

de meest directe bronnen vanuit het perspectief van diegenen die het geweld moesten ondergaan.

In het vierde hoofdstuk behandelt Etambala een regio in het uiterste noordoosten waarover nog relatief weinig onderzoek is verricht, althans wat de tijd van de kolonisatie betreft. In dit hoofdstuk staan exploratiemissies en expedities, die ook deels vanuit buurlanden werden opgezet, in het middelpunt. Het is dan ook het enige hoofdstuk dat doet aanvoelen dat Congo geen eiland is. Eerlijkheidshalve moet ik erop wijzen dat in hoofdstuk 1 de vlucht van de Lulua chef Kalamba naar Angola vermeld wordt (p. 84), maar met die grensoverschrijdende vervlechting wordt verder niets gedaan. Recente literatuur die zich precies op die grensoverschrijdende relaties of op de ontwrichtende impact van kolonisatie tussen Angola en Congo toegeleegd heeft (Jelmer Vos, David Maxwell, Achim von Oppen), ontbreekt in de bibliografie. Ook de ruimere internationale context, niet in het minst vastgelegd in de akte van de Congoconferentie van Berlijn in 1884–85, kan een ander licht werpen op vragen van handelsvrijheid, concessies of buitenlandse consulaire onderzoeksmisssies die in het boek enkel intra-Congolees worden geïdentificeerd.

Maar zoals eerder al aangegeven ligt de verdienste van dit boek bij de omgang met primaire bronnen. Etambala kiest ervoor om uitvoerig uit bronnen te citeren en soms fragmenten van meer dan een bladzijde integraal weer te geven. Het boek heeft een rode draad (driestheid en wreedheid van verovering en bezetting), maar de auteur bouwt dit narratief van tekstfragment tot tekstfragment. Etambala laat de bronnen spreken. Op de getuigenissen in hoofdstuk 3 na zijn de meeste bronnen geschreven door buitenstaanders, meestal Belgen in dienst van de Congostaat, maar niettemin is het verbluffend hoe onthullend – soms afkeurend, soms schaamteloos – tijdgenoten over de wrede daden schreven. De oordeelkundige selectie, de opbouw, het uitlichten van kernpunten zijn uiteraard actieve ingrepen van de auteur, die wel degelijk de pen vasthoudt. Met zijn keuze om de bronnen te laten spreken kiest Etambala er tevens

voor om geen diepgravende analyses te maken. Dat is de kracht van dit boek, al heb ik me tijdens het lezen wel afgevraagd of een teksteditie van het bronnenmateriaal niet nuttiger was geweest. In ieder geval zou een index, die direct toegang biedt tot de geciteerde bronnen, het boek een duidelijke meerwaarde bieden.

Geert Castryck

HOUSSINE ALLOUL, EDHEM ELDEM AND HENK DE SMAELE (EDS)

To Kill a Sultan: A Transnational History of the Attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)

London, Palgrave, 2018, XIII-281 p.

On 21 July 1905, Sultan Abdülhamid II narrowly escaped an assassination attempt as he exited the Hamidiye Mosque in Istanbul's Yıldız neighbourhood. A car bomb intended for the Ottoman ruler missed its target as the monarch had briefly paused upon leaving the building. Instead, the device killed twenty-six people who were present at the scene. The attack had been planned by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) – the so-called *Dashnaks* – and, as such, it seemed to exemplify the violent tensions of an empire in decline. It was the involvement of a Belgian that turned this incident into a wider international affair. Edward Joris, an anarchist from Antwerp, had moved to Istanbul in 1901 and been enlisted in the Armenians' cause through ARF member Vramshabouh Kendirian, one of his co-workers at the local office of the Singer sewing machine company. Joris was not a leading figure in the plot but provided practical support to the conspirators. An Ottoman enquiry into the attack led to a trial, which concluded in December 1905 with the proclamation of a death sentence for Joris and three Armenians. Joris's situation generated protests in Belgium as well as significant diplomatic tensions, with Belgian officials questioning the legality of the trial and requesting his extradition.

At first sight, both the attack and the Belgian efforts in the so-called 'Joris affair' appear like stories of failure. Rather than advancing the Armenians' cause, the unsuccessful attempt on the Sultan's life triggered reprisals against Armenians

in Istanbul and Izmir. The ARF held Mardiros Markarian ('Safo'), the leader of the operational cell behind the attack, to be responsible for the 'Yıldız fiasco' (p. 59) and expelled him from the party. Meanwhile, Belgian backing for Joris only had a limited impact: the Ottoman authorities did not execute Joris, yet he remained imprisoned until December 1907. Then, in a surprising move, the Ottoman authorities released him and allowed his return to Belgium – but there is little evidence that this decision resulted from Belgian pressures. While the whole affair offered disappointments to its protagonists, it provides fascinating material for historians. *To Kill a Sultan* – a volume edited by Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem and Henk de Smaele – amply demonstrates the value of revisiting this episode from multiple angles.

Collectively, the contributors to this book highlight the benefits of combining microhistorical and transnational perspectives. Their study offers interesting insights in several different respects. One major aspect is the Ottoman Empire's position on the international stage. The chapters by Houssine Alloul and Will Handley show that international law was central to debates about Joris. According to Belgian officials, the stipulations of the Belgo-Ottoman commercial treaty of 1838 meant that Joris could only be sentenced by his compatriots. They cited the French wording of the treaty text as evidence, but both established custom and the Ottoman Turkish version of the agreement were at odds with this interpretation. As Alloul shows, Belgian diplomats nonetheless persevered with their 'legalistic' approach, which allowed them to gloss over the delicate fact that Joris had contributed to the deaths of a substantial number of civilians. Moreover, Alloul suggests that the Belgian stance reflected external perceptions of the Ottoman state as 'most Western diplomats, intellectuals and policymakers did not regard the Ottomans as a member of the Family of Nations' (p. 158). Such views also informed debates on the Joris case among scholars of international law and within the international press – subjects that are tackled in chapters by, respectively, Will Hanley and Henk de Smaele.

Taken together, the authors show that Orientalism featured prominently in Western representations of the affair. Contemporary accounts drew on established images of Abdülhamid as an 'Oriental despot' and on the outrage caused by the Ottoman massacres of Bulgarians and Armenians in the late nineteenth century. At the same time, the edited volume acknowledges various ambiguities. For example, the Ottoman state was able to cast itself as an active participant in an international struggle against terrorism. After all, a wave of terrorist violence – mostly associated with anarchists and the 'propaganda of the deed' – had been causing alarm for many governments. As Toygun Altıntaş notes, 'For Ottoman officials, the wave of anti-Anarchist public opinion and legislation in Europa, and the Russian Empire provided a venue through which they could justify their crackdown on political opposition in the Empire without damaging their international reputation' (pp. 109–10).

A second major dimension of this book concerns the transnational connections of political activists. The ARF had been founded in the Georgian city of Tbilisi (then part of the Russian Empire), published its magazine *Droshak* from Geneva and cooperated with Macedonian revolutionaries. In sourcing their explosives, the *Dashnaks* worked with partners in several countries. Indeed, two key figures in the plot – namely ARF co-founder Christapor Mikaelian and Joris's colleague at Singer, Kendirian – both died before the Yıldız attack, while testing bombs in a Bulgarian village. Bulgaria was also the site of the ARF's final congress prior to the assassination attempt, while the fallout from its failure was the subject of an ARF congress in Vienna. Gaïd Minassian's chapter discusses the Armenian plot and, in doing so, takes note of such transnational dimensions. He argues that the ARF was 'not a nationalist organization, but rather a synthesis of nationalism and internationalism that finds its own balance and uniqueness in a constructivist type of socialism' (p. 45). In the conclusion to the book, İpek Yosmaoğlu considers the broader trajectories of Armenian activism, arguing that it 'did not simply come into existence as a result of nationalist fervor gripping Europe in the nineteenth century'

(p. 262). Given the importance of transnational ties, the presence of a Belgian amongst the conspirators seems less surprising.

This observation ties in with a third aspect of this book, namely visions of solidarity in Western Europe. In some cases, support for Joris came from groups and individuals who had an existing interest in the Armenian cause. Coverage in the Parisian periodical *Pro-Armenia* (as noted in Henk de Smaele's chapter) is one such example; the efforts of the Belgian radical politician Georges Lorand (as discussed in Marnix Beyen's chapter) are another. For others, such as the Antwerp anarchist Victor Resselier, activism on Joris's behalf seemed to reflect broader political affinities. Moreover, Beyen shows that, like many solidarity campaigns, Belgian mobilization during the Joris affair could serve a variety of purposes. The coexistence of different political agendas did not just characterize the *Jorisard* campaign but also the object of its efforts: Maarten Van Ginderachter addresses this aspect as he examines and contextualizes Joris's intellectual and political trajectory. Joris's political attachments may have looked contradictory, as they encompassed anarchism, social democracy, Flammingantism, support for Armenian nationalism as well as cosmopolitan visions of a world without borders. Van Ginderachter's nuanced discussion therefore provides us with a valuable reminder that we should not expect ideological coherence when it comes to the motivations and preoccupations of political activists.

As a whole, this volume constitutes a consistently engaging enquiry that reflects the careful planning by its editors. Rather than being a collection of stand-alone essays, the pieces add up to a systematic examination of the Yildiz bombing and its manifold dimensions. The individual chapters follow on from one another quite naturally. At times, authors repeat key information that is relevant for their own chapter, but thankfully, such overlaps have been kept to a minimum. As a result, the book invites reading from cover to cover. Historians of modern Belgium, of national movements, of international relations and of the Euro-

pean left will all find useful material in this book. The volume serves as a model of how the writing of transnational history can be approached as a collaborative venture.

Daniel Laqua

MATT HAULTAIN-GALL

The Battlefield of Imperishable Memory. Passchendaele and the Anzac Legend

Victoria, Monash University Publishing, 2021, xvii + 317 p.

Matt Haultain-Gall is an Australian historian living in Belgium, a research associate at the Université Catholique de Louvain, who has focused for many years on the cultural and social consequences of the First World War. For his doctoral thesis, presented at the University of New South Wales in 2017, he examined how Australia and Australians remembered and commemorated the Battle of Messines and the Third Battle of Ypres, also known as the Battle of Passchendaele. This book is the result.

For Australia, the First World War is considered as the 'coming of age' of the nation, the moment when something like an Australian nationhood emerges. This should come as no surprise: of the then population of 5 million, no less than 330,000 - all volunteers - served in the Australian Imperial Force, or one in fifteen. Moreover, with 215,000 'losses' (dead, wounded, missing, sick, prisoners of war) including 60,000 killed, the Dominion paid a very heavy toll.

Of those who died, 12,750 fell in Belgium during the battles of 1917, over 21% of the total Australian war dead. October 1917 was even the deadliest month for the Australian army. Yet Haultain-Gall notes that the Battle of Messines (7-14 June 1917) and the Third Battle of Ypres (31 July-10 November 1917) are relatively badly represented in both Australian World War I historiography and commemorative practices. For example, apart from a memorial to the 5th Australian Division, there are no national Australian monuments in Belgium while during the recent centenary, the 'great' official Australian ceremony on 26 September 2017 at Polygon Wood (Zonnebeke) was but a sideshow