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Settlement of Immigrants and the Changes in Rural Settlement Patterns in the Central Black Sea Region: Some Observations (1860s to 1920s)

by

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A cursory look at the history of Turkey's settlement patterns reveals that the most drastic and comprehensive changes took place from the 1860s through the 1920s, principally as a result of a) sedentarization policies of the state towards nomadic groups, b) waves of mass migration of Muslim populations from the lost territories of the Empire and their subsequent re-settlement in Anatolian and Syrian provinces, and c) policies of demographic engineering and ethnic / religious homogenization of the territory that is now considered "homeland" for only one unified nation. The habitation geography of rural Turkey during this period displays a radical transformation as the re-settlement of the Muslim immigrants (*muhacir*) emerged as a major issue for both the imperial and the national governments. Turkish historians have generally dealt with the settlement of the *muhacirs* in an extremely standard fashion, reducing the whole process of settlement into practically a state-run scheme by ignoring its inherently multi-layered and multi-staged character. Only very recently has the international historiography developed new approaches to both general migratory movements and to the multi-dimensional character of such settlement processes. By focusing on the case of the Georgian immigrants, who arrived in the Central-Black Sea region of Ordu from the year 1878 onwards, I will first emphasize the complexity of their settlement processes, which include not only the State, but also the private initiatives of the immigrants themselves. Secondly, I will argue that the finalization of their settlement took a long time stretching well into the first quarter of the twentieth century, including the critical stages of the dramatic dislocation of first the Armenians in 1915-1916, and next, the Greeks in 1923-24. Finally, I will discuss the resulting changes in settlement patterns as well as in the ethno-demographic composition of the society.

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