

By explaining that the origins of the myth of Muslim non-violence against Jews was based on the ideal of inclusion of the Jews within a diverse divine community, although remaining in a subordinated position in the Islamic world, Cohen contributes to a clearer understanding of why in Christendom, Jewish people were socially excluded, theologically stigmatized, and physically expelled or restricted to certain residential quarters.

However, both in the Islamic and the Christian world, both domains asserted their superiority over the Jews living in their respective lands. Nevertheless, Islam recognized that other religions should be protected as long as they submitted to the Islamic ideal of peaceful coexistence. The Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish communities are two distinct groups of Jews because they lived in two distinct civilizations, but

both were submissive actors. The Sephardic Jewish community resided under a Muslim world of 'tolerance' while the Ashkenazi Jewish community lived in a Christian world of 'intolerance.' As Mark Cohen writes, "Jews defined themselves vis-à-vis others just as others defined themselves vis-à-vis the Jews," yet the Jewish voice seems to be silent within both narratives.

The determination of the rational of where the "other" fits into either the Islamic or Christian social order is decisive in this book's inquiry and, according to the author, reveals that the more inclusive Islamic world was also more 'civilized' in its treatment of the "other." In such terms, Cohen's analysis contributes to a better understanding of the contemporary interreligious impasse between the three main universal religions.

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Geçmişiniz İtinayla Temizlenir (Your History is Carefully Cleaned: Historian as an Autopsy Expert)

By *Cemil Koçak*

Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 2009, 558 pp., ISBN 9789750506352.

The volume under review is the collection of many articles written at different times by Cemil Koçak. It consists of three main chapters, "Atatürk and the One-Party Regime," "İnönü and the One-Party Regime," and "As the One-Party Regime Changes." This thematic organization makes the edited volume easy to read. However, since the collection brings together different kinds of writings, such as polemics, conference papers, academic

journal articles, and newspaper articles, the book has no the internal cohesion.

History lends itself available to those seeking to legitimize contemporary political/ideological positions. For Koçak, guessing what comes after that proposition is not impossible: it is of course the process of "clearing the past carefully" which is imposed by an "etatist/nationalist understanding" (9). History is hitched to the service of power when it is used to "adapt masses to

the current political/ideological air on the ground of cleared information” (11). This process operates on three stages (9-10). Firstly, some points/moments/events of history that are wanted to be forgotten are removed from the pages of history. Secondly, when the denial of happened things is not possible, some part (or the luminous face) of information about the happened thing is illustrated. Lastly, the thing which never happened is presented as if it had happened.

Koçak is optimistic that there exists a way of getting rid of such an approach. He points to “historiography”, a job which can be done by digressing from the framework dressed in “straitjacket” (9). What Koçak understands from historiography is that one has to accept the information about the past as it is and should not care about its results. He compares historiography to forensic science. Like a medical examiner conducting an autopsy, a historian should exhibit his/her inferences in cold blood without concern for their effects and results (11). In his book, Koçak operates like a forensic expert and tries to illustrate carefully cleaned points/moments/events of the period from 1923 to 1950 in Turkey, which is called the “early Republic” (11).

Koçak gives many examples for each stage of the process of “clearing the past carefully”. For instance, many of Atatürk’s words have been totally removed from the books written to collect his speeches and declarations (31-32). In other cases, Atatürk’s words have been partially quoted to legitimate some arguments (38-40). Information which is in original texts or written by some authors has been intentionally conveyed wrongly (18 and 44-45). Koçak supports his arguments with a very staggering example (47-50 and

57-58). The *Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü* and the *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi* printed *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Atatürk’s Speeches and Declarations) in 1981 and 1989 respectively. According to those texts, in his conversation with the US General Douglas MacArthur in 1932, Atatürk predicted that Germany would remember its ambitions and start another war, and depicted the Soviet Union as a threat for civilization and whole humanity. However, archival documents belie the two publishers. In contrast, during the interview, Atatürk predicted that a war would not be possible in the next ten years. Koçak refers to two reasons to explain this particular distortion: a concern to depict Atatürk as a fortune-teller or someone similar to a prophet, and an attempt to legitimize the anti-Communist stance of the Turkish state during the Cold War. Such examples bring to mind George Orwell’s work in which history is rewritten to convince the people that new alliances and policies have always existed.

Koçak “tries to tear down dominant paradigms” (11) by putting all information which is presented as “reality” into test by comparing them to first-hand sources such as documents, memories and newspapers. His main concern is to free statements and events that “describe the interplay of relations within” them and outside them.¹ Although he believes in an “alternative paradigm” which is going to save the honor of historiography in Turkey, such an alternative paradigm is not completed yet. For Koçak, his writings (11) and other writings by scientific and objective historians will contribute to the formation of a new paradigm.

Koçak’s concern for acting in a scientific and objective manner is so strong that

it leads him to argue that “a serious scientist [is the one that] analyzes the adventure of Turkish society as a subject of which he/she is not a part” (174). When we compare this argument to Michel Foucault’s assertion of the ‘impossibility to speak on our own archive,’ at first sight Koçak appears to be going too far. For Foucault, “it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say.”² In short, “archives remain unthought at the time they are operant.”³ The natural result of this argument is that “the description of the archive deploys its possibilities on the basis of the very discourses that have just ceased to ours.”⁴

Then, are we going to sink into a deep silence about our own archive? Of course, not! For Foucault, when one is dealing with the time of which an author is not a part, one has only to describe it. When it comes to the time when the author is part of, however, “the problem is to free oneself from it.” In other words, “when it is a matter of determining the system of discourse on which we are still living, when we have to question the words that are still echoing in our ears, which become confused with those we are trying to formulate, the archaeologist, like the Nietzschean philosopher, is forced to take a hammer on it.”⁵ The history of the

present is just made possible by “presenting a critique of our time.”⁶

Of course, Koçak is one of those who are very critical of the near past of Turkey. I think his concern to be scientific and objective must be understood as a critical stance on the near past. “Who is critical and a historian?” is the main question of Koçak and it travels over his all writings (425). In a country where there is a “literature of praise” which everyone takes for granted (174), Koçak undertakes to criticize and undermine this literature of praise by shedding light on hidden/forgotten/distorted things.

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Endnotes

1. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Trans.: A. M. Sheridan Smith, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 32.
2. Foucault, *ibid*, p. 146.
3. David Couzens Hoy, “Foucault: Modern or Postmodern?”, Barry Smart (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1, (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 281–301, p. 295.
4. Foucault, *ibid*, p. 147.
5. Alan Sheridan, Michel Foucault, *The Will To Truth*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1981), p. 196.
6. T. Carlos Jacques, “Whence does the Critic Speak? A Study of Foucault’s Genealogy”, Barry Smart (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 3, (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 97–112, p. 97.

Islam in Nederland en België

By *W.A.R. Shadid* and *P. S. van Koningsveld*

Leuven: Peeters, 2008, 282 pp., ISBN 9789042921009.

Shadid and van Koningsveld are at it again, this time with a full-length compara-

tive treatment of Islam in two countries, the Netherlands and Belgium. For both authors