osman Nuri Paşa, like Ahmet Cevdet, had a clear notion that the Turks constituted the “fundamental element” (*unsur-u asli*) of the empire. He bemoaned the fact that the majority of the soldiers in the Ottoman armies were Turks, for this meant that they were withdrawn from the agricultural labor force and, “as those versed in the science of economics will know, this is detrimental to production of wealth for the state as a whole.” Osman Nuri Paşa also stated that, “Although it is possible for the whole of the Islamic population to become part of the fundamental element time is not yet ripe . . . Even when this happens, and the other Muslims, by the application of effective policies, will be blended [into the fundamental element] they will still be as the boughs and branches of the tree, whose trunk and roots will still be made up of the Turks.”⁷¹

On the matter of the construction of the state buildings, it was the Paşa’s view that, “these are the visible proof that the state is effectively established in that locality . . . and that it has taken in hand the government of the population.”⁷² Such buildings would have a beneficial effect on the population as well, as they would become poles of attraction for markets and other beneficial activities as security of life and property became established. As law and order spread this would lead, in turn, “to the putting into operation of the productive forces making for national wealth” (*servet-i milliye*). This “physiocratic” approach which would have done justice to Turgot is compounded with the assumption that the very presence of the state in terms of buildings, courts of law, etcetera, is an auspicious development, desired by the population at large as an almost organic or natural state of affairs.

Another frequent theme in the reform literature is the need to reform education. Osman Nuri Paşa repeatedly pleaded for the upgrading of schools in the Hicaz. The Paşa declared that, “the people of a country without education are like so many lifeless corpses of no benefit to humanity.” Yet, here too the emphasis is on education for the population so that they can be put to use to increase the national wealth, “as is demanded by the science of economics” (*ilm-i tedbir-i servet istilahnca*). If this is not done, “this will mean that the population will live in a state of wretched poverty and vileness” (*zillet ve sefalet içinde yaşarlar*), or that, “all productive forces will be concentrated in the hands of the foreigners.” Both of the above developments were, according to

⁷⁰ Ibid. ⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² This was the Ottoman model as applied throughout the empire, in the case of Damascus see, Stefan Weber, “Ottoman Damascus in the 19th Century,” 371: “The construction of a new administrative town-center was, in itself, a manifestation of Ottoman reformatory intentions. In the nineteenth century, and in the first two decades of this century, the construction of a new administrative center west of the old town was a functional and structural break in the tradition of town settlement in Damascus.” I owe thanks to my colleague Çiğdem Kafescioğlu for this reference.

the Paşa, “verily, a source of shame for both the state and the population.” Osman Nuri complained that in the few Ottoman schools that did exist in the Hicaz, there were very few Arabs, “they are like scattered birthmarks on the human body,” the majority of the students being “the children of Turkish officials, Dutch Javanese or Russian Turks.”⁷³ The worry over the accumulation of wealth and resources in the Hicaz in the hands of “foreigners” is important here. Since no Christian could set foot in the sacred territories, foreigner here meant “non-Ottoman Muslim”—that is, the Muslim subjects of the British, French, Russian, and Dutch empires. It was a serious source of concern for the Ottomans that these people would be used as stalking horses, or as a fifth column to garner much of the real estate and property in the region.⁷⁴

Osman Nuri Paşa also had a certain, “civilian consciousness” which is seen in other officials at this time, all the more remarkable as he held the highest military rank in the land. He was decidedly against the constant appointment of military governors to the Arab provinces. He was also against these areas being seen as a constant security risk: “Security cannot mean that these lands which have been in our control for centuries should take on the appearance of a recently conquered territory.”⁷⁵

The Paşa’s greatest emphasis is on “gradually bringing the nomad into the fold of civilization.” This was to be the major focus of educational policies. Local schools should train Ottoman Arab youths who would then implement Ottoman laws and regulations. It was also important, however, not to frighten the leading sheikhs and other notables, who would be brought, through gradual uplifting, to “destroy their savage customs with their own hands.” It was thus necessary to “win the hearts of the population” (*ahalinin celb-kulublari*).⁷⁶

This emphasis on “winning the hearts and minds of the population,” is quite evident in another report written by Osman Nuri Paşa.⁷⁷ After his transfer from Hicaz to Yemen, the Paşa produced a long and detailed report on his activities in the former province. It is worth quoting from at some length because it provides valuable insight into the mentality of a late Ottoman, all the more so since it written in a remarkably frank and forthright style, devoid of the usual polite forms in such documents. When the Paşa arrived at Hudaida, the port of the province, he was suffering from acute rheumatism, to the point where he could not walk or ride. In evocative words he describes his arrival:

I was met by some three thousand bedouin who took great pride in taking turns at carrying me in a stretcher from Hudaida to San’a. I was thus met in an unprecedented fashion for an Ottoman Vali. This was largely because the tribes had heard of my fair and

⁷³ BBA YEE 14/292/126/8.

⁷⁴ I have discussed this elsewhere in greater detail, for example, see my *The Well Protected Domains*, chapter 2, “The Ottomanization of the Şeriat.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 7 Teşrin-I Evvel 1306/19 Oct. 1890. Report by the late Osman Nuri Paşa, the late Vali of the *vilayet* of Yemen regarding his activities during one-year’s service in that province.

equitable treatment of the bedouin during my posting in Hicaz . . . There is nothing here that shows that the state has ever been present. There is not even a decent landing station, passengers being obliged to be carried ashore on the backs of these men. . . . It is difficult to understand this neglect in such an important port . . . It seems that the hundreds of Ottoman officials who have been posted here over the years have thought of nothing else except enriching themselves and working great damage on the tribes, thus creating wounds which are very difficult to heal.⁷⁸

He went on to bemoan the fact there were no roads and no government buildings worthy of mention. His first act was to write to the major tribal sheikhs asking for their help. "I first proposed the rebuilding and paving of the San'a to Gidda military road. To a man, they complied, and sent some fifteen thousand first-rate workers. These work teams then proceeded to build a good road to within three days march of San'a."⁷⁹

Significantly, the Paşa's next move was to constitute a Sharia' court and do away with the regular (*nizamiye*) court, "as I had been ordered to do by imperial decree." This court however was a much more comprehensive affair than the ordinary Sharia' Kadi courts. In addition to the *kadi* and chief *mufti*, it was to include representatives from the leading families and notables: "this was to cause considerable gratitude among the tribes and gladden their hearts, for at this court, as is demanded by the Sharia, I resolved all of the blood feuds in the area."⁸⁰

Osman Paşa then invited two of the leading Sharifs to San'a, and when they complied he pointed out that this was the first time leading Sharifs had ever trusted an Ottoman governor in this fashion:

I met them with full military honours and gave a great feast in their honour. Also, with Imperial permission, I gave them as a gift my two beautiful horses complete with splendid livery. I also ordered that they be given a house each, together with a stipend of three hundred *gurus*, this too was approved . . . They then told me, "Oh Osman Paşa! We came here only out of respect for your person, for we had heard of your honourable and upright conduct in Hicaz. For we know that we will not see the same honourable behaviour in your successors. Rest assured that as long as you are Vali there will be no bloodshed in Yemen, we give you our solemn oath."⁸¹

The Paşa then dwelled at some length on the importance of winning over the Sharifs: "For they are very valuable in the desert as only they can maintain order among the bedouin. Thus it would be advisable to appoint them as [Ot-

⁷⁸ Ibid. From Hudaida to San'a is some one hundred kilometers as the crow flies.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. This is the process that I defined elsewhere as "the Ottomanization of the Şeriat" during the Hamidian period. See my *The Well Protected Domains*, chapter 2. The *nizamiye* courts were the secular courts that had been set up during the Tanzimat era. On this see, İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorlugunda Tanzimat döneminde Mahalli Idareler* (Local government in the Tanzimat era in the Ottoman Empire) (Ankara 1983). The *kadi* was the religious judge and the *mufti* was the local religious leader.

⁸¹ Ibid.

toman] officials together with the other officials of the Sublime State. For, verily, the Sharifs are lovers of justice. If one deals honourably with them, if one listens to their complaints with a lenient ear, they would be very valuable in matters such as tax collection and security. It is sufficient to flatter them and occasionally give them presents and robes of honour (*hil'at*) for they are very fond of pomp and display."⁸²

Unfortunately for the Bedouin and the province generally, the Paşa's health was to deteriorate rapidly and after one year he was recalled. As he was leaving, Osman Nuri met his successor, Divrikli *Ferik* Osman Paşa, at Hudaida. He was not impressed by what he saw, and did not mince his words: "I told him about all that I had done and recommended that he continue in the same vein. Alas, it became very clear very quickly that the man is an unredeemable ignomamus (*gayri kabil-i islah bir aptal*) and that he is completely incapable of handling such a large province. Thus it has transpired."⁸³

The "uplifting of the noble savage" was also the preoccupation of one of the most remarkable figures of the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, Osman Hamdi Bey, who was later to achieve renown as the forerunner of Ottoman museology and archeology, and as one of the empire's earliest realist painters.⁸⁴ Osman Hamdi began his career in the late 1860s as an ambitious young man in the entourage of the great reformer, Midhat Paşa, and was then posted as Vali to the province of Baghdad.⁸⁵ Freshly returned from Paris, where he had stud-

⁸² Ibid. Sharifs are tribal leaders who claim descent from the family of the Prophet Mohammad.

⁸³ Ibid. Indeed the new Vali completely alienated the Sharifs who fled from San'a. Ottoman rule was however to continue in Yemen. It has been noted that the Ottomans had a much better reception in southern Yemen, which was Sha'afi, whereas the predominantly Zaidi north remained hostile. Yemen remained Ottoman right until the end of World War I. See: Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford 1993).

⁸⁴ Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910) was born in Istanbul as the son of Ibrahim Edhem Paşa (1818–1893), who served as Grand Vizier, minister and ambassador. The fact that Ibrahim Edhem Paşa translated some works of Descartes into Turkish gives us a good idea of Osman Hamdi's family background. Osman Hamdi was sent to Paris to study law in 1857. While he was studying law Osman Hamdi also attended the Ecole Des Beaux Arts where he studied painting under Jean-Léon Gérôme and Gustave Boulanger. He also took courses in archeology. He served in an official capacity during Sultan Abdülaziz's visit to the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1867. In 1869, he returned to Istanbul, almost immediately entering Midhat Paşa's service as Director for Foreign Affairs of the Vilayet of Bagdad until the Paşa's recall in 1871. He was to become a major figure in late Ottoman intellectual circles, working as a conservator of archeological artifacts and the founder of the Imperial Archeology Museum. He is remembered today mostly for his painting, which had a great effect on subsequent generations. See Mustafa Cezar's *Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi Bey* (The beginnings of Western art and Osman Hamdi Bey) (Istanbul 1971). Also see Zeynep Rona, ed., *Osman Hamdi Bey Kongresi. Bildiriler* (The Osman Hamdi Bey Symposium. Proceedings) (Istanbul 1992).

⁸⁵ On Midhat Paşa's endeavors to apply direct Ottoman rule to the Nagd and the Arabian Gulf area and subsequent Ottoman efforts in that direction see, Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf. The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar* (1997). Compare this work to the received wisdom. See particularly p. 2: "Yet histories of the region give the impression that the Ottomans studiously ignored eastern Arabia after 1871, that in fact they were little more than stage scenery in the political drama from that date until the outbreak of World War I."

ied painting in the *atelier* of Gérôme, Osman Hamdi greatly admired Midhat Paşa, whose reformist zeal he fully espoused. His letters to his father during the years 1869–1870 show us that the young Parisian dandy shared much of the reforming zeal and the “civilizing mission” that characterized his older colleagues. Osman Hamdi was particularly scathing in his assessment of the settled population of the province, whom he compared very unfavorably with the Bedouin: “It is not necessary to concern ourselves with the inhabitants of the big cities . . . these people, although they appear to bear a modicum of the civilization of the nineteenth century, are in fact far below the desert dwelling bedouin, who, although they lead a primitive and patriarchal life, [are far better than the former,] who lead a life of infamy and corruption, to the point that in the whole of Bagdad and particularly among servants of the government you would not find a single honest man!”⁸⁶ By contrast he gives the semi-sedentary Bedouin much more generous treatment: “This almost nomadic population is, so to speak, still virgin . . . They are intelligent, courageous and valiant.”⁸⁷ Osman Hamdi condemned the local corrupt officials for mistreating the Bedouin, who were set upon in every way, only taken into consideration when they were forced to pay taxes or pressed into the army: “for these people, the government is the army.”

Nonetheless, Osman Hamdi’s assessment of the character of the Bedouin is every bit as paternalistic as that of any official of the British Raj: “Take a Sheikh, make him a Paşa, give him a firman; you will make no impression on him but give him a *Hkilat*, [*sic*] with a flag, he returns to his tribe tall and proud; wearing his robes and preceded by the flag. They judge things by external appearance.”⁸⁸ This patronizing affection is an attitude we are familiar with from European colonial settings, particularly among European colonial personnel who spent much of their lives “on station.” It is interesting, in this instance to compare Ahmet Cevdet Paşa’s and Osman Nuri Paşa’s views on the Arabs with those of a contemporary, Auguste Pavie, a French colonial official in Indochina. Although Ahmet Cevdet is clear about the fact that the “roots and trunk of the tree [of the Empire] are Turkish,” he nonetheless is quite critical of Turkish officials who “despise the Arab, call him *fellah* and naturally this causes him to hate the Turks.” Ahmet Cevdet made a point of emphasizing that, “It is necessary to treat the Arabs well, for they are the people of the Prophet. This was the policy of Selim [I]. Since then ignorant and negligent officials have multiplied who did not pay attention to these matters.”⁸⁹ Similarly, Osman Nuri Paşa was to state that, “I spent over a year in Yemen, never once was a case of theft re-

⁸⁶ Edhem Eldem, “Quelques lettres de Osman Hamdi Bey a son pere lors de son séjour en Irak (1869–1870),” *Anatolia Moderna/Yeni Anadolu I* 33:130–31. Osman Hamdi corresponded with his father in French. All the translations are mine.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ A *hil’at* is a robe of honor, traditionally bestowed as a gift by a superior to a subordinate.

⁸⁹ BBA YEE 18/1858/93/39.

ported to me. These are proud people whose unspoiled nature renders them noble hearted (*alicenab*).”⁹⁰

Auguste Pavie, who spent three years in French Indochina, displays the same paternalistic affection for “his charges”: “During all this time . . . the pure ideal that drove me was ‘to make Laos a French country in sentiment and habit’ . . . with such happiness do I see this now, in the charming heart of French Laos . . . I see it in the expression of joyous tranquility and love in the eyes of my old and good friend, the old King, the old Queen, as I, the honoured representative of France, sit by them and give them the good tidings of the new regime in their country.”⁹¹

MEMOIRS AND “LIFE WORLDS” AS CLUES ON BORROWED COLONIALISM

In the memoirs and biographies of people who lived through what turned out to be the death throes of an empire, we catch glimpses of the mentality outlined above. Habermas’ concept of “life world” is useful here in attempting to capture this mentality:

“[T]he lifeworld appears as a reservoir of taken-for-granted, of unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation . . . We can think of the lifeworld as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns.”⁹² In this context Naciye Neyyal Hanım, the author of the memoir cited below, and the life stories of Yusuf Dia’ and Ruhi Al Khalidi are instances of “lifeworlds,” as a shared world in which “interpretative patterns,” and “mutual understanding” would regulate the intellectual horizons within which these actors found themselves.”⁹³

A remarkable example of the *genre* is the massive memoir of a woman (unusual in itself), the painter Naciye Neyyal Hanım, whose life spanned the last days of the empire and the first days of the republic.⁹⁴ Her husband, Tevfik Bey, was the Ottoman *mutasarrıf* (governor) of Jerusalem from 1897 to 1901, Naciye Hanım accompanied him on his posting. A fellow passenger on their journey was the Minister of Customs, who disembarked when the ship first

⁹⁰ BBA YEE 14/292/126/8.

⁹¹ Auguste Pavie, *A la Conquete des Coeurs. Le Pays des millions d’éléphants et du parasol blanc. Les classiques de la colonization* (Paris 1947), 367. Pavie spent three years in Indochina (1886–1889) during which time he traveled to Siam, where he negotiated the treaty that demarcated independent Siam from French Laos. The “good tidings” that he was imparting to the King and Queen, was that they had definitively become a French colony. My translation.

⁹² Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System* (Boston 1989), 124.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁹⁴ *Ressam Naciye Neyyal ’in Mutlakıyet, Meşrutıyet ve Cumhuriyet Hatıraları* (The memoirs of painter Naciye Neyyal regarding the Hamidian Young Turk and Republican Periods), prepared for publication by Fatma Rezan Hürmen (Istanbul 2000). This memoir is based on diaries that Naciye Hanım kept throughout her life. The book is some six hundred pages in length and is virtually a day-by-day account of these years. The writer went on to become a prominent painter in the early republic. The volume was prepared for publication by her granddaughter.

docked at Beirut: "I saw a crowd of Arabs who had come to meet him. They were noisily kissing his hands, and in a great clamor they put him in a boat and rowed off shouting 'Allah! Allah!'"⁹⁵ When it was their turn to disembark at their port of arrival, Jafa, "some twenty or twenty-five Arabs arrived in big boats to take us ashore and seized the oars shouting, 'Allah! Allah.'"⁹⁶

It is almost as though that by their 'nature' the Arabs must utter "Allah! Allah!" After their arrival in Jerusalem, at some point Naciye Hanım catches an eye infection from two Arab women vendors who have been let into the house. She points out that eye infections due to flies are "very common among the Arabs." When she welcomed her husband home in the evening, "In those days, because of this confounded eye infection, I used to liken myself to those Arab women who go out to the gate together with their gummy eyed (*çipil gözlü*) child to meet their husbands. Accordingly I welcomed Tefvik Bey with the Arabic greeting, '*ahlan wa sahlân*.' He smiled and replied, 'there we are, now you have become just like them' (*tam onlara benzemişsin*)."⁹⁷

Yet, the 'noble savage' is right around the corner in the shape of Sheikh Rashid Arikat, who is presented as, "[Formerly] a rebel against the state who then declared his obedience and was made responsible for keeping the peace in Riha." The sheikh teaches Naciye Hanım to ride, saves her life from a runaway horse, and she ends up by saying, "He used to love me as a father." In describing her life as the young wife of a dashing Ottoman official Naciye Hanım waxes poetic: "I used to accompany Tefvik Bey everywhere he went, but in those days, even if one was man and wife, it would not do to be seen next to one another. Accordingly I followed at a distance of fifty, sixty or even one hundred metres. I was usually accompanied by gendarmes, just as he would be surrounded by soldiers and other official people. This life of ours, was something like the life of a prince and princess ruling a faraway kingdom . . ."⁹⁸

When Tefvik Bey went to Bir-i Sebi in the Negev desert, where he had been given instructions to form a *kaza*, Naciye Hanım went with him. Here, in contrast to the words above, she emphasized how they won the hearts of Arabs by their modesty: "The fact that, although we were the *mutasarrıf*, we mingled with them as a young husband and wife, without fanfare and ceremony and shared their life style, caused them to warm to us. I sensed that they liked us because, although they are savage, and live so far from civilization, they appreciate goodwill and know how to be thankful."⁹⁹ Apparently, the *kaza* was a success. After the construction of the government building, Naciye Hanım recorded that, "[P]eople flocked to the government building to register themselves and to settle around it. They requested that a mosque be built alongside it as an imperial gift and that all the buildings should bear the name of the August Personage."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ibid., 49. ⁹⁶ Ibid., 50. ⁹⁷ Ibid., 61. ⁹⁸ Ibid., 77–79. ⁹⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 88–89. Present-day Beersheva in Israel.

The memoirs of Naciye Hanım bear eloquent testimony to the “half-and-half nature” of Ottoman colonialism. On the one hand, Naciye Hanım feels that it was a mistake to let the Arab vendor women into the house because she “caught an Arab disease” which caused her husband to tease her that “she had become just like them.” On the other hand, Sheikh Arikat emerges from her memoirs as the heroic father figure. Yet, the scene in which she describes the official procession could have been a scene from “Passage to India.” Her assessment of the Arabs who “appreciate kindness and goodwill” is reminiscent of British lady travelers who praised the hospitality of ‘savage peoples’ into whose hands they entrusted their lives. Yet, the subtext of a shared religion is there in the need to be seen walking a respectful distance behind her husband.

At this point it seems appropriate to introduce two men into the picture who shared the same geography as Naciye Hanım, at much the same time. The lives and careers of two prominent Palestinians, Yusuf Dia’ al-Khalidi (1842–1906) and his cousin Ruhi al-Khalidi (1864–1913), are indeed biographical illustrations of borrowed colonialism.¹⁰¹ Rashid Khalidi rightly points out that the lives of these two men “show the different elements that constituted the identity of Palestinian notables in this transitional phase.”¹⁰² Yusuf Dia’ (or Yusuf Ziya Bey, as he would have been called in Turkish) received both an Islamic and Western education and his career followed the ups and downs of the Tanzimat reforms. In his lifetime he served as Mayor of Jerusalem, Ottoman Consul to the small coastal Black Sea town of Poti in the Russian empire, instructor of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish at the Imperial Royal Oriental Academy in Vienna, and member of the Ottoman parliament in 1877. Even after the sultan’s suspension of the parliament in 1878, when he fell out with the autocratic regime of Abdulhamid because of his liberal views, he was still kept on the payroll, and was named *kaymakam* to the Kurdish district of Bitlis in eastern Anatolia in mid-1880. In 1890 he was appointed Ottoman Ambassador to Belgrade, then as Ottoman Ambassador to Vienna in the same year, neither of which he was allowed to take up. “For the last ten years of his life, Yusuf Dia’ was in effect kept in enforced residence in Istanbul by the Sultan, who appointed him to ambassadorships he was not allowed to fill, to a consultative consul that never met . . . all of this with the objective of preventing him from going abroad, and thereby keeping a potential opponent under surveillance and control.”¹⁰³

The career of his cousin Ruhi al-Khalidi, whom Yusuf Dia’ groomed as his political successor, followed much the same pattern. Receiving a mixture of Islamic and Western education like his uncle, Ruhi al-Khalidi attended the prestigious School of Public Service, the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* in Istanbul, from which he graduated with distinction in 1893. Affiliated with liberal circles early in his

¹⁰¹ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. (New York 1997), 69–84.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 68. ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 74.

career, and pursued by Abdulhamid's secret police, Ruhi left hurriedly for Paris soon after his graduation, where he attended the Sorbonne. One of the high points of his life in Paris was the paper he presented to the 1897 Orientalist congress on the Muslim populations of the world, which was subsequently published as a pamphlet. Like his uncle, the regime suspected him but still made use of him. In 1898 he was appointed Ottoman Consul General to Bordeaux. After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 he was elected to parliament as deputy for Jerusalem, eventually becoming the Vice-President of the Chamber after his re-election in 1912. Ruhi al-Khalidi did not earn the favor of the ruling Young Turk party for his outspoken opposition of some of the government's policies which he (among other Arap deputies) feared were furthering Zionist encroachment in Palestine. Like his uncle, he died in Istanbul.¹⁰⁴

What do we glean from the careers of these two men in the matter of borrowed colonialism? One interesting aspect of their lives is that these two Palestinians saw their destiny as intimately linked with the survival of the Ottoman state: "For these men and others like them, the Ottoman government dominated by the CUP [Committee of Union and Progress] represented the best vehicle for championing constitutionalism and opposing the arbitrary exercise of power, for carrying out the administrative modernization necessary to restore the strength of the Empire, and enable it to resist strong external pressures."¹⁰⁵ Yet, Rashid Khalidi points out that in the case of both of these men (and many others) it was a case of "competing and overlapping loyalties." The Palestinian Arab identity would take precedence over Ruhi's "Young Turk" identity when it came to vital differences like that which occurred over Zionist settlement in their homeland.¹⁰⁶

Compared to the experience of British Indians then, the life stories of the Khalidis and their "pilgrimages," to pursue Benedict Anderson's metaphor, are very different. No matter how elite they were, it would have been inconceivable for a Raja Rammohan Roy or a Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to sit on the backbenches of Westminster.¹⁰⁷ Also, no doubt, Naciye Hanim, if she had met ei-

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 76–84.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 86. On the CUP—The Committee of Union and Progress—see Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York and Oxford 1995).

¹⁰⁶ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 87–89.

¹⁰⁷ It is interesting that like the Khalidis, both Rammohan Roy and Syed Ahmad Khan believed that Western learning was the *sine qua non* of survival in the modern world. Again like the Khalidis, the two Indian intellectuals had a solid grounding in Hindu and Muslim classical training. But there the similarity ends. Unlike the Khalidis who were either in parliament or functioned as a respected opposition, the Indian intellectuals had to confront the colonial authorities as supplicants. Roy traveled to England in 1832 and presented a memorandum to a House of Commons Committee urging reforms on the British government, particularly the lifting of the monopoly on salt. His views did indeed carry the day. Rammohan Roy believed that the British Raj had delivered the Hindus from the "Muslim yoke" of the Mughals. Roy also believed that missionary teaching, particularly the work of the Unitarians and the Presbyterians was important for bringing enlightenment to India. In many ways Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was to the Muslims what Roy was to the Hindus. After the Indian rising of 1857, Syed Ahmad Khan came to believe that the British were invincible,

ther of the Khalidis would have found him “*tres convenable*” and addressed him (in Turkish of course) as a “gentleman” (*beyefendi*). They may have been less favorably viewed by her husband who was a “Hamidian.” The picture changes somewhat, however, if we substitute Lord Minto, or Lord Aberdeen, or any other prominent Scottish name for the names of the Indians in the analogy. So the Khalidis and other Arabs who did reach the apogee of their “pilgrimage” in Istanbul are much more like the Scots than the Indians.¹⁰⁸

It is at this point that I would like to engage Homi Bhabha’s formulation of the colonial relationship as “mimicry” and question its applicability to borrowed colonialism. In Bhabha’s memorable wording: “[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*.”¹⁰⁹ The concept of “mimicry” or “mimic man” as a threat to colonialism, “[T]he *menace* of mimicry “ which ultimately becomes a threat because it threatens to do away with the *difference*,” would simply not apply in cases like the Khalidis.¹¹⁰ To continue to read Bhabha here: “The ambivalence of mimicry—almost but not quite—suggests that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal.” For the Khalidis or their other Arab Ottoman cohorts, mimicry of the Ottoman elite would not have been an issue, they *were* the Ottoman elite. The Khalidis would not have to “mime” nor would they have to “fetishize.” They, along with their Turkish, Albanian, Armenian, and Jewish fellow Young Turks or Young Ottomans, were already *within* the Ottoman system; Istanbul was not Gandhi’s London or Ho Chin Minh’s Paris—it was *their* city. Mimicry implies self-consciousness and inferiority, we will of course never know the psychological make up of these men, but it would appear that they were in no way consciously seeking to “copy the Turk.” So where do we draw the line? Who *was* the center? In 1841 the Ottoman governor of the province of Trablus Garp became an affiliate of the Sanusiyyah dervish order, a situation which would have been considered an unthinkable case of “going bush” in a white colonial context.¹¹¹

So what remains of the other colonial half of borrowed colonialism? Where

and that the only way forward for the Muslims of India was to prove their loyalty to the British after their disastrous defeat in 1857. He visited Britain in 1868 and returned more pro-British than before he left. On the lives and careers of these men see, R. C Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. 1. (Calcutta 1962), 33, 54, 291, 246–96; D. C Gupta, *Indian National Government* (Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore 1970), 21, 28. On Ram Mohan Roy’s relationship with Christianity and his activities in Britain, see S. Cromwell Crowford, *Ram Mohan Roy. Social, Political and Religious Reform in 19th Century India* (New York 1987), 41–92, 160–87.

¹⁰⁸ This point is also made by A. G Hopkins. See his, “Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History,” *Past and Present* (1999):205: “Even the Scots, who were present on every frontier, served mainly as adjutants rather than as pro-consuls. However, integration into the empire, far from destroying Scottish identity, helped to mould it, both in colonies of settlement and at home.”

¹⁰⁹ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man. The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York 1994), 85–92. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 88–89.

¹¹¹ Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya*, 73.

has the other “half” gone? The answer lies in the *limits* of the pilgrimage. Only one Arab served as Grand Vizier in the nineteenth century, and he was of Circassian slave origin.¹¹² Prosopographies of Ottoman Grand Viziers in the Tanzimat and Hamidian periods show that “34 of the last 39 Grand Viziers of the Ottoman State were Turkish, meaning that they were Anatolian or Rumelian Muslims whose mother tongue was Turkish.” So that is where we find the “gentlemen of the Home Counties.”¹¹³

In the case of the Palestinian distinguished gentlemen, or even in the case of the leaders of the dervish order of the Sanusiyyah, the fact was that they were well within the Pale. They were part of the Civilizing Project as Civilizers. Those who were excluded of course were the tribal, nomadic element, until the state became desperate for manpower in the later half of the nineteenth century.

CONCLUSION

The question that arises is, what was the difference between the Ottoman attitude of, say, the eighteenth or even early nineteenth century toward their peoples and their attitude in the nineteenth century. In a word, what was “Ottoman Colonialism”? I think the only succinct answer would be the new attitude of increased distance from the population. Here I speak of a moral distance whereby the fact that the population in question is Muslim is not of the first degree of importance. On the one hand, a moral appeal is made for Muslim solidarity against the Christian invader, yet on the other the peripheral people are seen as a resource in the material and positivist sense. The moral distance is paralleled by a will of unprecedented intensity to enforce the policies of the center.

It seems to me that the important difference between the pre Tanzimat Ottoman state and the modern Ottoman state may well lie in the disappearance of the “polite fictions.” In the pre-Tanzimat period the official in any given locality, the Vali or the *kaymakam* may very well not have needed to enforce the center’s will. Both he and the local power holder (sheikh, *agha* notable, etc.) would go through the motions of a polite fiction. The Ottoman official would not unduly interfere with the inner workings of the local power holder’s dominion. Polite forms would be observed, gifts exchanged, bribes given and taken, and in return, the local power holder would acknowledge the suzerainty of the sultan. However, when the empire was being squeezed to an unprecedented

¹¹² He was Tunuslu Hayreddin Paşa (Hayreddin Paşa the Tunisian) who served briefly as Grand Vizier under Abdulhamid II. On him, see Ibnulemin Mahmud Kemal Inal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar* (The last Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Empire) (Istanbul 1984).

¹¹³ Sevan Nişanyan, “Son Sadrazamlar. Kimdiler, Nereden Gelip Nereye Gittiler? (The last Grand Viziers. Who were they? Where did they come from? Where did they go?)” *Toplumsal Tarih* 7 (1997):36–46. See also Ibnulemin Mahmud Kemal Inal, *Son Sadrazamlar*. For the “Home Counties” imagery, see Hopkins, “Back to the Future,” 204–5: “But the British Empire . . . was still run from London and managed by English gentlemen whose natural habitat was found in the Home Counties.” The natural habitat of the Ottoman Grand Viziers would have been their *yals* on the shores of the Bosphorous.

extent, indeed was fighting for its life, there was no longer any space for the polite fictions. In the words of a Western contemporary observer: "In the spasmodic attempts made by individual Sultans to reorganize the Empire, the nomads presented themselves as a difficulty that must be eliminated before organization could be achieved. It was part of the policy of Abd ul Hamid [*sic*] carrying out more effectively the tendencies which were inevitably produced by the centralizing tendencies began by Mahmud II about 1815, to bring about the uniformity of the Muslim population."¹¹⁴

Lamartine's "Oriental Despotism" that Makdisi rightly exposes as a chimera, and the "always reconfigured anomaly that was everyday Ottoman politics" that he points to as the reality on the ground, the "perfectly routine and reciprocal, if hierarchical, intercourse between urban Ottoman governors on the one hand, and rural Druze chieftains and Maronite emirs on the other," in other words my polite fiction, is replaced by a much more immediate presence that draws on European colonial experience.¹¹⁵

But in the final instance, borrowed colonialism was fated to remain an art of the possible. The center's weakness meant that it was dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of the Sanusi sheikh, the local notable, and the Bedouin. It was here that Islam came into play. Even the Parisian intellectual Osman Hamdi, deeply concerned about increasing British encroachment, declared that Ottoman ships should patrol the Persian Gulf and show the flag, "To show that Turkey still lives, to show the Turkish and Muslim flag to all peoples."¹¹⁶ As was seen above, the census-takers in Tripoli were ordered "not to frighten" the people, and the first preference in such situations was always the application of "lenient and moderate measures" (*vesait-i leyyine ve mutedile*).¹¹⁷ These were cheaper and less destabilizing than the military option, which might not be available in any case. Standard practice usually followed a set pattern. First, an "advisory commission" (*heyet-i nasiha* or *heyet-i tefhimiye*) would be sent, usually including local notables or respected religious leaders. In the case of the Saharan Bedouin, it was hoped this role would be fulfilled by the Senusi sheikhs. In the case of the Hicaz and Yemen, Osman Nuri Paşa made it clear that nothing could be accomplished without the co-operation of the tribal chiefs. The commission would, "cajole the local leaders" with decorations and declarations that the Sultan was their, "affectionate father" (*peder-i müşfik*). Sometimes they would be invited to come to Istanbul as the Sultan's "guests," where they could on occasion be "guests for life" under house-arrest.¹¹⁸ Out-and-out

¹¹⁴ William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor. Some of its Causes and Effects*, Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. 7, 1916, 31.

¹¹⁵ Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate," 190.

¹¹⁶ Eldem, "Quelques lettres d'Osman Hamdi Bey," 127. It is interesting that Osman Hamdi should have equated Muslim and Turkish in this way. Eldem's view is that he was not a particularly pious person.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of this, see my *The Well Protected Domains*, 68–92.

¹¹⁸ The Wahabi leader Ibn Su'ud was captured and sent to Istanbul in 1818, "where many

bribes and presentation copies of the Qur'an usually, "written in large (meaning easy to read) characters" were also used. If all else failed, then and only then was a "punitive expedition" (*kuvve-i tedibiye*) or a "reformatory force" (*firka-i ishlahiye*) sent to inflict what was hoped would be exemplary punishment. But a pardon was always on offer if the people mended their ways.¹¹⁹ The Ottoman officials on station were in fact quite conscious of their "new colonialism." On one particular occasion in 1869, the Vali of Damascus, Mehmed Raşid Paşa, actually invited the French and British Consuls to accompany him on a pacification campaign against the Bedouin in the central Jordan valley.¹²⁰ When the Bedouin in the Karak region of the Jordan rose in rebellion against the Ottomans in 1911, they targeted specifically those elements that they saw as representing Ottoman rule: the census offices, the school, barracks, even the mosque built under Ottoman auspices.¹²¹

Another aspect of the relationship between the Ottoman center and the subject peoples that differed considerably from the British or French experience was the far greater negotiating power that the subject population had. What Beshara Doumani has pointed out in the case of Ottoman Nablus up to the mid-century holds largely true for the Ottoman center's relationship with other spheres: "In their discourse, both forces seized on the long history of flexible and permeable boundaries between center and periphery as well as on the exigencies of rapidly changing political economic realities in order to expand their respective space for maneuvering and, in the process, to reinvent their mutual relationship."¹²² Yet, as his study shows, by 1860 the rules of the game had been radically altered as the Ottoman government ended the centuries-long autonomy of Jabal Nablus and, "finally achieved a monopoly of the means of coercion and was able to impose direct political control."¹²³ The Hamidian regime very closely resembled what Christopher Bayly has described as "Curzonism," with its emphasis on "unity" and "efficiency." Abdulhamid's Ottoman Empire, like Curzon's United Kingdom and India, used as its instruments "public health, public works, and the taxonomizing imperatives of police anthropology."¹²⁴

learned orthodox *ulema* tried to reason with him in his prison and to win him back to Islamic orthodoxy." See, Howard Reed, "*The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II*," (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University 1951), 34.

¹¹⁹ The punitive expeditions could sometimes be commanded by the highest ranking officials in the land. Ahmet Cevdet Paşa himself commanded such a force sent to quell rebellion among the Kurds in Cilicia in 1864. See Cristoph Neuman, *Araç Tarih. Amaç Tanzimat* (Istanbul 2000), 34. Similarly, no lesser a personage than Fuad Paşa, the Grand Vizier, was sent to restore order in Damascus after the 1860 riots. See, Leila Fawaz, *An Occasion for War* (London 1994).

¹²⁰ Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 51. The Paşa's aim was presumably to show off his efficiency. In this he was successful since the Bedouin submitted, and the French Consul duly reported back to his superiors.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 197–201.

¹²² Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine. Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus 1700–1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1995), 217.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹²⁴ Christopher Bayly, "Returning the British to South Asian History," *South Asia* 22 (1994):1–25.

As the century wound to its close, and particularly after the Young Turks seized absolute power after the rigged election of 1912, the Committee of Union and Progress alternated the policies of strong centrist rule with continued appeals to Islamic solidarity: “The fact that they were of the same religion as the Arabs was not significant to the Young Turks. They saw themselves as bringing civilization to the tribal society of the Arabs and protecting it against Western Imperialism.”¹²⁵ As the debate between the “Arabists” and the “Turkists” in the Committee of Union and Progress heated up, some of the Arabists accused the CUP of “having been intent on concentrating the power of the state in Turkish hands and treating the non-Turkish elements in the Ottoman Empire just like colonial France treated the Algerians.”¹²⁶

After the Italian navy bombarded Arab provinces with impunity during the Italian-Ottoman War of 1912, and news reached Syria that Libya had fallen to the Italians, some Arab Ottomans began to think that the Ottoman state could no longer protect them against ‘real’ colonialism. Rafiq al-Azm, a prominent Syrian and president of the Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party, wrote: “Syria is Ottoman as long as the Ottoman state is capable of defending it. If, God Forbid, the Ottoman State collapses, . . . then Syria is an Arab country indivisible from Arab territory. Syria is Ottoman first, Arab second, and rejects any foreign interference. The Syrian nation holds fast to its Ottomanism and . . . does not wish for the policy of colonization to put an end to its national life.”¹²⁷ Therefore, in a paradoxical way the Italian defeat was used as propaganda material by the Young Turks and served to push their appeal for unity and solidarity in the face of the colonialist threat.¹²⁸

Situating the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire in the post-colonial debate ultimately ends up showing us more clearly what we knew all along: the Ottoman state was never a colony. In order to avoid becoming a colony, and to stake a legitimate claim to existence in an increasingly hostile world, the Ottomans decided that they had to become like the enemy, to borrow his tools, so to speak.

This brings me full circle to my query at the beginning, to paraphrase: at what point does the common religion cease to be a sufficiently differentiating condition in the relationship of the Ottomans to the “native” population? I submit that it is at the point that the stance of *moral superiority* leads to a position of *moral distance*, this perceived sense of “them” and “us.” The paradox lies in

¹²⁵ Şükrü Hanioglu, “The Young Turks and the Arabs before the Revolution of 1908,” in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Reeva Simon, and M. Muslih, eds. (New York 1984), 31.

¹²⁶ Mahmoud Haddad, “The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26 (1994):201–22.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* Haddad is quoting an editorial by Rafiq Al Azm published in the *Al Muayyad* newspaper on 24 December 1912.

¹²⁸ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908–1918*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1997), 129–43. Kayalı’s work shows that the relationship between the Young Turks and the Arab reform movement was much more nuanced than has hitherto been believed.

the fact that this distance is establishing itself in the minds of the center at the very time that their dependence on their fellow Muslim subjects is increasing. Also, in the absence of real coercive power at the disposal of the center, the bargaining position of the tribal warrior is much stronger than the bargaining position of say, a jute worker in India, or a rubber gatherer in the Congo. When the Ottoman official approaches the Touareg, he still assumes as a given that the man is a 'savage' (noble or not), but he must make an *argument*, which is: "the Christians are closing in on you." Thus it could be said that as an empire, and a great power, and the only Muslim great power at that, the Ottomans rejected the *subaltern role* that the West seemed intent on making them adopt, but they could only do this by inviting (to put it euphemistically) 'their own' subalterns into history.

Seen from the position of the subaltern, on the other hand, the Ottomans and the British as imperial powers may well have looked rather similar. Karl Blind, in 1896, was to severely criticize Gladstone's comment that the "Turks were the one great anti-human species of humanity" with the remark: "How if he had been reminded by a member of the anti-human race that there are some Irish Home Rulers and Secessionists who in *United Ireland*, speak of England, on account of her rule of the Sister Isle and her many polyglot dominions as the 'Anglo-Saxon Grand Turk.'"¹²⁹ No doubt Abdulhamid would have considered this a compliment although the Irish could hardly have meant it as such.

¹²⁹ Karl Blind, "Young Turkey," *Forthnightly Review* 66 (London 1896):840.