

BOOK REVIEWS

Meltem Toksöz. *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region, 1850-1908*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, xxviii + 224 pages.

Meltem Toksöz's book on "the making of the Adana-Mersin Region" in the second half of the nineteenth century discusses the transformation from a state of *tabula rasa* to a state of semi-autonomous commercial regional economy:

At the beginning of the 19th century, Çukurovan landscape was mostly a marshland with few settlements and a large nomadic population. One hundred years later, at the turn of the 20th century, it had become a major region of commercial cotton agriculture and textile production that placed it among the leading areas of Anatolia and the Ottoman Empire (p. 3).

As argued forcefully throughout the book, the region lived through a complicated process of "increase of settled population on the land, intensification of commercialized market mechanisms, creation of contact with the outside world and investing in agriculture and industry" (p. 1). The author insists not only on a "multiplicity of agendas" in this process, but also on "arrangements among international, central, regional and local agendas of the evolving political, social and economic circuits" (p. 7). Underlining more continuities than disruptions (p. 198), the author therefore tells of "a multilevel regional history of capitalist transformation" (p. 2).

The book is divided into two parts, consisting of a total of four chapters. The first part is on the structures and dynamics on which the formation of the region was based: the landscape, the people, and the state. In fact, the first part implicitly follows a Braudelian historical and geographical analysis in order to delineate the regional dynamics that left an imprint on the region. The first chapter is on the history of human-land relations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After a detailed account of an historical geography of the region, it focuses on the complex transition from nomadic to sedentary life. From such a context of transition, the author underlines that nomads co-existed peacefully with

the small farmers and merchants and that “the expansion of settlement in the 19th century did not disrupt any peasant community” (p. 36).

The second chapter discusses the political and legal dynamics that started to activate the regional economy, from the Egyptian rule (1832–1840) to the *Tanzimat* Reforms. The author argues that, by organizing sedentary life around cotton cultivation, it was the Egyptian rule that provided the momentum for the region’s transition to commercialization based on cotton cultivation. The Ottoman impetus to the regional economy, however, started more than twenty years later, with the provincial reform of 1864. Although the research on the establishment and work of the local councils is not detailed in the chapter, it is suggested that local councils stimulated a local political, legal and financial environment quite independent of the central state.

One of the most important policies that gave impulse to the region’s transformation towards agricultural commercialization, according to the author, was the both forced and unforced settlement of immigrants. After a detailed analysis on forced settlement policies conducted by Cevdet Paşa, the author proposes that settlement of tribes, “an ill-fitting element in the straightforward relationship of the state with its subject sedentarized population” (p. 73), constituted the first step in the development of the labor force needed for agricultural commercialization. The second step was related to the settlement of immigrants; but the research undertaken proposes that Nogay, Circassian, and Chechen immigrants’ settlement did not come to an end until the 1880s and that such an unstable environment hindered the ongoing economic commercialization.

The second part of the book is on the construction of the regional economy. The third chapter discusses the organization of economic space by means of “the emergence of a new regional circuitry between agrarian hinterland and the port-city”—in this case Mersin (p. 87). The author continues to develop further the argument of the region’s relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* the empire, by analyzing not only the development of the physical infrastructure of the port-city, but also the development of new business networks that connected the region and even inner regions of Anatolia (such as Niğde, Aksaray, Nevşehir, and Kayseri) to foreign markets via the port-city. The well-documented and well-discussed history of a migrant family, the Mavromatis, who became wealthy due to commercial and financial activities (p. 136–134), characterizes very well the making of a regional economy within an “economic and spatial order of both the Ottoman and Mediterranean worlds” (p. 11).

The fourth chapter analyzes the agricultural and industrial production of the region and the consolidation of a semi-autonomous region-

al economy. The author characterizes the region as offering abundant land in spite of the settlement process of nomads and immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century. She underlines the legal and bureaucratic framework provided by the Tanzimat reforms, as a qualified "process of individuation" (p. 7), in the constitution of a stimulus to the development of commercial agriculture. Within this context, the most important development was the extension of cotton cultivation by land reclamation and the draining of marshes in the 1870s. Accordingly, the chapter proposes that the increase in agricultural production was directly related to the registration of land that was the key purpose of the 1858 Land Code and started in Çukurova after the 1870s. Nevertheless, at the turn of the twentieth century, as cotton became a very profitable export crop, according to the author, the Adana-Tarsus sub-region had reached its natural limits for further commercialization, but the Ceyhan sub-region continued to be available to the new population. The interesting discussion in the chapter on land reclamation and the draining of marshes does remind of Halil İnalçık's argument based on the importance of *mevat* lands for the formation of big estates. Taking also into consideration the growing literature on the new institutionalist or political economy framework,¹ it is well worth to put the question of land reclamation on the research agenda for studies on nineteenth-century commercial agriculture, as does Toksöz's book.

One of the main sources for Toksöz's discussion of land registration are the cadastral records in the Archives of the General Directory of Cadastral Survey (*Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü*) in Ankara (p. 160-163; 176-177). In fact, the research and discussion on these sources give very fruitful results, especially to delineate the basic characteristics of the ongoing establishment of the new property regime in the Çukurova region in particular, and in the Ottoman Empire in general. It is only on the basis of such documentation that the development of large-scale landholding patterns, or simply the application of the 1858 Land Code, can be followed over time, as does the author. The analysis of the land regime is also fed by information derived from the statistical registers of land transactions found in the Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives in İstanbul (p. 168, 177). Both sources give a better idea not only about the dynamics of the development of commercial agriculture, but also about

¹ Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *The Fruits of Revolution: Property Rights, Litigation, and French Agriculture, 1700-1860* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1992); Noelle Plack, "Agrarian Reform and Ecological Change During the Ancien Régime: Land Clearance, Peasants and Viticulture in the Province of Languedoc," *French History* 19, no. 2 (2005); Raphaël Morera, *L'assèchement des marais en France au XVIIe siècle* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011).

that of the land market as commercialization deepened. Relating the commercialization to security of property-holding, as do new institutionalists, the author observes in fact in the increase in land transactions in the region a stability and confidence in commercialization (p. 177).

The high land-labor ratio prevailing during the agricultural commercialization was, for the author, one of the causes of a "smooth history" (p. 9) of the region, since small peasantry did not face any dispossession and since mercantile capital investment in large-scale landholdings did not meet any serious opposition, thanks to the available land. Indeed, the author suggests throughout the book that "Çukurova's transformation was at the very least confrontational as a new kind of space was created with multiple communities establishing conditions for their material relations" (p. 9). The other principal reason behind such a sustained and smooth growth relatively free of conflicts, highly related to the first one, was that "Çukurova had no *ancien régime*" (p. 8). The author therefore advances political factors in addition to economic ones to explain the frictionless environment. The *ancien régime* to which the author refers here means older power configurations embedded in a property regime that continuously produces social differentiation and conflicts and therefore path dependence in the evolution of the region in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this context, one of the most interesting arguments of the book is that the property regime and therefore the power configuration that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Çukurova region was instituted on a *tabula rasa* and did not depend on older social, political and economic structures, as opposed to the other regions of the Ottoman Empire. Following this perspective, just as Dobrudja has been qualified as the "California of the Rumanians,"² one could qualify Çukurova as the "California of nomads and immigrants." Such an argument may also lead the reader to Alexis de Tocqueville who stresses the persistence of old social dynamics forming structural obstacles to social, economic and political development in Europe, as opposed to the constitution of a new society free of historical path dependence activating dynamics of social, economic and political development in America.³

Even if the region did not inherit an *ancien régime*, it should nevertheless be mentioned, first, that it transferred the winners and losers of the *ancien régime* from other regions: "dispossession was not at the root of the large landholdings in Çukurova" (p. 144), but settlement of already

2 The expression refers to the California gold rush of 1848. See Constantin Iordachi, "'La Californie des roumains' l'intégration de la Dobroudja du nord à la Roumanie, 1878-1913," *Balkanologie* 6, no. 1-2 (2002).

3 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Ancien régime et la Révolution* (Paris: Michel-Lévy frères, 1856); *De la démocratie en Amérique* (Paris: C. Gosselin, 1835-1840).

dispossessed people was at the root of the large landholdings. Secondly, in spite of the existence of some remarks on “unjust accumulation of wealth” resulting from tax-farming, money-lending and indebtedness (p. 143), land conflicts (p. 166-167, 192) and very informative passages on the organization of labor (the employment of sharecroppers and/or agricultural laborers) on the large estates (p. 46-47, 136, 144-145, 156, 164-165, 181), more detailed information and analysis is needed to explain the increasing social differentiation and continuous reproduction of labor (and therefore dispossession), not only in commercial agriculture, but also in the rapidly developing industrial sector. Depending on the availability of archival sources on the workings of local courts and councils, further research could shed more light on the dynamics of social differentiation in the region and reevaluate the “smooth history” (p. 9) of a capitalist economy as depicted in the book.

Last but not least, one of the strong points of the book is its discussion of the region’s semi-autonomy *vis-à-vis* the center. The development of a semi-autonomous regional economy, according to the author, was a process of amalgamation and/or confrontation of internal and external forces, and not a question of peripheralization:

The making of Çukurova entailed very complex political and economic processes that worked not against or despite one another, but together; this was not simply part of the story of the peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire by the European center. If anything it became detached from the Ottoman economy and all by itself, turned into a periphery of the world economy, this status constantly being realigned against various forces of the late 19th-early 20th century world economy. At the same time, this confrontation with the world economy strengthened and shaped the region’s relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman center (p. 189).

As observed also in other major port-cities of the Eastern Mediterranean and their hinterland,⁴ it was the increasing competition of individual economic interests composed of local and foreign entrepreneurs that detached the regional dynamics from the effective control of the central administration.

To sum up, Meltem Toksöz’s *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean* is thought-provoking and brings to the table new

4 Alp Yücel Kaya, “19. Yüzyıldan 21. Yüzyıla İzmir Ekonomisinde Süreklilik ve Kırılmalar,” in *Değişen İzmir’i Anlamak*, eds. Deniz Yıldırım and Evren Hasanpolat (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınları, 2010).

arguments on Ottoman economic and rural history, by discussing the making of the Çukurova region not only through market forces, but also through the constitution of a property regime.

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Yıldız Atasoy. *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, viii + 288 pages.

After Turkey's 2002 elections it was commonly believed that the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) would be a stalwart agent of economic and political liberalization in Turkey. Ultimately, it was suggested, the party would guide the country out of the semi-authoritarian-nationalist *cul-de-sac* in which it had been stuck for so long and integrate it into a democratic European Union (EU). This belief was supported by the broad class-coalition that the AKP was able to forge around neoliberal market principles, along with some promising initial steps to institute an agenda of political reform. Remarkably, Islamists-turned-neoliberals were to become the representatives of a democratic society against an undemocratic state. Yıldız Atasoy's book, *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism*, takes this common belief as its starting point.

The book aims to explain how the coupling of neoliberalism with Islamic cultural values has altered state-society relations in Turkey. Atasoy argues that the embrace of neoliberal and democratic principles by the AKP has led to a transformation of "the authoritarian fundamentals of the [Kemalist] state" (p. 9). According to the author, two parallel processes of liberalization are leading to this transformation. First, the AKP is committed to democracy and "a new social contract that facilitates an engagement between society and the state on the basis of universal justice and human rights principles" (p. 110). Second, the AKP is pursuing neoliberal economic policies including "privatization of public corporations, liberalization of trade, entrepreneurship, [and] private investment" (p. 109). Together, these efforts are said to be deepening democracy and slowly altering the "Kemalist epistemology of state-centrism" (p. 12). This change has not been driven from within Turkey alone, but has also been shaped by a global context where neoliberal and democratic