

An Agenda for Research in History: The History of Libya between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH IN HISTORY: THE HISTORY OF LIBYA BETWEEN THE SIXTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

INTRODUCTION

It is perhaps premature to spell out priorities of research in the history of Libya, since bibliographies of what has already been written have not been systematically read, nor even adequately compiled and indexed.¹ The following observations and analyses are, of necessity, based on a cursory reading in a list—compiled by the author on the history of the Arab world and Ottoman Empire (sixteenth through nineteenth centuries)—of some 500 studies done since the 1950s by Arab scholars and historians. The fifties are taken as the period which signalled the achievement of political independence by the Arab States.² I realize that individual scholars will be able to make exceptions here or there to the observations, generalizations, and criticisms which are made in this study. The very exceptions, however, point to the dearth of modern critical scholarship on the history of Libya from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. However, the exceptions which one could point out as models for research to be done, do not in and of themselves amount to trends in research. To date, available histories of Libya are, in the main, focused on political if not outright dynastic history. The focus is usually placed on the peculiarities and the anomalies of political history rather than the primary similarities which make for comparative history. In the remainder of this paper we offer a novice's priorities for research under five headings.

I. THE LAND

Whatever has been written on the question of who owned and worked the land tends to focus on the nineteenth century and to be mainly formalistic. I have in mind M. A. Muhammad, *Mulkiyat al-Arabi fi Libiya fi al-uhud al-Qadima wa al-ahd al-Uthmani*, 1974 (University of Cairo in Khartoum). His legalistic and formalistic approach is exemplified by his assumptions. From Muhammad's point of view, the process of law-making (*tashri'*) by the Ottoman state (here presumably for the Libyan provinces as for others) tends to remain strictly Islamic. The implication in this pronouncement of principle is that the method of law-making and legislation called Islamic has not changed since the seventh century A.D. and that the Ottoman state has not changed this approach until

modern times, i.e., until the entry of France and England into North Africa and the Middle East, when the Ottoman state copied European law-making and adapted it to its needs.³ Furthermore, Muhammad's treatment of the period under discussion tends to be rather simplistic and ahistorical. On pages 131–132, he discusses the question of the *timar* and *ziamet* only in terms of usufruct from the land. He does not refer to the fact that the *iqta*^c (feudal) system had no provisions for inheritance, with major significance for later sociopolitical developments and consequences, nor does he indicate that it took other forms than land, among others, *gumruk* (customs), *hisba* (market inspection), etc. Incidentally, the *iqta*^c system did eventually evolve into a system of near-strict tax-collecting for the benefit of the central treasury starting from at least the end of the seventeenth century in some of the Ottoman domains. When Muhammad treats the evolution of land laws, he does not tie up the purpose of each to the motive(s) for it. He never takes into consideration the factors which made the major-scale changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries necessary. For example, the most simple explanation given for the evolution of the *timar* system is the one which describes it as a revenue-collecting system developed in lieu of payment of salaries to “officials” of the state. As the economic conditions of the state changed, especially as its sources of revenue began to diminish (and as it became more and more tightly drawn into the world market), there arose the necessity for a different state formation, one which was more directly involved in the collection of revenue through its directly or indirectly designated agents. There was a transitional period, when state officials were “awarded” (actually, purchased at an auction) certain tax-farming privileges which allowed them to collect revenues, but split half of it with the state treasury. This newly evolved system came to be known as the *malikane* (ownership), which appeared in two varieties: limited duration and life-time awards. Finally, when Muhammad reports change from the *timar* to the later *tapu* system (turned in the nineteenth century into private property), he attributes the change to an attempt on the part of the state to rectify the past abuses of the *timar* system in the form of over-exploitation of the peasants. This latter is hardly a convincing argument, since it is difficult to find more than token examples of a state in pre-modern times or modern times, which would carry out reforms primarily to ease the material burdens and alleviate the economic hardships of the peasants. This interpretation is offered against the explicit and recurrent reiteration of these motives in pre-modern Ottoman state official vocabulary, whenever pronouncements for changes in surplus extraction are recorded. Parenthetically, it should be noted that these terms represent more than pious expressions, for they are to be taken to be part and parcel of the ideological justification which the state deems necessary to make in order to render these usually further exploitative changes a bit more palatable.⁴ The very question of whether or not the lands held in the Libyan provinces of the Ottoman domains were subject to the *timar* system is still an open one. Cengiz Orhonlu maintained that the province of Tripoli itself was divided into *sanjaks*—in and of itself a hint that points to a more or less direct land exploitation by the central government—yet nowhere does he refer to whether or not the feudal system was

in effect in any of these districts.⁵ The evidence for his interpretation is taken from the *ruus defters* of the Başvekalet Arşivi, for the sixteenth century. More recently, Halil Sahiloğlu, on the other hand, argued that the timar system did not apply to the Libyan provinces, although he admitted that there is evidence which points towards the existence of *miri* (state-held) land.⁶ In light of this uncertainty about how land was held in the Libyan provinces, it becomes even harder to understand the relevance of the discussion by M. A. Muhammad in the chapters on the application of his preliminary observations on land (nearly the first 400 pages of his text). In those chapters, he points out that changes had taken place in land-holding in the nineteenth century, yet he offers no explanations for the changes which had been effected in the seventeenth. That century is dubbed by him as one of decline, which was followed by disintegration in the eighteenth century. There is no attempt on his part to explain the reasons for the historical changes in the means of land exploitation and revenue extraction.

Since the focus of the remaining chapters of Muhammad's book relate to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially the period when private land-holding became the main mode of land-holding, it leaves the important question of land-holding in the earlier periods totally open to research.⁷ On this point, scholars will have to conduct a systematic study of materials available on the local level (in Tripoli and Bengazi among others) and in Istanbul (at the Ottoman archives especially in the *Maliye* [financial] records, which directly pertain to land-holding, revenue extraction, and assignment).⁸

Out of 500 pages, which purport to study the question of land in Libya, it is only from about page 431 that chapters are specifically devoted to the Libyan provinces. The earlier parts are preliminaries which discuss the land laws as they appear in the general Islamic law codes; a discussion not based on an examination of the day to day practices or seasonal and periodic changes exemplified from each specific and distinct period. Therefore, it is impossible to raise questions of the social consequences of the kinds of law and practice which relate to the land as discussed in this volume.⁹

In our discussion to this point on the treatment of the land question, our focus has been mainly on the ownership, the management, and the administration of the collection of the surplus revenue which accrued to the state, the provinces, and individuals. Nothing has been said about the conditions of the soil, its use, the implements used for the cultivation of the land and other "technologies." This information and evidence could be obtained if the proper training and inducements were available. For example, training in archaeology which focuses on the period under discussion and earlier Islamic-Arab periods, could help point toward tentative answers to the questions relating to land which documentary evidence could not in and of itself give, such as the existing modes of production and available implements and technologies, and the extent of limitations on land these may have exerted. These questions, when explored, should be able to ultimately tell us something about the levels of efficiency of land use during particular periods. It is perhaps ironical that in both the Maghreb and the Mashreq, there are Arabs trained in ancient archaeology who are provided with

major facilities for the study and exhibition of artifacts from these earlier periods. Needless to say, we are, in part, witnessing the phenomenon of the continuation of colonial scholarship whose main focus had been on the archaeological exploration of the roots of Western civilization (the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine empires); the remarkable and expensive reconstructions which one finds in Libya (for example, of Roman ruins) are part and parcel of the legitimation of colonization by Italy (in the period between the wars especially) in its claim to be heir to Rome and the Roman Empire. The ideological exploitation of the potential in the focus and continued support of ancient history by the modern nation-states of North Africa and the Near East can also be seen in part as a continued effort to find justification for the peculiarities and uniqueness of the separate and provincial-*qutri* nation states, thereby adding a contemporary dynamics. (For example, the focus on the uniqueness of the Egyptian historical experience and its attribution to Pharaonic roots is an effort to support a separatist modern Egyptian state and society.) These remarks should not be taken to imply a call on our part for the abandonment of ancient archaeology by Near Eastern scholars, rather we aim to induce and advocate parallel training in the rich and still under-explored field of Arab and Islamic archaeology. There are some contemporary Arab historians who, by giving priority to the Arab-Islamic past, do not find any use for the study of the ancient part of the history of their region. Due to this lack of incorporation of that part of their own history, the interpretation of these civilizations is left on the aesthetic level, facing its viewers with artifacts they are expected to admire and with curiosities which leave them utterly surprised and baffled. It would be quite naive to assume that a study of the history of modern nation-states of the Near East and North Africa which incorporates the ancient period will develop out of mere moral exhortation or for purely academic reasons. It is contended, however, that such a trend in scholarship will develop out of historical necessity which would require the exploration of specific aspects of the past to better understand the dynamics of that history. Thus, for example, neither the history of the peasant nor the common man finds itself in the written documents except as their lives impinged on or were impinged upon by either the city or the ruling class or both. Archaeological evidence may help in the reconstruction of the history of the common man in Libyan history. The Centre for Libyan Studies has already rectified some of this gap in our knowledge about certain aspects of the life of the *mujahideen* against the Italians throughout the span of the colonial presence, by inaugurating a program of oral history which is creating a depository of tapes which will preserve their history as they experienced and remembered it.¹⁰

Since the wealth and resources of Libya during the period under study are related, in part, to the land, land ownership, and cultivation, the social-historical questions which relate to societal formations which arose commensurate with the various forms of landownerships can be identified. Such problems as the organization of society for the efficient production of food and surplus can be addressed with an eye to identifying how the surplus was used and by whom, as well as the institutions which evolved to accommodate the system of land and peasant exploitation.

II. THE CITIES, VILLAGES, OASES

Little is known about urban and semi-urban life in Libya between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The social and economic life of the common man, and the economic life of the cities, villages, and oases are hardly known for any period. The closer we come to the modern period, the more plentiful the sources become. However, for the period which concerns us, there are available sources which remain untapped. I am specifically referring to the records of the *muhakem al-sharʿiyya*. For Tripoli, for example, al-Ustad Muhammad Al-Usta, of the Libyan Archives (Darulmahfuzat/ al-Saray al-Hamra), assures us that these records are available from at least 1014 A.H. (1605–1606).¹¹ These same records, by their very nature, touch upon every aspect of life in the cities. The *sijils* (records) were kept by the kadi courts which in most instances also coincided with the administrative territory of the *sanjaks*.¹² But whereas the sanjak level of administration was governed by the sanjak bey, the *kada's* was governed by a kadi who was normally an independent agent from the military governor. The kada-sanjak is the basic Ottoman administrative unit, and with the *eyalet* serves as the most meaningful field for the study of Ottoman provincial history in general. Throughout the empire, courts of the kadis had records of the day-to-day transactions which were conducted and cases heard before them. Given the nature of the state between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, entries in the *sijils* cover the whole spectrum of human activities from governmental and financial affairs to civil, criminal, and even ethico-religious ones. Every once in a while, announcements (especially the accession of new sultans) and directives drawn up in the central capital and the provincial capitals found their way into these records. However, the great majority of the entries pertain to the daily course of events and cases which were brought before the local authorities. In the remaining parts of this section, we will look at the economic and social features of these records (gleaned from the *sijils* of one more or less typical kada-sanjak) as an illustration of the type of information, records, and data which they could provide.¹³ We are forced to discuss the typical rather than the specific records in Libya because up to this date no systematic description of the contents of the Libyan *sijils* has been published.

Economic and Commerical Life

Economic and commercial life in the cities was regulated by the kadi and the sanjak bey. Regulation of economic life took the form of price-fixing of retail commodities and imports, inspection of weights and measures, and supervision of the public weighing station (*qaban*). The appointment to the office of *muhtaseb*, part of the domain of the sanjak bey (as part and parcel of his *timar*), was within the jurisdiction of the sanjak bey. The *muhtaseb* served the sanjak bey as his representative in the market-place, although he was responsible in turn to the kadi for carrying out his duties in the markets of the city. The office was usually farmed out to one or two individuals for limited periods of time (up to one year). As we have already noted, beyond the payment of dues to the governor, the

muhtaseb was responsible before the kadi for the performance of his duties, in mainly ordinary and unexceptional cases.¹⁴ In the periodic drawing of price lists (in the sixteenth century four times a year was normal), the muhtaseb appeared before the kadi with representatives of the professions (*ahl ak-suqa*). There thus seems to be a certain amount of consultation allowed for the tradesmen and craftsmen in the market. Once a price-list was drawn up, to the mutual agreement of the three parties present, it was permanently inscribed in the sijils as binding on the merchants, craftsmen, and retailers and also for the purposes of reference by the muhtaseb in his duty to enforce the price-lists. To ensure adherence to these lists the muhtaseb conducted regular inspection tours of the markets of the city. Cases of violation, whether in the form of cheating on weights, or sales made in violation of the price lists, were brought by the muhtaseb before the kadi. It is there that once the violation had been ascertained that the verdict (usually *ta^czir*) was recorded against the offenders.

For his own compensation, also according to these records, the muhtaseb was paid both in kind and in specie by the salesmen, shopkeepers, and merchants and by wholesalers at the city gates.¹⁵ Since there is a consistency to entries to the type of mahkame sijil kept throughout the Ottoman domains, the Tripoli sijils referred to above should serve as bases for the study of the market and for the reconstruction of economic life of the city for the periods covered by these records. Furthermore, since the office of the hisba was filled by local families, the study of the office and those who held it could further shed light on the structure of the local administration and the social base which both supported the system and in the process also derived benefit from it.

Social life and Demography

The daily life of Muslim subjects, i.e., their private and public conduct, was subject to the regulation of the kada-sanjak administration. For example, the head of each Muslim household was bonded by professional bondsmen and sheykhs (patriarchs) of their quarters (*harat*) against the detection in their respective households of a thief, a prostitute, or a person neglectful of the performance of the daily Muslim rites. Should such a "misdemeanor" be discovered, the bondsmen were liable to forfeit their bond. In the cases where those who were bonded had no assets available, household heads used their marriage contracts as bond. In effect, the inhabitants were expected to provide warrants of good conduct at all times.¹⁶ Because the names of the bondsmen and patriarchs are listed along with the names of heads of households, by tens, and by city quarters, at least two obvious extrapolations from the available figures could be made: the composition of each quarter could be figured out and therefore also that of the whole city. When correlated with other data also available in the sijils—e.g., with reference to the socioeconomic backgrounds of the household heads, i.e., their professions, size of family, inheritance, awqaf, marriage contracts with specific families and individuals and the names of the witnesses who are also listed for these nuptial contracts—we could also perhaps assess the social and economic mobility of the city's families.

Although regulations such as bonding are not applied to ruling elites (asakir and ulema), and therefore are confined in the main to the indigenous Muslim population, certain aspects of the life of the non-Muslims (whether subjects of the sultan or not) fell within the control of local and central authorities. Thus we find *jizya* records in the *sijils* with lists of those who were liable to this special tax. Such records, when available, will serve as a base for the demographic composition of the non-Muslim population.¹⁷

III. STATE AND SOCIETY

There is enough evidence to warrant a hypothesis that in the Arab Near East in general and in the Maghreb in particular, there seem to be two parallel societies and therefore two histories which have evolved side by side. Only one has been noted, researched, and exposed because it has been based on a written record; it also happens to be the history which reflects the predominant interest and ideology of the one over against the other. This predominant history is the history of the "state." It can be defined as the history which is focused on the cities, urban centres, and coastal regions of North Africa. In practically every instance, the ruling elite was foreign, i.e., not indigenous to the region concerned, whether they were Turk, other Arab, or Berber in origin. The economy of the state tended to be different from that of the "society." In the former, the economy tended to be oriented toward trade, mainly external, and toward piracy as well. Its survival was based, in the main, on the expropriation of revenue by other means than the actual taxation of the indigenous population. The orbit of its concerns and relations, such as piracy, seems to be in the main with the Mediterranean world and Europe. In the Mediterranean Sea, the purpose of piracy has recently been approached quite differently from the standard approach of "plunder for its own sake." The new interpretation makes piracy a mainly European problem. Piracy has been attributed in part as a reaction by southern Europe to its deteriorating economic status vis-à-vis northern Europe. Accordingly, the role of the North African pirates is regarded mainly in terms of an alliance with southern European counterparts against the Mediterranean shipping and trade of northern Europe. In this sense then, piracy is viewed as a reaction by southern Europe to a strictly European problem; the North African states were attracted through alliances and the lure of easy and quick profit.¹⁸

In the Libyan provinces from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the ruling elites were "pure" Turkish in the earlier periods and more or less Turkish *kuloğlu* (descendants of Turks who had intermarried locally) in subsequent centuries. Although the phenomenon of the ruling elite (foreign or otherwise) separating and segregating itself from the rest of the population which it exploits is a common one (e.g., pre-Ottoman Egypt, which was governed by "mamlukes"), in modern Libyan historiography there is the curious phenomenon of identification by contemporary authors of the *kuloğlu* with such modern expressions as "Libyan patriots" and "nationalists." Thus, Muhammad Mustafa Bazmah regards Abdul-Rahman Aga al-Budayri, an envoy to Europe despatched by the eighteenth-century Qaramanli dynasty which ruled Tripoli, as a "Libyan" ambassador.¹⁹ At

one point in this same study, Bazmah splits ethnic hairs when he tries to differentiate between the *pure* Turks who ran the Libyan provinces of the Ottoman domains and the *kuloğlu*, of whom the Qaramanli dynasty traces its descent. (The *kuloğlu* are said to have married local women and therefore developed a local power base.) This contention borders on the absurd, since there was no such thing as a *pure* Turkish element. During the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Turkish elite (whether military or religious) tried its utmost not only to differentiate itself from the local population, but also maintained this differentiation and segregation through the importation of non-local, but also non-Turkish and usually enslaved, wives for their garrisons and their high administrative personnel. (For example, both the ulema and the Ottoman askeris who contracted marriages in Jerusalem during the sixteenth century had either women of their own class or manumitted slaves; usually of either Hungarian, Bosnian, or other origins.)²⁰ By concentrating on ethnicity for the explanation of the Qaramanli phenomenon, Bazmah opted for a focus on what he thought was unique to the history of Libya during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, e.g., the presence of the *kuloğlu* dynasty, when a slight shift in focus to the comparative level shows the rise of local elites in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries to be the rule in practically every part of the Ottoman empire. (The work done by Dina Sadat, Albert Hourani, and Ahmed Joudeh, among others, gives examples on such dynasties as the ^ʿAzms in Syria, Dahir al-^ʿUmar and Shihabs in Greater Syria and the Mamlukes of Iraq in the eighteenth century.) One obvious and consistent feature which all these ruling local elites shared in common is the fact that as they became autonomous, they not only retained Ottoman Turkish culture, but seemed to compete with one another to identify with it. This seeming contradiction dissolves when this identification is viewed from the perspective of the justificatory features of the imperial culture to the central elites' position as rulers and beneficiaries of the state. It was mainly those features of central elite culture which enhanced the local dynasties' own (ruling) identity that were promoted. Simultaneously with providing a definition of an identity which set them apart from the local culture and society, the central elite culture had hypnotic features which rendered them impervious and unconscious of their exploitive role. The cultural identification took several forms, ranging from architecture, (e.g., Qaramanli Mosque in Tripoli and the al-^ʿAzm Palace in Syria) and artistic design to the actual reproduction (republished by newly acquired printing presses) of literature which was once produced and read in Istanbul.

From literature, we have an excellent example for the first half of the nineteenth century in Egypt of Muhammad Ali. Here we find among the many works which were first printed by the Bulaq press an Ottoman treatise on "ethics" called *Ahlaq-i ʿAlaʿi* (Bulaq, 1844) whose main focus is on the ethos and life-style which guided and governed the life of the ruling elite in sixteenth-century Istanbul. (An easily available discussion of the content of this work can be found in *İslam Ânsiklopedisi*; it provides as well the precedents upon which this particular study was modeled.) The republication of this sixteenth-century treatise was not an isolated exception, for the divans of Ottoman poetry of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Istanbul were also republished. One recent commentator on this phenomenon of re-publishing of classical Turkish adab literature speculates that

there “might have been a market for Turkish poetry of classical quality in Egypt itself from 1830s on (among the Turks upon whom Muhammad Ali founded his authority).”²¹ In an earlier study, Heyworth Dunne, who is quoted in the same source, offers another opinion that perhaps the editions of classical Turkish works might have been produced for export to Istanbul.²² It should be pointed out that Muhammad Ali was attempting to create a new elite for Egypt which was not based on a native Egyptian culture. The ready-to-hand model he had was that of the Ottomans with whom he identified to the end of his days. His newly formed ruling class required a culture of its own to differentiate it from that of the native Egyptians. (One issue neither commentator takes up is the probability that these deluxe editions of classical Ottoman literature were not so much produced for a reading public as they were for the Turkish elite class of parvenus who like all parvenus are among the most enthusiastic subscribers to the most elegant editions of classical literature which they themselves do not either read, or appreciate. The same local elite, later in the same century, did a parallel identification with the culture of western Europe with disastrous results in architecture, art, and literature. For it took—lock, stock and barrel—the mainly European (especially French and Italian) cultural models so wholly unmodified, that its culture became a stilted imitation of the original. In its earliest manifestations this latest cultural adaptation was so extremely imitative, taking only the facade, that it ended with rococo and effete qualities. It is perhaps not insignificant that this later identification with European culture came at a time when the Turkish elite in Egypt had nearly completely lost control over its own destiny.) Research in cultural history should try to differentiate between the various literatures and their class bases.²³

Finally, new research should try to account for the local allies of the ruling elites. For without the facilitation of contact between the elite and local population, the smooth operation of the administration of state functions (e.g., collection of taxes, obedience of the law) would have been well nigh impossible. These same local elements sometimes helped in the justification of the status quo, mainly when that met with their own interest. Their relationship was, however, at best, ambivalent, and at worst potentially hostile. Under certain circumstances, we find them working against their former allies when it seemed to be in their best interest to do so. I have in mind as an example the local allies of the foreign ruling elite, especially the upper echelons of the ulema class.

The “Society”

Although the state has been comparatively well researched and documented, the “society” in Libyan history for the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries has been ignored and remains undocumented in the conventional sense of this term. Within this framework falls the thus-far virtually unreported inner socioeconomic life of the coastal cities (which although falling within the jurisdiction of the state remain undocumented and unresearched) and the *badiya*, which in turn was virtually outside the jurisdiction of the state. Even the origin of the latter mode of living and production has yet to be treated in any adequate and systematic fashion. Thus far, nomadization has been treated in an ahistorical manner as a

given, or perhaps has been seen as a kind of historical regression. Recently, however, there have been suggestions that it be treated as an active phenomenon, namely as a reaction to recession in resources due to competition over the use of limited economic resources (especially cultivable or arable land). In the period under discussion for the Arab Near East and North Africa especially, the most typical formations of order (both social and in the form of embryo mini-states) in the badiya were the *ribats*, *zawiyyas*, and the sufi orders associated with them. These points of contact provided the various tribes a common ground and allowed them to meet in peaceful and economically useful intercourse. What this supratribal “*asabiyya*” managed to create was a kind of “God’s peace” of medieval Europe or the haram-months of the jahiliyya and early Islamic history, when peaceful, smooth, and comparatively efficient commercial and other transactions (cultural fairs such as *Suq ‘Uqath*) took place between otherwise hostile tribes and semi-urban groups. Thus the *ribats* and the *zawiyyas*, though short of providing a full “state,” supplied a modicum of political, social, and economic order.²⁴

We have noted earlier that “society’s” history is much harder to write because its records are not of the conventional type for history writing. Folk culture, and adab, whether in the form of poetry, religious treatises (especially of folk sufi orders), has in the main been retained partly in writing, but mostly orally and perhaps even through archaeology. These can be recovered and recorded by field work similar to that with the Libyan mujahideen undertaken by the researchers from the Libyan Studies Centre to which we have already alluded. In the case of Libya proper, the focus for such studies will be on areas where the authority of the foreign-based coastal state did not penetrate or extend, i.e., the badiya and its oases. It is here where we will find a record of a history of a different kind: from tribal history to the economic history of the Sahara trade.²⁵

Echoes of aspects of life in “society” will probably be noted in archival sources, whether central (at the capital; such as the *muhimme defteri* at Istanbul) or local (in the form of the *sijils* of the courts and in the official histories). In these documents on the life of the interior, reports are usually made on the conflict between the settled coast and interior, of alliances between certain sectors of society with the ruling elite or its challengers in the cities, and yet another in the form of armed and tribal other incursions against the coast when the state was in a state of chaos and turmoil. Finally, these same records will note the attempt on the part of the city and the state to impose on the local population and on the interior, taxes to supplant the loss of revenues when foreign sources (e.g., piracy, gold mines, raids) had dried up, as was especially the case in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is in this period that the western European states began to fill the so-called political vacuums in North Africa and the Near East as the region became more and more incorporated into the world market as a provider of natural resources (e.g., grain from Tripoli).²⁶

Although the European archives (and consular reports especially) have been tapped as a major source for the writing of the political history of Libya in the period under consideration, to date they have not been used as a source for economic history. Because most of the representatives of Europe in the Libyan

provinces were concerned primarily with commerce and trade, it is not a matter of mere speculation that these sources can provide primary or secondary information, along with local sources of information on the economy and the commerce of the area.²⁷

IV. RELATIONS BETWEEN EYALET AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Most studies of the relations between the Ottoman regencies and Morocco, on the one hand, and the government in Istanbul on the other, tend to be formalistic. The attempt to explain these relations on the basis of the principles of sultan-caliph, as commanding moral and spiritual support and therefore sufficient cause for explanation of need or want of ties between the growing independent regencies of the eighteenth century (for example) and Istanbul. The study of the day to day contacts between the two levels of administration throughout the period of Ottoman suzerainty should point to the mutualities as well as the conflicts which these relations underwent. One accretion of this type of research would be the rendition of the nature of Ottoman sovereignty over the provinces in a concrete and scientific manner. It is only after these studies have been undertaken that we will perhaps not find surprising or contradictory the startling fact that the Ottoman ruling classes provided support (at great expense to their treasure and when they could ill-afford it) to the Libyan mujahideen in their early struggle against the Italians in the early part of the twentieth century.

The primary sources for contacts between the Libyan provinces and Istanbul have to be sought in Istanbul at the prime ministers archives. The muhimme defteris which record the correspondence emanating from the grand vizier's chancery can serve as one of the most valuable records. Here, a large number of the communications between Istanbul and the provinces are either summarized or replicated in some detail. For one period for which I have consulted the muhimme defteris, there are examples of the kind of military and other support which the regencies provided the Istanbul government, especially in times of war. These took the form, in the main, of naval support. (This was especially true of the late seventeenth century when the Istanbul government was at war for nearly sixteen continuous years with the Holy League powers of Venice, Russia, Poland, and Hapsburg Austria.) The margins of the sijils of the provincial courts occasionally contain duplicates of letters or instructions sent from Istanbul to the provincial administrators. In a similar fashion, occasionally the correspondence from the provinces aimed at the capital might find its way into these same margins. Finally, the financial registers available in Istanbul could perhaps also shed some light on the economic relations between the Libyan provinces and the central government.

V. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most of the sources I have consulted subscribe to the notion that history can be written without any conscious or unconscious philosophical framework. Thus, historians record historical realities; i.e., record events as they happen, no more

and no less. This they call pure scholarship aimed at objective history, and in the main comes in the form of narrative history instead of the critical and analytical forms which make history into a science. The narrative historical document is given glory as a valid thing in and of itself. At the minimum, the reader is left without any notion of the difference between symptoms and causes.

A history which has no sense of cause and effect and offers no hierarchy of the most important causative factors is a history without dynamics. It is, after all, the discernment of dynamic forces in history (often hidden and behind the symptoms) which forms the very essence of the historical enterprise as a science. Without such discernment, history is left without debate; the very essence of continuity in scholarship and what gives it both its intellectual content and justification. If all historical work was indeed empirical, then the scholar himself does not enter into the discourse. And without the self-consciousness of his own theoretical and philosophical vantage point a scholar would not be able to raise questions beyond the ones he last thought possible to raise.

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NOTES

Author's note: I wish to thank Talal Asad of Hull University and Irmgard Staueble of the Free University, Berlin for their reading of and critical comments upon, this study.

¹The Centre for Libyan Studies has been providing a continuous bibliography on the history of Libya, especially in its journal, *Mjallat al-Buhuth al-Tarikhiyyah*, which started publication in January 1979. The reader will find the following bibliographies of great value for this period: *Annuaire d'Afrique du Nord: Algerie, Maroc, Tunisie, Libye*, Aix-En-Provence, 1962–; and the more recently started *The Turkology Annual (Turkologischer Anzeiger)* which has been published as a supplement to the journal *Wiener Zeitschrift Fur Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* since 1975, but can also be separately obtained. This latter bibliography is prepared under the direction of Andreas Tietze in collaboration with sectional editors from practically every part of the western world and now taps some of the resources of Middle Eastern centres to provide perhaps the most complete (for all languages) and thorough (it has systematically arranged every aspect of Turkish scholarly endeavors since 1972) bibliography on Turkology.

²The compilation of this bibliography and the critical reading of parts of it were facilitated by grants for research and released time from California State University, Long Beach. The impetus and inspiration for the early assessment of these materials are in part due to the author's participation in an international conference held as the inaugural meeting of the Centre for Libyan Studies in Tripoli (December, 1978). The theme of the conference was The Decolonization of Libya's Historical Past. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Dr. Muhammad al-Jarary and the preparatory committee for their hospitality and to the participants for their direct and indirect contributions to the substance, approach and orientation of this study.

³Thus the periodization adopted by the author is still the liberal one which considers the history of the Ottoman state and its provinces strictly in terms of their response to external threat devoid of local concerns and dynamics.

⁴In the case of Ottoman history, the examples which come to mind show that the reforms were aimed at the creation of the largest immediate cash revenue for the state treasury at the time of a protracted war. Changes in the *malikane* system that were offered in the latter part of the seventeenth century are reported in the Istanbul-based Başvekalet Arşivi, Maliye Defteri no. 3423, p. 607 and excerpted in Raşid, *Tarih-i Raşid*, Istanbul 1283, Vol. II, pp. 288–291.

⁵"Trablus Garp," *İslam Ânsiklopedisi*. Orhonlu's contribution is an addition to the Turkish translation of the original text in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

⁶Oral observations by Sahiloğlu at the inaugural conference of the Centre for Libyan Studies, held in Tripoli, in December, 1978.

⁷Most of the historical material found in M. A. Muhammad's work is based on secondary and tertiary sources. The work is based mainly on analogous treatment of land-holding in other parts of the Ottoman state, rather than on the critical examination of the actual practice of land-holding in the Libyan provinces. Except for a model of decline and disintegration, there is no critical sense or apparatus to the work. Finally, there is missing an historical dimension, which is so critically important for an understanding of the socioeconomic dimensions of Libyan society in premodern times.

⁸The reader can find a general classification for the financial registers in the work of Midhat Sertoğlu, *Muhteva Bakimından Başvekalet Arşivi*, Ankara, 1955; Stanford Shaw, "Archival Sources for Ottoman History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 80, 1960, pp. 1–12; and the most recent work which I have not been able to consult, by Atilla Çetin, *Başbakanlık Arşivi Kilavuzu*, İstanbul, 1979.

⁹The author does admit at one point that he had spent only one week in Tripoli where he visited the archives (Saray al-Hamra) and managed to get some documents produced to be able to include as appendices to his text, see pictures 2–9.

¹⁰Jan Vansina had been involved early in this project. Report in *Majallat al-Buhuth al-Taikhiyya*, Vol I, no. 1, 1979, pp. 145–146.

¹¹Report to the inaugural conference for the Libyan Studies Centre, Tripoli, December, 1978.

¹²The *sanjak* is the military administrative unit used nearly throughout the Ottoman domains.

¹³The registers or records which have been consulted for this essay are located in the court offices in Jerusalem. There are over 550 sijils, which follow one another in almost direct chronological order. Of these, the first 416 cover the affairs of the Kada-sanjak of Jerusalem up to World War I. Although there is no specific index of the sijils, a reference list (*fihris*) which is kept for the *waqfiyat* can serve as an index for them. In the *fihris*, the waqf entries are listed bearing the number of the sijil, page on which it is found, and the date of the waqfiyyah. In addition there are two columns which note the dates covered by each sijil and the names of the incumbent kadis. This part of our study is based on illustrative and typical selections from the first eighteen sijils which cover the period 934–954 A.H. (1530–1546/7) and on; sijil no. 49 dating from 973 A.H. (1566). The standard scripts are broken *naskhi* and *rikʿa*; the rescripts and orders emanating from İstanbul and Damascus (the provincial-eyalet capital) are written in *nestalik*. The common Ottoman practice of using modified forms of *siyakat* for the financial entries is copiously illustrated in the registers consulted. There are in Arabic two articles which both describe and illustrate the usefulness of the sijils from other Arab provinces as historical records: Khalil Sahili (Sahiloğlu), "Sijillat al-Mahakem al-Shariʿiyyah kamasdar farid litarikh al-ʿiqtisadi wal-ʿijtimaʿi," *al-Majallah al-Tarikhiiyyah al-Maghribiiyyah*, no. 1, 1974, pp. 25–32; and Abdul Wadad Yusuf, "Sijillat al-mahakem al-Sharʿiyyah kamasdar asasi litarikh al-ʿArab fil-ʿAsr al-ʿUthmani," *al-Majallah al-Tarikhiiyyah al-Misriyyah*, no 19, 1972, pp. 325–335.

¹⁴For example, when the welfare of the town was in jeopardy, the sanjak bey was called upon to take direct action. In one instance, serious shortage of meat was experienced in the city of Jerusalem due to the fact that its butchers could not agree on the selection of a *reis* (head of their "guild"), resulting in the fluctuation of the price of meat three times in one month. The governor stepped in, and in consultation with various sectors of society in the city, he had a reis appointed and gave him virtual monopoly to provide meat. Jerusalem sijil 18 (952 A.H./ 1546).

¹⁵These dues were regulated by Ottoman law (*kanun*). Omer Lutfi Barkan, *Osmanli İmparatorlugunda zirai ekonominin hukuki ve mali esaslari*, İstanbul, 1945, I, 218 cites an undated price-list which corresponds to versions of this list entered in Jerusalem sijil 13 (948 A.H./ 1541); the first instance is on page 303 and the other on page 381. Heath Lowry has collected most of the available liva and sanjak kanunnameler for the Ottoman provinces. For a report and list with dates see Heath Lowry, "The Ottoman Liva Kanunnames contained in the Defter-i Hakani," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* II (1981), pp. 43–74. Part of my ongoing research includes the examination of the liva and sanjak kanunnameler for eighteen Arab districts and provinces of the Ottoman state and the assessment of the usefulness of these laws for the economic and social history of the Arab provinces in the sixteenth century.

¹⁶This practice is very much reminiscent of the “frank-pledge” of the Middle Ages in the West. For a quick reference, see Bryce Lyon, *A Constitutional and Legal History of Medieval England* (New York, 1960), pp. 81–82 and 195 ff. I am grateful to my colleague, Donna Boutelle, for drawing my attention to this similarity between Ottoman and European practice. There is evidence that this practice was continued elsewhere in the Ottoman domains well into the eighteenth century. For example, in the year 1115 A.H. (1703), a contemporary chronicler records that “since there was rumor that certain misdemeanors were being practiced. . . . those men and women who are not bonded [without kafil, i.e., bondsman] against such ‘crimes’ were to be fetched and expelled from the city.” In Edirne, “Edirne bazi mertebe fevahish maqulese-i istimā’ olunmaghla def’, shehri tatheer eylemek uzere hatt-i humayun shevketmekrun sadir oldu. . . . veziri-i azam tarafindan dahi mu’tamed ağalar tayin, mahelle bi-mahalle teftish oliyip kefilleri olmiyan rijal u nisa ikhraj ve yanlinara chawushlar kushulup shehirden chikardilar” (unpublished chronicle), Anonymous, “Tevarih-i Sultan-i Suleyman,” Berlin staatsbibliothek, Diez A quarto 75, p. 229.

¹⁷In a “jizye defter” found in the Jerusalem records (for 940 A.H.), there is inscribed a list of the names of the Christians and Jews who were liable to pay the jizye and those individuals who actually paid the head tax. There is a notation against the names of those who were absent from their residence or for some other reason did not pay their taxes. Finally, the disbursement of the revenue collected among the various Muslim charitable and religious bodies is recorded. For a study of an Anatolian example of these records see B. Jennings, *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* Vol. XXI (1978). David Geza provides a useful study based on the “tahrir defter” from the Ottoman archives, for the formula calculating the number of individuals living in a household. Idem., “The Age of Unmarried Male Children in the Tahrir Defter,” *Acta Orientalia* Vol. XXXI (1977), pp. 347–357. Heath Lowry discusses the issue of the composition of the *hane* (households) both in his book *Trabzon Sehrinin Islamlasma ve Turklesmesi: 1461–1583* (Istanbul, 1981), soon to appear in English and especially in his forthcoming review article of B. Lewis and A. Cohen, “Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century,” in *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*.

¹⁸A. Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay* (Princeton, 1977).

¹⁹Idem., *Abdul-Rahman Agha al-Budayri* (Beirut, n.d. [1960s?]). Omar Ismail, *Inhiyar Hukm al-Ussrah al-Qaramanliya fi Leebya* (Beirut, 1966), takes the same approach.

²⁰We cite for example, two such marriage contracts: the first dated 12 Zul-Hijjah, 973 A.H. where the spouse was Suleyman Çelebi ibn the late Mehmed, the Agha of the fort of Jerusalem, whose wife was Fatmah bint Hasan, the Çavuş of the said fort, and lately the divorcee of Mustafa, the molla of the same fort; even the ex-slaves of the elites seemed to marry from within the ex-slave population of the elites, for instance, the spouse Rizq b. Abdullah, the manumitted slave of the late Qaytas Bey, and the wife was Hurayr bint Abdullah, the manumitted slave of Shehzade bint Yusuf al-Rumi al-Ankaravi. Jerusalem sijil 49, pp. 73 and 100.

²¹R. N. Verdery, “The Publications of the Bulaq Press under M. Ali of Egypt,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 91 (1971), 135a.

²²*Ibid.*, 135b.

²³Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, in a forthcoming study from Cambridge University Press, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, adds new insights into the conflict between Muhammad Ali and his eldest son over the wisdom of using native Egyptians to staff the new ruling elite and the importance of this delay in the Egyptianization of the ruling class and the latter’s impact on the evolution of a modern Egyptian culture, nation state, and national identity.

²⁴Abdul-Mola al-Horeir describes and analyzes the culture created in the badiya of North Africa and especially Libya by the Sanusiyya movement, and assesses the role of the zawiyyas in the creation of the socioeconomic formation and culture. “Social and Economic Transformation in the Libyan Hinterland During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1981 (copies are available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA).

²⁵The Centre for Libyan Studies in cooperation with UNESCO sponsored a conference on the caravan trade across the sub-Sahara (announced in *Majallat al-Buhuth al-Tarikhyya*, Vol. I, 1 (1980). Some of the papers for that conference have been published in *ibid.*, Vol. III, nos. 1 & 2 (1981).

²⁶Ismail’s study of the Qaramanli dynasty quoted in footnote 19 above is written completely

without raising any of the critical questions and without taking into consideration the whole question of the relation between state and society outlined in this section.

²⁷Christian Sourriou of the University of Aix en Provence has indicated that in the French archives such information remains untapped.