

OSMANLI ARAŞTIRMALARI
V

Neşir Heyeti — Editorial Board

HALİL İNALCIK — NEJAT GÖYÜNÇ

HEATH W. LOWRY

THE JOURNAL OF OTTOMAN STUDIES
V

İstanbul - 1986

kunun case-metodla hiçbir ilgisi yoktur. Fakat İslam Hukukunun özelliklerinden bir de «Kazuistik» oluşudur. (J. Schacht : *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, s. 205 Türkçesi : *İslâm Hukukuna Giriş*, Ank. 197 s. 208/9).

Biz, Osmanlı Hukukunun Yapısı'nda bu iki metodun da iyi tefrik edilemediği intibamı edindik (s. 117, 118).

Özbilgen kitabının bir yerinde, yeni hukuk terminolojisinin kullanılışında «kargaşa» görmekte ve bunun, «bugünün araştırmacısını inceleme ve hatta yanlış yorumlamalara götürebileceğini» haklı olarak vurgulamaktadır (s. 33 dipnot 19). Aynı yakınmayı kendi kitabı için yaparak sözlerimize son verirse, bizi hoş göreceğini umarız.

Turgut Akpınar

Antoine Abdelnour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane* (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle), Publications de l'Université Libanaise, Section des Etudes Historiques XXV (Beirut, 1982).

In the last few years, there has been a revival of interest in Ottoman towns and cities of the Arab provinces. Attention has been focused on Cairo, but the Syrian cities, particularly Aleppo, have equally attracted the attention of researchers. The *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane* is remarkable for its attempt to provide regional coverage, and thus it goes beyond the single-city monograph which is the most common type of contribution to urban studies. In the foreword, Antoine Abdel Nour indicates that the book is the product of his dissertation researches as a student of Dominique Chevallier, and promises further publications in this field. Unfortunately in 1982, the year in which his book was published, the author was killed in Beirut without being able to realize the projects he had formed.

There is something especially melancholy about reviewing the work of a scholar cut off in the early stages of his career. It is difficult even to be critical, because criticism implies the right of rebuttal, and no dialogue is possible with a dead person. Therefore the present review is really more of a report, which may be of some use as the war has made the distribution of Beirut publications difficult, and the present volume, for instance, reached Turkey only after a long delay.

The *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine* consists of four main sections. It begins with a long single chapter on the growth and or decline of Syrian cities from the 16th to the 19th century. In this section Abdel Nour attempts a rebuttal of the commonly held view, defended largely on the basis of European sources, that Syrian population declined during the three centuries of Ottoman

rule. Basing himself upon the researches of Barkan, Hütteroth and Abdulfattah, he points out that while certain areas close to the limits of the desert were given up, the coastal regions were newly settled, large cities became even larger, and the total population of Syria showed an appreciable increase. In accordance with what is known for other parts of the Mediterranean, Abdel Nour assumes that after the population increase of the 16th century (which is accepted by almost all researchers) a period of stagnation followed which lasted throughout the 17th century. For the 18th and 19th centuries, Abdel Nour assumes growth in certain areas of Syria and decline in others. Given the limitations of all available counts, Abdel Nour's views can certainly be challenged, since he, like everybody else, is forced to work with estimates. But on the other hand, the evidence which he has marshalled certainly suffices to cast doubt on the hitherto dominant view of continuous population decline since the closing years of the 16th century (or even since the period of Roman rule, as has been proposed by certain scholars).

The second section of Abdel Nour's work deals with the spatial organization and habitat of Syrian towns and cities. This section is innovative from several points of view: Not only does the author give an overview over the activities of the numerous guilds in which the construction workers of Ottoman Damascus were organized, he has also used the Aleppo *kadı* registers to reconstruct changes in the physical shape of urban residences. Given the Aleppine tradition of building in stone and the long-lasting importance of the city, Aleppo constitutes an especially propitious environment for a study that combines documentary with architectural evidence. (For a comparable study of Central Anatolian towns, documentary research must on the other hand, be carried out almost in a vacuum, given the scarcity of datable buildings going back to the 16th or 17th century). In this section of his book, Abdel Nour's most important achievement is probably his analysis of the process by which buildings were subdivided, when in the 18th century a decline in Aleppo's commercial opportunities coincided with a wave of displaced villagers migrating into the city.

In the third section of his study, Abdel Nour concentrates upon the mechanisms by which Damascus received its provisions; thus his work compares with the studies that Güçer and Mantran have undertaken with respect to İstanbul. Even though the author is well aware of the difficulties involved in discerning the role that climatic variations may have played in the genesis of famines, he does seem to feel that the Syrian 18th century was characterized by an unusually large number of droughts. The latter gave rise to famines partly because the Ottoman state was no longer able or willing to supply Syria with Egyptian or Anatolian grain. These observations are remarkable from several points of view: first of all, the European 18th century is generally considered to form part of the 'Little Ice Age', which was characterized among other things by more than average rainfall. That this phenomenon should have been accompanied even by a minor tendency toward droughts in the eastern

Mediterranean is a matter which climatologists may be able to situate in a larger context.

More directly relevant to political history in the traditional sense of the word is the Abdel Nour's observation concerning Ottoman state policy. The early 18th century is generally considered a period in which the central government attempted to reform and restore Syrian provincial administration. This policy included an attempt to supply the cities at (relatively) cheap prices, while peasants and animal breeders were made to foot the bill: a way of thinking which can also be observed in the provisioning policies relevant to Istanbul. Moreover, the inability of the central government to supply Syria with Egyptian or Anatolian grain may be one of the reasons why the reign of the 'Azm governors has often been considered a period in which local initiatives gained ground. Who knows, Abdel Nour may have hit upon an element in the material basis underlying this tendency toward increased local initiative?

As to the fourth section of the *Introduction à l'histoire Urbaine*, it deals with urban-dominated regions and in this context, addresses itself to the problem of migration. Here Abdel Nour attacks the theories of Weulersse concerning the radically different cultures and ethnicities of townsmen and villagers in the Middle East. This theory may appear so far-fetched that it scarcely needs a rebuttal. But the reason why it has survived for a relatively long time may well be the convenient use to which it may be put: namely to deny any kind of urban cohesion in Middle Eastern cities, while at the same time rejecting all potential for national states in the Middle East (Weulersse was writing at the time of the French mandate). Abdel Nour tackles the problem by referring to the massive currents of migration from the countryside to the Syrian cities. The latter are well-documented and quite sufficient to demolish Weulersse's theories, thus bringing out the parallels between the Middle Eastern experience and that of other pre-industrial societies.

Abdel Nour's work here ends rather abruptly; there is no concluding chapter, a fact which may be taken as a reflection or symbol of the circumstances under which it was written. This book fits well into what might be called the 'revisionist' current in Ottoman history. Making wide use of Ottoman archival material, scholars who share this outlook tend to polemicize against the overall denigration of Ottoman state and culture which formed part of the intellectual baggage of both European historians of a colonialist orientation and Arab nationalists of the more old-fashioned variety. This book ought to be widely read, particularly in Turkey; and it is to be hoped that an enterprising publisher will attempt a translation.