

The Review Section

This issue includes four reviews covering subjects that, while deeply rooted in the past, have profound repercussions on our understanding of the present. **Lital Levy's** review of Julia Phillips Cohen's *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* illuminates the story of the Ottoman Jewish community in the final half century of the empire. This book deconstructs the myth of the "special relationship" between the Jewish community and the empire and presents an authentic historical narrative of the Jewish community in the context of the social transformations associated with modernity as they occurred in Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica. Levy indicates the contribution of Cohen's work to scholarship dedicated to the Jewish presence in Ottoman societies by stressing the far more complex picture that it purveys in relation to the common narratives of the Jewish community's history.

The second review probes a different subject but similarly scrutinizes common understandings of the sociopolitical framework of Ottoman history. **Marios Hadjianastasis's** review of Marc Aymes's *A Provincial History of the Ottoman Empire: Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean in the Nineteenth Century* highlights the book's examination of the province of Cyprus in the nineteenth century in terms that go beyond the physical boundaries of the island. Hadjianastasis outlines Aymes's attempt to rethink the function of the "province" in Ottoman history and to challenge the historical preconceptions that rose from the center-periphery model. This reevaluation, as Hadjianastasis emphasizes, does not approach the "province" merely as an attempt to write "local history" but as a "point of departure" for understanding Ottoman history.

Elizabeth Thompson's *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East*, reviewed by **Chibli Mallat**, presents the struggle for reform throughout modern Middle Eastern history (since the seventeenth century) through individual vignettes. By presenting the struggles of prominent activists in one work, the author outlines a homogeneous historical narrative that revolves

around the struggle for justice and reform in the Middle East. Mallat indicates that presenting “heroes” from different Middle Eastern societies, including Turkey, Iran, and Israel, rather than just the Arab world, is the major contribution of this work.

John Robert McNeill’s review of Ronnie Ellenblum’s *The Collapse of the Eastern Mediterranean: Climate Change and the Decline of the East, 950–1072*, links present changes with deeper historical events. McNeill points out that by exploring an earlier era, the book presents case studies that address the subject of climate change as an explanation for large-scale changes in human societies. In his work Ellenblum focuses on mapping ecological crises, bad weather, timing of droughts, and water and food shortages, attributing to these climate-oriented changes a crucial impact on society and demography. Through emphasizing the link between nature and human society, Ellenblum explains political turmoil, waves of violence, persecution of minorities, and accelerations in religious conversions. McNeill adds an apt insight that reflects the importance of historical analysis of climate change in the Levant, Anatolia, and the Balkans for present, and future, societies of these regions, implying that the impact of nature on modern human societies has been forgotten.

The reviews in this issue deliberate different concepts and time periods in the history of the region, yet they also address the eastern Mediterranean as a sociogeographical entity that sustains certain internal dynamics and should be treated as a subject in its own right. Thoughtful arguments are presented that must be taken into consideration by scholars interested in reconceptualizing the complexity of this region.

Wael Abu-^Uksa and Yonatan Mendel