

## BOOK REVIEW

### **TANZİMAT'TAN İİ. MEŞRUTİYET'E ERMENİ NİZAMNAMESLERİ (THE ARMENIAN REGULATIONS FROM THE TANZİMAT REFORMS TO THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD (MEŞRUTİYET))**

Author: Murat BEBİROĞLU

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#### **Hasret DİKİCİ\***

The book by Murat Bebirođlu aims to deal with the regulations related to the Armenians in the Ottoman territory. Mainly, three regulations in 1860, 1863, 1916 are focused in depth. The writer relies on the original documents in Ottoman and Armenian in order to have a comprehensive approach. He also aims to analyse the governance of the Armenians and the East Orthodox Armenian Apostolic Church under the Ottoman rule in terms of the related economic and political factors.

Murat Bebirođlu divides the book into periods of Mahmut II, *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* Reforms, continuing with the 1860 and 1863 Regulations, and the treaties of Ayastefanos and Berlin. The First Constitutional Period is then studied. The next period, that of Abdulhamid II, is taken as a turning point by the writer. Bebirođlu claims that the contemporary attitude towards the governance of non-Muslims can be traced back to the Panislamist policies of II. Abdulhamid, which are argued to be discriminative and biased. The author concludes with the applications of the Second Constitutional Period and 1916 Regulation.

The difficulties of studying historical events are discussed in the initial paragraphs of the book, and then a glance is paid to the

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discussions about the origins of Armenians in general, and the Armenians of Anatolia in particular. The Armenian churches of Protestant and Catholic origin are also mentioned.

The reign of Mahmud II began with serious governance problems and instability. The uprisings and administrative deficiencies had urged the Sultan to take precautionary measures. The policies concerning the Ottoman Armenians intended to solve the internal sectarian conflicts for the sake of stability. After his short comments on the period of Mahmut the Second, Bebiroğlu turns to the *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* Reforms, and explains their consequences especially in terms of the Armenians of Ottoman Empire. Afterwards, 1860 Armenian Regulation which brought a new governance system is dealt from many aspects.

Coming to the First Constitutional Period, the reforms were not successful in that the aims are not achieved fully. According to the author, the failure of this was related to the unwillingness of the Turks to share the administration of the state with the non-Muslims. In addition to this, he argues, the growing budget deficit increased the pressure on the non-Muslims. He focuses on the declaration of the First Constitution (*Sahmanatrutyun* in Armenian) and its part related to the non-Muslims.

As mentioned above, Bebiroğlu pays special attention to the period of Abdulhamid II, and claims that his rule of *İstibdat*, which limited individual freedoms and rights, constituted the roots of the contemporary repressive policies. The appointment of Ahmet Cevdet Paşa as a minister is interpreted by the author as a proof of his argument, since Ahmet Cevdet Paşa was in favour of limitation of the privileges of the Armenian Patriarch. The subsequent events and the 1890 Armenian Regulation was given in the book in this framework. Next, the declaration of the Second Constitutional Period, the political unrest following the declaration, the Event of March 31st, and the new Regulation for the Armenians of 1916 are analysed in the same manner as before. Murat Bebiroğlu attached the original documents at the last chapter of the book, and some pictures of the Armenian patriarchs were also added.

The book by Bebiroğlu is very important in the sense that the writer carefully rests on the original documents, and makes his comments in accordance with them. He mainly focuses on the Regulations arranged by the Ottoman administration for the

governance of the non-Muslims, especially the Armenians; and he aims to understand the recent policies in terms of their historical background. Even though his ideas and comments on the historical process and about the official policy towards the Armenians can be a matter of debate, his study deserves attention in terms of its documentary character.