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**Üngör Uğur Ümit, Mehmet Polatel**. *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. XVI, 226 S. ISBN 978-1-4411-3578-0.

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**U. Üngör u.a.: Confiscation and Destruction**

After more than nine decades the question of the Armenian property remains one of the most vexing issues in Turkey as part of the Armenian Genocide conundrum. The scholarship on the Armenian abandoned properties in the past couple of years has received some attention by historians and journalists alike. However, most of these works tend to concentrate more on providing a historical narrative of the abandoned properties and some of them even have journalistic tendencies. The book under review by Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel should be considered as the most sophisticated publication to date that discusses the fate of the Armenian properties through its innovative theoretical and conceptual analysis. The book sheds light on the interrelated nature of property confiscation carried by the Young Turk regime during World War I in cooperation with the local elites within two eastern provinces of the Empire: Adana and Diyarbekir. The main thrust of the book is that Turkish political elite during World War I "launched a process of societal and economic transformation in order to establish a Turkish nation state with a robust economy consisting of ethnic Turks" (p. X). This transformation (according to the authors) was only possible through violent homogenization of an ethnically heterogeneous Ottoman economy.

The main themes in the book that the authors explore include: ideology, law, and mass violence. In the opening section of chapter one, the authors introduce the problem from a theoretical and comparative perspective by explaining the ways in which the genocidal elites dealt with the victims' property and how the expropriation process preceded the destruction of the Armenians. The authors argue that the confiscation of the Armenian properties during the genocide "offered the Young Turk political elite opportunities to restructure Ottoman society by forging alliances and eliminating opponent groups" (p. 3).

The book itself is divided into seven chapters through which the authors provide a systematic explanation of the fate of the Armenian properties during World War I. Chapter two discusses the ideological foundations of the confiscation process. Chapter three of the book discusses one of the most critical dimensions of the confiscation process: its legality. The chapter provides a detailed account of the laws, regulations, and the commissions that were established in the framework of the sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus to implement the confiscation process. One of the most important commissions was the Abandoned Properties Commission (Emvâl-ı Metruke Komisyonu) that had 33 branches in the Empire. The commission took the task of registering, liquidating, appropriating, and allocating the Armenian properties. In the end of the chapter the authors raise one of the most important questions that deal with the theme of legality: why would authors of mass crimes feel the necessity to establish a juridical apparatus to organize the dispossession of the vulnerable population in the most minute detail? Despite the fact that the authors do not provide a conclusive answer, their answers are worth taking into consideration. They argue that the Young Turk regime at the time did not "see all consequences of their policy coming." According to them most orders camouflaged the plunder and lent it a "juridical quasi-legitimacy". This "legal" façade fulfilled the vital function of "increasing the effectivity of the dispossession measures." Finally, the laws were also expected to calm foreign (especially German) firms and consulates' requests for accountability or compensation (p. 58). Other scholars have argued that the aim of using law and legality was to create a degree of state control over the situation in order to avoid the spontaneous seizure of 'Abandoned Property' by the local population. Bedross Der Matossian, The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of "Armenian Capital" at the End of the Ottoman Empire, in: European Journal of Turkish Studies, Complete List (2011), <http://ejts.revues.org/4411>

(23.08.2013); Hilmar Kaiser, Armenian Property, Ottoman Law and Nationality Policies during the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1916, in: Olaf Farschid et al. (Hrsg.), The World War I as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, Beirut 2006, pp. 49-71. The choice of the authors to provide multiple factors as opposed to one factor is a plausible approach mainly due to the fact that the confiscation laws and regulations and the processes themselves were implemented in accordance with the local exigencies within the provinces.

Chapter four of the book discusses the dispossession of the Ottoman Armenians. It summarizes the progression of the genocidal policy and traces the Young Turk economic policies towards the Armenian population after the Balkan Wars 1912-1913 until the collapse of the Young Turk regime in 1918. Chapter 5 and 6 of the book are each devoted to a specific case study that deconstructs the confiscation process in two provinces: Adana and Diyarbakir. While all of these chapters are worthy of discussion and comments, I deem it necessary to highlight two major contributions of the book: the model of confiscation and colonization and the two case studies that aim to support the arguments of the authors.

The authors develop a model in the book that consists of two important pillars: confiscation and colonization. By confiscation they refer to the involvement of an extensive bureaucratic apparatus that propagated a legal façade during the dispossession of Armenians. As to the concept of colonization, they use it to signify the redistribution of the Armenian property as a form of internal colonization. They successfully demonstrate this model through applying it on the two provinces of Adana and Diyarbekir. The Adana province was the most important province in the Empire for the cotton production. The authors demonstrate in detail how in the case of Adana the Armenian properties were confiscated and distributed among private individuals, CUP activists, police officers, other governmental officials and most importantly the newly emerging Turkish bourgeoisie. The second case study concentrates on the southeastern region of Diyarbekir, where economic life specially the textile industry was dominated by Armenians. In the case of Diyarbekir the interplay between the local elites and the state is much more evident than that of Adana. The genocide in the province was perpetrated with the aid and the cooperation of influential Muslim notables such as the Pirinçizâdes. According to the authors, the case of Diyarbekir exemplifies "how local dynamics shaped the Armenian genocide at the provincial level as a product of competition between families" (p. 162). For them this competition between urban elites became a major factor that contributed to the intensity of the violence in both provinces.

Towards the end of the book the authors answer one the major questions of the book: was the confiscation and colonization of the Armenian property economically motivated as a medium for material gain or was it simply a consequence of the ideology of destruction? They argue that the economic impulses and interests did not motivate the ideology of destruction during the genocide. By applying the approach of regionalism, the authors argue that the local dynamics influenced the course of the intensity of the genocidal process. It is within this competitive environment between the local elites that the CUP took the opportunity to mobilize them in order to expedite the genocidal process.

Though the book solidifies its main argument through strong historical and documentary evidence and an outstanding conceptual analysis, I would like to comment on a couple of points. The first of these pertains to the concept of colonization. The authors should have devoted a bit more space within the book in defining and qualifying in-depth the concept of colonization. The concept might be more applicable to the Muslim refugees who arrived from the Balkans and the Caucasus and were assigned to colonize "abandoned" Armenian property. Second, it would be beneficial to examine whether the model of cooperation between the local elites and the government in the destruction and the confiscation process is also applicable in the case of the other provinces. Finally, it is yet to be determined from an empirical perspective as to how the confiscation of the Armenian property influenced the establishment of the Turkish economy in its formative years.

The book by Üngör and Polatel is to be regarded as a very important contribution to the historiography of the Armenian Genocide, the field of late Ottoman history and the formation of the Turkish Republic. The book is useful for every graduate student, scholar, historian and social scientist interested in researching the dynamics of the Armenian genocide, economic dimensions of mass crimes, and the history of World War I. And it provides the basis for further debate and discussion through some of the innovative arguments made by Üngör and Polatel.

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