

KİTAP TANITIM VE DEĞERLENDİRMESİ

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Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbakir, 1870-1915, edited by Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage, 51; Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012.

The volume contains eight studies by Turkish, European and American scholars that deal with the fraught relations between social and religious groups in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Diyarbakır. The authors of these studies seek to establish a new conceptual framework that does not limit the discussion to an account of initiatives of the Ottoman state or to the simple chronicling of atrocities.

The first contribution by Suavi Aydın and Jelle Verheij, ‘Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbakir Province, 1800-1879’, provides the historical context for the following studies. It describes the region, its changing administrative structure and the size and distribution of the different ethnic and religious groups before examining how in the course of the nineteenth century the Ottoman state appeared as a new player in a region that had until then been dominated by local powers, the elite families of the towns and the Kurdish chiefs of the countryside who were either hereditary leaders of sancaks with obligations to the state or virtually independent rulers. The authors highlight that government action in the 1830 wrested power from these groups and imposed for the first time direct taxation and military service, that later setbacks allowed for the consolidation of Kurdish principalities, above all that of Bedirhan Bey, but that

these principalities were destroyed by the mid-century. However, they also point out that the Ottoman state did not have the resources to fill the ensuing power vacuum and that as a consequence the now autonomous individual tribes began to harrass the sedentary population. Under these circumstances frequent revolts broke out and the Ottoman authorities were reduced to playing out the leaders of these groups against each other. The next stage in the development was the implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms from 1869 onwards when the administration of cities was overhauled through the foundation of new institutions. Equally important was the land law, which allowed the local elites to acquire vast tracts of land to the detriment of the cultivators. At the same time the propagation of the new ideal of *Osmanlılık* and the influence of the Christian missions affected the Christian and in particular the Armenian population, which became better educated and enjoyed greater economic success than before, leading both to the emergence of Armenian nationalism and to Muslim resentment. The authors conclude by emphasising that Ottoman actions had overwhelmingly negative consequences, bringing to the region political instability and unprecedented oppression by the representatives of the state.

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The next phase in the historical development is investigated by Joost Jongerden in his contribution 'Elite Encounters of a Violent Kind: Milli İbrahim Paşa, Ziya Gökalp and Political Struggle in Diyarbakır at the Turn of the 20th Century'. Jongerden's focus is on two elite groups that were in permanent conflict with one another, urban notables involved in trade and agriculture who were participants in the budding nationalist movement, and leaders of nomadic tribes loyal to Sultan Abdülhamid II who through his foundation of the Hamidiye regiments had given them a new power base. The article considers the actions of two major representatives of the two groups, Milli İbrahim Paşa and Ziya Gökalp. The author rejects the widespread view that the Hamidiye regiments were the driving forces behind the anti-Armenian pogrom of 1895 and makes the case that the true perpetrators were the urban notables and that Piriñçizade Arif and Ziya Gökalp played an important role in the latter group, the former as businessman, municipal leader and editor of the local newspaper and the latter as a leading figure in the local branch of *İttihat ve Terakki* who helped shape the ideology that led to the eradication of the Armenian population. The author deliberately restricts his topic to the city of Diyarbakır and to writings of Ziya Gökalp and members of his family. He rejects facile generalisations and argues that for a proper evaluation of the events of 1895 it is

necessary to study each region separately. Sketching a picture of the situation in the nineteenth century he rejects the notion that civic and tribal leaders can be seen separately from the central government. Instead he argues that they always had a profound effect on each other. His starting point is the situation after the fall of Bedirhan when the overarching political framework was dismantled and the region plunged into anarchy and during the reign of Abdülhamid II when the Hamidiye regiments were created and the civic notables acquired the ownership of large tracts of land. A brief description of the intended function of the Hamidiye regiments is followed by an overview of the previous history of the Milli confederation and of Milli İbrahim Paşa's successful attempt to bring a large area under his control. It is argued his creation of an alternative economic centre in Viranşehir brought him the enmity of the notables of Diyarbakır who after the ousting of the sultan saw to his downfall. Next the author turns to Pirinçizade Arif, his son Feyzi who was later responsible for the eradication of the Diyarbakır Armenians, and his nephew Ziya Gökalp who developed the ideological basis for Turkish nationalism and declared the need for a homogenous society that was Turkish, Sunni Muslim and modernised, thus contributing to the reorientation of *İttihat ve Terakki* away from its Ottoman roots. The author agrees that Gökalp's influence on the national stage may have been exaggerated in the past and that his writings were virtually unknown in the early Republic but insists that he was a major player in Diyarbakır before the First World War. Making use of handwritten accounts by Mustafa Akif Tüfenk the author chronicles the 'cleansing' of Diyarbakır and the surrounding villages in 1895. Attempts to control the situation by the centre remained ineffectual and many Armenians fled to Milli İbrahim Paşa's capital Viranşehir. Milli İbrahim Paşa even dispatched some of his troops to Diyarbakır to protect the Christians, thus extending his sphere of influence and seizing the lands of some Diyarbakır notables whose cultivators were forced to pay their dues to him. Accounts of this process by the notables are revealed to be tendentious through comparison with British consular reports. The author then analyses a series of telegrams sent by the notables to the central authorities in the years 1905-1906 in order to complain about Milli İbrahim Paşa and then highlights the measures taken by these authorities against the notables for having seized the telegraph office and forced the local governor into hiding. The situation, however, changed dramatically when in 1908 *İttihat ve Terakki* came to power because then the Pirinçizades were in a position to send troops against Milli İbrahim Paşa.

The author concludes by juxtaposing the new ideological framework forged by Ziya Gökalp with the traditional Ottoman thought-world of Milli İbrahim Paşa.

The next contribution, ‘Diyarbakir and the Armenian Crisis of 1895’ by Jelle Verheij, deals with the repercussions of European support for the Christians in the Ottoman Empire and of the Armenian demonstrations in İstanbul. The author first gives a brief overview of the ethnic and religious composition of Diyarbakır in the late nineteenth century and then devotes a chapter to the Armenians who made up between 15% and 20% of the population of Diyarbakır and to the ‘Armenian Question’, which arose from Ottoman responses to the Christian independence movements on the Balkans and the annexation of some Armenian areas by Russia. The author argues that these Armenians were then exposed to Western culture, which had a knock-on effect on the Armenians still under Ottoman control. Availing themselves of Western education and profiting from the Ottoman reforms urban Armenians shed their marginal status as non-believers and became on the whole more prosperous. This caused a strong negative reaction by the Muslim population. Matters became even more fraught with the meddling of European powers. In the Treaty of Berlin improvements for the situation of the Armenians were demanded. When the implementation of this policy stalled nationalist Armenian societies were founded. Although these societies had little impact they were considered a major danger by Abdülhamid II and his advisers who sought to counter the perceived threat of separatism by the foundation of the Hamidiye regiments. After the disturbances in Sasun and the violent reaction to the demonstration of the Hnchak party in Istanbul Muslim fears arose that the sultan would cave in to the demands of the Western powers and give the Armenians a privileged position, which led to the disturbances to 1895. The author then discusses the historiographical traditions in the West and in Turkey. He points out that Western historians hardly ever consider the motivations of the Muslim population such as fear of excessive concessions to the Armenians and that they tend to overstress the role of Abdülhamid as the mastermind behind the disturbances. Turkish historians, on the other hand, tend to present interpretations that are intended to exculpate the government and the people. Moreover, they rely almost exclusively on official Ottoman sources without recognising that they are carefully crafted documents meant to present the developments in a positive light. The author then offers a quick overview of the available sources for Diyarbakır: consular reports, Ottoman archival documents, reports

from missionaries, but surprisingly no Armenian material. This is then followed by an overview of the events based on consular reports, which stresses the predominant role of Muslim civilians, an assessment of the numbers of victims (about 1000 Christians and 195 Muslims), and a discussion of the aftermath when insufficient relief was organised and the Ottoman authorities quelled further attempts at violence. Then the same events are discussed on the basis of Ottoman documents, in particular a lengthy *fezleke*, which consistently present the Armenians as aggressors and the Muslims as defenders of their own lives and livelihoods. The author then attempts a discussion of the events based on both Western and Ottoman sources, paying particular attention to the state of mind of the Muslim population, with a focus on telegrams sent to Istanbul by Pirinççizade Arif and other notables, known for their involvement in *İttihat ve Terakki*. This group, the notable Cemil Paşa and the governor Enis Paşa were seen by Western consuls as the main instigators of further disturbances. By comparison the sultan and his emissaries to the region appear as moderating forces, albeit with little success, and there is no evidence for involvement of the Hamidiye regiments (in contrast with other areas).

The next contribution is Janet Klein's article 'State, Tribe, Dynasty, and the Contest over Diyarbakir at the Turn of the 20th Century'. The author starts with a warning not to project the status of Diyarbakır as the Kurdish 'capital' back to the late Ottoman period. She claims that Diyarbakır can only be understood in the context of the wider region, which was characterised by its special administrative structure and its closeness to the border. Her focus is on the creation of the Hamidiye regiments, which were intended to extend the reach of the government in the region and to rebut perceived outside threats, including the supposed Armenian conspiracy. She claims, however, that there is no evidence that the Hamidiye regiments were formed in order to exterminate the Armenian population. The regiments were intended as a tool to bring the Kurdish leaders under Ottoman control through personal bonds of loyalty to the ruler. The effect of this development was a major reshuffling of power relations in the region, to the detriment of the tribes that were not included in the project. Embarking on a case study about Mustafa Paşa and the Miran 'tribal emirate' she highlights the importance of links with the centre in bids to acquire status within a tribal milieu. The background to Mustafa Paşa's rise is the introduction of the land law and the pressure on nomadic tribes to settle down, which led to considerable tensions. Participation in the Hamidiye project was one means of securing land

for the Kurdish tribal leaders. Mustafa Paşa prevailed in a feud against Muhammad Aghaye Sor who had no Hamidiye connections where he could even make use of regular troops. Indeed the government consistently overlooked lawless actions by Mustafa Paşa. Furthermore Mustafa Paşa could bring other weaker Hamidiye regiments under his control. The dispossessed descendents of Bedirhan who were fiercely opposed to the Hamidiye venture added a new element to the mix when they started to perceive of the situation increasingly in Kurdish nationalist terms. After the regime change in 1908 attempts were made to disband the Hamidiye regiments and to expropriate the lands that they had taken over. However, these attempts met only with qualified success. The author concludes by arguing that at the centre of the developments were local power struggles between and among tribes and urban notables and between peasants and their overlords over resources. The central government insinuated itself into this situations through its own initiatives but did not have sufficient power to control the developments that it had started.

Nilay Özok-Gündoğan's article, 'A Peripheral Approach to the 1908 Revolution in the Ottoman Empire: Land Disputes in Peasant Petitions in Post-Revolutionary Diyarbakir', focuses on the topic of peasant dispossession, which arose from the land law of 1858. Although its purpose was to boost tax revenue it also led to the seizing of vast tracts of lands by the local elites. However, this does not mean that the peasants cultivating the land were entirely passive. They turned to the central administration, either directly or through intermediaries such as the Christian bishops in order to bypass local officials whom were not sympathetic to their claims. In their petitions the peasants skilfully made use of revolutionary rhetoric. Repeated petitions help us to gauge some of the effects of measures taken in response. It appear that even with government support it was difficult for peasants to realise their claims. The conflicts were entirely class-related and thus provide a welcome corrective to the almost exclusive focus on ethnicity and religion.

Emrullah Akgündüz's contribution, 'Some Notes on the Syriac Christians of Diyarbakir in the Late 19th Century', casts light on this minority group, which has often been neglected in favour of the Armenians. Relying on largely unstudied primary sources such as the salnames and a collection of Syriac documents from Mardin the author reconstructs the development of the Syriac community throughout the nineteenth century. He attempts to gauge the Syriacs'

economic and educational condition and their relationship with the other ethnic and religious groups in the city.

In his article 'Relations between Kurds and Syriacs and Assyrians in Late Ottoman Diyarbakır' David Gaunt discusses the history of these groups in Diyarbakır province. He first speaks about the emergence of the term Assyrian and about the difficulty of assessing population numbers due to the lack of reliable state censuses and church registers. Then he traces the deterioration of originally good relation with the Kurds. He starts by sketching the integration of Jacobites and Nestorians into Kurdish tribal structures and pointing out that Christians usually were craftsmen whereas Kurds were farmers or nomads. Some Christians had adopted the Kurdish language and were often on good terms with Kurdish Yezidis. Unlike the Armenians, they did not develop a strong nationalist movement. The few intellectuals hoped for more rights within an Ottoman framework. According to missionary accounts the traditional relations between Syriac Christians and Kurds broke down in the reign of Abdülhamid II although this may not have been the case everywhere. Traditional cattle raids were replaced by more serious and large-scale military encounters due to the attempts of the Ottoman state to control the area. The emirs Muhammed Paşa of Rowanduz and Bedirhan Bey of Botan began turning against Yezidis and Christians and Muslim religious leaders declared their actions to be holy wars. The central authorities succeeded in suppressing the autonomous emirates but the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 led to a further worsening of the situation. By this time the Kurds had been given superior weapons and the role of şeyhs as power brokers was rising, which intensified the religious element. Christians were also among the main victims of the rivalry between the Hamidiye regiments although some Mountain Nestorians continued to serve as soldiers. The regime change of 1908 was first welcomed by the Assyrians and Syriacs but led to disappointment when no improvements materialised. The author next shows the high degree to which Christians in the Tur Abdin and in Mardin were integrated into the tribal structures, that one of them could even rise to the rank of tribal leader and that Kurdish tribes defended the Christians of Mardin in 1895. However, the situation changed radically during the First World War when a new nationalistic policy of displacing Christians led to a genocide. The Syriacs and Armenians were affected just like the Armenians although continuing bonds of loyalty with Kurdish groups mitigated the consequence somewhat. However, the scope for individual stances

was becoming more limited when the state threatened the Kurds with reprisals if they did not participate in genocidal activities.

The last contribution is Uğur Ümit Üngör's article 'Disastrous Decade: Armenians and Kurds in the Young Turk Era, 1915-25'. After a overview of modern genocide studies and their findings the author applies the established conceptual framework to the specific case of Diyarbakır, focusing in particular on the relationship between centre and periphery. The different elite families of Diyarbakır are described in some detail and their anti-Armenian stance is highlighted. This is followed by a brief discussion of incipient Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish nationalism, in the latter case with focus on Pirinçizade Feyzi. The Balkan Wars, the interference of Western powers in the Diyarbakır region and lastly the First World War caused gradual radicalisation and thus set the stage for the destruction of Diyarbakır's Armenians. The author insists on essential continuity between 'Young Turk' rule and the Turkish Republic until 1950 since in both periods the same policies were pursued. The imprisonment, deportation and assassination of the Armenians is described in detail. Once this objective had been achieved with the help of the Kurdish population the Turkish state turned against the Kurds themselves and started deporting them to the West. The author makes extensive use of inofficial and official Western sources, which are quoted at length. In the conclusion it is asserted that before the First World War there Diyarbakır's notables engaged in a fierce struggle for the available resources and that the central *İttihat ve Terakki* government exploited this struggle for its own ends. Enticed by rewards the notables took a leading role in the successive stages of genocide and ethnic cleansing. At the same time the new nationalistic ideology permitted the notables to justify their deeds to themselves.