

(e.g. faith at a time of crisis). Sometimes simple context holds more explanatory power than attempts at discerning larger (gendered) patterns in texts composed in a very different world.

A second criticism (ironic given previous comments) centres on the surprising lack of textual analysis in the book. Although sections within chapters are purportedly devoted to textual evidence, they often veer from this goal and lack copious narrative examples. Given the brevity of the book, there is certainly space for more primary source evidence and it is tempting to consider whether the absence was prompted by the comments of an editor or the publisher. If this is the case, it is unfortunate as the inclusion of additional material would give further flesh to a book filled with compelling and interesting arguments.

Overall, Pierce has written an insightful first book that challenges assumptions about the early history of the Twelver Shia through an innovative examination of previously understudied sources. In the process, it fills a notable gap in the study of Shii Islam and models a disciplinary approach that holds considerable promise for future research. This book is an important addition to the blossoming field of Shii studies.

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ZEYNEP KEZER:

Building Modern Turkey: State, Space and Ideology in the Early Republic.

(Culture, Politics and the Built Environment.) xii, 330 pp. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. \$29.95. ISBN 978 0 8229 6390 5. doi:10.1017/S0041977X16000616

Building Modern Turkey is a meticulously researched and very well written book for anyone interested in Turkey's transition from a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, polyglot empire to a modern unitary nation-state. The strong principal idea that cuts across the six thematic chapters is that modern national identity construction is a predominantly "spatial" concept – that the visual, architectural, urban, infrastructural and geographical strategies by which the new Kemalist regime made its ideology visible and disseminated it across the country were not simply physical manifestations of the Republican idea, but rather its *constitutive* ingredients. Power was not merely represented; it was produced through space and performance. Critical re-evaluations of the Turkish nation-building project (its authoritarianism, its suppression of religious or non-Muslim identities, its militarism and its paternalism) already constitute a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship, but the central role that *space* – especially symbolic and representational space – plays in this process is a relatively new area of inquiry to which the book makes a very significant and most welcome contribution.

The book is divided into three parts with two chapters in each. The first part focuses on the building of modern Ankara as the grand project of inscribing Turkey's regime change onto the landscape, both physically and symbolically. Deconstructing the republican myth of "tabula rasa" (that a modern capital city was miraculously built from scratch), Kezer explains how existing communal and commercial networks of old Ankara were dismantled and scarce resources were channelled to the southward expansion of the new city. She takes us through Ankara's master planning by German experts, the building of foreign embassies

on locations that symbolized the Kemalist regime's newly forged diplomatic and geopolitical relationships with other nations and the opening of new arteries and residential neighbourhoods around the presidential palace where power was staged. What is most remarkable in these stories is how they were fraught with ambivalences, conflicts and incomplete trajectories. Master plans were made but what was actually implemented was almost invariably a compromised version, reflecting competing interests of different actors and shifting political priorities over time – from the ideals of liberal parliamentary democracy to the authoritarianism of Jacobin reformers who prevailed.

The second part of the book is a tour de force of scholarship bringing to the fore what is suppressed and silenced in official discourse – namely, the erasure of the received, religion-based Ottoman communal order to mould a secular and homogeneous society. The dismantling of *vakıfs* (pious foundations) and the transfer of their assets to the state, the crackdown on vernacular, unorthodox Islam, the closing of *tekkes* (dervish lodges) and the banning of any sartorial expression of religious and communal affiliation are topics discussed as centrepieces of the republican “social engineering project of corporatist homogenization” (p. 104). The “minoritization” of remaining Jews, Armenians and Greeks (their numbers already diminished after the population exchanges, deportations and massacres of World War I) was the other component of this project, pushing them out of the public sphere, appropriating and repurposing non-Muslim properties and most symbolically, changing/Turkifying “foreign” place names in what Kezer calls “toponymical engineering” (p. 143). Again, what comes across so successfully is an attention to nuance, contingency and conflict rather than smooth narratives. While radical measures were put in place to suppress religious, non-Muslim or local identities, we are told that not only were these met with varying degrees of resistance rather than total submission, but also that republican leaders were often themselves ambivalent, recognizing the unifying power of faith and the centralizing potential of orthodox Sunni Islam which they effectively brought under strict state control.

The final part of the book, aptly titled “An imaginable community” with a nod to the late Benedict Anderson, looks at how infrastructure and public works were deployed as national integration strategies to expand communal imagination beyond local villages or towns to the entire national geography. The construction of an Anatolian railway network, the building of railway stations as generators of urban form, the emergence of a repeatable urban design template for “republican towns” across the country, the imposition of uniformity through prototype architectural projects for the key educational institutions of the Kemalist state (elementary schools, Girls’ Institutes and *Halkevleri*) are presented as compelling evidence for the nationalization of geography. This was a “militarized geography” (p. 166), Kezer tells us, where railways carried not only modernity and civilization, but also military troops and state power to suppress dissent and resistance (especially in the Kurdish regions in the east, the lasting legacy of which still plagues Turkey today). Yet, inconsistencies in implementation, reversals of policy, tensions between civic and military approaches to the eastern problem and an overall failure to resonate with popular sensibilities were plenty, once again casting republican nation building as a fitful, untidy and conflict-ridden process.

The research that has gone into the book is extensive, covering a wide range of archival primary material, secondary sources and visuals (photographs, cartoons and maps). Kezer’s account also has remarkable contemporary relevance in the sense that the seeds of popular resentment planted by the radical strategies of the 1920s and 1930s explain so much about Turkey today. Ironically, the rise of political Islam since the mid 1990s has introduced not just a revanchist rejection of the

Kemalist project, but also a resort to the same authoritarian measures and spatial strategies that Kemalists employed earlier, this time putting them in the service of a new, Islamist construction of national identity. This irony is not lost on Kezer, who concludes the book with a short Epilogue (written after the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in 2013) in which the republican desire to homogenize, discipline and (re-) shape the population transcends its historical time frame and re-emerges as very much alive and well today. Ultimately, it is to this enduring statist impulse for authoritarian national identity construction in Turkey that the book offers a scathing critique.

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VANESSA GUÉNO and STEFAN KNOST (eds):

Lire et écrire l'histoire ottoman.

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This volume of fine and impressive articles seeks to make a contribution to the study of Arabic court records of Syria in Ottoman times.

The editors say in the introduction that the purpose of the book is to present studies by younger scholars, who suggest new paradigms for the study of Ottoman *sijills*, or *qadi* court records, hailed as the best source for the study of Ottoman law. The main paradigm shift suggested is to criticize and go beyond the older generation of Ottoman *sijill* scholars, who are said to have made the mistake of treating the *sijill* documents as transparent, that is, as a data bank and no more. This was problematic, since the *sijill* was not a source intended for historians, and hence should itself be a text to be analysed. Stronger versions of this criticism claim that it was a grave mistake to assume that the *qadi* was a benign judge, interested mainly in justice for the simple folks. The *qadi* had his own agenda in each and every case brought before him, and it was the main task of the historian to unlock this code. This writer comes from the Ottoman Turkish culture area of *sijills*, but belongs to the same generation of obsolete historians, and is also a target of critical comment in several of the papers in the book. This is perfectly legitimate, but it is perhaps too soon to forget scholars such as Andre Raymond, Abdul-Karim Rafeq and Abraham Marcus, to name just a few. What I argue in defence of the old guard is that generally I am not at all against the “new (*sijill*) historians” on a theoretical level. But it seems to me that what they have assumed is next to impossible to achieve and, more importantly, that their obsession with it blocks from sight a whole range of important topics that will have to wait another generation before returning to fashion (the status of minorities; the nature of Ottoman–Islamic substantive law, its relation to Islamic law in general and to change in particular, to name just a few). Indeed, the *sijill* was not an intended source; an intended source was the chronicle, for example those early Ottoman chronicles that portrayed the house of Othman as reaching all the way back to Biblical Noah! (All sources are biased.) More concretely, exposing the personal agenda of an Ottoman *qadi* – if such existed, which for the most part I doubt – would be practically impossible, since the *sijill* is based on summaries, not verbatim reproduction of what went on in court. If the *qadi* was subject to pressures by litigants, witnesses and court employees, or Ottoman officials, these are never reflected in the text we are given to read.