ARIT BOOK TALK

Inventing Laziness : The Culture of Productivity in Late Ottoman Society

by

Melis Hafez

Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at 6:00 pm Istanbul

In person lecture at ANAMED Auditorium, İstiklal Caddesi, 181, Merkez Han, Beyoğlu

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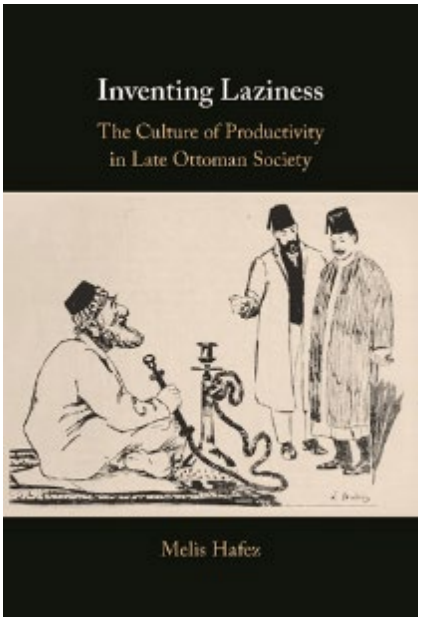

Neither laziness nor its condemnation are new inventions, however, perceiving laziness as a social condition that afflicts a 'nation' is. In the early modern era, Ottoman political treatises did not regard the people as the source of the state's problems. Yet in the nineteenth century, as the imperial ideology of Ottomanism and modern discourses of citizenship spread, so did the understanding of laziness as a social disease that the 'Ottoman nation' needed to eradicate. *Inventing Laziness* asks what we can learn about Ottoman history over the long nineteenth-century by looking closely into the contested and shifting boundaries of the laziness - productivity binary. Hafez also explores how 'laziness' can be used to understand emerging civic culture and its exclusionary practices in the Ottoman Empire.

A polyphonic involvement of moralists, intellectuals, polemicists, novelists, bureaucrats, and, to an extent, the public reveals the complexities and ambiguities of this multifaceted cultural transformation. Using a wide variety of sources, Hafez's book explores the sustained anxiety about productivity that generated numerous reforms as well as new understandings of morality, subjectivity, citizenship, and nationhood among the Ottomans.

Melis Hafez is an Associate Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. She received her Ph.D. in History from UCLA. Her book *Inventing Laziness: The Culture of Productivity in Late Ottoman Society* came out from Cambridge University Press in 2021.