

THE EDITOR'S DESK

During the first half of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was one of the greatest political units of its time. Extending from northern Hungary to southern Arabia and from the Crimea almost to the Atlantic, it was a state that exceeded its European counterparts not only in size, but also in political, economic, military, and financial strength. Yet in less than a century, this Empire was beginning to fall into a state of disintegration which, except for certain states, was to continue, slowly but steadily, until its final collapse three centuries later. This Empire, its rise and decline, has been the subject of numerous studies. Western scholars have theorized, with little basis in fact, that the rise of the Empire was attributable largely to Christians in Ottoman service and its decline to the intrusion of born Muslims who were deemed inherently incapable of maintaining an Empire. Only recently, however, have the more fundamental causes of decline, involved for the most part with the social and economic makeup of the Empire, begun to be examined. In our feature article this issue, Professor Ömer Lütfi Barkan, Director of the Turkish Economic History Institute of the University of Istanbul, provides a definitive statement of the economic causes of decline in his study 'The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Middle East'. For many years a pioneer in exploiting the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, Professor Barkan now uses archival sources to demonstrate the basic factors involved in Ottoman decline: overpopulation, European economic warfare, deflation to Ottoman currency, inflation of prices, decline of the landed aristocracy, unemployment, and the rise of Celali rebels against the misrule of the *Devşirme*-dominated regime in Istanbul. Professor Barkan enables us to understand, really for the first time, not only the reasons for the decline, but also why the Empire managed to survive in such a state for so long a time.

In our other contributions, Saad E. M. Ibrahim, of De Pauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, analyzes the relationship between the urbanization and modernization in the Arab world in 'Over-Urbanization and Under-Urbanism: The Case of the Arab World'. Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, studies the relationship between the structure of Ottoman government and the local military and civilian leaders in 'The Beylicate in Seventeenth-Century Tunisia'. Jonas Prager, of New York University and Hunter College of the City of New York, analyzes the role of the Central bank of Israel in controlling the country's financial development in 'Central Bank Policy-Making in Israel: The Horowitz Governorship (1954-1971)'. Your editor also contributes a description of the 'Ottoman Archival Materials for the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: The Archives of Istanbul', emphasizing in particular the

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previously unknown and unexploited collections of the Prime Minister's Office (*Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası*), containing largely undisturbed files concerning all the problems that enveloped the Empire during the last half-century of its existence: wars with European and Balkan powers seeking to gain their share of the spoils of a declining Empire, large-scale massacres of Turkish and other Muslim inhabitants of the Empire on the part of the invading armies and of the minorities in revolt, and the efforts to modernize and reform the Empire in a last, vain struggle to save it. These archives offer by far the largest available source for the study of Balkan and Middle Eastern history from the late nineteenth century until the end of World War I, and the Turkish Government is to be commended for making them available for study in surroundings as pleasant as those provided by the Prime Minister's Archives in Istanbul. Finally, Professor John Joseph, of Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, discusses on the basis of his own research, Khaldun S. Husry's article 'The Assyrian Affair of 1933', which appeared in volume v of *IJMES*.

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