

The Ottoman culture of defeat: the Balkan Wars and their aftermath

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20470091&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

This book deals with military defeat and national catastrophe, and their implications for society. When the First Balkan War broke out in October 1912, few Ottomans anticipated that it would prove to be a watershed moment for the empire, ending in atrocities, ignominy, national catastrophe, and the loss of its remaining provinces in the Balkans. Defeat at the hands of an alliance of Balkan states comprising Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro created deep national trauma and led to bitter soul-searching, giving rise to a so-called culture of defeat in which condemnation, exclusion of the non-Muslim minorities, criticism over the project of Ottomanism, and calls for national rejuvenation prevailed in a way clearly at odds with the reformist discourse which followed the young turk revolution of 1908. This book discusses some of the different visual and written products of the defeat, published in Ottoman local languages (Turkish, Arabic and Ladino), with the aim of understanding the experience of defeat, how it was perceived, analyzed and commemorated by different sectors in Ottoman society, to show that it is key to understanding the decisions and actions of the Ottoman political elite during the subsequent world war one and the early decades of the Turkish Republic.