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Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Başhoca İshak Efendi (Türkiye'de Modern Bilimin Öncüsü) [Chief Instructor İshak Efendi: Pioneer of Modern Science in Turkey], Ankara, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989; 146 pp.
M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi* [Abdullah Cevdet the Physician as a Political Thinker and His Era], Istanbul, Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981; 439 pp.

Contemporary analyses on the Middle East often locate the origin of social change in the transformative power of the West. They assume eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western political and economic revolutions to be the underlying determinants of most Middle Eastern transformations. Such an assumption, however, takes away the agency of the indigenous people in shaping social change. It overlooks the process through which Middle Eastern societies accept and interpret Western goods, institutions, and ideas. The significance of the two books under review lies specifically in their attempt to restore that agency by analyzing the lives and times of two nineteenth-century Ottoman scholars, İshak Efendi (?–1836) and Abdullah Cevdet (1869–1932). The books study, in careful detail, the process through which these two men intellectually and politically came to terms with the emerging West.

Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu's focus is on İshak Efendi, the chief instructor of the Western-style Army Engineering School and the author of many scientific books, especially ones on chemistry. Şükrü Hanioğlu concentrates on Abdullah Cevdet, the physician, political activist, and essayist. In the lives of these men, the struggle between the Islamic religion and Western science for social power constitute, as for the rest of society, the main source of tension. Both try to come to terms with this force in different ways: İshak Efendi, learned in both the religious and Western sciences, achieves a successful synthesis between the two. Abdullah Cevdet, a couple of decades later, works to displace the social power of religion with the rational strength of Western science.

Through the lives of these two men, the books illustrate the choices, options, and obstacles the Ottoman society encountered in negotiating its relations with the West. Both authors carefully portray the ambivalence of Ottoman society in coming to terms with the complicated relationship between religion and science. İshak Efendi's life course captures the brief equilibrium that existed between Ottoman society and the West when the Ottomans still had sufficient control over Western knowledge. İshak Efendi, a convert, successfully utilizes both his traditional and Western-style education in guiding his students into Western science. İhsanoğlu suggests that İshak Efendi's synthesis should still serve as a model for us today in our attempts to adopt the West without abandoning our social identity. Yet, Abdullah Cevdet's life course demonstrates the fragility of such a solution: with the increasing diffusion of the West, Ottoman reformers choose Western science and philosophy over indigenous forms of knowledge. Their support culminates in the establishment of a secular Turkish republic.

In his book, İhsanoğlu undertakes a meticulous archival study of İshak Efendi's life and works. We find out that the most distinctive attribute of İshak Efendi is his being both a Jewish convert and an Islamic scholar. In Ottoman society, it was not at all common for converts to pursue a religious education; they often could not acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in time. Yet, not only does İshak Efendi attain such an education, he also displays the extent of his piety first by committing the Qur'ān to memory in three months and then by going on the pilgrimage. He still cannot overcome the precarious social position of a convert in early nineteenth-century Ottoman society, however. Although İshak Efendi serves as a translator at the Imperial court and as a chief

instructor, the doubts about his 'trustworthiness in keeping state secrets' prevents his promotion to important political posts. İhsanoğlu cites archival sources that emphasize İshak Efendi's weakness for fame and money as a reason for this lack of advancement. Yet, as the research of Carter Findley on the Ottoman civil officialdom amply demonstrates, the question of trustworthiness emerges too frequently as a cause for dismissal in the employment of minorities in the Ottoman bureaucracy. In explaining the pattern of İshak Efendi's career, it might therefore be more pertinent to focus not on the alleged individual attributes of İshak Efendi, but instead on the socially imposed constraints on his life course as a convert.

The book then analyzes İshak Efendi's works in meticulous detail. We learn that his compendium of mathematical sciences introduced modern mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology, and chemistry to the Middle East. İshak Efendi was also very prolific: in ten years, he completed 13 volumes on Western science and technology, always grounding his research in the most current Western sources. What made his approach to Western science unique was his persistence in developing an Ottoman technical vocabulary. He resisted the direct transliteration of Western terminology and sought to replace it with an Ottoman one. İshak Efendi could successfully undertake such an endeavor because of his mastery of both the Ottoman and Western sources — a proficiency lost in the later decades as hasty Western translation replaces careful Ottoman interpretation.

İhsanoğlu's work on İshak Efendi is pioneering on a number of counts. Ihsanoğlu successfully undertakes a history of Ottoman science, uses extensive archival evidence in doing so, and, as a thorough historian of science, meticulously traces the original Western sources in each of İshak Efendi's many monographs. We direly need more such studies on the interpretation of Western science and technology in the Islamic world. Only then can we come to terms with how it was that the Middle East negotiated Western science and technology. Yet such analyses will need to emphasize in more depth the social context within which such a negotiation occurs. After all, the nature of social conflict and the position of different groups within the Ottoman social structure very much patterned the lives of Ottoman scholars such as İshak Efendi.

Hanioğlu's analysis of Abdullah Cevdet precisely demonstrates how significant the social context is in determining the life course of a person. Abdullah Cevdet, son of a military clerk in the provinces, first obtains a religious education and then graduates from the Army Medical School in Istanbul. The couple of decades between the lives of İshak Efendi and Abdullah Cevdet vividly demonstrate the extent of Ottoman structural and social transformation. Abdullah Cevdet attends one of the army schools where İshak Efendi's pioneering works were probably still being taught. Unlike İshak Efendi, however, Abdullah Cevdet does not form a synthesis between Islamic religion and Western science. Instead, he chooses biological materialism over the traditional forms of religion. Hanioğlu uses Cevdet's case to carefully portray the complex tensions in nineteenth-century Ottoman society between the Islamic religion and Western intellectual movements such as positivism, atheism, anarchism and biological materialism. Through frequent references to newspapers, letters, and archival documents, he carefully positions Abdullah Cevdet within the context of the contemporary academic controversies, intellectual debates, and political strife.

Abdullah Cevdet's numerous attempts to contain religion within science contrasts sharply with İshak Efendi's earlier successful synthesis. Reflecting the views of many of his Ottoman and Western contemporaries, Cevdet predicts that religion would wither away in the face of science. He therefore accepts only the 'religion of freedom,' an endorsement which leads him to link religion to political opposition. Recognizing the significance of religion in people's lives, Abdullah Cevdet and his

friends utilize Islam to criticize the Ottoman sultan's rule. They thus mediate an Enlightenment idea, viz., the realization of human rights, into Ottoman society through their discussions on Islamic religion. Abdullah Cevdet's banishment to the provinces, and his subsequent escape to Europe as a political exile marks the life patterns of many other Ottoman political dissenters as well. They all try to insert the concepts of liberty, fraternity, and equality into new ideologies such as Ottomanism and Islamism. Cevdet is marginalized within this movement as he stays in Cairo, away from the centers of political action in the Balkans and the capital. Ultimately, Hanioğlu argues, it is the concept of nationalism that replaces Islam to provide a vision for reformers like Abdullah Cevdet—a vision that leads to the foundation of the republic.

In summary, both of these books provide us with new insights into the process of social change in nineteenth-century Ottoman society. Although one emphasizes history of science and the other intellectual history, both focus on men whose lives and works highlight the conflicts and tensions at large that Ottoman society underwent. Both authors emphasize the role knowledge and ideas in structuring Ottoman social change in general and the life course of these men in particular. As a historical sociologist, however, I cannot help but urge that we place more emphasis on the role of structures and institutions in producing social change. After all, ideas acquire meaning within the Ottoman societal context of the changing patterns of trade with the West, the increasing influence of provincial notables, and the newly emerging state and military institutions. Only by combining such ideational factors with structural ones can we reach a deeper understanding of the agency of Middle Eastern societies in their nineteenth-century negotiation with the West.

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Muhammad Y. Muslin. *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, Columbia University Press, The Institute for Palestine Studies Series, New York, N.Y. 1988; xiii+277 pp., 5 tables, bibliography and index.

Muhammad Muslih, who is Assistant Professor in the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures at Columbia University, asserts in the volume under review that the origins of Palestinian nationalism should *not* be sought at the end of the First World War (where, as he claims, most historians have placed them), but much earlier, i.e., in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hence, Zionism's role in shaping the local Arab nationalism in Palestine has been less conspicuous than has generally been accepted. The emergence of Palestinian nationalism was precipitated by other factors whose contribution was more decisive than the challenge posed by Zionism.

The periodization Muslih offers of ideoligical developments among the Arabs of the Middle East is an interesting one, and begins with *Ottomanism*, which emerged to win the loyalty of the subjects of the Empire since the latter part of the nineteenth century. This was followed, in 1908–1914, by *political Arabism* (whose goals were reforms and autonomy for the Arab provinces within the framework of the Ottoman Empire) and, during the First World War, by *Arab nationalism* (which worked towards a complete political independence for those provinces).

Muslih attributes great importance to the gradual rise of Turkish nationalism as an incentive for the emergence of Arab nationalism. 'If the Turks were a nation' claimed the harbingers of the new ideology, 'so were the Arabs.'