

advent of the settler state of Israel to the flourishing of an acclaimed international communist poet; and from the development of one of the largest business tycoons in Greece to the making of the global revolutionary movement of Trotskyism and even the transformation of Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli into Pope John XXIII.

Consisting of seventeen partly chronological but primarily thematic chapters, which are accompanied by photos from the mid-twentieth century by the famous Turkish photographer Selahattin Giz, *Midnight at the Pera Palace* is a long, well written, and informative—albeit selective—account of Istanbul's messy transition from Ottoman to republican times. For urban historians of Istanbul, the author hints at several key methodological questions, in addition to presenting a vast array of anecdotes excavated from a dizzying array of primary and secondary sources. Nonetheless, readers looking for an urban history of “the birth of modern Istanbul” should be warned that they may find less Istanbul than they would expect as they travel extensively alongside the characters to whom King gives central stage.

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Sinan Yıldırım. *Politics and the Peasantry in Post-War Turkey: Social History, Culture and Modernization.* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017, x + 294 pages.

The Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) period between 1950 and 1960 is arguably the most controversial and least studied period of modern Turkish history. Scholarly study of the period has been significantly influenced by dichotomous views that remain quite dominant at the popular and political levels even today. The DP's takeover of power in 1950 is seen either as a counterrevolution as a result of which the most valuable achievements of the single-party period of 1923 to 1945, such as secularism, were reversed, or else as a popular uprising in which the authentic spokespeople of the will of the nation finally replaced the republican elites.

Calling this dichotomy a “perception rupture,” in this book, which is primarily a study of peasants, Sinan Yıldırım avoids this problem via meticulous analysis of the existing scholarship and data. His decision to extend the period

under examination so as to cover the years from 1945 to 1960 is also a wise choice, as in this way he is able to stress not only the ruptures but also the continuities between the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) and the DP.

The postwar years in Turkey were a period in which peasants became more visible, ultimately emerging as important social and political actors. Yıldırım follows this increasing prominence of peasants through four areas that correspond to the core chapters of the book: sociological studies of the countryside; urban areas in relation to peasant migration; politics; and literature. While the increasing visibility and empowerment of peasants in postwar Turkey has long been recognized, Yıldırım revises several of the prevalent arguments on this subject. Indeed, there has been a protracted debate about the very definition of peasantry, with several approaches—Marxist, Weberian, and moral economy—offering different criteria. Yıldırım chooses not to enter into the discussion about who the peasant is, instead adopting a minimalist definition of peasantry that simply includes within the term all village dwellers (p. 40). Although this choice can certainly be criticized on analytical grounds, it does provide the author with considerable flexibility to cover a wide range of people, localities, and practices in connection with rural cultivators.

In Chapter 1, Yıldırım traces back to the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire the different schools of sociology that competed in the field of rural sociology, showing that, from the 1940s on, the two main rivals in this field were the LePlay-Prince Sabahaddin school on the one hand, and American sociology on the other. The author argues that, despite their differences, the two schools later converged into a single perspective that was developmentalist in nature. This perspective sought a “real” picture of the peasantry, presented underdevelopment as the greatest problem facing this group, and offered “scientific” solutions aimed at promoting rural development (pp. 49–50). Yıldırım attributes the convergence of these different sociological approaches to the peasant question to the influence of the modernization theory on Turkish rural sociology, and for this reason the chapter also includes a rather lengthy discussion of the modernization perspective.

In Chapter 2, Yıldırım moves on to the complex economic and spatial relations between the rural and the urban in Turkey. It is here that the author is most critical of the existing literature and the book is at its most revisionist. By 1960, around half of the inhabitants of large cities in Turkey lived in the shantytowns known as *gecekondu*, and so not surprisingly *gecekondu*s, as well as the rural-to-urban migration that was the main cause for their proliferation, have become one of the most widely discussed issues in sociology and urban studies relating to Turkey. Most studies on rural migration have determined that the main factor driving peasants to cities was mechanization and the

detrimental effects it had on, especially, landless peasants and sharecroppers. Yıldırım, however, challenges this model by means of a careful reexamination of the literature as well as the data. His claim is that the main source of migration was actually smallholders, and he shows that rural-to-urban migration did not actually intensify in Çukurova and southeastern Anatolia, areas where sharecropping was dominant (p. 86). Moreover, mechanization also led to other outcomes, such as the cultivation of new land by landless peasants. In this chapter, the author has much to say about urban studies, criticizing the bulk of the urban studies literature of the period and subsequent decades for its lack of sensitivity to the complexities of rural life and for opting for simplistic explanations, such as linking migration directly and exclusively with mechanization in order to account for migration to cities.

The book's treatment of the involvement of peasants in politics in Chapter 3 is equally rich and thorough, if somewhat less critical of the existing scholarship. That the onset of the multiparty parliamentary system in Turkey following World War II led to the empowerment of the peasants in representative democracy is well known, but Yıldırım undertakes an especially thorough investigation of the repercussions of this phenomenon. As he points out (p. 133), while voting was the most important form of action linking peasants to politics, it was by no means the only one: from coffeehouses to popular journals targeting peasants, the countryside was in fact highly politicized, in some cases even leading to the partisan politicization of village headman elections (p. 138). In one such case, the February 1947 headman elections in Arslanköy, near the city of Mersin, turned so violent as to become a nationwide issue. Analyzing this particular incident in detail, the author convincingly argues that this seemingly minor event in fact reveals peasants' changing perception of freedom and their expectations of reciprocity, as well as attesting to how the rule of law became a tool in the hands of politicians, especially those in the DP. With the multiparty elections, and given the sheer fact that the majority of the population lived in the countryside, peasants became indispensable to the political system after 1945, and as the Arslanköy case revealed, the peasants themselves were actually aware of this.

As examined in Chapter 4, the birth of a new literary genre called "village literature" also made peasants more "real" and visible in the tumultuous period between 1945 and 1960 (p. 203). One of the most common themes in the politics of this era, one that was shared by both the DP and the CHP, was anti-communism, and exactly how a literary movement with strong egalitarian overtones and an overtly critical view of existing class relations in the countryside was able to thrive in such an atmosphere begs an explanation. In this chapter, Yıldırım points out two factors behind this: first, the initially sympathetic attitude of the DP (p. 211), and second, the emergence of a generation

of writers originally from villages and often educated in village institutes (*köy enstitüleri*) (p. 216).

The book has a couple of shortcomings. One of these is related to style and seems to be a result of the difficulties involved in converting a dissertation into a monograph: parts of the book, for example, are far from being succinct, and there are some unnecessarily lengthy quotations from secondary sources, as well as certain repetitions. The other problem concerns the author's treatment of the single-party period. In marked contrast with his nuanced analysis of the 1945–1960 period, in treating the first decades of the republic the author relies on the conventional literature, and in so doing seems to reproduce some of its problems. One can see this, for instance, in references to the “populist-peasantist” discourse of the single-party government, or when the village coffeehouses of the single-party period are contrasted with those of the period of DP rule. While the author's attempt to establish continuity by tackling coffeehouses as political spaces *par excellence* from Ottoman times all the way through to the DP period is commendable, the book nevertheless presents a rather implausible picture of full state control over village life during the single-party era in order to better underline the differences between DP rule and earlier CHP governments. In general, there is an emerging scholarly literature on the period of single-party rule that questions the conventional picture of the CHP government as an all-powerful and internally fully coherent apparatus that was largely detached from the masses.¹ Yıldırım hardly engages with this new understanding of that period, and as a result the book is less nuanced and less “creative” when dealing with the republic prior to the year 1945.

Of course, the book is concerned with the postwar years, and so the problem with the approach to the single-party period does not constitute a major weakness. Setting the task of revisiting the question of the peasantry during the crucial period of 1945–1960, the book is successful in handling the different social, cultural, and political issues that involved the Turkish peasantry during this period. The author does not assume familiarity on the part of readers, and so he patiently summarizes debates even about topics that are not directly part of the book's core subject matter. This choice makes the book particularly accessible to those who are not familiar with Turkish political history, the peasantry, or some of the theoretical debates these topics entail.

Focusing on four areas where peasants became unmistakably more visible and influential in the postwar years—namely, sociological studies, urban areas,

1 The work of Murat Metinsoy is crucial in this respect. See, for example, his “Fragile Hegemony, Flexible Authoritarianism, and Governing from Below: Politicians' Reports in Early Republican Turkey,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 4 (2011): 699–719 and “Kemalizm'in Taşrası: Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Taşrada Parti, Devlet ve Toplum,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 118 (2010): 124–164.

politics, and literature—and taking a bold and revisionist approach to most of the conventional assumptions about this era, Yıldırım's book represents a major contribution to the study of the Turkish peasantry, which until recently constituted a majority of the population, as well as of Turkish politics, in which rural dwellers came to play a crucial role after World War II.

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Zeynep Kezer. *Building Modern Turkey: State, Space and Ideology in the Early Republic*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015, xii + 330 pages.

Zeynep Kezer's *Building Modern Turkey* is a meticulous study on the spatiality of nation-building in Turkey. In the author's words, it sets out to portray "Turkey's transition from a pluralistic (multiethnic, multireligious) empire to a modern unitary nation-state as a fitful twofold process that simultaneously unleashed creative and destructive forces" (p. 11). To this end, the book analyzes the physical setting and sociospatial practices of the new political order, as well as its efforts to dismantle those of its predecessor, thereby demonstrating the interdependence between the creative and destructive dynamics of the same process.

The book represents a fine contribution to the growing body of work scrutinizing the spatial character of Turkish nation-building in the interwar period. While earlier studies were characterized by an implicit (and at times explicit) appraisal of the making of the young republic, the recent scholarship that has flourished since the 1990s has developed an increasingly critical perspective that makes use of contemporary debates, particularly those of postcolonial theory. Within this framework, Kezer's contribution analyzes this historical process through its "ambivalences and anxieties," rather than seeing it as a smooth process of development and progress.

The book is made up of three main sections, each comprising two chapters. The first part, entitled "Forging a New Identity," focuses on the republican capital of Ankara. Chapter 1 revisits the reconstruction of Ankara by the nationalists, who saw it as the symbol of the nation-state and the locus of a modern way of life that was to be disseminated out across the country. Although this process has been examined in various studies in different languages, here the author rigorously supports her narrative through analyses of original archival sources ranging from