

A History of the Near East
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*The Making of the
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1792-1923

M. E. Yapp



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above. Only those whose experience of teaching Near Eastern history extends over a considerable period can know how the subject has been carried forward by its practitioners in the second half of the twentieth century; where once one scraped to fill a bibliography there is now a real task of selection. It has been good to be part of that endeavour and it has been good also to stand back and to take stock of some of its results.

The principal difficulty which I encountered in writing this book was to combine the requirement for a straightforward, factual account of the modern history of the region, such as would be useful to students, with the desirability of providing an introduction to various ideas – some fairly well developed, others only half formed – about the nature of Near Eastern development during the period. My inclination towards the second possibility was strengthened by the opportunities for comparisons presented by the project. Looking at the results some readers may think the combination should not have been attempted and I confess that there were moments when I thought the same. But it seems to me now that the ideas have profited from the discipline of the factual narrative and that the narrative itself has been ventilated by the ideas and given a suitably provisional character. I do not know whether I can write received wisdom but I know I have never wanted to do so.

A similar, comforting rationalization has come to unfold my second difficulty which was to find the time to write the book. In the end most of it was written in various holiday homes in France. When I was a student I marvelled at the ingenuity of Henri Pirenne writing his history in a prison camp. Now, it seems to me to be the only way such a work could have been brought to a successful conclusion. Escape from libraries can be an intellectual liberation: deprived of his books even H. A. L. Fisher might have discovered some patterns in history. At all events I doubt if I would have picked my way through the Eastern Question without the help of the empty air of the high Pyrenees.

It is tempting to use a preface to seek to anticipate or even to disarm one's critics. Wise publishers like mine restrict writers to two pages and prevent them from offering a second book as an introduction to the first. Messrs Longman have served me well with patience, encouragement and help and I should not try their goodwill further. If they have a fault it is no more than a scepticism about the value of capital letters.

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CHAPTER ONE

Society, Economy and Politics in the Nineteenth-century Near East

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter will provide an outline of the main features of the social, economic and political condition of the Near East in 1800 and a sketch of the principal changes which took place during the course of the period down to 1923. Before embarking upon that task it will be helpful to say what is meant by the Near East.

The term "Near East" appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century, when it was used as a convenient expression to describe the Ottoman empire and the territories which had until recently formed part of it. The companion term "Middle East" appeared a few years later and was used to indicate the territories which extended from Iran to Tibet. These two terms were used in those senses down to the end of the First World War. The core of this study therefore is the political unit which Europeans called Turkey and which the Ottomans referred to as *mamluk-i 'Osmaniye* (the Ottoman lands) or *dewlet-i 'alviye* (the exalted state). In this book it will be referred to as the Ottoman empire.

The Ottoman empire in 1880 extended from Bosnia to Arabia and from the Zagros mountains to Algeria. However, it is not intended to devote equal attention to the whole of that territory but to concentrate on the central Ottoman lands. In 1800 Algeria, Tunisia and Libya were autonomous and only a brief account will be given of their fortunes. Little will be said also of the Sudan, which was independent in 1800 but conquered by Egypt in the nineteenth century; and Arabia will receive modest attention. The Balkan lands, which are usually referred to as Rumelia, although the term is not contentious with the Balkan countries, were of great importance to the Ottomans and are given due

prominence during the time they remained part of the empire. But as the Balkan states begin on their careers of autonomy little attention is given to their domestic affairs. The heart of the book is Anatolia, Greater Syria, Egypt and Iraq to which is added one area from outside the Near East, namely Iran, which, because of its size and because of the interest of comparing developments in Iran with those in more western areas, deserves inclusion. Finally, a few references are made to Turkestan in the east for the sake of comparison and completeness.

One major problem which besets any writer on the modern history of the Near East is what place to give to the activities of the European powers. To ignore their role is to distort the history of the Near East, yet to understand it fully requires a detailed consideration of purely European problems and space which is not available; and the effort distracts attention from the changes within the Near East which are the central concern of this book. Some compromise is essential but no compromise is likely to please.

SOCIETY

Writing at about the beginning of our period the Egyptian chronicler, al-Jabarti, described society in terms of five hierarchically arranged categories ranging from the Prophet Muhammad to the masses. What is interesting about his arrangement is the criterion he used to determine the rank of each category, for he did not use wealth or birth or political power but instead applied the concept of justice (*‘adl*). Social status is determined by the propensity of each group to behave justly. The concept is set out in the Ottoman Civil Code, the Mejlle: "The *‘adl* person is one in whom good impulses prevail over bad." Of course, Muslims recognized that in this evil world social rank was not founded on justice but on power, but in stating the ideal Jabarti was also indicating that deviations were essentially impermanent; ultimately society must depend upon justice if there was to be stability. It is implicit also in his view that the just society was a Muslim society for only the believer had accepted the guidance which was necessary in order to behave with justice.

* Another common view of the social order depicted it as related to the four elements. Society was composed of four classes: men of the pen, men of the sword, merchants and peasants. The classes were bound together in mutual dependence — the state rested on the military; the military on the peasants, the peasants on justice which was guaranteed

by the Shar‘a and the Shar‘a required the support of the state.

It is useful to set out contemporary Near Eastern views of society in order to show how essentially anachronistic is the analysis which follows for modern analysis begins with the idea of describing the actual mechanisms of society in order to propound a view of the way it coheres or is organized.

To modern Western readers the term social organization suggests a pyramid wherein social classes are arrayed in a hierarchy according to wealth and status. That image will not do for the Near East in the early nineteenth century. According to one view there was no hierarchy but two distinct horizontal layers consisting of the rulers and the ruled. Applied to Near Eastern towns that scheme has some merit, but it fails when applied to the countryside for it overvalues the interest and influence of the rulers. The shadow of government certainly extended into the countryside, but it was there refracted through various prisms which themselves represent social groupings.

Another, valuable concept which has been applied to Near Eastern society is that of the mosaic. In this view Near Eastern society is seen as a mosaic of autonomous corporations existing side by side and not arranged in any particular order of eminence, or at least not an order accepted throughout the society. Government itself may be regarded as one such corporation and, like the others, defined partly by inheritance and partly by function — the provision of defence and some modest administrative services.

Birth was certainly the primary criterion which determined to which corporation within Near Eastern society an individual belonged. It was not impossible to achieve membership of another corporation, and in earlier periods a large part of the ruling group within the Ottoman empire was recruited by lifting children from one group and enrolling them among the rulers, but it was exceedingly difficult and it was an ambition which few cherished. In the nineteenth century the one substantial group which did not have its status determined by birth was the slaves. Slavery in the Near East chiefly involved the importation of pagan Blacks for domestic duties. White slaves were used primarily as soldiers or concubines but in the nineteenth century Circassian slaves were also employed, unusually, in agricultural work. Slavery was, however, also a door to the highest positions in the state: of twelve Ottoman grand viziers in the period 1785-1808 at least five were by origin the slaves of pashas. But for the most part people lived their lives within the group in which they were born and their children followed them in it.

The basic social group was the family. In the absence of any censuses

or any system of registration we know regrettably little about the size of the Near Eastern family in 1800. It is usually assumed that the common pattern was that of the extended family and the isolated examples such as the Serbian *zadruga* which are recorded support that assumption.

The family was the basis of tribal organization. "Tribal" does not mean "nomadic" in the Near East; it is a much broader category, and may be regarded as a spectrum extending from settled peoples such as those in Syria who retained a memory or myth of Arab tribal descent, through settled tribes such as the Khazā'il or Marsh Arabs of Iraq or the bedouin of the western provinces of Egypt through to the true pastoral nomads of Arabia. Even nomadism itself should be regarded as a spectrum rather than an absolute category for it embraced both those who confined their movements to the summer and cultivated grain or were sedentary stock-breeders in the winter and those aristocrats of central Arabia, the camel-herding tribes like the Harb and the Shammar who looked down on those who merely herded sheep. It was the camel nomads who especially cherished their genealogies, but descent as well as occupation determined the status of all who retained a tribal identity. For them society was governed by categories such as the family, the segmentary lineage, the clan, the division, the group and the tribe (*qabila*) itself, by traditional alliances, by an established hierarchy of tribal authority and by tribal obligations and customs, notably the blood feud. What proportion of the population of the Near East in 1800 may be classified as tribal is difficult to estimate, but the number would include most of the population of Arabia, half that of Iraq, a third of that of Iran and substantial proportions of the populations of Egypt, Syria and Anatolia, especially the eastern areas. Tribal groups also existed in the European provinces of the Ottoman empire, in Albania and Montenegro.

The category of peasant overlaps with that of tribesman but it embraces much more and peasants formed the largest socio-economic category in the Near East in 1800. Beyond the family the peasant looked to the village, which was the common focus of loyalty through much of the Near East and was a centre of economic as well as social life. The village created its own hierarchy, composed of the elders or heads of families who met in council under a village headman and took decisions affecting the village as a whole. The village was an enclosed community; a feature underlined by its appearance through most of the region. The description of an Egyptian village by Lady Duff Gordon in 1862 may convey something of the style:

The villages look like slight elevations in the mud banks cut into square shapes. The best houses have neither paint, whitewash, plaster, bricks nor windows, nor any visible roofs. They don't give one the notion of human dwellings at all at first, but soon the eye gets used to the absence of all that constitutes a house in Europe.¹

Single-storey mud and timber constructions were the norm; apart from houses a Muslim village would have a few handicraft shops, a mosque and a Süfi lodge. Christian villages would be similar with a church substituted for the mosque and Süfi residence. Until the fashion of urban romanticism created the legend of the simple and deserving peasant, peasants were everywhere regarded with contempt in the Near East and held to be stupid and ignorant; civilization was an urban phenomenon and the countryside the realm of barbarism. Peasants were certainly illiterate, ignorant of the outside world and prone to superstition, although not necessarily more so than many town-dwellers: they were not, however, so submissive as they were often depicted to be and the history of the Near East contains many accounts of violent peasant uprisings against attempted impositions.

In the towns the focuses of social (and economic) life were the guild and the urban quarter, two institutions which tended to coincide. A quarter consisted of several narrow lanes with a single gated entrance which was closed at night. Within it were grouped the shops of people practising the same trade, who were usually organized in a guild. A guild was composed of apprentices, journeymen and masters and had elaborate regulations and ceremonies to control and celebrate passage from one grade to another. The guild masters formed a council and had a headman who represented the guild to outside bodies. Apart from its economic and governmental functions the guild also fulfilled social purposes, organizing parades, picnics, feasts and other ceremonies. Many, but not all, townspeople belonged to guilds; there was also a floating population of recent immigrants who were not absorbed into the guild structure and who constituted the element commonly described as the town riff-raff and who provided the muscle in the frequent urban riots. In addition, of course, the town was also a centre of government with the apparatus of bureaucrats and military garrison and of religion with a complement of religious teachers, lawyers, officials and students.

Cutting across the social divisions of the Near East described in the preceding paragraphs was the religious division. In 1800 the majority of the population of the Near East was Muslim: Turkistan, Iran and Arabia were almost wholly Muslim; a small Christian and Jewish minority lived in Iraq; a larger Christian minority (the Copts) lived in

Egypt together with a smaller Jewish community; most of the rest of North Africa was Muslim but with a substantial pagan element in the south; a sizeable Christian minority (over 10% of the population) lived in Greater Syria; another sizeable Christian minority of Greeks and Armenians lived in Anatolia; and there was a Christian majority of over two to one in Rumelia, the European provinces of the Ottoman empire. In Rumelia Muslims were especially the townspeople, with the exception of Bosnia, where there was a large class of Muslim landlords and free peasants, of Albania, where the rural areas contained a majority of Muslims, and of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Thrace, where there had been substantial Muslim settlement and conversion and there were many Muslim villages. There were no Muslim landholding in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, where the Ottoman presence was confined to the fortress garrisons: in Serbia there was, apart from the garrisons, an urban Muslim population of about 20,000 composed of administrators, craftsmen and feudal landlords (*spahis*); and in Greece about 65,000 Muslim landholders controlled about half the land of the future Greek state of 1830. By contrast, in Istanbul and the towns of the Asian provinces non-Muslims were represented disproportionately.

The Christian population of the Ottoman empire was divided into many sects but by far the largest group, concentrated especially in Rumelia, was the Greek Orthodox community. For organizational purposes the Greek Orthodox were divided into four patriarchates (Istanbul, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria) of which the most important was that of Istanbul. For many purposes the Ottomans dealt with the Greek population through the patriarch in Istanbul, who was regarded as a high Ottoman official, entitled to a standard of two horse-tails.

It is usually suggested that the Christian and Jewish communities of the Ottoman empire were organized in so-called *millet*s and that the Ottoman government dealt with each *millet* through its hierarchical head. This did indeed become the practice during the nineteenth century, but in earlier periods the Ottomans commonly dealt with smaller groups (*ka'fias*) of non-Muslims for most purposes and rarely used the term "*millet*" except in relation to the Muslim community. It is also suggested that all non-Muslims paid a special tax, the *jizya*, but in fact there was considerable discrimination between non-Muslim groups, depending upon age, status and services to the state and it has been calculated that no more than one-third of non-Muslims actually paid the tax.

In dealing with non-Muslims through their religious communities

the Ottomans were also recognizing a social reality: religion was not merely a matter of church organization, worship and rites of passage but the religious communities also provided the two major social services of law and education. Personal law to the people of the Near East was the law of their religious community, and the authority of the religious community also penetrated other areas of civil law and occasionally even criminal law when cases involved members of the community alone. Such education as existed was provided almost entirely by the religious community through elementary schools attached to churches and through seminaries for higher education. Similarly with the Muslim community: although law was administered through the *qāḍī*'s court, education was provided through the mosque and the *madrasa*.

The Muslim community was far from uniform. In the first place it was divided into sects: Sunnī (the majority of Ottoman Muslims), Shī'ī (the majority of Iranian Muslims), and a variety of smaller sects mainly of Shī'ī origin. In the second place it was divided into what may be termed high Islam and popular Islam. High Islam was the religion of the *madrasa* and firmly rooted in the *Sharī'a* and elaborated in the opinions of the most learned, the *mufīss* and (among Shī'īs) the *mujtahids*. In the Ottoman empire, unlike other Muslim states, there existed by the late eighteenth century something approaching a Muslim hierarchy, led by the Shaykh al-Islām in Istanbul, to represent high Islam. Popular Islam was especially the Islam of the Sūfī orders which formed a major element in the social fabric of the Near East. A large proportion of the Muslim inhabitants of the Near East belonged to one or other of the many Sūfī orders which were extensive organizations owning property and providing a variety of social services for their adherents. Sūfī orders were of many types: some essentially religious, contemplative, literary organizations like the Naqshbandiyya and the Khalwatiyya in Istanbul; others were more like friendly societies, offering everyday services and appealing to the masses; many were distinctly heterodox like the Bektashiyya; some had close links with particular guilds or professions; and some espoused the cause of social revolution. What is striking about the Sūfī orders is not only their diversity but their vigour. Far from being an old and decaying form of social organization they were entering, in the nineteenth century, a period of vigorous expansion when new orders were founded and older orders assumed novel aspects. The Sūfī shaykhs were powerful men in society.

Against that background it is possible to begin to sketch the social hierarchy of the Near East. At the top were those connected with government who comprised the military (almost entirely Muslim) and the

bureaucracy (mainly Muslim but heavily penetrated with Christian and Jewish groups, for example the Copts, Armenians and Greeks who played a large part in financial administration in Egypt and the Ottoman empire as a whole). Without doubt this group enjoyed the greatest rewards. The second group was the religious establishment which included those claiming descent from the Prophet (the *sharifs* and *sayyids*), those especially distinguished for their learning and the excellence of their behaviour, and those who held offices of importance, such as the imams of the leading mosques, the guardians of the great shrines, the principal *muftis* and the members of the official Ottoman hierarchy. The existence of this hierarchy provided one link between government and religious groups. Another was provided by the existence of the *qazis*, a man with religious training who was a linchpin of administration throughout the Near East for he not only presided over a court but also discharged a host of administrative functions. The significance of the role of the *ulema* may be illustrated from the life of the Egyptian, Shaykh Muhammad al-Mahdi (d. 1814) (curiously enough a Copt by origin who converted to Islam as a child) of whom al-Jabarti remarked that "he came to make the acquaintance of important people and through his good conduct with them, and the beauty of his words, he obtained much wealth".²

The third group was composed of the remainder of those outside government and consisted of merchants, peasants, tribesmen and townsmen, mainly the guildsmen. This was a large and heterogeneous group with considerable differences in manner and standard of life. In particular it is possible to distinguish a group which is usually described as notables (*d'yan*) and which forms an essential bridge between government and the governed, representing the people to government. In no way should the notables be thought of as a species of middle class: their claim to consideration did not derive from their role in production or their professional status. They were in effect the people who had to be consulted by government because they were wealthy or because they had followers.

During the eighteenth century *d'yan* was an official title but not an official post in the Ottoman empire. Many *d'yan*, however, held an official post, namely that of *miterellim*, by origin the agent sent to collect the revenues of a *sanjak* in the absence of the great dignitary to whom revenues were granted. These *d'yan* became administrators of *sanjaks* and farmed the taxes thereof. Most of the Anatolian *derebeys* built their power in this way. But it would be wrong to restrict the term "notable" to this group for in functional terms it may usefully comprehend a much larger group.

The notables were diverse in origin and wealth. At the village level there were headmen. "The affairs of the Bulgarians", remarked an English traveller in 1829, "are referred in each village to a junta of old men, who may be considered, in the absence of the Turkish authority, as a sort of provincial government."³ In Egypt, government could not have been carried on without the assistance of the *shaykh al-balad*. Among nomadic tribes the leader of each major division was also a notable. Large landowners such as the Anatolian *derebeys*, the Arabian boyars and the Bosnian begs were notables and able to defy government on occasion. So also did landowners and tribal leaders in Syria, some of whom were able to force from the Ottoman government incorporation within the formal governmental system. In the Peloponnese the Council of Notables had the right of direct representation in Istanbul against the local government. In the towns the heads of guilds, of *Sufi* orders and of *millet*s all had followers and influence and had to be conciliated when, as was usually the case, they could not be coerced. In Aleppo and in Baghdad the head of the organization of the descendants of the Prophet, the *Naqib al-Ashraf*, was a man of substance.

Many writers have argued that wealth was the prime determinant of the notable. Baron de Tott wrote at the end of the eighteenth century that "the riches of some large landholders maintain, in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, a system of independence the progress of which increases every day. They rely principally on the power of money and this power is irresistible."⁴ But money was decisive only if it bought followers; wealth alone was not a sufficient qualification. The Armenian *amiras* were the main bankers, controlled the mint and ran state industries in the Ottoman empire, but they had no direct political influence. Within the Armenian community, on the other hand, their power was considerable through their support of many institutions and they could achieve an indirect influence in that way. The same situation obtained with regard to many non-Muslim families which amassed great wealth in the service of Muslim rulers and who occupied major offices. Almost overnight they could be stripped of their offices and wealth and executed; they lacked the essential property of the notable, namely followers.

The Muslim ideal of a stable society, based on justice and composed of the four classical pillars - bureaucrats, soldiers, merchants and artisans, and peasants - bore little relation to the reality of Near Eastern society in 1800. Near Eastern society has been described as a block of flats in which the inhabitants met only in the corridors. It is right to emphasize the compartmentalized nature of the society but it is impor-

tant also to understand the significance of the traffic in the corridors. Each compartment had its hierarchy and the leaders of those hierarchies transacted much business together. It was the people who bridged the compartments, *qâdîs* and notables, who made the system work.

During the course of the nineteenth century Near Eastern society underwent a major transformation, the effect of which was to alter the character of the compartments and their relationship to each other. The causes of this transformation were, first, the growth in size of the compartment named government so that it squeezed all the others. In particular the extension of government control affected the position of the notables. A second factor was economic; increased competition and opportunity changed the relationship of peasant and landowner, altered the function of guilds and contributed to the decline of pastoralism. A third factor was intellectual; a new style of education and its extension contributed to the rise of a secularized intellectual class which challenged the position of the religious groups. The religious groups also lost most of their educational and legal functions.

It is even possible to detect a fall in the social status of some religious groups. In the eighteenth century a large proportion of holders of the post of *shaykh al-Islâm* in Istanbul were the sons of former *shaykhs*: after 1839 not a single *Shaykh al-Islâm* fell into the same category — all were of much lower social origins. In Iran, on the other hand, the great *mujtahids* continued to succeed their fathers.

For the non-Muslim *millet*s the nineteenth century was a period of unparalleled advance. The patronage of Europe, the more rapid development of their educational systems and the opportunities created by the new ideas of secularism and equality led to their assuming a much larger role in the economy, in journalism and in government in the Near East. The *millet*s were transformed into secular institutions and in some cases became the nucleus of separate states.

The changes are considerable and real, but what is more distinctive is how little Near Eastern society appeared to change. The changes were especially in the corridors; the compartments themselves proved remarkably enduring; their size changed and the furniture was moved but at the end of the period the Near East was still a society of compartments, no longer in equilibrium.

ECONOMICS

No reliable statistics for the population of the Near East in 1800 exist.

Formerly, historians employed the estimates of contemporary European travellers; more recently demographers have attempted to work backwards from later statistics. However, all calculations involve so many assumptions that they can never be more than enlightened guesses. Such guesses put the total population of the region in 1800 at a little over 30 million people, of which 6 million lived in Iran and nearly all of the remainder in the Ottoman empire. Of the Ottoman population, around 4.5 million lived in the three North African states of Algiers (3 million), Tunisia (1 million) and Libya (0.5 million). In Egypt were around 3.5 million people, in Iraq 1.25 million and in Greater Syria 1.75 million, made up of modern Syria 1.25 million and Lebanon and Palestine 0.25 million each. More heavily populated was Anatolia with around 6 million people, but the largest number of people (9.0 million) were in the European provinces of the Ottoman empire. This last total was made up of the Principalities 1.5 million (Wallachia 1 million and Moldavia 0.5 million), Greece (as formed in 1832) 0.75 million, Serbia (as in 1815) 0.4 million, Montenegro 0.1 million, Bosnia 0.75 million, Bulgaria 1.5 million, Macedonia (including Albania 1.2 million) and Rumelia proper, including Istanbul, 2.8 million. What the population of Arabia was is wholly unknown but the order of magnitude is in the region of 1 million.

Demographers are agreed that the population of the Near East had been falling for some time before 1800. To accept this proposition, however, does not mean that one should also accept the view that the region had once supported a very much larger population. It has been claimed, for example, that the population of ninth-century Iraq was 50 million and of fourteenth-century Egypt 14 million but the sources for such statements are wholly unreliable. While there is reason to suppose that the population of the Near East had been greater in the past there is no good reason to suppose that it had ever been substantially greater than it was in 1800. European travellers were often misled by the spectacle of the vast ruins which adjoined many Near Eastern cities and assumed that the population of the cities had once been much larger. But the nature of building materials, the movement of rivers, the blockage of canals, epidemics and political changes often led to the abandonment of one area and a movement to an adjacent location. An instructive example is provided by Cairo which consists of a succession of cities each constructed by a new dynasty which chose a site down river and upwind of the last site which was left to fall in ruins. By 1800 Cairo stretched from the old Byzantine city of al-Fustât in the south to the Mamluk city in the north but at no one time had the whole area been fully inhabited. It is true, as comparisons of sixteenth-century Ottoman

tax records with nineteenth-century observations have shown, that villages and small towns were occasionally abandoned in Palestine and elsewhere, but there is also evidence of increased economic activity leading to the foundation of new settlements in other areas during the same period. Another piece of so-called evidence relates to the rural population. In Iraq, it is argued, there are remains of water channels which demonstrate the previous existence of extensive irrigation schemes capable of supporting a substantial population. Both in Iraq and in Egypt, it is contended, changes in political organization led to failures to maintain these schemes and to a drastic fall in population. But it is not clear that the water channels were all irrigation channels and some appear to have been only flood-relief channels intended to protect cities like Baghdad from inundation.

To outside observers the Near East in 1800 appeared an empty land. They wrote of ruins, fertile lands uncultivated and a sparse population. Large parts of the European provinces, the most heavily populated part of the region are described as almost uninhabited: William Eton described the road from Belgrade to Istanbul as passing through a deserted countryside. The pashalik of Belgrade had a population density of only ten per square kilometre. Why was the population of the Near East not larger? Discussion has revolved around the four Malthusian checks of war, famine, disease and birth-control, and these provide a convenient framework for consideration of the question.

International war was a major problem in the border areas of the region. There were wars between the Ottomans and Iran which were fought in Iraq and Azerbaijan but most of the Ottoman Wars were fought on the European frontier of the empire. More important were the effects of endemic internal violence, the consequences of the conflicts between nomadic and settled people, the resistance offered by local groups to government demands, and faction fights. Insecurity, the destruction of crops and the flight of cultivators may account for much of the relative emptiness of the Near East. The eighteenth century saw a steady encroachment by nomadic peoples from Arabia on the settled areas of Syria and Iraq and of the bedouin on the Delta area of Egypt. Cultivation was abandoned in some areas, for example on the Tigris north of Baghdad. But one should be cautious about assuming that the relations of nomadic and settled peoples were always those of hostility deriving from competition for land. The relationship was much more complex: nomad and cultivator often lived in a symbiotic relationship. An economy dependent upon animal transport looked to nomads for supplies of camels and horses; much meat also came from nomads - Kurds brought around 25,000 sheep a year into Syria. The

wool of sheep and goats was also an important product. Above all, nomads were major carriers of goods in the Near East. It is a question whether nomadic expansion caused a decline in cultivation or whether nomads entered upon lands already abandoned by cultivators.

There is ample evidence of the prevalence of famine and disease which were commonly sequential. Raymond, in his major study of eighteenth-century Cairo, lists six major famines in Egypt between 1687 and 1731 and further years of great scarcity between 1731 and 1792. In the 1784 famine al-Jabarti reports that the peasants came into the town and ate everything. Cannibalism was also reported. In Iraq eight famines are recorded during the period 1689-1801. Egypt and Iraq were perhaps especially vulnerable because of their dependence upon river water for cultivation but severe shortages were not unknown in the rainfall regions. Leaving aside the debilitating effect of endemic diseases there is much evidence concerning major epidemics of plague and cholera. Between 1689 and 1802 there were four outbreaks of plague in Baghdad; that of 1831 killed 50,000 in a single month according to a European missionary observer. Raymond records eight visitations of plague in Cairo in the seventeenth century and five in the eighteenth and estimates that some of the outbreaks may have killed between a third and a half of the population of the city. It is said that one-sixth of the population of Egypt died in the 1785 plague and a similar proportion in those of 1791 and 1834-5. In the Istanbul region in 1812 over 300,000 people were reported to have died in an outbreak of plague and the towns of Bucharest and Belgrade were each reported to have lost one-third of their populations. These figures, of course, were all estimates and mainly from towns. Deaths in the countryside, especially from epidemic diseases, may have been much less. Nevertheless, it is evident that contemporaries who observed the effects of these epidemics regarded them as major disasters.

Birth-control is a subject which has only recently been considered as an important factor in regulating the population of the pre-modern Near East. Basim Musallam, however, has produced evidence, albeit inconclusive, suggesting that Muslims made real efforts to regulate the size of their families. There are also indications of the use of abortion in western Anatolia in the late eighteenth century, but nothing which would show how widespread the practice was. Some nineteenth-century European observers, it is interesting to note, believed that the practices of the seclusion of women, the restriction of the size of Muslim families, polygamy and homosexuality would eventually cause the Ottoman Muslims to die out, but the population statistics show the impression of a declining Muslim population to be wholly

inaccurate, and it is probable that the suggestion owed more to a dislike of the Turks and their institutions than anything else.

From this brief survey of a complicated and tantalizing subject it may be concluded that it is likely that the population of the Near East had fallen during the years before 1800, but that it had never been very much higher and that it was held in check not by pressure on the means of subsistence but by the effects of famine and disease preying upon a population made more vulnerable by internal insecurity. This lame and uncertain conclusion would hardly be worth setting out but for the circumstance that it is necessary to do so in order to highlight the major single change in the Near East during the period considered in this book, namely the increase in population. During the nineteenth century the Near East witnessed a demographic revolution. Down to 1914 the population increased at a rate of nearly 1 per cent per annum, probably more quickly during the second half of the period than during the first. This increase, I would argue, was quite unprecedented in the history of the region and the problems of feeding, clothing, housing and governing these extra people provided the major dynamic factor.

It is more difficult to account for this increase in population than to demonstrate that there was an increase. One reason was the reduction of the epidemic diseases; bubonic plague was no longer a major problem after the mid-nineteenth century and cholera reduced its toll after the last great attack of 1865 in Anatolia and Syria and of 1869 in Iran. Neither disease, however, was completely extinguished. Western medicine had some effect, chiefly in the cities, through the use of vaccination (replacing the older practice of inoculation) against small-pox, but its contribution was probably small for vaccination was virtually unknown in most of the countryside. More important were public health measures, notably the introduction of quarantine regulations, improved urban water supplies and better sewage disposal. Certainly, the effect of improvement was pronounced in the cities. In 1800 the towns of the Near East were death-traps, drawing in and killing the people from the countryside; by 1914 they were more healthy than the rural areas. Famine was reduced by better communications which enabled food to be brought to regions where the harvest had failed. Probably most important of all, however, was the increased security throughout the region which was the consequence of the intervention of government to reduce the level of internal violence.

The increase in population was not accompanied by a substantial redistribution of the population between town and country. In 1800 the Near East was already more urbanized than most regions of the world, with something approaching 15 per cent of the population living in

towns of over 10,000. Among these towns were Istanbul with 400,000 people, Cairo with over 200,000, Aleppo, Baghdad, Bursa, Edirne and Izmir each with more than 100,000, Bucharest 80,000, Damascus, Jassy, Tabriz and Tehran all with around 50,000. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the urban population grew at about the same rate as the population as a whole; the only dramatic growths were registered by port cities linked with international trade, for example Alexandria, Beirut, Izmir and Salonika.

Among the rural population an alteration did take place in the balance between pastoral and agricultural pursuits. This change was most marked in the European provinces of the Ottoman empire where animal herding had been the occupation of a very large proportion of the population in 1800. During the nineteenth century there was a shift towards grain production; the oak forests of Serbia, which had supported so large a population of swine that Serbia was known as "The Land of Pigs", were burned down and farmers moved in; and Romania became a major grain producer. In Egypt also there was a substantial settlement of bedouin as the Delta region was irrigated and put under cotton; and the tide of nomadism was pushed back in Syria and Iraq. The great extension of cultivation was one of the most notable features throughout the Near East during the period 1800-1914, but calculations for Syria and Iraq show quite remarkable results: it is estimated that the cultivated area increased from about 125,000 *dunums* in the 1860s to about 1.6 million *dunums* (about 400,000 hectares) in 1913.

A second major change in the distribution of population concerned the religious composition of different areas. The loss of Ottoman authority in the European provinces was accompanied by a major emigration of Muslims to regions still under Muslim rule. In some cases they went voluntarily, in some cases they were expelled or refused permission to return after a temporary flight in wartime, and in some cases they fled to avoid the massacres which were the fate of many. They were joined by Muslim immigrants from Russia, especially from the Caucasus following the Russian conquest during the mid-nineteenth century, but also from other parts of Russia. Many Muslims moved more than once as the extent of Muslim authority in Europe diminished, until, by the end of the period, the great majority came to be concentrated in Eastern Thrace and Anatolia. Substantial pockets of Muslim people survived only in Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. At the same time the Christian population of areas which remained in Ottoman hands was very greatly reduced through forced and voluntary emigration and by murder and neglect.

The process of redistribution of populations reached a dramatic and

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brutal climax during the period from 1912 to 1923 which saw the Balkan Wars and the First World War. That period witnessed what has been described as a demographic disaster for the Near East; 20 per cent of the population of Anatolia died and another 10 per cent emigrated; 40 per cent of the Armenian, 25 per cent of the Greek and 18 per cent of the Muslim population died. In the same period 62 per cent of the Muslim population of the region conquered by the Balkan powers during the Balkan Wars had left that region and 27 per cent were dead.

The fine mosaic of religious communities living side by side which had been a feature of the Near East in 1800 was destroyed by 1923 in the northern part of the region; in the southern area the resolution of the problem was postponed until the second half of the twentieth century. The destruction of the mosaic was accomplished by violence and the threat of violence. The Greek uprising in 1821 began with a massacre of Muslims in Greece and with Muslim retaliation which included the hanging of the Greek patriarch in Istanbul. The cycle of violence continued throughout the century as governments sought to create demographic facts on the ground and at the popular level feelings of hatred and fear provoked massacre. Most people know the Eastern Question as an affair of diplomacy conducted in the chancelleries of Europe; in the Near East it was a bloody battle for land.

In 1800 the largest number of working people of the Near East were engaged in agriculture. The principal crops were cereals grown mainly for subsistence; wheat, barley and rice. There was also production for export in certain regions. In the late eighteenth century cotton was by far the most important export from Macedonia and Thessaly, and in that region maize was grown as an export crop. Cotton was also cultivated in many other regions. Silk was cultivated in several areas: the northern Iranian province of Gilan, the Bursa and Edirne areas of the central Ottoman lands and in Lebanon. Flax was produced in Egypt, tobacco in Latakia, coffee in Yemen and dates in parts of Arabia, notably in the Basra district of Lower Iraq. Fruits were also produced in the Mediterranean and exported from the Greek islands together with olives. Mocha coffee from Yemen was still prized.

During the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the area devoted to specialized crops increased. Most spectacular was the adoption of cotton as a major crop in Egypt and Turkestan, an event which completely transformed the economies of those countries. Cotton cultivation also flourished in other regions, for example Adana province in southern Anatolia and Khurasan in eastern Iran. Other cash crops which showed substantial increases included silk, tobacco, opium and sugar. It is true to say, however, that the Near East remained

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predominantly a cereal-producing area and this feature was accentuated by the decline of pastoralism, notably in south-east Europe. In 1909-10 between 80 and 90 per cent of Anatolia was still under cereals, cereal cultivation dominated Syria, and it was extending in Iraq.

The combined effect of the switch to cash crops and of population growth contributed to a change in one aspect of the Near East. In 1800 the region was self-sufficient in grain but that was no longer true in 1914. From about 1900 Egypt became a net importer of food: Turkestan also became dependent upon imports from Siberia, a dependence for which the region was to pay a heavy price in famine during the First World War when the transport system became overloaded by the demands of war and sufficient grain could not be brought in. Most surprising is the situation of the Ottoman empire. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century there was a steady increase of grain imports (allowing for the considerable fluctuations from year to year) and in 1910-11 the Ottomans imported twice as much cereal in value as was exported; during the last five years before the First World War average imports were of the order of \$4 million a year. No doubt this circumstance was largely attributable to the demands of Istanbul and the fact that it was cheaper to supply that city from foreign sources than to use domestic grain, but the overall impression of the change in the Near Eastern agricultural economy is confirmed by these figures.

In 1800 agriculture throughout the region was dependent upon rainfall, or upon local irrigation systems by which water was drawn off from the adjacent river or spring by such means as the basin irrigation characteristic of Egypt or the underground channels found in Iran, Iraq and parts of Arabia. The development of major irrigation systems, involving the construction of barrages for storage and elaborate canal systems for the distribution of water, was a feature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and was concentrated especially in the cotton-producing regions of Egypt and Turkestan.

Cultivation in 1800 was carried on through crop sharing, according to which the product was shared between landlord and tenant in proportions dependent upon their inputs of land, labour, seed, implements (including animals for ploughing, etc.) and water. In much of the area the village community was the basic economic unit with its three characteristics of village lands held in common and periodically redistributed among the peasants, collective responsibility for payment of taxes and other dues and shared responsibility for providing labour for public works. In some areas individual proprietorship was more common, for example western Anatolia, Lower Egypt and part of Syria.

4 Serfdom, that is the binding of the peasant to the land, was not the norm, although not uncommon either. There were few landless labourers in 1800.

Either individually or collectively peasants had rights in land: normally the right to cultivate land during their lifetime and to pass it to their descendants, occasionally to alienate it temporarily and always to take their share of the crop fixed according to their contribution to the factors of production. Peasants also had obligations: to pay what was due, sometimes to perform labour services on the landlord's farm or on government property although their labour services were less onerous than in the Habsburg lands. Commonly, peasants paid their dues in kind but in some areas there was an increasing practice of demanding cash, a circumstance which obliged the peasant to cultivate marketable crops. By the end of the eighteenth century cash payments were usual in Lower Egypt, although still rare in Upper Egypt.

Cultivation was carried on by peasant cultivators with simple implements, usually wooden tools. Fertilizers were rarely used and two years fallow out of three was the common practice. The principal crops were cereals grown for human and animal feed and were consumed locally, mostly by the peasant and his family. In Egypt the peasant did not normally consume his own wheat, however; instead he sold it and ate cheaper grains including maize and millet (including *dura* (sorghum)). The remainder of the produce went either as payments in kind to the landlord or was sold to provide money to buy goods or pay taxes. The extent to which such sales were possible varied from region to region. Produce was usually sold in a local market; exceptionally, it was disposed of in a regional market - Istanbul consumed produce drawn from distant regions - or in international trade. Cultivators also reared animals for dairy products, meat, used in cultivation or sale, like the 200,000 Serbian pigs exported each year to Austria.

The largest part of the Near East, that is the whole of the north and hilly areas in the south, was dependent upon rainfall and a dry year could reduce the crop to a quarter of that harvested in a good year. In the few areas of irrigated agriculture mainly in the south and east of the region, notably Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Turkestan, floods or low rivers could produce the same effect. Egypt employed basin irrigation by which the land was flooded in August and sown in the autumn with a winter crop (wheat, barley, peas or beans). Summer crops such as rice, sugar, indigo, cotton and millet were produced by irrigation, using primitive lifting gear on the banks of the river.

Finally, villages carried on some industrial activity. Apart from the provision of local services, such as that of blacksmith, they produced

handicrafts for their own use or for sale. In some areas such industrial activity was a major feature of village life, notably in southern Bulgaria and Thessaly and will be described below. For the most part, however, industrial activity was on a small scale. But one should not underestimate its importance anywhere in the traditional Near East. It is calculated that under basin irrigation in Egypt about 150 days a year were required for the tasks of cultivation, leaving a substantial time available for handicrafts even without reckoning on the labour of women and children. It is interesting to observe that the advent of perennial irrigation during the nineteenth century increased the time required for cultivation to about 250 days a year, drastically reducing the time which could be devoted to handicrafts.

The story of relations between peasant and landlord is a complicated one. It begins with the outstanding fact that land was the major source of wealth, and that in one way or another the great majority of people and institutions had to live off it and therefore claimed a share in the produce of land. The principal institution was the state and from the point of view of the state (and of Islamic law) there were three types of land: *milk*, *waqf* and *miri*.

Milk land was the nearest Near Eastern equivalent to freehold land and could be inherited, purchased and sold. *Milk* land was principally urban land or gardens in the vicinity of towns. Although the category included much of the most valuable building and agricultural land it formed only a very small part of the total stock of land and can be disregarded for the purpose of most of the following comments.

A *waqf* is a charitable endowment in which the revenues from a specified property are set aside for a charitable purpose, for example the maintenance of a mosque or shrine, school or college, road, bridge or caravanserai. The property involved might not be land, but given that land was the major source of wealth it usually was. Quite considerable amounts of land were held under *waqf* grants for the benefit of great institutions, for example the important Shi'i shrines of Iraq. There is an obvious comparison to be made with the form of tenure in medieval Europe known as mortmain. Also, like many modern trusts, in practice the creation of *waqfs* was an activity carried on not only in the interest of charity but also to avoid making payments to the state; the *waqf* contract could be drawn up so as to ensure that a substantial part of the revenues went to the administrators of the *waqf*. In this way a family might escape paying the share which belonged to the state (or pay at a low rate) by naming itself as the hereditary administrator. Religious families especially benefited from this device. By the end of the eighteenth

century one-fifth of arable land in Egypt was *waqf*. *Waqf* land was both rural and urban.

More than 90 per cent of all land was *miri* land, that is it was land which was liable to pay a certain proportion (usually one-tenth but it could be as high as a third) of its produce to the state. Nearly all *miri* land was rural land which could be either waste land, pasture land or arable. Waste land was a very extensive category and paid nothing: pasture land could be either nomad pasture or, more commonly, consisted of the pastures around villages used for the villagers' animals: arable land was the principal source of payments, although the tithes on agricultural produce was usually matched by a levy of one-fortieth on herds.

The state was, in theory, by far the biggest landlord in so far as that term is applicable to the Near East. But the state lacked the machinery to collect directly from the cultivators and therefore usually granted its share of the produce to individuals in return for services. Some of this land was granted to bureaucrats but most went in return for military service, because war was the principal activity of the state. Some land was not granted in this way but was held back as imperial estates and the revenues were collected directly by paid officials or tax farmers. In most of the Ottoman lands - most of Rumelia and Anatolia, much of Syria and Iraq, but not in Egypt - the state's revenues were allocated to *bursemen* (*sipahis*) in return for specified military services. The holdings were known by various names but the basic unit was the *timar*. A similar situation prevailed in Iran. The *timariots* or their equivalents became, in effect landlords, dealing with the cultivators or their representatives directly or through their agents. One says "in effect" because there is a necessary simplification in this outline. What we have been talking about is the fate of the state's share of the produce and have disregarded the possibility that other people had claims on the produce, that is, that there were other landlords. Because we do not know enough about the actual situation and because we believe it to be so we tend to treat the *timariot* as the only landlord of the lands of which a part of the revenue (and a farm of his own) was assigned to him.

This system began to break down as early as the seventeenth century, if not even earlier, although it was an unconsciously long time in dying. The system, however, came to serve neither the new interests of the state nor the interests of the *timariot*. One great puzzle of modern Near East history is what exactly replaced it in the different parts of the region and with what effect. As far as we can determine it was replaced by a variety of systems including an extension of *waqf* ownership (which need concern us no further), the *chiftlik* system and the *iltizam* system.

The *chiftlik* (Bosnian *egalik* and *beglik*) apparently became the predominant form of landholding in the European provinces of the Ottoman empire and extended into Anatolia. About the nature of the *chiftlik* controversy rages. It was a heritable, disposable estate. According to the Marxist interpretation, which has inevitably become widespread owing to the extensive work done on the subject by Balkan historians in recent years, it was a large-scale agricultural unit worked with wage-labour and sharecroppers producing for the market and forming a transitional stage between feudalism and capitalism. Other researchers have disputed this proposition and asserted that *chiftliks* of this description were rare and tended to be concentrated in areas near large cities and producing for the urban market, for example in the Istanbul-Edirne region, or were located in regions of high specialization such as in the cotton region of Macedonia or in Adana. The great majority of *chiftliks*, it is argued by the opponents of the Marxists, were small *chiftliks*, worked without wage-labour by a single family. Without more research one cannot say which view is correct, but in favour of the second view is the circumstance that big landlordism did not become the norm in the region. In most of Rumelia and Anatolia small peasant proprietors tended to predominate; the major exceptions were in eastern Anatolia and in Romania, which became areas of big estates. However, in part, this circumstance may be the result of the subsequent displacement of Muslim landlords, as in Bulgaria.

The *iltizam*, which was most common in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire, was a tax farm. In crude terms the right to collect the state's share of the produce was sold to the highest bidder, although the matter was rarely so simple as this statement suggests for local influence was often important. Frequently, the governor of a province would take a farm of the taxes for his own province (raising a loan from the Armenian bankers in Istanbul to finance the transaction) and would sublet the tax farms. In some cases, for example in Afghanistan in 1840, the chief minister would become the farmer of all the taxes of the state. During the course of time many *iltizams* were also converted into heritable, disposable estates. Tax farming remained the mainstay of the Ottoman tax system throughout the nineteenth century, but landholding was subject to major modifications as a consequence of state action and economic forces. Unlike the situation in Rumelia and Anatolia, in the Arab provinces the norm became the great estate and a sharecropping peasantry.

It has been frequently argued that the change from *timar* to *chiftlik* and *iltizam* was greedy to the detriment of the peasantry. It has been contended that under the well-regulated *timar* system the peasant's

rights were protected but that under the *chiftlik* and *iltizam* systems he was exposed, without protection, to rapacious, profiteering landlords. Some doubt has already been cast upon the merits of this argument in relation to the *chiftliks*, but the truth is that there is very little evidence, other than general statements and isolated examples, either for the view that the peasant was well off under the *sipahi* or that he was badly off under his successors. Opinions of different European travellers could be cited on either side and there is no evidence that discontent, measured by peasant uprisings, was greater under one system than another.

Local conditions were all important. The peasant needed protection and capital and the landlord needed labour and a regular income to cultivate his lands and to meet government demands. Ruthless exploitation served neither landlord nor peasant. In the first half of the nineteenth century the existence of much uncultivated land meant that peasants who were badly treated could pack up and leave, confident that they could find a more congenial landlord elsewhere. Alternatively, the peasant could go to the mountains and take up the life of a shepherd, cultivator or bandit. Such men were the Greek klephts, the Serbian *haiduks* and the Bulgarian *haiduts*. Eric Hobsbawm has suggested that these characters, whom he terms social bandits, appeared only at a time when traditional agriculture broke down and was replaced by capitalist farming but this suggestion cannot be a complete explanation; the klepht and his colleagues were not a new phenomenon and they were associated less with regions in which new types of farming were coming into existence than with the proximity of wild and mountainous territory. During the latter part of the nineteenth century the situation began to change due to the increase of population, the strengthening of the power of the notables under the 1858 Ottoman land law and the pressure on land in some areas, notably in Egypt. In this period and in some regions one observes the emergence of big landlords and landless agricultural labourers. But this deterioration in rural conditions was partly offset by the increased value of the produce and by the development of another safety-valve for discontented peasants, namely movement to the cities where the decline of the guild system allowed more flexibility of employment.

The greater part of industrial activity was carried on in towns. As mentioned above, there were exceptions of which an outstanding early example is the agricultural co-operative at Ambelakia in Thessaly which produced spun red cotton and exported it all over Europe. The co-operative was very successful for a period of several years at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, but eventually collapsed in anarchy assisted by foreign competition. Industrial

activity also spread from certain towns in the Balkans to neighbouring villages which specialized in different stages of production. Such activities were a feature of the region around Plovdiv (Philippopolis) in Thessaly which specialized in the production of *'aba*, the coarse woollen cloth widely used throughout the Near East and bought in particular by the Ottoman government to clothe its soldiers. Another town, Sliven, also concentrated on *'aba* production and made a great deal of money through contracts to provide the new Ottoman army of the 1820s with uniforms. The *'aba* industry was one of considerable and continuing importance through the nineteenth century and the demand for wool stimulated sheep production throughout the Balkan mountains. But, essentially, the *'aba* industry was town-based and controlled and merely involved the surrounding villages. A similar development took place in other parts of the Near East, for example in Turkestan where the villages around Bukhara were drawn into the textile and carpet industries.

Industry in the city was predominantly handicraft industry carried on by workers organized in guilds. The number of guilds in cities was very large; Raymond calculates that there were at least seventy-four craft guilds in Cairo in 1801. The most prominent crafts were various forms of food processing, for example bakers, millers, butchers, who were the largest groups in cities and tended to be the aristocrats among guilds; crafts connected with construction (another very large group) including masons and carpenters; crafts linked to transport such as boatmen and porters, who often formed the lowest ranking group in the social hierarchy of the guilds; and those involved in manufacture, including textile workers, metalworkers, leather-workers and workers in wood. Enterprises were small and commonly consisted of a master, an apprentice and two journeymen working in the master's house. In some cases, for example in textiles, a series of processes carried on in such enterprises would be organized by an entrepreneur. Such men could become very wealthy, for example, the property of Mihailaka Gümüşgedan, whose family began as *'aba* merchants in Plovdiv, was valued in 1880, shortly before his death, at £20,000. Characteristically, however, only small amounts of capital were employed in any single enterprise. Large enterprises, whether conducted in a single establishment or through connected processes carried on by small manufacturers, were usually linked to government demands; good examples are the manufacture of gunpowder and the construction of ships. In every town a large number of guildsmen were concerned with supplying government demands, including the needs of the garrison. How far they also supplied the requirements of the surrounding countryside is a

matter of dispute. Some writers have tended to stress the interdependence of town and country; others to argue that the two were basically self-contained, that rural areas met their own simple needs for manufactures and that cities, apart from drawing food supplies from the country, worked primarily for themselves. This latter view sees the cities as essentially parasitic. It is not possible to discuss the issue further; one may only remark that regional variations were very considerable and raise the possibility that in some areas one may need to consider a triangular relationship of village, small town and city.

The social functions of the guilds have already been mentioned. They had other functions both economic and administrative. Their principal function was to act as an administrative link between government and the urban population, their leaders were to represent government to townspeople and townspeople to government. In most areas they had fiscal duties in the collection of taxes for government. The guilds also performed judicial functions in the arbitration of disputes between their members. In some towns, for example Serres and Damascus, there existed individuals who held sway over all guildsmen, and such powerful men could adjudicate disputes all through the artisan population. The economic functions of the guilds were concerned with the control of quality (including the superintendence of weights and measures, a duty which properly belonged to the *qādī*), the fixing of prices and wages, the purchase of raw materials, the supply and distribution of goods and the control of entry to the craft. This last important function gave guilds the possibility of protecting their own monopoly and of policing demarcation lines between their work and that of other guilds. This function or privilege was difficult to protect against pressure from new immigrants to the towns, and in the Rumelian provinces in the nineteenth century there came to be acute differences between entrenched Muslim guildsmen and new Christian Slav immigrants from the countryside. In the long run the guilds were dependent upon government, which had the power to recognize a new guild, although governments were reluctant to do so in case there followed a loss of quality or social unrest.

The guild system continued throughout the nineteenth century in most areas of the Near East but the guilds lost most of their functions, particularly the economic functions. Their survival was due especially to their usefulness to government as replacements for bureaucrats, but as bureaucracies developed their administrative functions also disappeared and with them, finally, the guilds. Down to the end of the eighteenth century the guilds had been largely the preserve of the Muslim population, which was everywhere dominant in the towns,

but during the course of the nineteenth century Christians began to enter the guilds or, more commonly, form their own guilds and obtain recognition. In Istanbul in 1870 of 133,000 guildsmen 13,000 were Christian. The Christian guilds, as they became more powerful, tended to become more independent of the Ottoman authorities, more closely linked with their churches and more concerned with relations with Europeans. But the inroads which non-Muslims made into the guild system in no way reflects the full extent of their inroads into the economy; in 1800 the guild system had been more or less synonymous with industry in the Near East: by 1900 most industry was outside the guild system and was dominated by non-Muslims.

Transport in the Near East in 1800 was largely by animal carriage. A few regions benefited from use of the sea: the Mediterranean coasts, where Greek sailors held sway, and the Red Sea and Persian Gulf which were the home of Arab seamen. There were also rivers, navigable in places, notably the Danube, the Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates. Throughout most of the area land transport afforded the only means of communication and, in the absence of roads which could sustain wheeled traffic, the usual mode of transport was by pack animal—horse, donkey and camel.

The capacity of animal transport should not be underestimated. The Sudan Darfur caravan which brought ivory, hides, skins, gum, ostrich feathers, gold dust and natron to Cairo, numbered 5,000 camels in 1800, a figure which may represent over 1,000 tonnes of goods. The Sudan caravan was so large because of the peculiar requirements of the route; elsewhere it was common to find more frequent, smaller caravans but the total quantities of goods involved were still significant; the Trebizond-Tabriz traffic employed 15,000 animals on three journeys a year moving 25,000 tonnes of goods. Nevertheless, animal transport remained slow, expensive and dangerous with the consequence that bulk goods rarely figured in long-distance trade by land; when such goods were moved, like grain to Istanbul or timber to Egypt, it was usually by sea. The Saharan salt caravans provided one of the few exceptions. Accordingly, most trade was local trade and long-distance trade was mainly restricted to goods with a high value to weight ratio or to those, like animals and slaves, which provided their own transport.

The nineteenth century saw the development of several new modes of communication. Chronologically, the first important development was that of steam navigation on the rivers of the region; steamboats were employed on the Danube in the 1820s, on the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris in the 1830s and on other rivers, notably the regular service on the Karun river in Iran opened in 1888. Steamboats pulling

barges provided a much faster and more economic system than did sailing-boats. Subsequently, steamboats also came to be used extensively on sea routes around the Near East, although the high cost of transport by steam meant that in the early years the use of steam vessels was confined to mails, passengers and high-priced goods; the bulk of trade continued to be moved by sail. By the second half of the century, however, steam vessels were beginning to take over the bulk trade as well and their use was greatly enhanced by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

The most characteristic transport system of the nineteenth century was the railway which played an increasingly important role in the Near East from the second half of the nineteenth century. As early as 1834 that enterprising modernizer, Muhammad 'Ali of Egypt, planned a line linking Cairo and Suez, although it was not built until 1858 when it became part of a line linking Alexandria with Suez via Cairo. Thereafter there was considerable railway construction in Egypt; by 1905 there were 3,000 kilometres of state railways and 1,400 kilometres of narrow-gauge private railways. In the Ottoman empire railway construction began after the Crimean War with lines built to open up the Danube valley, and in 1868 a concession was awarded for a railway to link Istanbul with the European system in Vienna, although for political reasons this line was not completed until 1888. In 1866 the first railway in Anatolia was opened to bring goods to Izmit from its hinterland, and towards the end of the century lines were constructed in Syria with French capital to link the main towns together. From Damascus the line was extended southwards to Medina (1903-8) by the Hijaz railway, which was built to serve the interests of the pilgrims but which also had strategic importance. The Hijaz railway was the only railway in Arabia.

The best-known railway in the Near East was the Baghdad railway, principally because of the diplomatic arguments which accompanied its construction. In 1893 a line from Scutari, the town facing Istanbul across the Bosphorus, to Ankara was completed with extensions to other towns in Anatolia. In 1903 a concession was given for a further line from Konya to Baghdad and in 1903 for an extension to Basra. The Baghdad railway was still uncompleted in 1914. It was also planned that the system should be extended eastwards from Baghdad to Tehran via Khaniqin, but this line was not built and Iran remained with no significant railway development other than a short extension of the Russian system from Julia to Tabriz for which a concession was given in 1913. Eastern Iran did, however, benefit from the development of railways in Turkestan; between 1881 and 1888 the Transcaspian railway was built to link the Caspian Sea with Samarkand and this line, running close to

the Iranian frontier, offered opportunities to producers in Khurasan. The lack of railway development in Iran must be regarded as a major factor in the slow rate of change in Iran during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as compared with the Ottoman empire and Egypt; no other system of transport in the nineteenth century could provide for the speedy movement of large numbers of troops or large quantities of goods, two essential features of political and economic modernization.

The development of roads fit for wheeled traffic was a slow process in the Near East, and over the area as a whole had made little progress by 1914. Little was done anywhere before the 1890s when efforts were made to improve the roads of Anatolia and to construct a Russian-built road network in northern Iran, linking Tehran with the Caspian Sea and Qazvin. In Lower Egypt at the same time a road system was built under British supervision. The only notable road built in an earlier period was the French-managed Beirut-Damascus road, constructed between 1859 and 1863, which had a considerable effect on the economy of the Syrian interior. As a result of poor road development the Near East was ill-equipped to take advantage of the advent of motor-driven, wheeled traffic in the years before the First World War.

The growth of sea-borne trade and the arrival of large ocean-going steamships in the second half of the nineteenth century led to the growth of port facilities. The principal developments took place at Alexandria, the main cotton port of Egypt, but, after the opening of the Suez Canal, Port Said and Suez were also developed as modern ports. On the Syrian coast the great new port was at Beirut, constructed with French capital between 1890 and 1895. Further north, Izmir, the principal export centre of the Ottoman empire, was modernized in 1875, and Istanbul, the largest import centre, in 1901, the same year as Salonika. Elsewhere, there was little development; Aden became a major port but served not south-west Arabia but the movement of vessels between Suez and the East and the regional trade of the western Indian Ocean. Apart from some modest innovations at Abadan just before 1914 there were no important changes in the Persian Gulf, a circumstance which meant that Iran was again severely handicapped in her economic development by having no southern port which could handle a large quantity of goods.

In 1800 information travelled in the Near East no faster than the Tatar post could carry it. The Tatar post, carried by specialized messengers changing horses (or dromedaries) at special post-stations, could achieve remarkably fast speeds, but it was often slowed by its use for the carriage of parcels of valuable goods. The situation was transformed by the arrival of the telegraph in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Construction began in the Ottoman lands in 1855 with a line from Istanbul to Edirne and was quickly extended to link with the European telegraph system. From the European point of view it was important to build lines in the Near East in order to link Europe to European possessions and interests further east: from the point of view of the Ottoman government the telegraph was a valuable system of internal communication which could ensure tighter control by Istanbul over provincial governments. As the British ambassador in the 1870s, Sir Charles Eliot, put the matter: the telegraph is "the most powerful instrument for a despot who wishes to control his own officials".⁵ Under this dual enthusiasm the telegraph system spread rapidly. The Iranian government quickly overcame its original suspicions and in 1864 a telegraph line linking Baghdad to Bushir through Tehran and other major Iranian towns was completed. The 1860s also saw the development of the Egyptian telegraph system. Modern postal services were also introduced in the Near East, beginning in 1834 with the inauguration of the Ottoman post although this was unsuccessful and for a long time foreign post offices were preferred. And, finally, the development of newspapers ensured a wider circulation of information. The first newspapers established in Egypt and the Ottoman empire in 1829-30 were official papers intended for the publication of regulations and proclamations. Newspapers in Western European languages, Greek and other languages appeared soon after, but it was not until the 1860s that newspapers in Ottoman Turkish carrying a variety of news began to appear. Similarly, it was the 1870s which was the great age of the development of Egyptian Arabic journalism principally in the hands of Lebanese Christian immigrants; by the end of the nineteenth century Egypt had a substantial free press capable of reporting and discussing a wide range of issues. Iran, as usual, lagged behind and it was not until after the constitutional revolution of 1906 that Iranian newspapers began to appear in numbers.

The nineteenth-century communications revolution in the Near East had three main consequences. First, it had the effect of increasing government control over its territories and its own officials. At the same time the development of newspapers provided an arena which was exploited by critics of government. Second, the pattern of development, by concentrating on links with ports and therefore with the world economy, tended to import a new imbalance into the economic development of the region by promoting the advance of particular regions and fostering the growth of crops for which export markets existed. Third, it tended to break down the isolation of different parts of the region, to promote specialization and exchange, to reduce the

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incidence of famine and to foster a change of outlook, a movement towards a recognition of membership of larger communities.

Trade in the Near East in 1800 may be classified in three groups: local, regional and international. We have no statistics for local trade but there is every reason to believe that it was the largest in bulk and value. It was conducted by small merchants or directly by producers and it was usually managed through barter. Nor do we have any reliable or comprehensive statistics for regional trade, that is, the exchange of commodities within the Near East. Partly this trade was conducted by direct exchange, for example the trade between Egypt and the Sudan, or that between Egypt and Syria; partly it consisted of the regular provisioning of great cities like Istanbul; and partly it was carried on through fairs, particularly in Anatolia and Rumelia. International trade was conducted between the Near Eastern region and Europe on the one side and the East on the other. There is reason to believe that until the end of the eighteenth century imports of cloth, spices and other goods from the East Indies may have been more important than the European trade to the Near East as a whole and certainly more important to the areas fed through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Raymond calculated that Egyptian trade at the end of the eighteenth century (excluding local trade) was divided as follows: 45 per cent with other parts of the Ottoman empire; 35 per cent with the Red Sea; and only 14 per cent with Europe. The European trade was conducted by four routes: through the Caspian and through the Black Sea with Russia, via the Balkan land frontier with Austria, and via the Mediterranean with western Europe. We have little information about the absolute size of these trades. The Caspian trade was primarily in raw silk from northern Iran; the Black Sea trade developed after 1774 but really became important only after 1792 in the hands of Greek merchants sailing under the Russian flag; and the Austrian trade was heavily weighted in favour of the Ottoman lands—in 1779 it was estimated that exports to Austria exceeded imports by five to one. Most information is available concerning the Mediterranean trade. The dominant European country through most of the eighteenth century was France. As a consequence of the Revolutionary Wars and the Industrial Revolution Britain came to predominate in all the Mediterranean trade, a situation which was to persist throughout the nineteenth century, although French trade, especially in the middle of the century, was substantial.

The first obvious change in trade during the nineteenth century was its growth. Egyptian trade increased by 4 per cent per annum, Ottoman by 2.5 per cent and Iranian by about the same. These figures may be

compared with an average figure for world trade of 3.5 per cent per annum, suggesting that the Near East was near or perhaps slightly below the world average. The increase of trade was certainly well above the increase of population and the increase of gross national product, suggesting that exchange became relatively much more important to the people of the Near East. The defect of these statistics, however, is that they are based primarily on the figures for international trade and take insufficient account of regional exchanges and none of local trade.

The second major change in trade patterns during the nineteenth century was the greatly enhanced importance of trade with Europe relative to regional trade and trade with the East and Africa. By the end of the nineteenth century it is claimed 90 per cent of Near Eastern trade was with Europe and the United States and the Eastern trade was little more than a trickle, although this claim is probably exaggerated and undervalues the importance of the trade of Iran, Iraq and Arabia with India. Britain was the leading trading partner but France and Austria also played a prominent role in the first half of the nineteenth century, and Germany, Russia and Italy in the latter part of the nineteenth and the first years of the twentieth century. Russia, in particular, continued to enjoy a favoured position in the northern Iranian market, in 1913 Russia took 70 per cent of Iran's exports and supplied over half of her imports. By 1914 Britain was still the leading trading partner of the Ottoman empire, but its share of Ottoman imports had fallen to 19 per cent and of exports to 22 per cent. With Egypt the corresponding figures are 31 and 43 per cent respectively.

A third variety of change concerns the character of the trade of the Near East. In 1800 the Near East conducted a mixed trade with Europe exporting raw materials, foodstuffs and manufactured goods and importing a similar mix. Turkestan, for example, exported more manufactured goods to Russia than were imported. By the end of the period the Near East exported almost only food and raw materials and imported manufactured goods together with some food, notably grain, sugar, coffee and tea; shortly before the First World War the last three commodities amounted to 30 per cent of the imports of Iran and 10 per cent of those of the Ottomans. The largest single item of imports, however, was cotton textiles which amounted to about 30 per cent of imports into the Near East between 1840 and 1914. Near Eastern exports to Europe were varied but were easily led by raw cotton which formed the major export from Egypt (90% in 1914) and from Turkestan. Cotton was also an important item in exports from the Ottoman empire and from Iran (19% in the period 1911-13). Another major

export item was raw silk which accounted for one-quarter of Serbia's export. In Iran in the mid-nineteenth century raw silk had amounted to one-third of exports but silk-worm disease in the later nineteenth century greatly reduced silk production in the Caspian provinces. Dried fruits, tobacco, opium, wool and cereals also figured prominently in Near Eastern exports. The main cause of this change in the character of the Near Eastern trade was the Industrial Revolution in Europe which gave European industry a clear advantage over that of other areas of the world; other factors included the reduction in transport costs and the creation of favourable conditions for trade through such arrangements as the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman treaty which set tariffs on imported goods at a low level. It should be remarked, however, that the looming significance of Europe in the trade of the Near East was not matched by a similar importance of Near Eastern trade to Europe; for every European country Near Eastern trade accounted for only a small proportion of total trade.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also saw a considerable flow of capital from Europe to the Near East. By 1914 the Near East owed Europe about £500 million, of which half was owed by governments and the rest was accounted for by private investment. The great part of this borrowing occurred in the Ottoman empire and Egypt. Ottoman borrowing began in 1854 and by 1875, when the Ottomans could no longer pay the interest on their debt, amounted to £242 million plus an unknown floating debt. Egypt began with short-term borrowing and contracted her first loan in 1860. When Egypt went bankrupt in 1876 she owed £100 million. In 1880 Egypt and in 1881 the Ottoman empire came to settlements with their creditors by which the principal of their debts and the rate of interest were reduced. Both were obliged to accept some form of international supervision over their finances; Egypt through the Caisse de la Dette and the Ottomans through the Ottoman Public Debt Administration. The arrangements did permit the two countries to resume borrowing, however, and between 1881 and 1914 the Ottomans borrowed £1166 million, paying off at the same time a similar amount of old debt. The burden of debt remained considerable. To service her debt cost Egypt half her revenues and 30 per cent of her export earnings between 1880 and 1914. By comparison Iran's public debt was derisory; her first loan was contracted in 1892 and by 1914 her total debt amounted to only £6.8 million. Measured in per capita terms this amount was insignificant and the circumstances that its servicing required 25 per cent of government revenue and nearly 7 per cent of export earnings merely indicates how small was the government share in the economy and how tiny

was Iran's trade. The figures provide further confirmation of Iran's slow development and suggest an additional reason for her backwardness.

Private European investment in the Near East began at the same time as public investment but the greatest period of private investment came in and after the 1890s, compared with the 1860s which saw the peak of public borrowing. Most private investment went into public utilities linked to the export economy. The largest item was railways; over half of all private investment in the Ottoman empire was in railways. Other items included roads, port works and banking. In Egypt foreign companies also invested in land. Private investment in the Ottoman empire in 1914 amounted to £T181.5 million and in Egypt £E100.2 million of which £E92 million was in foreign hands.

The principal European investor in public debt was France; by 1914 France held 60 per cent of the Ottoman public debt compared with 20 per cent held by Germany and 14 per cent by Britain. France was also the largest private investor in the Near East; in 1914 France had 45 per cent of private foreign investment in the Ottoman empire, Germany 25 per cent and Britain 16 per cent; and in Egypt the corresponding figures were France 50 per cent and Britain 33 per cent. Russian investment was insignificant. To France the Near East was important in investment terms but to other countries it was of much less importance; in particular, to Britain with her world-wide spread of investments the Near East was small beer.

What effect did this investment have on the Near East? In the Ottoman empire and in Egypt it helped to finance the process of modernization, notably in military and railway development, and thereby to enlarge the power of government and increase gross national product enabling the two countries to sustain the increase in population and even improve the standard of living of the people. A comparison with the condition of Iran in 1914 shows some of the effects of investment. On the other hand it is certainly arguable that the Ottomans and Egyptians achieved this result very inefficiently. Over the whole period 1854-1914 Ottoman public borrowing amounted to about £T400 million of which they actually received about two-thirds. Nearly half of Ottoman borrowing was to liquidate past debts, 6 per cent went on the army and 5 per cent to cover budget deficits. Private borrowing gave rather better value for money and it may well be that increased export earnings through private investment paid for the extra charge of interest on the balance of payments although this can be no more than a guess. Nevertheless, by 1914 the Ottoman empire was burdened with a heavy requirement for debt repayment. The situation of Egypt was

similar although probably Egypt acquired more economic infrastructure for her money.

It is claimed that in consequence of their borrowings the Ottomans, Egypt and Iran all suffered a loss of effective sovereignty by being obliged to permit foreign countries to exercise some control over their financial arrangements. This claim seems exaggerated. The Ottoman Public Debt Administration was an Ottoman institution which, on the whole, made life easier for the Ottomans and does not seem to have prevented them from doing any important thing which they desired. The Caisse de la Dette acted in Egypt in a fashion less advantageous to Egypt, insisting on tying up revenues which could have been used more profitably to finance further investment, especially in irrigation. Egypt, of course, suffered a more considerable loss of sovereignty because of the British occupation in 1882, but although Egypt's indebtedness contributed to this event it was not the proximate cause. In Iran the Russian loan condition that she should have a veto on railway construction in Iran was certainly damaging to Iran, but it is arguable that Russia did not need the extra power given by the loan condition; if she had not wanted railways in Iran no country was likely to build them against Russian opposition. On the whole, leaving aside the question of the occupation of Egypt, it does not seem that the countries concerned lost any major advantage through being obliged to make concessions to their creditors.

The statistics of foreign trade and investment, together with other evidence, have been used as the basis of a theory that during the nineteenth century Near Eastern handicraft industry was ruined by European competition and that the period saw the development of a colonial economy in the Near East, that is, one in which economic activity in the Near East centred round the production of food and raw materials for the use of Europe and that for manufactured goods the Near East relied upon imports from Europe. The theory, of course, is one which has been used much more generally to describe the economic relations of Europe with most of the rest of the world during the same period; the Near East is only one case, and a minor one, within the world picture and there is no doubt that the application of the model to the Near East owes much to the circumstance that it had been developed already, on the basis of greater evidence, in relation to India. It should also be noted that the extent to which the model justly describes the Indian situation has been questioned in recent years. Some general remarks about the Near Eastern situation will be appropriate here.

First, as noted above, the statistics undoubtedly show a large rise in

imports of European manufactured goods and especially textiles. They also indicate, however, a substantial increase in the population. The first question to ask is whether European manufacturers, in addition to supplying the new market, also broke into the existing market and thereby injured the traditional producers. The answer appears to be yes, at least in the earlier period: Roger Owen has calculated that in 1842 alone enough British cloth (to say nothing of that of other suppliers) was imported into the Arab Near East to provide 3.6 metres for every inhabitant. More information about the whole region and period is required as well as information about consumption patterns, but there is certainly prima-facie evidence for supposing that cotton textiles were affected.

A second type of evidence commonly used is the reports of European consuls. Their reports consistently indicate substantial damage to handicrafts, especially cotton textiles. It has to be said, however, that their reports are often contradictory. For example, the consuls C. B. Henry and John Macgregor claimed that in Aleppo in 1838 there were 4,000 looms employing 4,800 people. Writing at about the same time the Russian consul, K. M. Barzili, stated that there were only 1,000 looms and said that this figure represented a fall from a previous total of 10,000 looms. If one pursues consuls' reports through the nineteenth century one can discover continual reports of falling numbers of looms, but the actual numbers cited do not always show a fall and in 1911 Consul Weakley estimated that there were still 10,000 looms in Aleppo, the same figure as Barzili's original peak of nearly a century earlier. It has been suggested that consuls were so sure that handicrafts must decline that they tried to show that it was already happening. Further, it is the consular reports from the coastal regions most exposed to European competition that suggest the most notable decline of handicrafts; in the interior handicrafts held up through the early nineteenth century and when reports of their decline appeared the reason was often competition from factories elsewhere in the Near East. Better communications not only aided European manufacturers but they also assisted the more efficient Near Eastern producers. In some remote areas of Anatolia handicrafts continued to operate up to the First World War. In Iran handicraft production was also substantial in the early twentieth century. It should be remembered that a decisive point with domestic producers is leisure; if time is available they will work for almost nothing.

Within the cotton textile industry it was producers engaged in spinning who suffered the most. The situation of weavers varied: some went under, especially producers of cheaper cloths, but others, produc-

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ing for a specialized market, could survive and prosper using imported threads.

Other handicraft industries suffered less than cotton textiles. Wool-len handicrafts, especially the *aba* industry in Bulgaria, performed well as also did silk in some areas. Copper, earthenware and leather provide other examples; shoemaking remained a purely handicraft industry in Anatolia and supplied almost the whole of local demand; Adipazar had 350 workshops producing 500,000 pairs of shoes a year. In Iran an old handicraft industry, carpet-making, underwent a spectacular expansion in the later nineteenth century by producing for export. By 1914 hand-made carpets accounted for one-eighth of Iran's exports.

When handicrafts declined it was often the consequence of local factory production and not of European competition. From the 1830s onwards modern processes were adopted for the spinning of raw silk in Bursa; in 1846 there were two factories with 120 reels and, by 1872, 75 with 3,520 reels employing 5,415 people, nearly all of them Armenians or Greeks. At the same time the output of finished silk products declined. In Lebanon, on the other hand, the output of silk goods increased after the adoption of jacquard looms by weavers who used European thread. The ambitious attempt of Muhammad 'Ali to establish factory production of textiles in Egypt, failed completely, but some large-scale industries were established in Egypt by 1914 including the Filature Nationale d'Alexandrie which produced 7-8 million metres of cloth annually. In Iran there were disappointments when efforts were made to establish modern factory industries at the end of the nineteenth century. In these failures foreign competition was certainly a factor but so were under-capitalization, bad management and an unskilled labour force.

Finally, in considering Near Eastern industry as a whole it is important to remember that two of the largest industrial activities in terms of numbers employed, namely food processing and construction, were relatively unaffected by European competition and may well have reaped some advantages from the closer contact with Europe through the processing of foodstuffs for export, for example the sugar factories established in Egypt, and through construction work financed by European investment, notably in connection with railway development. Several cement factories were established during the period. New extractive industries were also established, notably coal-mining in northern Anatolia, and that this development was partly the consequence of the new demands of factory industry and the railways. The oil industry developed during the second half of the nineteenth century and Romania and Baku became important centres of world production.

South of the Black Sea oil was still insignificant in 1914. Production had begun in Iran in 1909 and the Abadan refinery commenced operations only in 1912.

To sum up, the new economic relationship with Europe had an important effect upon Near Eastern industry, but it is one which cannot be described simply in terms of the model of the colonial economy. Many, although not all, textile handicraft industries declined during the period and some were almost extinguished. In this process the competition of European manufacturers was a significant factor, especially in the earlier period. There was, however, some development of factory industry in the Near East and the decline of handicrafts also owed something to competition from this source. To some extent Near Eastern factory industry was assisted by the European connection, but for the most part its development was restricted by European competition. Outside the field of textiles, and especially cotton textiles, the picture is notably different, however, and much more varied. During the nineteenth century Near Eastern industry went through a period of drastic reorganization; by 1914 it was still in the throes of that development and an accurate picture must take account of a great diversity of conditions from industry to industry and from region to region.

POLITICS

The two leading characteristics of Near Eastern government in 1880 were its diversity and its minimality. Near Eastern government was an armed bazaar in which a variety of groups bargained with each other, reinforcing their bids with force or the threat of force.

It is unnecessary to say much about the diversity of government. Near Eastern society was composed, it has been noted, of various groups whose relationship to each other was like that of pieces in a mosaic. Governments recognized the existence of these groups and dealt with them in different ways. There was no assumption that society was composed of numbers of individuals who should be treated in a uniform fashion; rather different groups had different rights and interests and required to be governed in different ways. Non-Muslims were different from Muslims, they were second-class citizens who were not liable to military service, who paid special taxes and who suffered certain restrictions on their liberty, for example in the height of their houses or the style of their clothes. Notables were different from

peasants and enjoyed privileges which recognized their superior position. Tribesmen were observed to have their own modes of settling disputes among themselves and were allowed to enjoy them. And foreigners were granted special privileges in regard to justice and manner of life. Not only did Near Eastern governments recognize that different categories of their citizens required different treatment but they also provided a variety of forms of government. Within the Ottoman empire were provinces and districts, but it should not be supposed that the government of one province or one district was like another or that it was thought appropriate that it should be so. A number of forms of government were thought to be suitable and these were adapted to suit the convenience of all concerned.

Minimal government implied that the state took only a small portion of the gross national product in taxation and in return offered only a very limited range of services: principally, defence, some public works (roads, bridges, caravanserais, mosques and madrasas) and although these were supplied principally by private institutions) and criminal justice. Most of the services offered by modern governments were supplied in the Near East of 1800 by non-governmental bodies—the family, the tribe, the village, the guild and the religious community. As the total quantum of governmental power was so limited the distribution of power between the various components of government was, at least as far as the great majority of citizens was concerned, of much less significance than would have been in a case in a different type of polity. To that small group of people who were directly concerned with government the matter was quite different, of course; to them the division of the insignificant spoils of government was a business of the utmost consequence and their struggles were conducted with a ferocity worthy of a greater prize. To Europeans also the distribution of that small quantum of political power was of absorbing interest, and as so much of our evidence about the Near East derives from European sources or from sources linked to government it follows that we are to imbibe a false impression of the centrality of politics.

To Europeans the circumstance that so much power resided in the hands of bodies other than the central government signified the decay of the state. Europeans, however, reasoned from the premiss that political power should be monopolized by central government and this assumption was not that of the Near East. The Near Eastern view of government was conditioned by ideology and circumstance. By its careful regulation of the duties of the believer Islam left little scope for the state other than to uphold the system of rules contained in the *Shari'a*. The absence of communications and the presence of large, armed, tribal

populations also provided practical restraints upon the power of government.

Given that Near Eastern governments were unable or unwilling to undertake the extraordinary tasks of coercion which would have been required in order to monopolize power they were obliged to bargain with their citizens. The elements which constituted the official hierarchy fitted into the system of bargaining. The authority of an Ottoman provincial governor depended upon a balance between Istanbul and local groups. A governor unacceptable to local élites would be left powerless like many an Ottoman pasha of Egypt, shut up in the citadel of Cairo while the Mamluk factions fought for power outside. Better for Istanbul to choose a man of local substance who might pay the tribute in return for being left to enjoy his local autonomy, reward his followers and make his own arrangements with his local rivals. Such a man as Sulaymān the Great, the Mamluk pasha of Baghdad, who appeared to Europeans as an almost independent potentate, to Istanbul seemed to be a good steady payer who kept his troublesome province quiet and looked after the border. Near Eastern government depended not on right and force, blood and iron but on the nuances of bargaining among those whose control of resources of men and money demanded that they should be consulted. Modest coercion or the threat of coercion was a part of bargaining; an outright struggle for mastery took place only rarely and usually when the process of bargaining had completely broken down. One of the many titles of the Shah of Iran was Supreme Arbiter.

To many readers brought up on the legend of oriental despotism this picture of Near Eastern government may seem strange and some further comment is required. The notion of oriental despotism embodies two distinct propositions. The first proposition is that the peculiarity of much oriental government is that it involves provision of massive capital investment in flood control and irrigation works in order to tame and harness the great rivers of Asia. This circumstance is alleged to require an extraordinary control over resources by Asian governments, control on a scale wholly unfamiliar to the West. Such governments are called, by the elaborator of this theory, Karl Wittvogel, hydraulic despotisms. The theory was developed in relation to China but has been applied to the Near East with particular reference to the rivers of Egypt and Iraq. The theory has little merit when applied to the Near East of 1800: no state maintained major river works, the distribution of population indicated the predominance of the rainfall economies of the north and not those of Egypt and Iraq; and the main centres of political power lay in the north of the region.

The second proposition is that traditional Near Eastern government was unrestrained and rested on force rather than on law; the characteristic symbol of Near Eastern government, it is suggested, is the tower of skulls. There are two errors in this proposition. First, Near Eastern governments were not unrestrained by law; Muslim rulers were bound by the *Shari'a* and although the *Shari'a* says very little about the duties of rulers it says a very great deal about the rights and obligations of the believer and, by implication, restricts the authority of government within very narrow limits. The duty of the Muslim ruler is primarily to ensure that Muslims can live as good Muslims are supposed to live and to protect *dhimmi*s living under Muslim rule. Second, although it is true that Near Eastern governments often disregarded the *Shari'a*, as other rulers disregard written constitutions, and acted in a brutal, tyrannical and arbitrary fashion, arbitrary government is not the same as strong government. States may maltreat or murder their citizens when they can catch them but first they must catch them. In general, the less likely they are to catch them the more brutally they are prone to treat them when they do apprehend them on the principle that severity may compensate in deterrent terms for infrequency. The conduct of a government in its own capital city is little guide to its practice in more remote areas. The oriental despot is an arbitrary or whimsical ruler, but he is not a powerful ruler in the sense that he is head of a government which closely regulates the lives of its citizens.

It may be argued that while it could be true that the concept of minimal government fits the Near East in 1800 this is not true of earlier periods. Discussion of that question lies outside the scope of this book and an answer cannot even be attempted here. But the question is relevant in the sense that in this book it is claimed that what happened to Near Eastern political systems during the nineteenth century was unprecedented and flowed from a novel enhancement of the role of government. If the role of government was merely being restored to a past position it would be necessary to revise one's view of that whole process of change. It is fair to say, therefore, that it is my contention that, although there were periods when Near Eastern government was stronger than it was in 1800, for example the Ottoman government had more authority in the sixteenth century than it had in the eighteenth, Near Eastern government had never been so very different as to change the basic character of the political system. The nineteenth-century revolution in government was wholly novel.

In what did the nineteenth-century revolution of government consist? It involved government becoming more uniform and more extensive. The notion of uniformity was embodied in the Ottoman reform

movement through the doctrine of Ottomanism — that all Ottoman citizens were equal, had equal rights and obligations and should be governed in the same way. This ideal was never realized and it is evident that many people found aspects of it repugnant, but much was done to translate the doctrine into practice by the establishment of uniform state systems of administration, education and law, by removing the disabilities suffered by non-Muslims and enforcing on them the same obligations as Muslims, and by a constant effort to bring tribal and foreign populations under the control of the Ottoman state. In particular the Ottomans sought to control the independence of the notables; the very notion of a notable was inimical to the idea of Ottomanism.

The extension of the power of the state may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, some of which will be discussed in later chapters in relation to particular regions, but one broad measure is that mentioned above, namely the ratio of tax revenue to gross national product. Of course we have no statistics of any value for the size of the gross national product in 1800, and those for the early twentieth century are to be used only with the utmost caution. But we can get some idea of the very small take of government if we bear in mind that the main contributor to the national product was agriculture and we note that in Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century the people of Cairo (although they represented only 7% of the population) paid as much to the state in taxes as did all the rural areas put together. This is not to say that the countryside did not pay taxes but that the taxes did not reach the state, or, to be more precise, the Cairo government. From the viewpoint of Istanbul all that was asked of any of the provinces was that they paid their way and remitted a modest tribute to Istanbul; often they did not pay the tribute. Again, the largest part of government revenues came from the tax on land and animals, but it was estimated in the early nineteenth century that only about one-tenth of the amount collected reached the central government; the rest went into the pockets of officials and notables. The situation in Iran was similar and the government sought to make up some of its losses by bargaining with its officials who were expected to make annual presents to the monarch, in effect to surrender a share of the revenues they had misappropriated.

The available figures indicate a rise in the total revenues of the Ottoman empire from about £T3 million in the early 1800s to £T29.2 million in 1913, a sum taken from a much smaller area and from a total population not much larger than in 1800 and representing about 10 per cent of the gross national product. It is quite impossible to believe that the gross national product increased by 1,000 per cent in that period and the only reasonable conclusion is that the figures measure a great

increase of government power. Figures for Egypt indicate an increase from £E1.2 million in 1798 to £E17.7 million in 1913, representing about 15 per cent of gross national product. In the case of Egypt the population had increased by between three and four times in that period and the gross national product probably by a larger amount, but there is still a considerable margin which measures the increased impact of government on the lives of the people. Iran, however, presents a very different picture. Its revenues increased from about £1.25 million in 1836 to £4 million in 1913. This increase was greater than the increase in population and probably greater than the increase in gross national product, but the increase in government power was small and the amount of power which government had was still tiny by this measure, probably not more than about 2 per cent of gross national product. Once again one observes the very slow pace of modernization in Iran.

Several other measures could be applied to Near Eastern government in the nineteenth century, all of which would tend to bear out the claim that there was a major growth in the power of the state. These measures would include that of function and it could be shown that government took over functions, such as education or the provision of legal services, which were formerly performed by non-governmental agencies as well as greatly enlarging the scope of its existing function of defence. Towards the end of the period there was even some assumption of economic functions by the Ottoman government, while in Egypt economic tasks were undertaken early in the nineteenth century. Another measure relates to the size of the bureaucracy, military and civil. Although in theory the size of such an establishment is no index of power yet the extension of the bureaucracy down to far lower levels of decision-making shows that the capacity was there, and a study of the transactions of government at these petty levels indicates that government decisions had an effect even at the grass roots.

The causes of this transformation of government are to be found especially in the decision to adopt European-style military forces, in the new economic opportunities, in the development of communications and in increased demand for government services from a larger and more ambitious population. The causes will not be discussed further here; rather it will be more useful to sketch in some of the political consequences of the enlargement of government power.

A larger share of the gross national product for government meant a smaller share for others. Those others had three possibilities: they could contest the claims of government, they could accept a reduced status or they could endeavour to join government and to try to reshape it to fit their particular wants. Each of these responses was tried by different

groups during the nineteenth century and their success or failure depended upon a variety of circumstances.

In remote areas such as central Arabia, the Yemen, the hinterland of Oman, the Zagros and Kurdish mountains, the Jebel Druze, in the remoter areas of the Sudan and Libya the encroachment of government was resisted with violent movements of protest commonly justified in religious terms. Often these movements succeeded for some time in postponing the imposition of government authority but the tendency was to make some compromise in the end. And it is also notable that the very act of resistance tended to promote government by requiring the protesters to organize and collect their resources. Thus the Mahdiyya in the Sudan developed into a species of state with an apparatus of administration comparable to that which it had rejected when supplanted by Egypt.

In most of the European provinces of the Ottoman empire the protest took the form of nationalist movements which aimed at achieving first an autonomous status and eventually complete independence from the Ottoman empire. It is no accident that these movements enunciated their protest in nationalist terms. The pressure of government was felt especially in the area of employment and those who spoke Slav languages, Greek or Romanian, were at an increasing disadvantage as long as the language of government was conducted in Ottoman Turkish. Under a government conducted in their own language their hopes of jobs would be greater. So long as government did little or nothing and the society was illiterate the language of government was a matter of relative indifference, but when increasing government forms were imposed on a society in which literacy was spreading the language of government became a matter of great importance to the class of students and intellectuals who played so large a part in Balkan revolutionary movements and who articulated the goals. National revolution was not only a matter of romance; it was also a question of jobs. This is not to say that Near Eastern Christian protest began with language: on the contrary it began with religion, supplemented by economics, among an illiterate people. It was in the articulation of its goals and its subsequent direction that the nationalists of language played the dominant role.

A similar response is observable in the last part of the nineteenth century and during the early twentieth century among the peoples of the Asian provinces of the Ottoman empire, the Armenians, the Arabs and the Turks themselves. The causes were fundamentally similar although the effects among the Muslims were different. Peoples with rising expectations found themselves squeezed by government and

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they put forward new formulas for the arrangement of governmental power.

Another response to the extension of governmental power was the demand for greater participation in government decisions through democratic process. Constitutionalism in the Near East was slow to grow and early constitutions appear as boons granted by rulers to their subjects, as devices for controlling one group or another and as diplomatic weapons for use against European demands. There is also in the early constitutionalist movements a powerful element of the desire of bureaucrats, more conscious of their professional status, to limit the power of an arbitrary ruler. Yet from the 1860s and the 1870s there is also a wider demand based upon a recognition that new forms of government are required in consequence of the enlargement of governmental power and the destruction of older institutions which had acted as buffers against the power of government within society. This is the theme of the Young Ottomans in the Ottoman empire and it is clearly enunciated in the writings of the Umma Party in Egypt after 1906. During the early years of the twentieth century constitutions came into operation in all the major states of the Near East.

The response of the majority of the people of the Near East to the enlargement of governmental powers was often to accept and welcome it. A strong government was a protection against the tyranny of local officials, the usurpations of notables and the raids of tribes. True, people might pay more to government but they paid less to a host of predators. The most hated feature of the enlargement of governmental power was conscription and there was constant opposition to its application to villages. But it was more and more difficult to avoid the long arm of government and in Egypt and in many areas of the Ottoman empire people reorganized their lives to fit in with its demands and to take advantage of its services—its schools, courts and its protection. In Iran, however, the continuing response of many people was to avoid government; the heart of the Iranian constitutional revolution was a desire to reduce the power of government.

The last feature of the Near Eastern political revolution in the nineteenth century which will be discussed here is the secularization of politics. In 1800 government in the Near East was Muslim government based on the *Shari'a*. That situation was tolerable so long as government kept its distance; as government grew it was obliged to present itself in a more secular garb. Further, government encroached upon areas formerly left to the religious communities, Muslim and non-Muslim. As functions passed under the state they were secularized so that, one by one and slowly and reluctantly, the great institutions of the state were

groups during the nineteenth century and their success or failure depended upon a variety of circumstances.

In remote areas such as central Arabia, the Yemen, the hinterland of Oman, the Zagros and Kurdish mountains, the Jebel Druze, in the remoter areas of the Sudan and Libya the encroachment of government was resisted with violent movements of protest commonly justified in religious terms. Often these movements succeeded for some time in postponing the imposition of government authority but the tendency was to make some compromise in the end. And it is also notable that the very act of resistance tended to promote government by requiring the protesters to organize and collect their resources. Thus the Mahdiyya in the Sudan developed into a species of state with an apparatus of administration comparable to that which it had rejected when supplanted by Egypt.

In most of the European provinces of the Ottoman empire the protest took the form of nationalist movements which aimed at achieving first an autonomous status and eventually complete independence from the Ottoman empire. It is no accident that these movements enunciated their protest in nationalist terms. The pressure of government was felt especially in the area of employment and those who spoke Slav languages, Greek or Romanian, were at an increasing disadvantage as long as the language of government was conducted in Ottoman Turkish. Under a government conducted in their own language their hopes of jobs would be greater. So long as government did little or nothing and the society was illiterate the language of government was a matter of relative indifference, but when increasing government forms were imposed on a society in which literacy was spreading the language of government became a matter of great importance to the class of students and intellectuals who played so large a part in Balkan revolutionary movements and who articulated the goals. National revolution was not only a matter of romance; it was also a question of jobs. This is not to say that Near Eastern Christian protest began with language: on the contrary it began with religion, supplemented by economics, among an illiterate people. It was in the articulation of its goals and its subsequent direction that the nationalists of language played the dominant role.

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divorced from religion and the religious dignitaries who had formerly played so large a part in government were excluded from its operation. The effect was to turn religion into a private activity divorced from the activities of the state. Broadly speaking this was the situation in the Ottoman empire and Egypt; in Iran the position was very different because there the religious leaders led the opposition to government and introduced into the constitution a major position for themselves.

The varieties of Muslim and Christian reactions to this situation are discussed at various places in this book, but here one may note that there were three main reactions during the period down to 1923: by the majority of the orthodox leaders to fight a rearguard action but eventually to accept the change; by some groups in isolated areas to mount a violent resistance to secularization or innovation in the name of a pristine undefiled Islam; and by some intellectuals to try to find a compromise between the claims of Islam and those of the secular state; the remarkable achievement of these Islamic modernists will be considered in due course.

Lastly, there was a change in the concept of international relations in the Near East. The European notion is that international relations are conducted between states through their duly appointed agents and that states are the only bodies legally competent to conduct those relations; the states of the traditional Near East made no such clear distinctions: the boundary line between domestic and international relations was blurred; for example, relations with border tribes involving dealing between provincial governors of neighbouring states were not seen as necessarily involving the rulers of states unless they chose to become involved. It was not merely that the provincial governor was given discretionary powers to act on his own border - that is a European rationalization of the situation - rather he was the responsible official, it was his job to act and there was no clear distinction between his dealings with tribes, merchants or other states.

Europeans found it difficult to grasp this situation and regarded having to deal with provincial rulers as attempts to fob them off. They sought to deal directly with the head of state and to embody the results of their dealings in formal interstate treaties. Over many years they were successful in imposing their concept of international relations upon the states of the Near East. For the Ottomans the process began as far back as the seventeenth century when they were obliged to sign the European-style Treaty of Zsitva Torok in 1606 and to give up their former habit of putting their international agreements in the form of commands sent to provincial governors. But the Ottomans did not abandon their older practices completely. Ottoman governors con-

tinued to act as the competent authority in what would be considered international relations, often in their dealings with Europeans and invariably in their relations with Asian states. It is interesting to observe the other side of the blurred division; throughout the nineteenth century the Ottoman government dealt with its non-Muslim citizens through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Iran the new system was not introduced until the nineteenth century. The first so-called Anglo-Iranian treaty of 1800 consisted of no more than the habitual orders issued by the shah to his officers, although it is true that this treaty was negotiated with a subordinate body, namely the English East India Company. The first European-style treaty signed by Iran was the Treaty of Finkenstein with France in 1807.

The traditional Near Eastern system reflected a different concept of government in which authority over men mattered more than authority over territory and in which power was dispersed among many groups within the same polity. Europeans could only interpret this concept as a decayed form of a political organism with which they were more familiar. They bent their efforts towards obliging the Near East to conform to their own notions of how states should behave, and in doing so contributed to the disappearance of the old system and its replacement by a state system which resembled that of Europe. Near Eastern states came gradually to accept the new roles designated for them and to conform to the European system of rules for international relations although, as late comers to the scene, they found themselves at a disadvantage in playing the new game of diplomacy. But the adoption of the new state personality caused much confusion. The Eastern Question was about the integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire. Europeans understood this famous phrase to refer to the territory and the form of government of a state; to many Ottomans it related to the preservation of the nature of the state, which involved the universal claims of Islam and the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan.

The European pressure upon the Near East had a decisive effect upon the state structure of the Near East. Throughout the nineteenth century it was Europe which determined the emerging shape of the Balkan states which gradually separated from the Ottoman empire; and between 1914 and 1923 Europe completely reshaped the Near East. The principle of self-determination which was introduced into the Near East, even attenuated as it was by the interests and ambitions of the European powers and the resistance of Near Eastern people, had a revolutionary impact upon the region.

NOTES

1. Lady Duff-Gordon, *Letters from Egypt, 1862-1869*, London 1969, 56.
2. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabarti, *'Aḡā'ib al-āḥbār fī-l-arā'ij wa'l-akhbār*, IV, Cairo 1879/80, 233. (Quoted Afaf Lutfi as-Sayyid Marsot, "The wealth of the Ulema in late eighteenth century Cairo", in T. Naff and R. Owen (eds), *Studies in eighteenth century Islamic history*, Carbondale, Ill. 1977, 207.)
3. Major George Keppel, *Narrative of a journey across the Balkan*, I, London 1831, 307.
4. *Mémoires du Baron de Tott sur les Turcs et les Tartars*, II, Paris 1785, 244. The English translation of this work (*Memoirs of the Baron de Tott*, II, London 1785, 366) translates "plusieurs grands propriétaires" as "several individuals" and misses the association with land. Recent research suggests that de Tott exaggerated the importance of commerce in wealth formation.
5. Odysseus [Sir Charles Eliot], *Turkey in Europe*, London 1900, 158.

CHAPTER TWO

The Eastern Question

THE INTERESTS OF THE GREAT POWERS AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Habsburg Austria had been the principal European opponent of the Ottoman empire, at first on the defensive as the main barrier to the progress of Ottoman arms into central Europe and latterly on the offensive. At the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) Austria wrested substantial territories from Ottoman control and made even greater gains at Passarowitz (1718). During the remainder of the eighteenth century Austria was unable to sustain this offensive because of her preoccupation with the threat from Prussia in central Europe. The gains of Passarowitz were lost at Belgrade (1739); Austria took no part in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-74 (although she took advantage of Ottoman helplessness in 1774 to seize the Bukovina); and she was dragged reluctantly into the Russo-Ottoman War of 1787-92 on the coat-tails of Russia and withdrew prematurely in 1791 (Treaty of Sistova) gaining only the Banat as compensation for her meagre efforts. By this time Austria had come to fear the growing threat from Russia in the Balkans, but could do little to oppose Russia lest she should drive that power into the arms of Prussia; instead Austria was obliged to endure an uneasy co-operation with Russia, even including a vague plan in 1782 to partition the European provinces of the Ottoman empire between the two powers. Nevertheless, it was plain that the Ottoman Balkans would become a major area of competition between Austria and Russia in the future.

During the eighteenth century it was Russia which emerged as the principal European antagonist of the Ottomans. Two factors are prominent in Russian involvement with the Ottomans: a religious factor deriving from Russian sympathies with the Orthodox Christians of the