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A Civilization Destroyed: The Wealth of Non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Period and the Early Republican Era

20.02.2015



**A Civilization Destroyed:
 The Wealth of Non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Period and the Early Republican Era
 20-21 November 2015
 Istanbul**

The Hrant Dink Foundation, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul Bilgi University and Sabancı University will organize an academic conference titled “A Civilization Destroyed: The Wealth of non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Period and the Early Republican Era” scheduled for November 20-21, 2015.

Throughout the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had integrated politically, economically, and culturally into Western capitalism. This was a fast-paced integration during which the Ottoman Empire was in a significantly passive position. This transformation had major impacts on the socio-cultural and economical fields in the Empire from commerce and industrial production to consumer culture, from institutional organizations to urbanization and the arts. An important consequence of this transformation was the emergence of an elite segment among the non-Muslim population. The leading figures of Ottoman modernization and Western integration were mostly members of this elite community. They became the representatives of an avant-garde lifestyle, with a distinctly high level of wealth, and new political and cultural dispositions.

This transformation received negative reactions from the Muslim population that perceived itself as the “hegemonic nationality” in the Empire. In the meantime, rising nationalism among different communities also resulted in conflicts. The existing economic system had come to an end as a result of boycotts that took place following the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, and rising nationalist movements. After the Balkan Wars, the process that began with the eviction of the Western Anatolian Greeks/Rums continued with the forced deportation of Armenians to Syrian deserts.

The “Islamisation/Turkification” of Ottoman economy accelerated after the population exchange between Turkey and Greece following the Turkish liberation war. The “national merchants”, supported and encouraged wholly by the new Republican Regime as of 1923, remained largely ineffective in replacing Ottoman non-Muslims that were already subjected to displacement, oppression, deterrence, forced migration, massacre and genocide between 1914-1924. With the goal of establishing a sustainable republic, “State Economic Enterprises” were created, and the principle of economic statism was put in practice. From the day of its establishment in 1923, the Turkish Republic’s discriminatory minority policies wiped out the non-Muslim merchants from the market.

This conference aims to create a productive academic atmosphere in order to discuss and understand the history of the expropriation and destruction of the wealth of non-Muslims through nation-building policies of annihilation of minorities and Turkification.. The central topics of the conference include but are not limited to:

- The social and economic results of the eradication (extermination and migration) of non-Muslim human capital.
- The middle class segments and non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire.
- The social consequences of the population movements experienced by non-Muslims, which were mainly triggered by political reasons.
- The transformation of the “entrepreneur” while the open economy of the Ottoman Empire was changing into a closed economy during the early Republican period.
- Non-Muslim merchants as the agents of the European capital, which was liquidated to a great extent between the years 1914 and 1924.
- The features of the entrepreneurship, which was mainly conducted through arbitrage, and then liquidated between the years 1914 and 1924.
- The confiscation of the lands, other assets, and especially church properties of non-Muslim communities.
- The impact of this confiscation on non-Muslim cultural wealth.
- The impact of this confiscation on the Ottoman waqf system.
- The political, cultural, and economic consequences of the confiscation and redistribution of non-Muslim properties after 1915.

Announcements

• Conference - Conscience and Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide: New Research on Survivors



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- The history of the commercial establishments founded by non-Muslim entrepreneurs.
- The philanthropic work of non-Muslim entrepreneurs in Ottoman cities.
- The migration of Ottoman non-Muslims from Anatolia to large cities, and the social consequences of this migration.
- The relations between non-Muslim entrepreneurs and religious communities.
- The quality of commerce between port cities and mid-sized Anatolian cities.
- The evolution of the Levantine merchant colonies.
- The relations and tensions between the Republican regime and port cities.

☐ Although the focus of the conference is economics, it is open to interdisciplinary perspectives.

☐ The conference will take place at **Boğaziçi University Albert Long Hall**.

☐ The working languages of the conference will be **Armenian, English and Turkish**. Simultaneous translation will be provided. The applications can be made in either language.

☐ In order to reserve time for Q&A sessions and discussions, speakers will have **20 minutes** for their presentations.

☐ The conference will be **broadcast live** on the Hrant Dink Foundation website: www.hrantdink.org

☐ Transportation and accommodation expenses of participants from outside Istanbul will be covered if their affiliated organizations cannot provide coverage.

☐ Researchers who would like to contribute to this conference should submit a 250-word abstract together with a CV, and send them to the addresses below until **April 30th 2015**:

eminekolivar@hrantdink.org.

☐ Papers presented during the conference will be published in the form of **conference proceedings** by the Hrant Dink Foundation Publications.

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