

Caglar on Onur Yildirim's paper "Representation of the Lausanne refugees in Greek and Turkish historiographies"

Yildirim addresses the representation of the Greek and Turkish refugees - who were displaced after the Convention signed in Lausanne (1923) concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish nationals in Greece and Turkey - in the Greek and Turkish dominant historiographies. This paper contextualizes these representations in regard to the nation-building processes in these countries. In his insightful and careful analysis, Yildirim approaches to the representations of the Exchange from within a field in which the nation-building process, the agendas of the political elite and the scholarship are entangled.

Although the Exchange has been incorporated into the master narratives of Greece and Turkey, its appropriation and weight in Greek and Turkish political discourse and collective memory are "diametrically opposed". Greece and Turkey have worked out the Exchange differently in their collective memory depending on the historical contingencies of the political discourse in these countries. While, the Exchange was incarcerated into the topos of collective tragedy as the Asia Minor Catastrophe in Greece, it was molded into the triumph of the War of independence in Turkish history and was consequently marginalized and "forgotten" in regard to the narrative of the nation and statehood. While the Greek historiography of the Exchange was marked by "rememberance", the locus of the mainstream public discourse and scholarship on this topic in Turkey was "forgetting". This event secured a place in the Greek historiography both as a reminder of defeat by Turks but also as an expression of Greek statecraft in handling large numbers of displaced people for the advantage of the Greek nation and state. The unproportional weight of the War of Independence in the grand narrative of Turkish nation-state rendered the Exchange to the margins of the collective memory and scholarship.

In the second part of the paper, Yildirim compares the reappropriation of the Exchange in the critical and "revisionist" scholarship both in Turkey and Greece. These critical approaches, draw attention to the deficiencies of the state-centric perspectives on the Exchange and in the light of new sources bring different, namely the social, economic and cultural, aspects of it to the fore front. On the Greek side, these new studies disrupt the myth of homogeneity of the mainstream Greek historiography which denied the differences of the refugees in Greece. In Turkey, it was a question of breaking the indifference to this topic within a context marked by a general "re-thinking" of Turkish modernity. In establishing itself as a proper subject of scholarship, Yildirim shows the different venues taken by the scholars in Turkey and how some of them fall into the categories which have already been marginalized in Greek scholarship. This is an important point that counters the widespread contention among the Turkish intellectuals about the force of nationalism on Greek intellectuals. Yildirim's analysis also demonstrates the common frame in both countries approach to the Exchange in terms of disregarding the effects of this forced migration on the refugees. Furthermore, the tension in the Turkish historiography vis-à-vis the Exchange pertaining the question of religion and national unity is an important observation that deserves further analysis. It would also be interesting to show convergences or disruptions between the scholarship and discussions in other domains, like film, literature, and in media in general, in both societies.