

Armenian Peasantry: A Black Hole in the Ottoman and Turkish Historiography

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Abstract

The peasantry and life in the villages are rarely studied in Ottoman and Turkey's history. Together with Harry Harootunian, I have been delving into this subject by re-examining the historiography with the Armenian peasantry at its center. In this presentation, I will detail some of our findings.

As opposed to the common image of Armenians as either merchants, artisans or Amiras, the majority of the Ottoman Armenian population consisted of peasants. By the mid-19th century, the male peasants were increasingly leaving their families behind in the villages to make money as migrant workers in the cities.

Both Ottoman and Turkey's historiographies follow similar narratives when it comes to the peasantry; they envision an abstracted peasant living in an amorphous time and space. In an attempt to make an intervention into this abstracted narration of peasantry, I will draw upon archival primary sources, oral history and Armenian literature representing the village life throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. I will argue that the framing of the concept of peasantry without its subject matter, the peasant, serves to hide the process which led to the annihilation of the Armenian peasant.

Bio

Talin Suciyan (Akademische Oberraetin auf Zeit/Associate Prof.) Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Turkish/Ottoman Studies Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich. She is the author of *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-genocide Society, Politics and History* (I.B. Tauris, 2016). The book is winner of Der Mugrdechian Society of Armenian Studies Outstanding Book Award in 2018. Its Turkish translation has been published in Istanbul by Aras Publishing in 2018 and German translation, *Die Armenierinnen und Armenier in der Türkei* will soon be published by De Gruyter Verlag (August 2021). She is currently working on the publication of her habilitation thesis entitled, 'Either save us from this misery or order our death': Tanzimat of the Provinces.