

BOOK REVIEWS

An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914. Ed. by Halil İnalçık, with Donald Quataert. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 1994. xxxix, 1026 pp. Maps. £75.00; \$120.00.

Since the 1940s two developments have coincided to give an enormous impetus to the study of the social and economic history of the Ottoman Empire: the influence of the *Annales* school of historiography, which only really started to dominate the international historical world after World War II, and the gradual opening up of the archives of the central government of the Ottoman Empire (now part of the Prime Ministerial Archives of the Turkish Republic). The one gave historians the motive, the other the means to give the historiography of the empire a wider horizon than that of the politics and policies of the court and the military/bureaucratic elite.

The Ottoman Empire not only lasted for over six hundred years; it also developed into a patrimonial-bureaucratic hybrid which attached great importance (and devoted large amounts of money and manpower) to record keeping. What is more: in spite of the frequent occurrence of earthquakes and fires in the capital Istanbul, large sections of the imperial archives have survived and they have proved to be a treasure trove for historians. It is thanks largely to their existence that Ottoman historiography has been able to make the transition from manuscript-based philology to primary-source-based history, something which has not been possible to this extent for the older states of the Middle East.

Research in the archives has yielded spectacular results, fundamentally changing our view of Ottoman state and society. And while these central state archives may represent a biased view of things as seen from the centre of power, increasingly, from the 1960s onward, they have been complemented by research in provincial Ottoman archives, first in the Balkans and Israel, and more recently also in the Arab countries.

Until recently, a synthesis or overview bringing together the results of this huge amount of research in a dozen or so countries was sadly lacking. This lacuna has now been filled by the work under review here.

An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire is a huge (1,026 pages) tome, divided chronologically into four main parts. To these an essay on the Ottoman monetary system by Şevket Pamuk, five separate bibliographies, a glossary, a chronology, an index and numerous tables have been added.

The first, and by far the largest, part is "The Ottoman state: economy and society, 1300–1600" which takes up the first 409 pages. It is written by Halil İnalçık of Bilkent University in Ankara and that is as it should be, because İnalçık without doubt has been the foremost scholar in the field for a generation. His earlier *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300–1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973) was widely hailed as the best one-volume introduction to its subject, but it has also been criticized for being a history of the empire with 85 per cent of its population (the peasants) left out. İnalçık must have taken this criticism to heart, because issues of landownership and land use are

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central to his section in this new book. Part I c 6, entitled “The *çift-hane* system: the organization of Ottoman rural society”, is in particular a masterful synthesis of the Ottoman system, in which the author shows both that the theories of A.V. Chayanov on peasant economies have a great deal of explanatory value for the Ottoman case and that the Ottoman system in many ways closely resembled that of its predecessors, the Byzantines and Romans. While the piece on land use is undoubtedly the most important section of the article, İnalçık’s treatment of internal and external trade which follows is worthwhile for the attention devoted to trade links which have often neglected, such as the Black Sea and Eastern European (Moldavian, Polish) routes. These are highlighted in the last section of the article, along with the better known Mediterranean networks, and the silk and spice trade.

While it is clear that an article such as this, which offers a synthesis of the scholarly work of a lifetime by the leading authority in the field, will be of great use to students of the subject, it nevertheless contains two glaring omissions. First, although the article – and, indeed, the book as a whole – purports to be about Ottoman history from the very beginning (about AD 1300), there is hardly any mention of the first 150 years of Ottoman rule. Apart from a very brief historical outline (pp. 11–15), İnalçık’s article is really about the period 1450–1600. In other words: it does only half of what its title suggests. This is partly dictated by the available archival sources, but the problem should at least have been addressed more explicitly. Secondly, while İnalçık deals extensively with land use, state revenue and trade, the whole urban manufacturing sector is omitted. This is an astonishing decision in view of the importance the Ottomans themselves attached to the guilds and to urban life in general.

The omissions may have something to do with the character of İnalçık’s 400-page article. It reads like a sequence of condensed articles and the fact that his bibliography mentions no fewer than eighty-two of his own earlier publications seems to support the idea that it is in fact just that.

In this respect at least, the sections by Suraiya Faroqhi and Bruce McGowan on, respectively, the seventeenth and eighteenth century, are more satisfactory. Faroqhi’s article, which focuses on urban life far more than that of İnalçık, covers the period which has traditionally been seen by Ottomanists as one of crisis and decline. While her research, too, shows that decline in terms of population and wealth was the predominant characteristic, at least of Anatolia, in the half-century after 1580, Faroqhi draws our attention to the local and regional differences which make any generalization difficult. The “decline” paradigm, which goes back ultimately to the Ottoman statesmen of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who lamented the passing of the “golden age”, has been questioned more and more over the past twenty years. Historians of the Ottoman state now see the changes which took place (professionalization, decentralization) as preconditions for the survival of the Ottoman state rather than as factors in its decline. More than before, it is realized that the revenue crisis which the Ottoman state experienced – and the accompanying social instability – were phenomena common to most European states around 1600. Faroqhi’s article reflects all of this revisionism. The results of her own pioneering research on Anatolian urban life come through best in the way she shows how social barriers which according to the Ottoman ideology should have been watertight (and were indeed assumed to have been so by historians as well)

were in fact hardly more than ideological constructs. In reality Ottoman society was more flexible and more mobile than these constructs allowed. This is true for such central dichotomies as town and country (where migration to the towns was in fact considerable), guild and non-guild labour (guilds took in more outsiders than previously supposed) and women and men (with women acting as artisans, merchants, bankers and landholders).

Bruce McGowan's treatment of the eighteenth century gives pride of place to the *Ayan*, the provincial notables who, through their stranglehold on the tax-farming system and with their local power bases and private armies, became the most powerful factor in Ottoman society in this era. The far-reaching decentralization of the empire in the eighteenth century is reflected in McGowan's section, where the elites, the peasants and pastoralists, the merchants and the craftsmen are described separately for the different regions of the empire.

Donald Quataert's overview of the nineteenth century deals with demographic developments, transport, agriculture, trade and manufacturing (the latter part of course building on his pioneering studies in this area, which have been published in *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)). As in this earlier monograph, Quataert demonstrates that the story of nineteenth-century Ottoman manufacturing was not one of linear decline under the impact of European industrial exports, but rather one in which the initial shock of the 1830s and 1840s, which did devastate the traditional industries in some sectors and in some geographical areas, was gradually overcome by an Ottoman manufacturing sector which was far more flexible than had been supposed. From the standpoint of social history, Quataert's discussion of the causes of rural and urban unrest is particularly interesting.

Unfortunately the editors of the volume have chosen not to include the World War I years, which saw the introduction of economic nationalism and attempts to build a native Muslim bourgeoisie. As an authoritative monograph on this subject (which has been very important in laying the groundwork for the economic development of the Turkish republic) by Zafer Toprak has been around since 1982 (*Türkiye'de Milli İktisat (1908–1918)*, Ankara: Yurt), it is hard to see why this should be so.

All in all, this one-volume social and economic history of the Ottoman Empire fulfils its dual purpose admirably: it gives students and general readers a convenient overview of the field and at the same time offers the specialist new material of interest, at least where the period 1450–1914 is concerned. Unfortunately size and price mean that it will remain outside the reach of the average student.

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PANAYI, PANIKOS. *Immigration, ethnicity and racism in Britain, 1815–1945*. Manchester University Press, Manchester [etc.] 1994. vi, 170 pp. £29.99. (Paper: £7.99.)

This volume appears in the "New Frontiers in History" series, whose stated aim is to provide "up-to-date overviews" of historical themes, particularly in