



### **Yektan Türkyilmaz**

Yektan Türkyilmaz is currently a lecturer at Sabanci and Bilgi Universities. He received his PhD from Duke University Department of Cultural Anthropology. His dissertation, “Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915”, concerns the conflict in Eastern Anatolia in the early twentieth century and the memory politics around it. It shows how discourses of victimhood have been engines of grievance that power the politics of fear, hatred and competing, exclusionary claims to statehood and territory by Turks, Armenians, and Kurds. Grounded in extensive archival research in American, British, Turkish, and Armenian historical repositories, Türkyilmaz traces how discourses of communal victimhood were generated around the traumatic ordeals in the two decades that preceded the Armenian genocide of 1915-6, carried out by the Unionist government. Türkyilmaz’s work pays special attention to the nature of political tension and debate among Armenians on the eve of the genocide. His analysis here goes beyond deterministic, escalationist and teleological perspectives on the antecedents of the Armenian genocide; instead, it highlights political agency and enabling structures of the war, offering a new perspective on the tragic violence of Eastern Anatolia in the early twentieth century.

### **Urbicide in Van: Destruction and Cultural Death of an Ottoman City**

Yektan Türkyilmaz’s research as a EUME Fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin revisits the most controversial site of the Armenian genocide, the province of Van between April and August 1915, and explores the political agendas and militaristic/strategic decisions that led to the total destruction of this historic Ottoman city. Van was the epicenter of the Armenian genocide, the place where it incubated. Paradoxically, however, genocide as such did not occur in the city/province; as the entire power structure in Van swiftly and radically changed hands between rival empires multiple times in a matter of a few months. Van in 1915 was a distinctive space within the larger devastating landscape of the Armenian genocide, one where myriad experiences, agendas, and actors clashed without any single dynamic or force establishing its unquestioned hegemony. Yet the city Van was the site and victim of an urbicide par excellence. All parties involved in the process targeted the city Van—its infrastructure, residential areas, government buildings, market place, military buildings, communication facilities, and foreign missions. Drawing on Armenian, Ottoman and Russian archival documents, periodicals, memoirs, photographic and cartographic materials and secondary sources his research investigates the ideological/symbolic and militaristic/strategic decisions that led to urbicide in Van and the continuing memory politics around it.