

**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, xvii + 315 pages.**

Emre Erol's *The Ottoman Crisis in Western Anatolia* focuses on the county of Foçateyn (the modern-day district of Foça in Izmir), a boomtown of the Aegean region in the 1850s fed through its production of alum, salt, and grains and integration into capitalist world economy. As its economic activities intensified, the demographic structure of the town in the 1860s and 1870s shifted. Foça became a hub for workers, porters, and day laborers, mostly migrants from the Aegean Islands. This economic prosperity, however, was short-lived, interrupted by political crisis and turmoil, which spawned a number of chaotic incidents in Foça in the first decades of the twentieth century. As a result of "the Spring of Organized Chaos", as Erol calls the expulsion of the Ottoman Greek residents in 1914, Foça became a depopulated ghost town. Erol attempts to uncover the reasons behind this town's drastic economic and political transition from the Ottoman Empire to the early Republican Era. He does so through an analysis of a variety of primary sources including memoirs, archival sources drawn from the state archives, and oral historical sources. Particularly with the latter, Erol aims to "give a voice to the 'silenced' agents of history" (p. 6).

Erol opens the first chapter of his work by sketching the economic structure of Foça from the classical ages to the nineteenth century. The chapter continues with an evaluation of Foça's economic growth and its incorporation into global markets, specifically triggered by the production the town's principal export commodity, salt. Erol shows the multiple effects of state management of the salt business after the establishment of The Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA) in 1881. While OPDA's management of the salt business in Foçateyn undermined the local economy, it also paved the way for economic growth and development of the town (p. 46). The OPDA's interventions in the production and export of salt also affected the life of workers. In response to the modernization of salt production and OPDA's attempts to maximize its revenues, boatmen and managers went on strike in 1908 and 1909 (pp. 53-57).

In the second chapter, Erol analyzes the application of Ottoman bureaucratic reforms in Foça, examining the administrative and demographic structure of the town in the late Ottoman Empire through a close reading of the provincial yearbooks (*salname*). Regarding the shifting demography, Erol states that by 1908 the ratio of Ottoman Greeks to Muslims quadrupled (p. 84). Erol uses yearbooks to reveal this shift in population demographics as the cause of political tensions in the region (p. 85). In the third chapter, Erol provides details about the cosmopolitan culture and hegemonic middle class values of the town that emerged as the economy developed. These ways of life, however, did not last long. A series of wars (from the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 to the Turkish War of Independence of 1922) and the loss of Ottoman territories resulted in large-scale migration to Western Anatolia and a dramatic change of social, economic, and cultural life in Foça.

The fourth and fifth chapters are the heart of this work. While the fourth chapter sets the framework to understand the turmoil and transition of the town, the fifth chapter is devoted to analysis of the expulsion of the Ottoman Greek residents in 1914 in depth. As Erol examined in the fourth chapter, the Unionists, empowered and more radicalized after the Balkan Wars, became involved in the chaotic incidents

in Western Anatolia in 1914, right after the Great Powers granted the Aegean islands to the Greeks in February 1914. The tragedy of 1914 marks the beginning of the intense and destructive stage of demographic engineering in the region (p. 162). Accompanied by the photographs of Félix Sartiaux, a philhellene French archeologist who resided in Foça during and after the events of 1914, Erol uses the fifth chapter to delve into the details of the incident of 1914, using Foça as an example to shed light on the Unionists' politics of demographic engineering. Erol approaches Foça as a microcosm of changes occurring in major port cities such as Izmir and Beirut in the late Ottoman Empire (p. 87). Throughout the chapters, Erol shifts between macro and micro analysis in order to trace the possible links between the demographic policies of the Unionists from the Macedonian Question to the tragic incidents in Foça. Regarding the perpetrators of the tragedy, Erol states that the violence was initiated by armed bandits who were not from the county. Almost all Greeks living in Eski Foça had left after the incident, and the turbulent times for the region continued until 1922. As Erol investigates in the sixth chapter, the First World War and the Greek invasion of 1919 also severely damaged the economic and demographic structure of the town and left unrepairable damage. Erol declares that this was the end of the *Belle Époque*.

Erol's work is a satisfying contribution to the history of Eastern Mediterranean literature. By providing a multilayered history of Foça, one of the major Ottoman port towns in the nineteenth century, Erol analyzes the town as one of the political and economic test grounds for the Unionists' nationalistic politics. Erol offers us fresh insights on Turkish nationalism and decision-making processes of the Unionists and local officers by focusing on the tragedy of 1914 and afterwards in Foça. However, the work has some shortcomings. In regards to sources, the author does not give sufficient references to Ottoman local newspapers, specifically *Ahenk* and *Hizmet*, two important sources published in Izmir in the late Ottoman Empire. Because the addition of the local press would certainly provide rich details about the incidents occurred in Foça, this seems a missed opportunity for the work. Moreover, given the importance of banditry as one of the book's major theme, the analysis of *chettes* (brigands) would also benefit from more extensive references to related literature on banditry in the late Ottoman Empire.

Aside from these minor shortcomings, Emre Erol's work, based on his doctoral dissertation, offers a fresh perspective for understanding the transition from empire to nation state in the Ottoman context. Erol leads us to re-think the application of politics, nationalism, antagonism, migration, violence, and demographic policies in the Ottoman Empire. As Erol boldly concludes, "perpetrators and victims are often the same people" (p. 244).

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