BOOK REVIEWS

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Emre Erol. *The Ottoman Crisis in Western Anatolia: Turkey's Belle Époque and the Transition to a Modern Nation State*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2016, xviii + 315 pages.

Emre Erol's book, based on his Ph.D. dissertation, is a general political and social history of one part of western Anatolia in the troubled years at the turn of the twentieth century. At the center of the story is the district of Foça near İzmir, one of the most important port towns of the eastern Mediterranean. The book is a welcome addition to a new crop of monographs focusing on particular smaller towns and their surrounding countryside, as well as to the increasingly nuanced studies on İzmir itself (not to mention the new work on other port towns in the eastern Mediterranean in general), and it serves as an attempt to comprehend the socio-economic and political transformations occurring at the turn of the twentieth century from a local perspective. However, perhaps it is misleading to claim at the beginning of the book, as the author does, that this is a work of local history. This is because the promise of local history put forward in the first pages of the book creates expectations that the reader is about to be presented with a picture of Foça's local history, a window into the diversity of past life in the town and countryside as well as into the local people's daily lives—expectations that the book does not quite deliver upon. If by local history we mean an in-depth focus on the history and human geography of a particular place, this is not local history. I have in mind, for instance, such classics by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie as *Montaillou*, the *longue durée* history of a French village of two hundred inhabitants, or *Carnival in Romans*, the story of a tumultuous carnival in February 1580. The nearest Erol's book comes to local history of this caliber is in Chapter 5, where he recounts a particularly important set of events that took place in the district, especially in the town of Eski Foça, in June 1914. Throughout the rest of the book, Foça merely serves as a backdrop for larger events and processes that the author goes to great lengths to explicate.

In fact, the way the book is structured in terms of its chapter breakdown is more reminiscent of a historical sociological taxonomy. The study opens with the main theoretical framework, within which Erol contextualizes what happened in western Anatolia in the second half of the nineteenth century; namely, incorporation into capitalism. This framework is by now very familiar, and the author follows the same trajectory as earlier authors like Reşat Kasaba and

Çağlar Keyder in explaining the social and economic transformation of the region during this period. In the context of this trajectory, he counterposes a liberal nineteenth century where a certain degree of multiculturalism and private economic initiative—what the author calls "the belle époque," though the meaning could have been better rendered as "the golden age"—gives way to a statist twentieth century through wars, forced population transfers, dispossession, and death. In this account, there is a tinge of reification of the concept of incorporation. It is as if there are two irreconcilable worlds out there, on the one hand an unchanging capitalism with a life of its own, and on the other hand the Ottoman Empire or its "top-down" reforms, totally alien to the former and possessing its own rhythm and logic, with the former then somehow "incorporating" the latter. The problem with this approach is its rigidity, the absence of any notion, for example, that capitalist relations in the metropole countries had changed during the long nineteenth century with ebbs and flows in the liberal content of capitalism that had an impact on how capitalism expanded as a global system over the course of the century, or that state structures themselves, as well as state reforms, are shaped by capitalist relations and compulsions and in turn shape those relations in different ways.

The following two chapters, "Ottoman Modernization and its Consequences" and "Bourgeoisie [sic] Cosmopolitanism or Nationalisms," follow a similar track, further multiplying the dichotomies—liberal capitalism vs. statism, cosmopolitanism vs. homogeneity, state vs. society, capitalist modernization vs. statist modernization, incorporation into capitalism vs. state reform, modernization by the state vs. modernization by the market, etc.—that are implied in the author's use of the notion of incorporation. Such polarities as these are not conducive conceptual tools to an adequate comprehension of the content and nature of the transformation, relationships, elasticity, and dynamism inherent in processes of historical change. As a result, a picture emerges in which Foça, as both district and as town (Eski and Yeni Foça), this cosmopolitan business hub, port, and boom town of the late nineteenth century, becomes in the aftermath of the First World War and following the establishment of the republic a ghost town, shorn of its cosmopolitan population, now reduced to Muslims only after the population exchange of 1923 with Greece. If, however, the recent history and even the present social life of many western Anatolian towns are to be any indication, they are anything but homogeneous, as there are fundamental differences among the local populations in terms of background, place of emigration, settlement history, occupational structures, culture, and class, with all of these differences shaping and molding and sometimes creating conflict in present-day social relations, which over time came to be reproduced in the region in a myriad of different ways. This is not to say that the ethnic/religious composition of the town to a certain

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extent (given the ambiguity as to ethnic/religious belonging of some recently arrived population groups) did not become uniform in the wake of the population exchange, or that the export orientation of the port and its hinterland was not directed toward the construction of a domestic market. It does, however, indicate that, perhaps paradoxically, the "homogeneity" argument may buy too much into both nationalist and liberal readings of history.

Such theoretical positionings aside, what the book does well is to clearly demonstrate throughout, and especially in the remaining chapters, the ways, means, and conditions under which the district and the town first became a theater of violent conflict, and how, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, its human geography was fundamentally altered a number of times over a very short period. Using a variety of sources, the author traces this transformation and contextualizes it within the framework of the wider seismic political and social changes occurring at the time: the Balkan Wars and the forced migrations that followed in their wake; the Committee of Union and Progress' (CUP) settlement policies in the province for the Balkan refugees; movements for the boycott of Greek businesses in western Anatolia; the CUP's "national economy" policies; the clash between Greek and Turkish nationalisms; the role of the press; the emergence of a politics of population in the context of the "national question" and how this politics materialized on the ground with the ultimate aim of creating ethnically/religiously uniform geographies; the outbreak of the First World War; the Greek occupation of western Anatolia; and, finally, the compulsory exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece in 1923. While all of this context is provided somewhat at the expense of the local history of Foça, in Chapter 5 Erol returns to the town in order to show how it acted as a stage for a clash of grand political designs, recounting the traumatic events that took place there in June 1914, which he calls the "Spring of Organized Chaos": armed men from outside the town attacked Foça's Greek residents and their houses, resulting in the death and flight of the Greek population. The author tells the story of these events using a number of eyewitness accounts provided by residents and a group of French archaeologists, as well as providing different versions of the events as they were reported by officials, foreign consular staff, and a Greek member of the Ottoman parliament.

One would like to know more about this kind of local history in all its diversity and human repertoire. However, in spite of the variety of sources the author uses, this diversity—the people of Foça in flesh and blood, their faces and deeds, past and present—are not particularly visible in the book. Perhaps this would require the use of other kinds of sources, or the reading of the available sources through a different interpretive framework. For instance, the kind of historical detective work that involves tracing, over time, the life of certain individuals from different classes and their networks of relationships, or

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a closer look into the transformation of the urban topography and rural landscape, would have provided just such a perspective and sense of depth. While the author's use of oral sources is to be commended, in the book the oral testimonies are generally used only to supplement the written evidence. These oral sources—perhaps owing to the particular nature of those used (i.e., collected from previously transcribed material and hence already transformed into written, rather than oral, evidence)—are not explored for the subjective life experiences of the witnesses to events. In the narration of events, just as important as what people actually say are the silences in the historical narrative, what and how things are remembered or forgotten, changes in tone, the rhythms of speech, and so on. Such elements are, after all, what make oral history distinct from other kinds of historical evidence.[1]

Overall, the book is a valuable contribution to the increasingly diversified historical work on Anatolian towns and the Anatolian countryside, past and present. It can only be hoped, as the author also notes, that the proliferation of such contextualized work—town by town and village by village—will ultimately lead to a synthesis for the construction of a social history of Anatolia that is both informative and analytical.

Yücel Terzibaşoğlu
Boğaziçi University

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Lerna Ekmekçioğlu. *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016, xvi + 240 pages.

Any history is by definition a partial story. Thanks to the awareness of this partiality, history as a field of research is indefinitely growing. Historians are constantly introducing new source material, new research questions, new historical actors, new angles of observation, and new theoretical assumptions. Historians and students of history today are polyglot, devoted to multidisciplinary approaches, and eager to write revisionist histories. The history of the early years of the Republic of Turkey has been subject to different waves of revisionism. The official, nationalist, and mythical state historiography, written by "the winners," has been subject to different schools of criticism. The once

1 See, for instance, Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).