

**Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010**

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The seventeenth century has long been considered to be the beginning point of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The economic, political and social crises that marked the century have all been considered to be the precursors of this decline that finally ceased with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. Revisionist scholarship has challenged many aspects of the Ottoman decline paradigm from various angles, yet still the decline narrative has not been replaced by a grand narrative that would ground its argument on a broad socio-political and economic base. Baki Tezcan's *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* makes a considerable contribution to the field, since it proposes a grand narrative of the early modern Ottoman past. For Tezcan, the profound socio-political and economic transformations that the Ottoman State underwent in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries led ultimately to the replacement of the medieval dynastic institutions of the Ottoman polity by an early modern state structure. This is where the name of the book, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, comes from, since according to Tezcan, from 1580 onwards culturally, economically, legally and politically the Ottoman Empire differs greatly from its preceding forms. For this reason he calls the period of ca. 1580-1826 the "second Empire."

The major focal point of the study is on the period of 1617-22, a period during which, as Tezcan argues, most of the socio-political transformations that produced the Second Ottoman Empire can be analyzed. However, the author also provides a broad economic and political background that proves to be essential in understanding the dynamics of those critical five years. In doing this, he also touches upon many of the most debated topics in early modern Ottoman history, such as the origin of the Ottomans, the authenticity of Mehmed II's (r.1444-46/1451-81) legal code, the limits of Ottoman absolutism, the question of regicide, the decline paradigm, and the economic as well as political empowerment of the viziers, imperial family members, high ranking ulema, chief eunuchs, central army, and their participation in active politics. To this end, the book can also be considered to be a general history of the early modern Ottoman past. Nevertheless, this feature of the book should not mislead the reader because, at the same time, in various parts of the book, the author provides a deep and detailed analysis of the lives and careers of certain persons, and of some

events in context. Therefore, methodologically, this book presents a combination of the macro and micro levels of historical inquiry. This multiplicity can also be observed in the primary sources of the book. Baki Tezcan uses documents from the Prime Ministry, and from the French and British state archives, as well as a great number of published and unpublished Ottoman chronicles, bringing diverse sources together to create his own narrative throughout the work.

After a general introduction, the book opens with a chapter entitled *One Market, One Money, One Law: The Making of an Imperial Market Society and a Law that Applies to All* on the emergence of the imperial economy and the law that applies to it. Here, the author primarily focuses on the gradual development of the Ottoman monetary economy in the sixteenth century, which eventually led to the decline of feudal institutions such as the *timar* (fief) and *kanun* (provincial/feudal financial law codes). Tezcan argues that this socio-economic change created new institutions whose regulation fell into the domain of the jurist's law; a fact that politically empowered the jurists greatly. Thus he perceives the rising power of the jurists' as an outcome of the development of a market oriented economy.

The second chapter, *The Question of Succession: Bringing the Dynasty under Legal Supervision*, continues the narrative of the first, in the sense that it analyses the rising political power of the jurists' over Ottoman dynastic politics, drawing on the example of the enthronement of Mustafa I (r.1617-18/1622-23) in 1617. In this chapter, the author firstly discusses the possible reasons behind the survival of Prince Mustafa, and then focuses on the emerging power of the office of grand mufti – the ultimate authority exerting the jurists' law – at the turn of the seventeenth century. The power of the grand mufti had reached such an extent by 1617 that, in opposing established Ottoman dynastic traditions, the grand mufti Esad Efendi was able to bring the brother of the deceased sultan, Mustafa I, to the throne. According to Tezcan, this enthronement was the victory of the constitutionalists, a diverse group that aimed to limit the royal prerogatives, as opposed to the absolutist ambitions of the court.

The third chapter, *The Court Strikes Back: The Making of Ottoman Absolutism*, examines the response of the Ottoman court to the socio-economic and political transformations of the sixteenth century. Tezcan starts the chapter with a general political history of the Ottoman state from ca.1300 to 1580. During this time interval, as the feudal institutions and local power holders started to be absorbed into the patrimonial state structure, the Ottoman court emerged as the ultimate holder of political power. This power was largely transferred to the hands of the viziers, against whom later on the court started to create its power brokers by empowering some officers and/or creating new ones. After a close analysis of this process and the roles of the people that partook in it, the chapter ends with the enthronement of Osman II

(r.1618-22) being accomplished by these new holders of political power. So this time at least, Tezcan argues, the absolutist party seems to emerge victorious over the constitutionalists.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, Tezcan focuses on the period that starts with the enthronement of Sultan Osman II and ends with the regicide of the sultan in 1622. With a thorough analysis of the events that marked these four years, the author re-constructs the life and politics of Sultan Osman II, and also the uprising of the Ottoman central army that brought about the first regicide in Ottoman history. The fourth chapter, *A New Empire for a Second Osman: Osman II in Power (1618-1622)* explores the short reign of Osman II by focusing on his childhood and upbringing as well as his absolutist ambitions, such as his military campaign against Poland in 1621 and his intention to recruit a new army that would be composed of *sekbans* (mercenaries). Tezcan evaluates the issue of recruiting a new army within the larger political and economic framework of the rising prominence of *sekbans* as an outcome of the monetized economy and competition of local elites for political power in the provinces.

The fifth chapter, *The Absolutist Dispensation Overturned: A Regicide* begins with a long and detailed narration of the deposition of Osman II and his regicide by the central army forces. By exploring a huge amount of Ottoman chronicles relating the event and by utilizing the Prime Ministry archives, Tezcan re-creates the day of the uprising in minute detail. Apart from that, the author questions the possible dynamics behind the central army's opposition to the sultan and argues that the central army chose to depose the sultan because it fitted better with their political aims than compromising with the court. Thereafter, the author aims to contextualize the undeniable influence of the Ottoman central army forces over political matters in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. To that end, the author addresses probably the most obvious and also still unresolved question of why the Ottoman central army grew enormously at that time.

The sixth chapter, *A Second Empire Goes Public: The Age of Janissaries*, is solely devoted to understanding the socio-political and economic formation of the janissaries and their politicization. As Tezcan argues, of all the corps of the Ottoman central army, it was the janissaries that became the symbol of the "Second Empire" and its political order, so that their abolition in 1826 represents the end of this period. To substantiate this claim, the author analyzes some of their rebellions in the seventeenth century, especially those of which can be taken, for Tezcan, as exemplary of the limits imposed upon Ottoman royal authority in the seventeenth century. Finally, the concluding chapter is devoted to two interrelated discussions on the issues of early modernism and decline in the Ottoman Empire. Here Tezcan emphasizes that, contrary to the general assessments, the seventeenth century was not a time of stagnation and decline but rather was a period of socio-

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political and economic transformation out of which a novel state structure appeared.

Even though the book dwells upon a time frame made up of just five years, and moves back and forth in time, the author offers us a general history of the early modern Ottoman past. Yet at the same time, the book cannot escape from the side effects of offering a general narrative; since the book touches upon a great variety of subjects, in some instances the analysis seem to be limited. Nevertheless, it can be fairly stated that the book, with its combining rapprochement of the new and old schools of history writing and historical inquiry, presents a post-revisionist outlook. The interrelated structure of the chapters, the well organized and uncomplicated format of the book and its simple language, make it easily understandable even for readers that are not familiar with the context.

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