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CERES Brown Bag Talk

Consumption, class, and domestic space in early republican Turkey

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In histories of preventing and treating tuberculosis, physicians came to prioritize the place and role of the home by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was as true in the West as it was in the late Ottoman Empire. Also common, practices of scapegoating the poor and other marginalized populations as TB sources and carriers were pervasive. This paper examines how ideas of health, TB, and home converged to accentuate class in the ostensibly objective public health literature and propaganda of late Ottoman and early republican Turkey. Analyzing both textual and graphic narratives found in primary sources written in Ottoman Turkish, this study explores how officials – lacking resources and alternatives – opted to pursue ambitious public health propaganda campaigns to at least achieve broad educational inoculation of the population. In doing so, rudimentary matters of treatment were taught and legislated in ways that aligned with the contemporary propagation of national citizenship.