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The “Art” of Government: Reading Turkey’s Raison d’état through Novels and Short Stories on Dersim 1937–38

Being a mountainous region with numerous bodies of water, valleys, and grottos, Dersim or Tunceli was a shelter for non-dominant groups (non-Sunni and non-Turkish) for centuries. Both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic conducted numerous military operations in the region, of which the Tunceli Operation in 1937–38 was especially traumatic. Turkey’s raison d’état described it as the self-righteous state operation against the rebellious tribes, which was largely reproduced in political as well as public spheres. Over the last five decades, various political movements have challenged this raison d’état. This lecture sheds light on the reflections of the continuities and ruptures of Turkey’s raison d’état on Dersim 1937–38 through 35 fiction (novels/short story) books published –in Turkish– between 1966 and 2018.