

in Mexico and, more broadly, Latin America and the underdeveloped world. This a subject to which business history needs to pay more attention, especially when dealing with less developed countries. It also provides key elements to decipher the political basis of Mexico's state-led capitalism, its success, and its structural problems. Moreover, the book substantiates the severe problems and stumbling blocks that small businesses and unprivileged entrepreneurs face in poor countries. Studying them confronts us with the steep challenges that underdeveloped nations must surmount to generate decent living standards for their populations. It also allows us to reflect on what progress really means.

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The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province. By Ümit Kurt. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021. 400 pp. Photographs, maps, tables. Hardcover, \$46.00. ISBN: 978-0-674-24794-9.

doi:10.1017/S000768052300020X

Reviewed by Cemal Eren Arbatlı

Ümit Kurt's book, *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province*, is a welcome addition to a relatively recent strand of scholarship on the Armenian genocide that investigates the interaction between political developments at the macro level and economic factors at the local level (Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* [2011]; Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1950* [2012]; Hilmar Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir Region* [2014]). The main premise of this body of work is that the Armenian genocide, like many other state-sponsored events of mass violence, was not merely an act of ethnic or religious hatred. It was driven by a complex set of

economic and political motivations that can only be understood through careful analysis of local histories.

In the book, Kurt explores the little-known economic and political history of the city of Aintab. The city was an important cultural and economic center in southeast Turkey, home to a thriving Armenian community until the mass deportations orchestrated by the governing Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in the early twentieth century. Kurt offers a detailed narrative of the major developments in Aintab from the late nineteenth century to the early Turkish Republic, in the context of interfaith relations, mass violence against Armenians, and the expropriation of their property.

The book offers useful insights on various important questions: What factors contributed to increased tensions and rivalry between the Muslim and Armenian communities of Aintab during the late nineteenth century? Which local actors in Aintab stood to benefit most from the deportations of Armenians and confiscation of their property? Did the prospect of self-enrichment through Armenian wealth motivate the anti-Armenian actions of the local Muslim elite? How did this elite manage to control local state bodies and to shape the implementation of laws concerning mass deportation, confiscation, and property redistribution?

The book consists of six main chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. In the first two chapters, Kurt offers a narrative of Aintab's experience of the 1895 Hamidian massacres and the 1908 Young Turk Revolution that led to the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution and the establishment of a parliamentary government led by the CUP. The third chapter details the wartime deportation orders. It also provides an account of the social, economic, and political conditions during the war years, explaining how Muslim-Armenian relations and local power dynamics in Aintab changed amid the genocide against Armenians (1915–1917). In the fourth chapter, Kurt describes the evolution of the legal and institutional framework that regulated the confiscation, liquidation, and redistribution of Armenian properties. Kurt also presents previously unpublished records of the valuable properties that belonged to some of the notable Armenian families of Aintab, to exemplify the nature and scope of the seizures and liquidations. Ottoman archival materials on this matter are not accessible, and we know little about the extent of Armenian wealth that changed hands. By unveiling some of the records that belonged to the Aintab Liquidation Commission, Kurt offers a glimpse of the main economic benefactors of Armenian properties: members of Aintab's CUP and local state officials.

The last two chapters are devoted to the aftermath of the Ottoman defeat in the war and the victory of the Kemalist independence movement. Chapter 5 describes the partial return of Armenian survivors to Aintab following the British and French occupations of the city, and the attempts for the restitution of their property. The sixth and final chapter discusses the end of the French occupation, the final exodus of Armenians from Aintab, and how the post-independence Kemalist government managed to block the repatriation of deportees and any future Armenian claim to seized property through a series of domestic laws and articles stipulated in the Lausanne Treaty.

Kurt offers several arguments in this work. He contends that the rapid economic divergence between non-Muslim and Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century was an important structural factor behind the deterioration of interfaith affairs. According to Kurt, the rising economic prominence of Aintab Armenians was not only a source of envy among Muslim residents, but it also increased the material incentives for the Muslim elite to collaborate with the central government during deportations. In this regard, the book speaks to a burgeoning literature that shows how competition among local actors and intergroup economic complementarities can explain the intensity and geographic scope of forced migrations and minority-group persecutions (Sascha O. Becker and Luigi Pascali, "Religion, Division of Labor, and Conflict: Anti-semitism in Germany over 600 Years," *American Economic Review* [2019]; Irena Grosfeld, Seyhun Orcan Sakalli, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, "Middleman Minorities and Ethnic Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms in the Russian Empire," *Review of Economic Studies* [2020]; Remi Jedwab, Noel D. Johnson, and Mark Koyama, "Negative Shocks and Mass Persecutions: Evidence from the Black Death," *Journal of Economic Growth* [2019]). Kurt makes a strong case that the local Muslim elite in Aintab actively tried to provoke negative sentiments among Muslim residents toward the Armenian community and to present Armenians as a security threat to local and central government authorities after the onset of World War I, thereby facilitating the deportation of Aintab Armenians. According to Kurt, the local Muslim elite had considerable influence on the implementation of the deportation orders and ultimately captured the lion's share of the immovable Armenian properties in Aintab mainly because the central government depended heavily on the active cooperation of local actors. CUP government was at times reluctant and at times simply unable to monitor and prevent opportunistic behavior by local actors, giving the provincial Muslim elite ample room to profiteer in fire sales and auctions of Armenian assets. He draws on Ottoman-Turkish, Armenian, British, and French archives, local newspapers,

and periodicals, as well as memoirs and testimonials, to support his claims. In his conclusion, Kurt maintains that the emergence of a thriving Turkish-Muslim bourgeoisie in Aintab was predicated on the dispossession of Armenian property. This argument is consistent with the systematic positive association between historical Armenian presence and local economic development in Turkey (Cemal Eren Arbatlı and Gunes Gokmen, “Human Capital Transfers and Sub-national Development: Armenian and Greek Legacy in Post-expulsion Turkey,” *Journal of Economic Growth* [2022]).

Kurt deserves praise for distilling a wide range of hitherto untapped historical sources into a coherent and compelling narrative of the local dynamics in Aintab. I wholeheartedly recommend this book not only to scholars of the Armenian genocide but also to anyone interested in regional perspectives on state-sponsored mass violence episodes in history.

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Powering American Farms: The Overlooked Origins of Rural Electrification. *By Richard F. Hirsh.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022. 400 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. Hardcover, \$60.00. ISBN: 978-1-42144-362-1.

doi:10.1017/S0007680523000181

Reviewed by Leah S. Glaser

Scholarly attention to electrical distribution does not match the pervasiveness of electricity in our economy and culture. Historical literature on rural electrification is likewise sparse in light of its significance in exacerbating and alleviating America’s historic rural-urban divide. A welcome addition is *Powering American Farms*, in which historian Richard F. Hirsh challenges the popular—and, he argues, overly romantic—narrative that through the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the federal government was solely responsible for electrifying the nation’s farms because private utilities were doing nothing. Rather, Hirsch argues that the government merely exploited the groundwork laid by private utilities and