**Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (eds.): *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), xii + 371 pages.**

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At present we are experiencing a series of noteworthy centennaries of historical turning points leading to the demise of the Ottoman Empire. These include the Young Turk Revolution, the Balkan Wars, the outbreak of World War I as well as the ethnic cleansing of Anatolia in 1915. These centennaries have induced a series of conferences as well as publication of academic volumes. Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij’s edited volume on Diyarbekir belongs to this group of publications.

As stated in the introduction, the production of this volume stems from the dissatisfaction of the editors with the existing research on Diyarbakır, where this town and its surroundings have never been properly studied in their own right, but rather treated within the imperial context. Jongerden and Verheij, in addition, state the fact that developments in the region between 1870 and 1915 have been generally viewed by national and nationalist historiographies “as a kind of pre-history of later developments”, which also includes the issue of the Armenian genocide (p.2). To counter these teleological approaches, where “authors search for … evidence for what was later to occur”, the contributors of this volume elaborate on incidents and networks which formed late Ottoman Diyarbekir, focus both on the elites and different subaltern categories as determining actors, and adapt the approach of poly-centricity which underlines that regional developments might arise with weight of their own (p.3).

The first contribution is titled “Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800-1870”, and authored by Suavi Aydın and Jelle Verheij (pp.15-54). This article, aiming to provide a historical background provides the reader a sructural view on Diyarbekir region as an administrative unit, geography and people, rivalries between Diyarbekir and Mardin, various phases of centralization in the region between 1834 and 1850, rural society after the centralization, Tanzimat-reforms in the 1860s, and the impact of centralizing measures over non-Muslim communities. This article is important in terms of offering the reader a solid framework of elite and subaltern dynamics which would play critical roles during the disturbances and violence in Diyarbekir in the subsequent decades.

This part is followed by Joost Jongerden’s “Elite Encounters of a Violent Kind: Milli İbrahim Paşa, Ziya Gökalp and Political Struggle in Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century” (pp. 55-84). Here rivalries between two Kurdish elite groups, one based on tribes, the other consisting of urban notables of Diyarbekir, are discussed with the goal of “investigating the forces shaping and thus advance our understanding of political life in Diyarbekir” (p.55). In this region tribal power was concentrated in the hands of Milli İbrahim Paşa, who led a major confederation of tribes. They were closely tied to Sultan Abdülhamid II through the Hamidiye Regiments. The urban elite of Diyarbekir, on the other hand, was financially based on long-distance commercial networks and possessed agricultural lands. Among them, Pirinççizâde Arif Efendi and his nephew Ziya Gökalp maintained secret connections to oppositional Young Turks. Jongerden explains that while İbrahim Paşa during the unrest in 1895 was eager to protect those Christians under his protection in Viranşehir, urban notables in contrast failed to protect local non-Muslims and even eliminated the Christian-inhabited settlements within their rural possessions. According to the author, İbrahim Paşa representing tribal, rural, and nomadic social setting with his loyalty to the sultan stood in contrast to the urban merchant elite with land possessions some of whom professed positivistic worldview and developed proto-nationalistic attitudes.

The biggest section in this volume is Jelle Verheij’s “Diyarbekir and the Armenian Crisis of 1895” (pp. 85-145). Verheij, by using Ottoman, British, and French archival material, aims to reconstruct a critical and reliable account of the Armenian massacres in Diyarbekir. The author states that all the existing sources, irrespective of their partiality and ideological stances, share the common attitude of “avoiding discussion of the factors inspiring Muslim action” (p.100). Thus, one aim of this article is also to determine the reasons for the Muslim aggression. Verheij concludes that first and most, the Armenian protests against the local government stimulated Muslim anxiety which was aggravated even more through the proclamation of the reforms for the Six Provinces. Muslim Ottomans considered these reform measures as initial steps for the separation of the region from the empire. Meanwhile, a significant part of the Muslim elite in Diyarbekir, having connections with the illegal Young Turk opposition, professed a clearly anti-Armenian attitude, and probably took part in the killings of the Armenians. It is striking that while local Muslim personalities with suspected ties to the Young Turks appeared to have encouraged aggression against Armenians, functionaries loyal to Sultan Abdülhamid did their best to protect non-Muslim civilian population from any kind of violence. Verheij thus questions the classical theory that Abdülhamid directly organized the massacres. For the author, the incidents of 1895 in Diyarbekir signifies a breakdown of the Hamidian system.

Janet Klein’s contribution, titled “State, Tribe, Dynasty, and the Contest over Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th Century” (pp 147-178), discusses the aims of the Ottoman government to utilize the Hamidiye Regiments and the unpredicted conflicts which emerged as a consequence of the inclusion of the Kurdish tribes into the complex power game which included the Yıldız Palace, Russia, Britain as well as Armenian and Kurdish peasantry. While doing this Klein also tries to demonstrate the historical process where Diyarbakır became a central issue of modern Kurdish nationalism. Being a peripheral region which was perceived by Istanbul of being under threats from Russia, Armenian nationalism and Kurdish separatism, Diyarbekir lacked regular military presence and instead “was a fuzzy blend of state and non-state actors” (p.150). According to the author the Hamidiye Cavalry was founded not as a measure against Armenian nationalism, but in order to “conquer the tribal zone in its periphery” (p.153). However, the Hamidiye Regiments turned to be significant a factor in particular social and political changes within Kurdish society unforseen by its engineers.

The following part, prepared by Nilay Özok-Gündoğan and titled “A ‘Peripheral’ Approach to the 1908 Revolution in the Ottoman Empire: Land Disputes in Peasant Petitions in Post-Revolutionary Diyarbekir” (pp. 179-215), is noteworthy as it provides a rare glimpse to the “voices of the subaltern”. The emergence of new major landholding groups in the region following the Land Code of 1858 was promoted even more by the creation of the Hamidiye Regiments. These developments led to the dispossessession of peasants, who were unable to complain about their grievances due to the sultanic support to the Hamidiye militia. The Revolution of 1908 created an utterly different political context where the peasants felt the possibility to retrieve their lands. Petitions of complaint sent by peasants to Istanbul used previously unheard political categories such as liberty, freedom, law, constitution, rights, which displayed the surfacing of peasant resistance to growing encroachment of the notables.

A more descriptive article belongs to Emrullah Akgündüz who provides the reader very much needed data on the various Syriac denominations in Diyarbekir region. The chapter titled “Some Notes on the Syriac Christians of Diyarbekir in the Late 19th Century. A Preliminary Investigation of Some Primary Sources” (pp. 217-240) provides us the intricate connections between the Jacobites/Syrian Orthodox (*Süryani Kadim*), Syriac Catholics, Nestorians and the Chaldeans, their economic and social conditions and their relations with the Armenians and the Muslims.

The next part, titled “Relations Between Kurds and Syriacs and Assyrians in Late Ottoman Diyarbekir” (pp. 241-266) is written by David Gaunt. The author stresses that the relationships among these local populations, both in terms of conflicts and cooperation, has not been adequately understood. The reader learns about the high degree of cultural and social integration of these population groups through the formal existence of Syrian Orthodox sections within large Kurdish tribal confederations or the presence of Syrian Orthodox warriors among Kurdish rebels or even the fact that numerous Kurds of Mardin were speaking the Turoyo language (p. 247-248). It was the nineteenth century where violence became prevalent in the region, in forms of small-scale cattle stealing reaching to systematic aggression of certain Kurdish chiefs to found local emirates as well as growing Ottoman military activities, culminating in massacres. The principal victims of the increasing hostilities were Assyrians and Syriacs, both in terms of burning and plundering of their villages as well as subjection to killings.

The final chapter of this volume, authored by Uğur Ümit Üngör, bears the title “Disastrous Decade: Armenians and Kurds in the Young Turk Era, 1915-1925” (pp. 267-295). Here it is put forward that from 1913 to 1950 a region originally rather ethnic heterogeneous such as Diyarbekir was put through a series of demographic engineering policies with the intention of ethnic homogenization and integration into Turkish nation state. Üngör states that the course and the intensity of demographic engineering processes, which went hand in hand with sheer violence, was dependent on local factors. While policy makers employed local powerholders for their goals, local notables in turn knew how to manipulate politicians in the center to promote their own gains. Thus leading Muslim families of Diyarbekir such as the Pirinççizadeler, in collaboration with local authorities, not only resisted any reform propositions in favour of Armenians, but provocated violence against non-Muslims to pursue economic and political benefits.

Being a collection of micro-histories for the Ottoman Diyarbekir region, this volume makes the academic reader deeply aware about the complexities and multi-layered nature of the late nineteenth century developments leading to violences and tragedies during the first decades of the twentieth century. It is clear that this volume is to a major extent a personal project of Jelle Verheij. Verheij contributed not only in the “Introduction”, but also in two of the articles. Even more, the highly extensive Annexes, which could have reshaped into at least two articles for themselves, are the works of Verheij. As one of the authors of the “Introduction”, the statement is made that “our motivation derives from a long-term personal commitment to the area under study” (p.2). This explains Verheij’s strong presence within the volume.

Having said this, some criticisms at the factual level need to be made. Though this volume is specifically on Diyarbekir region, some sweeping generalizations have been made for the whole Ottoman Empire. In the introductory part, the Land Code of 1858 is characterized as having empire-wide led to the dispossession of small landholders in favour of landlords (p. 9), leading to an “Ottoman feudalism” (p.10). In fact, the effects of the Land Code for the entire empire have been highly different according to regions. It was mainly in the Kurdish regions and in Iraq where the adversary outcomes of this law on small landholders was observed, which is not so true for other parts of Anatolia or the Balkans. Other mistakes are as follows; the Egyptians occupied “Greater Syria”, not “Anatolia” (p.34). The Edict of 1839 did not declare legal equality of Muslims and non-Muslims (p.35). It was Abdülmecid, not Abdülaziz, who declared the Edict of 1856 (p.43). The term “advice councils” should be “administrative councils” (p.43). Gökalp was around thirteen years old when his father died, but not four (p.68). The Ottoman term *vilâyet-i sitte* should be *vilâyât-ı sitte* (p.88 fn 7). Similarly, “Syrian villages” should be “Syriac villages” (p.134). The military coup of 1913 was not a “Young Turk Revolution” (p.275). Finally, Young Turks indeed came to power through elections in December 1908 (p.275).

As a significant contribution to the recent history of the region of Diyarbekir, this volume would serve the avid reader much more if the following items would have been included. First, a city map of ancient Amid, showing the town quarters. Then, regional maps of Diyarbekir which would depict the changes in administrative borders from 1870 to 1923. Also, a map depicting the distribution of local tribes throughout the region. The list of tribes, put on pages 26-27, in fact should have been placed within the Appexes.