

Islam when the rural-to-urban migration intensified in the later decades of the twentieth century. However, rather than focusing on resistance alone, having considered a wide range of responses to the reforms, ranging from enthusiasm and active support to active resistance, this reviewer concluded that noncompliance was not necessarily a mark of resistance or opposition, and that the application of the cultural reforms was diverse, uneven and incomplete, but not nonexistent or marginal. In the long run, this is what ensured the survival of the secular republic into the twenty-first century.

Scholars might disagree about the exact legacy of the RPP period on the evolution of the Islamist movement or Turkey's democratization in the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Metinsoy's *The Power of the People* makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the social history of the early decades of the republic and the role of the ordinary people's everyday acts of resistance within that.

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Zerrin Özlem Biner, *States of Dispossession: Violence and Precarious Coexistence in Southeast Turkey*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, ix + 264 pages.

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Zerrin Özlem Biner's book revolves around dispossession and the everyday violence in one of the Southeast Turkish provinces, Mardin, at the margins of the state. This is a book about the affective and violent relations of Kurds, Syrians, Arabs, and the state within the haunted and ruined lands. It offers a portrait of the layers of graveyards from 1915, the Armenian genocide, to the state of emergency between 1987 and 1999, to yet another state of emergency in 2016. Biner explores "the banal and the everyday so as to capture the state's powerful effects together with the agency of people who enact disgust, fear, support, and complicity with the state" (p. 18). The book addresses dispossession and ruination as well as constant affective, material, and legal struggle over space between the state, PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party), provincial governors, cadastral surveyors, lawyers, treasure hunters, cultural heritage explorers, Syrians in diaspora, monastery foundations, tribal lords, and village guards in the nexus of bribery, traditions of gift, and debt in Mardin. Biner opens the door to the art of storytelling embedded in stone buildings, monasteries, graveyards, vineyards, and tunnels in basements, walls, and roads.

The book consists of six chapters. The first chapter is a portrait of Mardin, populated with Kurds, who immigrated to the city due to the war between the state and Kurdish guerrilla forces in the 1990s; Christian Syrians, whose number has been diminishing since Sayfo mass slaughter and deportation of Christian Syrians in 1915–; and Arabs who travel between Turkey and Syria. Biner focuses on the restoration of Mardin in the 2000s as part of an effort to get the city to be selected as one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. For this purpose, the Turkish government has

launched the “Historical Transformation Project” to elevate Mardin’s touristic and historical value. Old stone buildings left by Armenians killed or forced to exile have become a new ground for neoliberal dispossession. The existing inhabitants in the Old City were strongly encouraged to leave their property by various actors, including the provincial governor, contractors, engineers, wealthy Kurdish tribal leaders from other cities, and Arabs, with the apparent goal being to capitalize on historical sites. While some residents of the stone building resist being dispossessed, some sell their property. However, in this process, no one speaks about the actual dispossession and ruination history of the stone buildings in the Old City. The spatial transformation of the Old City becomes another layer of silence as an object of cultural and economic capital.

The second and third chapter continues with the stories of ruination in the Old City of Mardin. The second chapter addresses digging for treasure a widespread “practice of curiosity, greed, hope, and obsession” (p. 65). Biner argues that digging for treasure assumed to have been left by exiled or killed Armenians is an old practice in the city yet has become more visible and acceptable because of the capitalization of heritage in Mardin. The chapter focuses on two individuals, professional digger Veysi Bey as a “witness and perpetrator of ruination for decades” (p. 71) and Uncle Ragıp, who literally occupies the ancient Armenian Church, Surp Kevork. Veysi Bey is a case study for the affective, material culture of digging with fantasies of treasure. Uncle Ragıp, however, is an actor in the ruination of Surp Kevork, built in 420 AD, as well as in the protection of the church as a family home for four decades. Therefore, Chapter 2 revolves around material culture and memory through digging and ruination. Chapter 3 sustains and furthers the focus of Chapter 2, focusing on digging also as a spiritual practice involving jinn stories, in other words, of invisible creatures living in a parallel world according to Islamic theology. Biner considers jinn, who are believed to guard the imagined treasure under the buildings, as an “alternative mode of storytelling” that “provides experimental and discursive for encounters between those who left and those who remained” (p. 84). In these stories, jinn has ethnicity, gender, and personality, so there are all sets of material and spiritual discourses and practices revolving around convincing, dismissing, and exterminating the jinn as if jinn is the reflection of the haunting violent past of the city.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 turn their attention to another concept, cycles of indebtedness between Syrians, Kurdish tribes, and the Turkish state. Chapter 4 is the story of İsa Bey, a Syriac returnee from diaspora, and his daily legal struggle over Syriac lands and yielding crops occupied by Kurdish tribes, including the descendants of perpetrators in the 1915 massacres. The chapter draws attention to the economy of bribery between Syrians in the diaspora and Kurdish tribal leaders and prostate village guards, as well as the Turkish state. It is a story of the everyday struggle for repossession of the land that once was stolen from Syrians. For İsa Bey, the debt economy in the villages of Mardin has “enslaved subjectivities that engendered further dependencies, exploitation, and failure to acknowledge and recognize past atrocities, and opportunities for a different life” (p. 129) because Syrians continue to seek acknowledgment and support from Kurdish tribal leaders or prostate village guards against other Kurdish tribes by bearing gifts and money from abroad. Chapter 5 focuses on the struggle over Mor Gabriel Monastery, founded in 297 AD by Syrians in the village of Kafarbe of Mardin. İsa Bey and other Syrians in the diaspora engage in a legal battle

against Kurdish tribes; some are descendants of the perpetrators of the massacre against Syriac nuns and pastors of the Monastery over the land of the same Monastery. For Biner, the legal battle is not only about reclaiming the lands of the Monastery, but it is also “a battle with Kurds and the Turkish state, a quest to gain recognition for what has been taken away from them, to consolidate the boundaries of their property and establish the political and existential boundaries between self and other, and self and the state” (p. 148). In other words, the battle over Mor Gabriel Monastery is a way of asking for recognition for past atrocities by Syriacs.

Chapter 6 looks at another side of the economy of indebtedness in Mardin. While Chapters 4 and 5 address the unwritten debt economy between Kurds and Syriacs, Chapter 6 focuses on the debt trap set up against Kurds by the Turkish state. With the “Law on Compensation for Losses Resulting from Terrorism and Fight against Terrorism,” the Turkish state operates like an insurance company that attempts to extract sources from Kurdish militants or their families to compensate for the losses of police forces, military, and gendarme. In this schema of a debt-producing system, militants, if they are deceased, their parents, or even their siblings become liable in the eyes of the Turkish state with a never-ending debt. Biner considers debt as a “material and intangible relationship between the Turkish state and Kurds” (p. 150) as well as an abusive and subverted mechanism. In that sense, Chapter 6 reflects on another layer of state violence not only against dissidents but also against their families.

Biner concludes the book with an epilogue focusing on the restarting of the war between PKK and the Turkish state in the middle of cities in 2015. She narrates the stories of people trapped in the never-ending violence of the state and PKK. Therefore, she attempts to give a sense of normalization of violence as an integral part of everyday life in Mardin, where past, present, and future suffering entangle in bodies, buildings, and memories. While focusing on the construction of subjectivities in cycles of violence, the book distances itself from identity politics that depicts Syriacs and Kurds as mere victims and perpetrators. Throughout the book, Biner focuses on interethnic and interreligious relationships through treasure hunting, heritage claims, and formal and informal debt relations between various groups.

Although the book offers a deep understanding of never-ending violence, it suffers from a few weaknesses. Biner refers to “dispossession” as a primary lens in writing this ethnography, yet there are some gaps in explaining levels of vulnerability in the nexus of gender, ethnicity, and class to dispossession in the city. Where are women or who is more likely to be dispossessed in relation to gender, ethnicity, and class? A multilayered understanding of vulnerability is also missing from treasure-hunting and jinn stories that clearly reflect not only past ethnic conflicts but also dynamic understandings of family, gender, religion, and class. Another criticism would be that even though “debt” seems to be a crucial concept in the book’s second part; it is not theorized with sufficient depth. The differences between formal and binding indebtedness to the Turkish State by Kurdish dissidents and the informal gift economy between Syriacs in diaspora and Kurdish tribal leaders are not fully elaborated. Because the theoretical relationship between dispossession and debt is also vague, there are also some gaps between the first and second part of the book.

Despite these criticisms, this ethnography is an impressive attempt to tackle layers of violence, suffering, and memory while focusing on the everyday experiences of Kurds, Turks, and Syrians. The book's success lies in years of fieldwork that offers a deep and thick understanding of violent relations historically and spatially. Thanks to Biner, one can imagine the stone buildings, lands planted with grapes or cotton, and the yellowish dirt hiding the stories of pain while reading the book. It is an ethnography of suffering that conveys pain, fear, anger, disappointment, and hope to the reader in a complete sense.

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Özlem Altan-Olcay and Evren Balta, *The American Passport in Turkey: National Citizenship in the Age of Transnationalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

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What compels individuals to stay in, move away from, or return to the countries where they were born? What does citizenship signify for them, politically, culturally, and emotionally, beyond the borders of the nation-state? How do they experience their “natural born” and “acquired” citizenships in transnational spaces? *The American Passport in Turkey: National Citizenship in the Age of Transnationalism* by Özlem Altan-Olcay and Evren Balta is a thoughtful and instructive engagement with these questions. Drawing on more than a hundred semistructured interviews with people who describe how they imagine and experience US citizenship in Turkey, the authors draw a vivid portrait of the aspirations and doubts associated with citizenship on the move.

The book starts with an introductory chapter that delineates “hierarchies of citizenship,” detailing inequalities between citizenship regimes and various combinations of subject positions. For cosmopolitan and upper middle classes who make up the subjects of the book, “U.S. ‘soft’ power actually continues to work, not only through unequal processes of globalized cultural production and dissemination, but also by offering a globally privileged citizenship and the feeling of security associated with it *despite* increasingly negative perceptions of the U.S. government” (p. 17). By engaging with scholars of citizenship and migration, the authors make the case for studying transnational imaginaries of America to understand what the United States means and signifies, how it is understood and experienced beyond its borders, and the transformations of the institution of citizenship more broadly.

Chapter 1 opens by acknowledging increasing anti-American sentiment and resentment of US foreign policy in Turkey in the last two decades, alongside the persistent desire to work, live, and study there. To address this puzzle, the authors sketch a historical overview of the relationship between the United States and Turkey by