



SOURCES IN THE HISTORY OF THE
Modern Middle East

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY Boston New York

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Printed in the U.S.A.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2001131516

ISBN: 0-395-98067-4

6789-QF-10 09 08 07 06

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CHAPTER 1

Central Political Reforms and Local Responses

The military defeats suffered by the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century and the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 ushered in a new era in the Middle East and North Africa. It appeared to local observers that European forces suddenly were more powerful and certainly were more expansionist. By no means did this perception lead local inhabitants to assume the overall superiority of European culture, politics, or civilization. The defeats, however, did result in a certain amount of soul-searching by government officials and intellectuals. Many responses were proposed and sometimes adopted, though not always successfully. One of the lessons drawn out of the defeats by some Ottoman officials was the need to modernize the empire and its bureaucracy.

The Tanzimat was a period of reform that began in the 1830s and lasted through the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I (*tanzimat* is a Turkish word meaning "reorganization" or "restructuring"). In response to the decreasing military, political, and economic power of the empire, reformers (first the Young Ottomans, and later the Young Turks) embarked on a series of programs to modernize the imperial government and the way officials related to subject people across the various lands under imperial rule.

The notion of "modernity" was not easily or completely definable, but to government officials—especially those trained in Europe or European schools—modernity meant an increase in central government control and a shift from treating the population as "subjects" to treating them as "citizens."

Without assuming radical and rapid changes, we can still observe that such changes were attempted by studying the first three documents in this chapter. The first document, the *Hatt-I-Serif* decree, proposed a reform project to secularize the Ottoman courts and bring a greater degree of central control over the administration of the empire. The second was an attempt to transform the sociopolitical organization of the Ottoman Empire from the *millet* (sectarian

communities) system to one of Ottoman citizens subject to the secular laws of the empire. The third document is an imperial decree presented to an Ottoman official in the province of Mosul (in modern-day northern Iraq) with regard to the nomadic tribes that predominated in the region. The opinion of the Bedouins expressed here provides valuable clues as to how some Ottoman officials understood the goals of the Tanzimat.

The fourth document, from the writings of the satirist Mirza Malkum Khan, provides glimpses of internal criticism of the Iranian government's and Islamic intellectuals' responses to European incursions. Malkum satirizes both groups and lampoons their efforts as half-hearted attempts to hold on to bygone days and waning powers. Although the great majority of the Iranian population probably disagreed—or at best partially agreed—with him, his satire is still important because it provides a critical perspective on the encounter between the Middle East and Europe.

Responding to Tanzimat reforms as well as to the growth of European cultural influence in the Middle East and North Africa, several Muslim intellectuals and religious reformers sought to influence the outcomes of these changes in ways that fit their own worldview. Two key Islamic voices responding to European imperialism are those of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (document 5) and his disciple Muhammad 'Abduh. Both men confronted an environment in which Islam and local cultures faced external pressure and criticism—direct and indirect. While some Muslim thinkers preferred to reject all attempts at reconciliation with European ways of life, these two sought some accommodation between the technological superiority of the West and their notion of Islamic society, traditions, and mores. Regardless of the degree of their success or failure, both thinkers were influential in shaping this cross-civilization dialogue and remain icons in the Muslim world.

The last document in this chapter indicates how after some seventy years of reform one minority—the Jewish community in Baghdad—evaluated the modernization of the Ottoman Empire.

1. The Hatt-I-Serif Decree Initiates the Tanzimat, or Reform, Period in the Ottoman Empire, November 3, 1839

In the Tanzimat period of Ottoman history, attempts were made to modernize the empire and enable it to withstand European imperialist pressures. The aim of the Hatt-I-Serif decree—clothed as it was in the religious legitimacy of the Shari'a—was to allow the Ottomans to establish a stronger central government by means of reforms in the tax collection and military service systems. The purpose of these reforms was to weaken provincial governors' holds on their territories and simultaneously provide the central Ottoman government with more resources with which to face the European military and political might. The reforms were never fully implemented,

but more important than any immediate changes was the fact that this decree initiated the period of Tanzimat, which lasted through the end of World War I, and whose impact went beyond military and political matters to touch social and cultural aspects of life in the Ottoman Empire.

All the world knows that since the first days of the Ottoman State, the lofty principles of the Kuran and the rules of the Şariat were always perfectly observed. Our mighty Sultanate reached the highest degree of strength and power, and all its subjects [the highest degree] of ease and prosperity. But in the last one hundred and fifty years, because of a succession of difficulties and diverse causes, the sacred Şariat was not obeyed nor were the beneficent regulations followed; consequently, the former strength and prosperity have changed into weakness and poverty. It is evident that countries not governed by the laws of the Şariat cannot survive.

From the very first day of our accession to the throne, our thoughts have been devoted exclusively to the development of the empire and the promotion of the prosperity of the people. Therefore, if the geographical position of the Ottoman provinces, the fertility of the soil, and the aptitude and intelligence of the inhabitants are considered, it is manifest that, by striving to find appropriate means, the desired results will, with the aid of God, be realized within five or ten years. Thus, full of confidence in the help of the Most High and certain of the support of our Prophet, we deem it necessary and important from now on to introduce new legislation to achieve effective administration of the Ottoman Government and Provinces. Thus the principles of the requisite legislation are three:

1. The guarantees promising to our subjects perfect security for life, honor, and property.
2. A regular system of assessing taxes.
3. An equally regular system for the conscription of requisite troops and the duration of their service.

Indeed there is nothing more precious in this world than life and honor. What man, however much his character may be against violence, can prevent himself from having recourse to it, and thereby injure the government and the country, if his life and honor are endangered? If, on the contrary, he enjoys perfect security, it is clear that he will not depart from the ways of loyalty and all his actions will contribute to the welfare of the government and of the people.

If there is an absence of security for property, everyone remains indifferent to his state and his community; no one interests himself in the prosperity of the country, absorbed as he is in his own troubles and worries. If, on the contrary,

Translated by Halil Inalcik, from the Osmanli text in *Takvim-i Vekayi* as reproduced in *Tanzimat* (Istanbul, 1940) after p. 48; checked, against the text in Latin Turkish characters in A. Şerif Gözübüyük and Suna Kili, eds., *Türk Analıyasa Metirleri* (Ankara, 1957), pp. 3-5, a text that appeared in *Düstür*, 1st ser. 1: 4-7. This document may also be found in J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 269-271.

the individual feels complete security about his possessions, then he will become preoccupied with his own affairs, which he will seek to expand, and his devotion and love for his state and his community will steadily grow and will undoubtedly spur him into becoming a useful member of society.

Tax assessment is also one of the most important matters to regulate. A state, for the defense of its territory, manifestly needs to maintain an army and provide other services, the costs of which can be defrayed only by taxes levied on its subjects. Although, thank God, our Empire has already been relieved of the affliction of monopolies, the harmful practice of tax-farming [*iltizam*], which never yielded any fruitful results, still prevails. This amounts to handing over the financial and political affairs of a country to the whims of an ordinary man and perhaps to the grasp of force and oppression, for if the tax-farmer is not of good character he will be interested only in his own profit and will behave oppressively. It is therefore necessary that from now on every subject of the Empire should be taxed according to his fortune and his means, and that he should be saved from [any] further exaction. It is also necessary that special laws should fix and limit the expenses of our land and sea forces.

Military matters, as already pointed out, are among the most important affairs of state, and it is the inescapable duty of all the people to provide soldiers for the defense of the fatherland [*vatan*]. It is therefore necessary to frame regulations on the contingents that each locality should furnish according to the requirements of the time, and to reduce the term of military service to four or five years. Such legislation will put an end to the old practice, still in force, of recruiting soldiers without consideration of the size of the population in any locality, more conscripts being taken from some places and fewer from others. This practice has been throwing agriculture and trade into harmful disarray. Moreover, those who are recruited to lifetime military service suffer despair and contribute to the depopulation of the country.

In brief, unless such regulations are promulgated, power, prosperity, security, and peace may not be expected, and the basic principles [of the projected reforms] must be those enumerated above.

Thus, from now on, every defendant shall be entitled to a public hearing, according to the rules of the Şariat, after inquiry and examination; and without the pronouncement of a regular sentence no one may secretly or publicly put another to death by poison or by any other means. No one shall be allowed to attack the honor of any other person whatsoever. Every one shall possess his property of every kind and may dispose of it freely, without let or hindrance from any person whatsoever; and the innocent heirs of a criminal shall not be deprived of their hereditary rights as a result of the confiscation of the property of such a criminal. The Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of our lofty Sultanate shall, without exception, enjoy our imperial concessions. Therefore we grant perfect security to all the populations of our Empire in their lives, their honor, and their properties, according to the sacred law.

As for the other points, decisions must be taken by majority vote. To this end, the members of the Council of Judicial Ordinances [*Meclis-i Ahkam-i Adliyye*], enlarged by new members as may be found necessary, to whom will

be joined on certain days that we shall determine our Ministers and the high officials of the Empire, will assemble for the purpose of framing laws to regulate the security of life and property and the assessment of taxes. Every one participating in the Council will express his ideas and give his advice freely.

2. Sultan Abdul Majid's Islahat Fermani Decree Reaffirms the Privileges and Immunities of Non-Muslim Communities in the Ottoman Empire, February 18, 1856

On February 18, 1856, Sultan Abdul Majid issued a decree that aimed to make equal all of the citizens of the Ottoman Empire regardless of their religion. Although in part this reform was an attempt to please the British, it was also a serious attempt to transform the population of the empire from "subjects" to "citizens." By so doing, the reforming elites of the empire hoped to deter the rise of nationalist movements based on religion, such as the one that had separated Greece from the empire in 1829. Moreover, the decree was intended to limit the ability of the European powers (most notably France and Russia) to claim the right to protect their coreligionists in the empire from religious discrimination. Although this decree did not stop such interventions—in 1861, for example, French troops landed in Lebanon to protect the Catholics of the area—it marks a historical moment of transformation in the nature of the empire.

Let it be done as herein set forth.

To you, my Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Aali Pasha, decorated with my imperial order of the medjidiye of the first class, and with the order of personal merit; may God grant to you greatness and increase your power.

It has always been my most earnest desire to insure the happiness of all classes of the subjects whom Divine Providence has placed under my imperial sceptre, and since my accession to the throne I have not ceased to direct all my efforts to the attainment of that end.

Thanks to the Almighty, these unceasing efforts have already been productive of numerous useful results. From day to day the happiness of the nation and the wealth of my dominions go on augmenting.

It being now my desire to renew and enlarge still more the new institutions ordained with a view of establishing a state of things conformable with the dignity of my empire and the position which it occupies among civilized nations, and the rights of my empire having, by the fidelity and praiseworthy efforts of all my subjects, and by the kind and friendly assistance of the great powers, my

United States, 46th Congress, special session (March 1881), Senate, Executive Documents, vol. 3, no. 3, *The Capitulations*, by E. A. Van Dyck, pt. 1, pp. 108–111. This document may also be found in J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 315–318.

noble allies, received from abroad a confirmation which will be the commencement of a new era, it is my desire to augment its well being and prosperity, to effect the happiness of all my subjects, who in my sight are all equal, and equally dear to me, and who are united to each other by the cordial ties of patriotism, and to insure the means of daily increasing the prosperity of my empire.

I have therefore resolved upon, and I order the execution of the following measures:

The guarantees promised on our part by the Hatti-Humayoun of Gulhané, and in conformity with the Tanzimat, to all the subjects of my empire, without distinction of classes or of religion, for the security of their persons and property, and the preservation of their honor, are to-day confirmed and consolidated, and efficacious measures shall be taken in order that they may have their full entire effect.

All the privileges and spiritual immunities granted by my ancestors *ab antiquo*, and at subsequent dates, to all Christian communities or other non-Mussulman persuasions established in my empire, under my protection, shall be confirmed and maintained.

Every Christian or other non-Mussulman community shall be bound within a fixed period, and with the concurrence of a commission composed *ad hoc* of members of its own body, to proceed, with my high approbation and under the inspection of my Sublime Porte, to examine into its actual immunities and privileges, and to discuss and submit to my Sublime Porte the reforms required by the progress of civilization and of the age. The powers conceded to the Christian patriarchs and bishops by the Sultan Mahomet II and to his successors shall be made to harmonize with the new position which my generous and beneficent intentions insure to these communities.

The principle of nominating the patriarchs for life, after the revision of the rule of election now in force, shall be exactly carried out, conformably to the tenor of their firmans [Ottoman imperial decrees] of investiture.

The patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, and [rabbis] shall take an oath, on their entrance into office, according to a form agreed upon in common by my Sublime Porte and the spiritual heads of the different religious communities. The ecclesiastical dues, of whatever sort or nature they be, shall be abolished and replaced by fixed revenues of the patriarchs and heads of communities, and by the allocations of allowances and salaries equitably proportioned to the importance, the rank, and the dignity of the different members of the clergy.

The property, real or personal, of the different Christian ecclesiastics shall remain intact: the temporal administration of the Christian or other non-Mussulman communities shall, however, be placed under the safeguard of an assembly to be chosen from among the members, both ecclesiastics and laymen, of the said communities.

In the towns, small boroughs, and villages where the whole population is of the same religion, no obstacle shall be offered to the repair, according to their original plan, of buildings set apart for religious worship, for schools, for hospitals, and for cemeteries.

The plans of these different buildings, in case of their new erection, must, after having been approved by the patriarchs or heads of communities, be submitted to my Sublime Porte, which will approve of them by my imperial order, or make known its observations upon them within a certain time. Each sect, in localities where there are no other religious denominations, shall be free from every species of restraint as regards the public exercise of its religion.

In the towns, small boroughs, and villages where different sects are mingled together each community inhabiting a distinct quarter shall, by conforming to the above-mentioned ordinances, have equal power to repair and improve its churches, its hospitals, its schools, and its cemeteries. When there is question of their erection of new buildings, the necessary authority must be asked for, through the medium of the patriarchs and heads of communities, from my Sublime Porte, which will pronounce a sovereign decision according to that authority, except in the case of administrative obstacles.

The intervention of the administrative authority in all measures of this nature will be entirely gratuitous. My Sublime Porte will take energetic measures to insure to each sect, whatever be the number of its adherents, entire freedom in the exercise of its religion. Every distinction or designation, pending to make any class whatever of the subjects of my empire inferior to another class, on account of their religion, language, or race, shall be forever effaced from administrative protocol. The laws shall be put in force against the use of any injurious or offensive term, either among private individuals or on the part of the authorities.

As all forms of religion are and shall be freely professed in my dominions, no subject of my empire shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion that he professes, nor shall he be in any way annoyed on this account. No one shall be compelled to change their religion.

The nomination and choice of all functionaries and other employees of my empire being wholly dependent upon my sovereign will, all the subjects of my empire, without distinction of nationality, shall be admissible to public employments, and qualified to fill them according to their capacity and merit, and conformably with rules to be generally applied.

All the subjects of my empire, without distinction, shall be received into the civil and military schools of the government, if they otherwise satisfy the conditions as to age and examination which are specified in the organic regulations of the said schools. Moreover, every community is authorized to establish public schools of science, art, and industry. Only the method of instructions and the choice of professors in schools of this class shall be under the control of a mixed council of public instruction, the members of which shall be named by my sovereign command.

All commercial, correctional, and criminal suits between Mussulmans and Christians, or other non-Mussulman subjects, or between Christian or other non-Mussulmans of different sects, shall be referred to mixed tribunals.

The proceedings of these tribunals shall be public; the parties shall be confronted and shall produce their witnesses, whose testimony shall be received

without distinction, upon an oath taken according to the religious law of each sect.

Suits relating to civil affairs shall continue to be publicly tried, according to the laws and regulations, before the mixed provincial councils, in the presence of the governor and judge of the place.

Special civil proceedings, such as those relating to successions or others of that kind, between subjects of the same Christian or other non-Mussulman faith, may, at the request of the parties, be sent before the councils of the patriarchs or of the communities.

Penal, correctional, and commercial laws, and rules of procedure for the mixed tribunals, shall be drawn up as soon as possible and formed into a code. Translations of them shall be published in all the languages current in the empire.

Proceedings shall be taken, with as little delay as possible, for the reform of the penitentiary system as applied to houses of detention, punishment, or correction, and other establishments of like nature, so as to reconcile the rights of humanity with those of justice. Corporal punishment shall not be administered, even in the prisons, except in conformity with the disciplinary regulations established by my Sublime Porte, and everything that resembles torture shall be entirely abolished.

Infractions of the law in this particular shall be severely repressed, and shall besides entail, as of right, the punishment, in conformity with the civil code, of the authorities who may order and of the agents who may commit them.

The organization of the police in the capital, in the provincial towns and in the rural districts, shall be revised in such a manner as to give to all the peaceable subjects of my empire the strongest guarantees for the safety both of their persons and property.

The equality of taxes entailing equality of burdens, as equality of duties entails that of rights, Christian subjects, and those of other non-Mussulman sects, as it has been already decided, shall, as well as Mussulmans, be subject to the obligations of the law of recruitment.

The principle of obtaining substitutes, or of purchasing exemption, shall be admitted. A complete law shall be published, with as little delay as possible, respecting the admission into and service in the army of Christian and other non-Mussulman subjects.

Proceedings shall be taken for a reform in the constitution of the provincial and communal councils in order to insure fairness in the choice of the deputies of the Mussulman, Christian, and other communities and freedom of voting in the councils. My Sublime Porte will take into consideration the adoption of the most effectual means for ascertaining exactly and for controlling the result of the deliberations and of the decisions arrived at.

As the laws regulating the purchase, sale, and disposal of real property are common to all the subjects of my empire, it shall be lawful for foreigners to possess landed property in my dominions, conforming themselves to the laws and police regulations, and bearing the same charges as the native inhabitants, and after arrangements have been come to with foreign powers.

The taxes are to be levied under the same denomination from all the subjects of my empire, without distinction of class or of religion. The most prompt and energetic means for remedying the abuses in collecting the taxes, and especially the tithes, shall be considered.

The system of direct collections shall gradually, and as soon as possible, be substituted for the plan of farming, in all the branches of the revenues of the state. As long as the present system remains in force all agents of the government and all members of the medlis shall be forbidden under the severest penalties, to become lessees of any farming contracts which are announced for public competition, or to have any beneficial interest in carrying them out. The local taxes shall, as far as possible, be so imposed as not to affect the sources of production or to hinder the progress of internal commerce.

Works of public utility shall receive a suitable endowment, part of which shall be raised from private and special taxes levied in the provinces, which shall have the benefit of the advantages arising from the establishment of ways of communication by land and sea.

A special law having been already passed, which declares that the budget of the revenue and the expenditure of the state shall be drawn up and made known every year, the said law shall be most scrupulously observed. Proceedings shall be taken for revising the emoluments attached to each office.

The heads of each community and a delegate, designated by my Sublime Porte, shall be summoned to take part in the deliberations of the supreme council of justice on all occasions which might interest the generality of the subjects of my empire. They shall be summoned specially for this purpose by my grand vizier. The delegates shall hold office for one year; they shall be sworn on entering upon their duties. All the members of the council, at the ordinary and extraordinary meetings, shall freely give their opinions and their votes, and no one shall ever annoy them on this account.

The laws against corruption, extortion, or malversation shall apply, according to the legal forms, to all the subjects of my empire, whatever may be their class and the nature of their duties.

Steps shall be taken for the formation of banks and other similar institutions, so as to effect a reform in the monetary and financial system, as well as to create funds to be employed in augmenting the sources of the material wealth of my empire. Steps shall also be taken for the formation of roads and canals to increase the facilities of communication and increase the sources of the wealth of the country.

Everything that can impede commerce or agriculture shall be abolished. To accomplish these objects means shall be sought to profit by the science, the art, and the funds of Europe, and thus gradually to execute them.

Such being my wishes and my commands, you, who are my grand vizier, will, according to custom, cause this imperial firman to be published in my capital and in all parts of my empire; and you will watch attentively and take all the necessary measures that all the orders which it contains be henceforth carried out with the most rigorous punctuality.

3. An Ottoman Government Decree Defines the Official Notion of the "Modern" Citizen, June 19, 1870

Derived in part from knowledge about the way the French, British, and Austrian governments functioned, and in part from local needs and established customs, these Tanzimat reforms attempted to extend the reach of the Ottoman government internally while allowing it to face external threats. This document seeks to draw an irrevocable distinction between "primitive" nomadic tribes—Bedouins—and "urbane" people who live in cities and villages. It makes strong value judgments about each category and provides a clear-cut recommendation for dealing with the Bedouins. Pay particular attention to the language used to describe each group, and question the characterizations. Think about likely reasons behind the creation of the two categories. Do not assume that the author is describing reality in an objective manner. What ideological motivation do you think lies behind this depiction of the Bedouin way of life?

To the model of proverbs and peers, His Excellency Firhan Pasha Zayd 'Alwa. It is known that if one compares the tribes and people who live in the lifestyle of Bedouins [nomadic tribes] with those urbane people who live in the cities and villages, one will note the complexity in the customs of city-folk. In contrast, it will be noted that in comparison to the original creation of man and his internal self, the way of life of Bedouins is simple. In fact, the primitive and original state of man is most likely the same as that of the Bedouin. However, God has graced human beings with a characteristic that is absent from any other [species]. According to this characteristic, man cannot remain in his original state of creation but should prepare all that is needed for his food, drink, and clothing, and after this he must gather knowledge and develop commerce and other human necessities. He seeks to obtain other necessities as well, and every time he reaches a stage of acquisition, then he sees the need to advance and progress beyond what he had in the past. [...] Thus, it is apparent that even if the first state of man is to be a Bedouin, urbanity is a characteristic that cannot be separated from him. For the human being has become civilized [...] and the virtues of humanity cannot be attained except through the path of urbanization and civilization. Those who surpass their brethren and control all elements of this world, completely or partially, are those who live in the cities and who are civilized.

After proving that this is the case, we would like to explain and specify the reasons those people demand to remain in this state [of being Bedouins]. They remain in this state of deprivation of the virtues of humanity and the characteristics of civilization for several reasons. The first is that these people are ignorant of the state of the world and the nations. Because of their ignorance we have

Ottoman government decree issued to the Amir of Shiraz, His Excellency Firhan Pasha, June 19, 1870. Ottoman archives of Directorate General of State Archives at the Prime Ministry (Tapu Tahrir: Mousil, 1869-1872). Translated by Akram Khater.

found our fathers desiring to stay unchanged in the state to which they were born. Secondly, the basis of the wealth of the tribes and clans is animals—in particular camels—and since it is difficult to manage and raise animals and camels in the cities—where they cannot find pasture—the people remain in their original state of being. [...] The third reason is that the mentioned peoples are like wild animals who enjoy what they have gotten used to in terms of stealing and raiding the property of others of their own people and killing them. This has become a reason for their wildness and their insistence on staying in the state of Bedouinism. It should be obvious that the first reason—which is ignorance and illiteracy—is an ugly and unacceptable characteristic in all the creatures of this world. And the second reason is the subordination [to tradition] characteristic of animals, and it is contrary to the image according to which man was created, for God has created the human being to be the most honorable of all creatures, and He made all breathing creatures subservient to him. He who is a Bedouin has become accustomed to the opposite of this natural order, so that although he used to be over other creatures, he has become subservient.

The truth is that this fallen state is an insult to humanity, and accordingly if we investigate the immense harm these tribes cause to each other, we will find that it has no equivalence in magnitude. For the human being has been commanded to protect those of his kind and treat them well, and is not commanded to do the opposite. In fact, all the religious command this [good treatment of others], and in particular the Mohammedan Shari'a. After proving that this is contrary to what has been commanded and is prohibited in all religions and in the Mohammedan Shari'a, then anyone with intelligence will see that harming people and robbing them of their money and their cattle is contrary to humanity and Islam. He who dares to commit that which we have mentioned must be punished. In addition, we see that this implies that since living as a Bedouin [...] leads to these harmful results, then no one should stay in that state of being, especially since we have arrived at a time and epoch [...] where to stay in this fallen and immoral state of existence appears as an ugly habit in the eyes of the world. For these explained reasons, these people cannot stay even for a short period in this state, and these tribes and clans should be settled and gain good human characteristics. It is imperative upon the Sublime Government to facilitate the emergence of these moral characteristics. This is particularly the case since those tribes and clans that have been settled during the past two years have faced difficulties and material needs, and they have remained in their original state because they are deprived of access to agriculture and commerce. Thus, and in order to feed their children, they have dared to attack the fields belonging to the inhabitants of the cities and towns. And in that case the government will have to reimburse the farmers for their losses and to dispatch imperial troops to punish the perpetrators, all of which costs money. Thus, and before matters reach this state, we would advise to give the lands that extend from Tikrit [village in Iraq] to the borders of Mosul [main city in northern Iraq] and that are located east of the Tigris River to the Shamir clan. Furthermore, we recommend that these lands be designated as a Mutassarrifiya [provincial gov-

ernment within the Ottoman Empire] and be named as Sandjak [province] of Shamir, and that they [the clan of Shamir] be settled in these lands until they dig the necessary canals to the Tigris and reclaim the lands and plant them like other people. Once it is apparent that they are settled, then this place should be designated as a Mutassarrifiya, like the Mutassarrifiya of al-Muntafak, and this Mutassarrifiya should be placed under your authority, O, Pasha! [...] Because those [people] are used to being Bedouins, and because it will be difficult to sever those ties all at once, then we should grant some of them with animals a permit to pasture their animals on some of the lands, provided that they return to their places of residence. In order to encourage development of these lands, we should exempt those who reclaim the lands and dig the ditches and canals from all but the Miri tax. [...] Once this Sandjak is formed according to what has preceded, and a Mutassarrifiya is subsequently established, then troops should be sent to keep the peace, and the Mutassarif should be assigned a deputy and a tax collector and all that he requires in terms of government officials. [...] This official Ottoman decree has been issued by the ministry of the Vilayet of Baghdad, and let it be known to all.

4. Mirza Malkum Khan Satirizes Iran's Central Government and Religious Elites, 1880s

Like some of his contemporaries in Istanbul and Cairo, Mirza Malkum (1834–1898) was a political scientist who skewered existing political regimes and popular beliefs for their irrationality and corruption. Like writers such as Yaqub Sannu (in Egypt), Malkum was well traveled and well educated. Although he was born in Iran, he spent only ten years there. His father was a scion of the Armenian community in Iran, a community that during the nineteenth century was commercially powerful due to its connections to European mercantile interests. Malkum claimed descent from Jean-Jacques Rousseau through a distant grandmother. Malkum's father was originally Christian; he converted to Islam for personal and practical reasons. Throughout his life, Malkum proclaimed himself a Muslim. However, one scholar (Hamid Algar) argues that this profession was insincere at best and that Malkum used his proclamation of faith as a way to hide and justify his later criticisms and attacks on the Islamic faith.

Malkum's writings and lectures—some of which were delivered while he was living in England—seem to indicate his interest in an Islamic renaissance. Educated in France at the Armenian school from the age of ten, Malkum went on to study natural sciences and engineering, but his main focus of interest came to be political science. His studies, at least in his own opinion, made him an authority on the foundation of European civilization and on the reforms necessary for “civilizing” Iran. Usually writing from outside Iran, he was an effective critic of practices within the