

THE EDITOR'S DESK

F. Robert Hunter's account of the Cairo archives today, following by only a short time Helen Rivlin's description of the same archives a few years earlier, brings back all too vividly my own experiences in the Ottoman archives of Cairo almost two decades ago, in 1955 and 1956. The royal dynasty had only just been overthrown. As part of the changes that followed, a new generation of Egyptian archivists had been given an opportunity to organize and make available the sources of their nation's history. But it still was a period of transition. In many cases, persons appointed under the old régime remained in positions where, as a result of prejudice or ignorance, they could and did continue to harass and frustrate the efforts of researchers, foreign and Egyptian alike, however few of these there were at that time. There was, in fact, no research room at all at the Citadel archives, and temporary arrangements had to be made for the use of part of the office of the Assistant Director. The 'Abdin Palace archives were so completely disorganized that they were entirely closed. In any case, none of the historians whom I consulted at the University of Cairo was able to tell me where the archives were, and it was only by chance that I was able to locate them and, eventually, to secure permission to consult them. It is gratifying to learn from Mr Hunter how much conditions have improved and to conclude that it is no longer possible for significant research to be undertaken in most areas of Middle Eastern history from the fifteenth century to modern times without use of the treasures available at the Cairo archives as well as those in Istanbul and elsewhere.

In other articles, Charles D. Smith of San Diego State University, discusses the shift in emphasis to Islamic subjects among Egyptian intellectuals in the 1930's, particularly by Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal; Emanuel Marx, of Tel Aviv University, describes in detail the traditions and practices surrounding circumcision feasts among the bedouins of the Negev Desert; and Philip Carl Salzman, of McGill University, Montreal, Canada, discusses the effects of modern conditions on the powers and positions of tribal leaders in Baluchistan. In our more historical articles, Richard L. Chambers, of the University of Chicago, describes the early education of one of the greatest of the Ottoman administrators of the nineteenth century, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, in the process discussing the organization and state of the Ottoman *medreses*, as well as the cultural activity in Istanbul at that time; and Dickran K. Kouymjian, of the American University of Beirut, analyses a manuscript of the Mxit'ar of Ani in the context of medieval Armenian and Muslim historiography.

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