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978-1-107-03363-4 - The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1918: A Social and Cultural History

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The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1918

The Ottomans ruled much of the Arab world for four centuries. Bruce Masters's work surveys this period, emphasizing the cultural and social changes that occurred against the backdrop of the political realities that Arabs experienced as subjects of the Ottoman sultans. The persistence of Ottoman rule over a vast area for several centuries required that some Arabs collaborate in the imperial enterprise. Masters highlights the role of two social classes that made the empire successful: the Sunni Muslim religious scholars, the *ulama*, and the urban notables, the *a'yan*. Both groups identified with the Ottoman sultanate and were its firmest backers, although for different reasons. The *ulama* legitimated the Ottoman state as a righteous Muslim sultanate, while the *a'yan* emerged as the dominant political and economic class in most Arab cities through their connections to the regime. Together, the two helped to maintain the empire.

Bruce Masters is John Andrus Professor of History at Wesleyan University. He is the author of *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge University Press 2001) as well as other books, articles, and scholarly contributions.

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For Giancarlo, Ussama, and Tim

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Acknowledgments

Thirty-seven years ago, I began to study the history of the Arab lands in the Ottoman Empire in earnest as a graduate student at the University of Chicago. I had already lived and studied for several years in the Middle East and found that many of the questions I had concerning the Ottoman centuries were unanswered in the literature that was available then. I set out to find answers and have been searching for them ever since. Along the way, I had the help of Professor Halil İncalcık, who introduced me to the intricacies of the language and scripts of the Ottoman chancelleries and provided me with an appreciation of the workings of the empire from the perspective of Istanbul. I was also fortunate to have the mentorship and friendship of Abdul-Karim Rafeq, who helped me both to understand how the empire functioned in Syria and, by using the court records, to approach questions of how ordinary people lived it. Both men have had a major impact on my subsequent career and I thank them as a grateful student.

This work represents my research and thoughts on the Ottoman Empire that have evolved over many years. I have had the benefit of knowing many remarkable scholars who have contributed to my knowledge and understanding of the past. I would like to thank in particular Virginia Aksan, Palmira Brummett, David Commins, Selim Deringil, Dick Douwes, Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, Tony Greenwood, Bernard Heyberger, Akram Khater, Dina Rizk Khoury, Najwa al-Qattan, and Madeline Zilfi for hours of good conversation. Much of the thought that went into this book is a product of having introduced Ottoman history and Arab culture to Wesleyan undergraduates for the past thirty years. I have learned from that truly remarkable group of young people and

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Abbreviations

AHR	<i>The American Historical Review</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
MES	<i>Middle Eastern Studies</i>
MHR	<i>Mediterranean Historical Review</i>
REMMM	<i>Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée</i>
WE	<i>Die Welt des Islam</i>

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Note on Transliteration

I have employed a modified system of transliterating Arabic proper names and terms suggested by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. I have chosen not to use diacritical marks and only retained the “raised c” (c) to represent the “cayn” and the apostrophe to represent the “hamza.” Ottoman Turkish proper names and terms are spelled according to the rules of Modern Turkish, with the exception that I have maintained the final voiced consonant that corresponds to the Ottoman spelling, “Mehmed” rather than “Mehmet.” Place-names and terms that are more familiar to English-language speakers such as “qadi” and “pasha” are spelled according to common English usage.