

arguments on Ottoman economic and rural history, by discussing the making of the Çukurova region not only through market forces, but also through the constitution of a property regime.

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Yıldız Atasoy. *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, viii + 288 pages.

After Turkey's 2002 elections it was commonly believed that the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) would be a stalwart agent of economic and political liberalization in Turkey. Ultimately, it was suggested, the party would guide the country out of the semi-authoritarian-nationalist *cul-de-sac* in which it had been stuck for so long and integrate it into a democratic European Union (EU). This belief was supported by the broad class-coalition that the AKP was able to forge around neoliberal market principles, along with some promising initial steps to institute an agenda of political reform. Remarkably, Islamists-turned-neoliberals were to become the representatives of a democratic society against an undemocratic state. Yıldız Atasoy's book, *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism*, takes this common belief as its starting point.

The book aims to explain how the coupling of neoliberalism with Islamic cultural values has altered state-society relations in Turkey. Atasoy argues that the embrace of neoliberal and democratic principles by the AKP has led to a transformation of "the authoritarian fundamentals of the [Kemalist] state" (p. 9). According to the author, two parallel processes of liberalization are leading to this transformation. First, the AKP is committed to democracy and "a new social contract that facilitates an engagement between society and the state on the basis of universal justice and human rights principles" (p. 110). Second, the AKP is pursuing neoliberal economic policies including "privatization of public corporations, liberalization of trade, entrepreneurship, [and] private investment" (p. 109). Together, these efforts are said to be deepening democracy and slowly altering the "Kemalist epistemology of state-centrism" (p. 12). This change has not been driven from within Turkey alone, but has also been shaped by a global context where neoliberal and democratic

discourses are nearly ubiquitous. Therefore, Turkey is presented not as an isolated case, but as part of a general trend toward neoliberal/democratic changes across the developing world. What is unique to Turkey, however, is that these widespread discourses have been molded and integrated into an “Islamic politico-social imaginary” that is acting to open society as well as “to transform the state” (p. 27).

The main premise of the book is that, even though the AKP does not represent a significant departure in its emphasis on religion, its policies are transforming the state. Atasoy argues that, unlike under previous governments, the “marriage of Islam with neoliberalism” (p. 240) under the AKP has led to an overall weakening of Kemalist *laiklik* (secularism)—which in the Turkish context means the state’s control over religion rather than the separation of state and religion—and the economic principle of state developmentalism. Whereas previous governments have at a minimum reproduced state power, the AKP’s efforts represent a “search for comprehensive democracy” that “breaks the historical connections between state sovereignty and cultural homogeneity imposed by Kemalist *laiklik*” (p. 244). According to the author, the AKP offers a fundamentally transformative project that “appeals to anti-bureaucratic sentiments” and levels criticisms against the moral order “generated by the Kemalist state’s exclusionary power” (p. 248).

For the uninitiated reader, the book provides a comprehensive review of some of the headline-catching debates about Islamic politics and personalities, military coups, and economic changes in Turkey. The early chapters in particular provide a wealth of information on the continuities and ruptures in Turkish politics and economy, with significant attention paid to religious actors.

There are several shortcomings to the book, however, and these undermine the merit of its primary arguments. First, there is a considerable gap between what the book purports it will do conceptually in the beginning and what it actually does in the following chapters. Early on the author claims: “the present work develops categories and concepts necessary to uncover the discursive interpretive struggles” (p. 14). Yet, the study makes no systematic effort to do so. For example, we are told that Islamic politics constitutes a reworking of the Kemalist state—that it initiates “state transformation” by coupling “new knowledge cultures” (Islamism) and “globalized frames” (neoliberalism) (p. 239). However, these concepts are not carefully defined, and there are no parameters provided to identify or measure when and how they change, which is precisely what is needed to assess the claims that the author makes. The result is that concepts like “state transformation,” “knowledge culture,”

and “globalized frame” remain frustratingly abstract and detached from the empirical chapters, and this makes it unclear whether the overarching arguments are indeed valid. These are not isolated examples, as other concepts such as “Islamic orientation” (p. 9), “transnationalization” (p. 12), “reorganization of public space” (p. 92), or “reconstitution of the state” (p. 240) remain insufficiently defined as well.

Second, the study makes a set of claims that are not clearly substantiated by the empirical chapters. One of the more significant arguments that the book makes is that Islamic cultural politics—and by extension the AKP—is spearheading democratic resurgence in Turkey. The author writes: “In replacing older cultural hierarchies, Islamic groups upholding ethical principles of human dignity and justice are motivated to build horizontally articulated linkages” as opposed to the “cultural hierarchy of Kemalism, stretching vertically from the upper bureaucratic echelons of the state” (p. 246). This is said to be demonstrated, for example, by the way in which the AKP has handled issues related to the military’s intervention in politics, the headscarf issue, and the Kurdish question, which “ties the AKP’s Islamism to norms of liberal democracy, personal freedom, and cultural expression” (p. 10). Another claim is that “Islam’s marriage with neoliberalism *today* undermines the connection between state sovereignty, as a measure of state power’ and Kemalist *laiklik*” (p. 240).

However, similar to the conceptual issue broached above, the gap between the arguments that the book wants to make and what it is ultimately capable of making is wide. The kind of research design and data that would be needed to substantiate the previous claims are sorely lacking. Such claims would require more precise articulations of concepts such as democracy and state power, and a method for connecting changes in government policies to variation in greater or lesser democratization and decentralization. It is necessary, for example, to show exactly how the government has attempted to solve the problems around civil-military relations, the headscarf issue, or the Kurdish issue, and then to have some consistent way of determining whether these policies are more or less democratic than previous ones, and whether or not they devolve power away from the state to society. Without this type of approach, it is simply difficult to argue that Turkey is truly becoming more democratic or less state-centered as a result of the policies of the AKP. Moreover, the author does not address alternative evidence about the AKP’s anti-democratic and occasionally authoritarian policies (regarding political arrests, ethnic politics, and educational policies) that would counter the arguments proposed. It could very well be that the AKP is not transforming Turkey along the positive lines that the

author suggests, but is instead just replacing one “regime of fear” (p. 84) with another. The answer cannot be ascertained from the present study. The insufficiently penetrating and uncorroborated generalizations of the book at points render its claims speculative, rather than convincing.

In conclusion, *Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism* offers a broad history and analysis of the relationship between Turkey’s changing economic conditions and Islamic political actors. I recommend it to those who want to know more about religion’s role in Turkey’s new economic and political context. While it does provide a wealth of useful information, those looking for a more analytically incisive examination of economic and political change under the Islamist AKP government will benefit from reading other books along with Atasoy’s.

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Miri Shefer-Mossensohn. *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions, 1500-1700*. Albany, NY: Suny Press, 2009, xvi + 277 pages.

Taking the intersections of medicine and society as the focus of her research, Miri Shefer-Mossensohn problematizes Ottoman medicine in the period between the sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth century, using pluralities within the medical world as the starting point of her discussion. The book offers a narration and analysis of the understudied field of the Ottoman medical history; it should be considered as a part of the new cultural and social history of medicine. Medicine here is perceived as a cultural and social construct. This is why the author argues that how people perceive their medical world depends on their perception of their own society (p. 2).

The book evaluates the tradition of writing medical history of the Ottoman world within contemporary Western and Turkish academia. The lack of Ottoman medicine in Western historical literature has gradually begun to be filled since the 1980s. Shefer-Mossensohn warns readers that the book does not intend to offer a complete account of medical developments in the Ottoman Empire of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, although she admits that such a monograph also needs to be written. She also underlines the difficulty to undertake such a comprehensive study mainly due to the scattered nature of the sources.