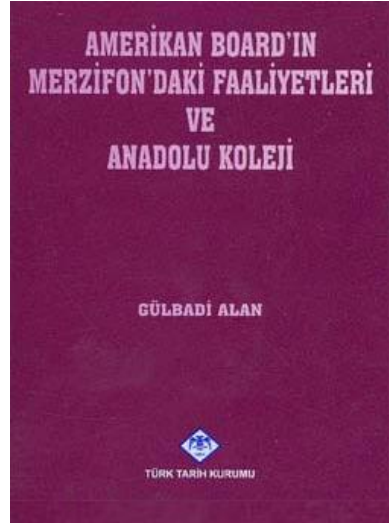


KİTAP DEĞERLENDİRME/BOOK REVIEW

Gülbadi Alan, *AMERİKAN BOARD'IN MERZİFON'DAKİ FAALİYETLERİ VE ANADOLU KOLEJİ*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2008, 650 sayfa, ISBN978-975-16-2093-4*

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Alan, who is a professor at the History department at the Faculty of letters in Erciyes University has carried out several studies on the missionary activities that gained a different momentum in the Ottoman lands in the early years of the 19th century owing to some military, political, social and economic changes through which the Ottoman Empire went. Along with a foreword, the abbreviations and the introduction and the closing, bibliography, index and the supplements included in the book, the book is mainly made up of four parts. What makes the book valuable and interesting for the readers is that it specifically focuses on the missionary activities ranging from religious, educational services to health and relief services provided by the American Board and its activities within the framework of the Anatolian College in Merzifon. Moreover, while giving a detailed account related to the subject, the writer also uses a wide range of primary sources such as the Ottoman documents, the American archives and the Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which cast a light upon the arrival of the American Board in Merzifon, the activities conducted at Merzifon station, some



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developments about the opening of the Merzifon Anatolian college, the activities carried out there, and more importantly, the socio-cultural impact of the Anatolian college on the region, and so on.

In the first part, under the title of “the Settlement of the American Board Missionaries in Merzifon and the Developments that Provide the Establishment of the Merzifon American College”, she gives information pertaining to the settlement of the American Board missionaries in Merzifon such as the first arrival of American missionaries in Merzifon, the establishment of a missionary station, the development of the Merzifon and outstations within the organisation of the American Board, the missionaries working in Merzifon, the expenditures made in Merzifon, and so on (p.30-61). In addition, based on the primary sources mentioned above, the author provides detailed information for the reader pertaining to the activities carried out by the missionaries, especially focusing on the ones in the religious and educational fields, how the Theology school started its educational activities, the educational activities at the Girls’ Boarding school and the construction of an orphanage, and so on (68-216).

In the second part, under the heading of “How the Anatolian College started its educational activities”, she writes about the developments for the opening of the Anatolian college, for instance; the opening of Harbinger college in Merzifon and how the Anatolian college gave start for its educational activities focusing on the management of the Anatolian college, the building itself, the finance of the Anatolian college, the students who attended the college, the teachers working there, and the official recognition of the Anatolian college by the Ottoman State. More importantly, the author gives detailed information that reveals a wide range of the activities conducted in the school. First, she focuses on the educational activities in the school such as the curriculum and the time table, the rules obeyed for the education of the Anatolian college, the equipment used for education, the practice of self-help, the student clubs and the other social activities carried out by the students, Last, she gives a detailed account of the activities of the Anatolian college in the field of health on the basis of the foundation of the hospital, the staff working at the Merzifon Anatolian Hospital, the health services provided, the building, the budget and the equipment of the hospital, and so on (p.222-353).

In the third part, the writer puts a greater emphasis on the socio-economic, cultural and political effects of the missionaries of the American Board and the Anatolian college on Merzifon and Anatolia. In this part, she asserts that the Anatolian college had a deep social impact not only on the minorities but also on the Turkish people in terms of some of the positive improvements which they made in the region. Moreover, she touches on political effects of the Anatolian college in Anatolia. In this sense, she discusses the issue of how the college gave a special training to the leading group among the Greeks and the Armenians, which would be the stepping stone to the tension and conflict in the Ottoman society later. For instance, she details and exemplifies it through the Armenian incidents in Merzifon and she discusses the importance of the American Board and the missionaries related to the incidents

experienced in the town. Furthermore, she mentions the Armenian revolts in Anatolia and emphasizes the role of the Anatolian college and its teaching staff in the Armenian revolts, which took place in 1895-1896 (p.363-476).

In the fourth part, she provides information pertaining to the termination of the activities of the American Board missionaries and the activities of the Anatolian college at Merzifon station during the First World War. First, she asserts that when the war broke out and the Ottoman Empire was involved in the war, the activities carried out in Merzifon started to go through difficult times because the main purpose of the missionary activities of the American Board among the minorities was to be able to get the largest piece during the share of the Ottoman Empire by the leading Western powers. The author details the activities of the American Board and the Anatolian college or the things experienced during the war such as the state of the Anatolian college when the war broke out, the Armenian deportation and the situation of the college in 1915, the confiscation of the college buildings by the Ottoman government, the end of the the First World War and how the college started its educational activities again after the war was over, the end of the English occupation in Merzifon and the missionaries of the American Board and so on. In addition, she focuses on the raid made by the Ankara government to the Anatolian college and putting an end to the educational activities of the college in Merzifon in a detailed way. In this sense, she gives some background information leading to it. For example, she touches the reasons of the raid made by the government of Ankara, the positive relations established between the English, who occupied the region and the missionaries of the American Board and the minorities, the activities of the Pontus society in the Anatolian college, the murder of a Turkish teacher in the college, the search of the building by the authorities and the documents (the reports and the documents and some of private letters written by the Anatolian college teachers to provoke people for the revolt) found in the college, giving information to the government authorities related to the search of the Anatolian college and the documents having been found there, the opinions of the American Board missionaries about it, and finally the arrest of the missionaries of the American Board, the students and their being charged at "the İstiklal courts". Besides, she writes about the decision of closing down the college in Merzifon and sending away the teachers and the students of the college from Merzifon, some new efforts for the revival of the college and more importantly, some other activities carried out by the teachers in favour of the Greeks (p.491-577).

Conclusion: The book written by the author discusses the activities of the American Board, which had lasted in Merzifon and its vicinity for 70 years within the framework of the Anatolian college. Therefore, it is apparent that this study casts a much deeper light on the missionary activities and enables us to understand the nature and the main purpose of the missionary activities carried out in the Ottoman lands by the American Board as well. For instance, the author underlines the fact that in order to develop the Protestant sect among the Christian Ottoman subjects some great efforts were made by the American

Board in Merzifon and its vicinity and she stresses that such sort of missionary activities planted some separatist seeds among the Christians against the Ottoman State and also the students at the college were encouraged to gain a different point of view, that is, the idea of establishing a state of their own independent from the Ottoman Empire through some of educational activities carried out at the Anatolian college. Strikingly enough, putting a greater emphasis on the role of the Anatolian college in Merzifon, she reveals the fact that these separatist ideas planted by the missionaries caused not only the Armenians but also the Greeks to revolt against the Ottoman State. Moreover, the Anatolian college gave a great deal of support to the Pontic movements in the region.

Besides, what makes the study valuable and interesting for the reader is that the author writes about the activities of the American Board and the Merzifon Anatolian college in a chronological order from 1852 to the Anatolian college's being closed down in 1921. Therefore, it becomes much easier to follow and understand how the American Board started its activities in Merzifon, the methods they followed while carrying out their activities in the town, the educational activities of the American Board, and Merzifon American college and its activities in the region. All in all, the book makes great and valuable contributions to the literature in that it enables us to gain a deeper insight into the missionary activities carried out in Merzifon and its vicinity within the framework of the Anatolian college.