

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Faroqhi, Suraiya. *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts, and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520-1650*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, 1984. Pp. xiv, 425. Tables, maps, illustrations, glossary, indices. \$59.50 (U.S.)

R. D. McChesney

Volume 14, Number 3, February 1986

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018098ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018098ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

McChesney, R. D. (1986). Review of [Faroqhi, Suraiya. *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts, and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520-1650*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, 1984. Pp. xiv, 425. Tables, maps, illustrations, glossary, indices. \$59.50 (U.S.)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 14(3), 299–300. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018098ar>

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 1986

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

Érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

social transformation of India. Instead, Veena Oldenburg conclusively shows that post-Rebellion, Raj officials in Lucknow demonstrated “continuing and conscious efforts . . . to ‘improve’ the Indian way of life” (p. xix). The author does not deny that official policy at the highest levels of imperial administration was against disturbing the social status quo, but argues that insecure bureaucrats at the urban level in Lucknow, pragmatically intent upon their survival in a hostile environment, acted systematically to transform the structure of the traditional society. Based on a thorough and discerning analysis of hitherto neglected local documentary sources, this study represents a real advance in the historiography of British-Indian colonialism.

The author proves her main thesis by a detailed examination of the major preoccupations of the British rulers of Lucknow during the years from the Rebellion until the city ceased to be a centre of regional administration in 1877. The first preoccupation, in the wake of the desperate British struggle for survival in the embattled Residency during the 140-day siege of 1857, was strategic. Chapter 2 details the energetic role of Colonel Robert Napier in making post-1857 Lucknow safe, by transversing it with a series of straight, wide roads (in the construction of which even sacred buildings and sites were ruthlessly demolished), supplemented in 1862 with railway lines, which also served the new strategically-located, military cantonment on the southeast outskirts of the old city. The second British preoccupation was the systematic preservation of law and order. In this connection, Oldenburg discusses the development of the police force, geared more to political control than dealing with ordinary crime, and of the highly collaborative and officially-controlled municipal committee. On the latter subject, the author concludes that colonial, municipal self-government was largely a farce, which in turn rendered municipal politics “unsatisfactory arenas for serious political change” (p. 94). A third and related British preoccupation, already well documented as far as post-Rebellion Oudh generally is concerned but less studied at the urban level, was the systematic effort to create longterm allies among segments of the traditional aristocracy and elite classes. In the case of Lucknow, as the author shows in a long and fascinating chapter, “the City Must Be Loyal,” the Indian collaborating elite consisted not of the former nawabi courtiers, who were downgraded or exiled, but of big absentee landlords from the countryside and a few Hindu bankers, all of whose fortunes were indubitably tied to the Raj.

Another major concern of the British, detailed in Chapter 4, was with the formidable problems of sanitation and disease presented by the characteristically congested and badly drained city. Here again the author reinforces her central thesis by graphically demonstrating the vigorous, utilitarian-reformist role of Lucknow’s civil surgeon for much of the period, Dr. E. Bonavia. Directly influenced by one of England’s noted poor law commissioners, Sir Edwin Chadwick, Bonavia and other officials were energetically involved

in improvements to latrines, drainage, water supply, and efforts to check the spread of venereal and other contagious diseases. Though the motives were primarily to protect British lives, these reforming activities inevitably touched much of the indigenous population.

The comparatively high level of British activity in reshaping Lucknow had to be paid for by the inhabitants, and one brief chapter is devoted to urban taxation. Not only was there a heavy increase in the amount of taxation, but this was made all the more burdensome because of a serious decline in the local economy, resulting partly from the undermining of the former, court-patronized handicraft industries. The author estimates that 85% of the adult male population were brought within the new taxation system, which extended down even to poor labourers. Considering that the benefits of this taxation went primarily to providing a good life for British officialdom in the spacious cantonment area, it is hardly surprising that the system engendered both popular protest and even passive resistance.

For all its virtues this local study shares with more general administrative histories of the Raj inherent problems resulting from the unavoidable heavy dependence on official source materials. Inevitably, there is much more data on Lucknow official policy formation than on implementation or, more especially, on how the ordinary populace was affected by the changes. In places, general references are made to the condition of the ordinary people, but we learn little about the impact of the colonial regime on their lives. Indeed, apart from the small elite who gained influence through collaboration with the British, we learn little about the Indian population. A further and less justifiable defect is the failure to highlight the extent and significance of the colonial-created divisions between the old native city and the new cantonment, divisions which, as the author observes in the Epilogue, lie at the root of many of Lucknow’s problems in the late twentieth century. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, this study will long remain the definitive work on early colonial Lucknow and will hopefully inspire similar studies of other major urban centres of colonial rule in South Asia.

Edward C. Moulton
Department of History
University of Manitoba

Faroqhi, Suraiya. *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts, and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520-1650*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, 1984. Pp. xiv, 425. Tables, maps, illustrations, glossary, indices. \$59.50 (U.S.).

For urban studies of the Middle East, this book represents a major advance. Influenced by the regional studies produced for Europe by French economic historians, Prof. Faroqhi has written a rich, sweeping, and wholly satisfying description of the urbanization of Anatolia in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

The book is organized topically within three broad categories: 1) towns, markets, and communications; 2) activities in the city center; and 3) relations between the town and its agricultural hinterland. She establishes at the outset the meaning of the word "town" and formulates three categories of towns distinguished by size. Category I, large towns, were those with more than 3,000 tax-payers or 10,000 inhabitants; Category II and IIa, medium-sized towns, had 1,500 to 2,999 taxpayers or a population of 5-9,000 (II) or 1,000-1,499 taxpayers i.e., 3-5,000 inhabitants (IIa) and Category III, towns with 400-999 taxpayers (1,200 - 3,000 inhabitants). Settlements with less than 400 taxpayers tended to lack what Faroqhi considers essential attributes, a market (evidenced by market taxes) and an administrative official, especially a magistrate (kadi). She stresses that despite Istanbul's megalopolitan influence on the economy of western Anatolia, her focus is on the urban network less influenced by Istanbul's needs and less studied by scholars.

The study uses as its sources the many monographic works done by Turkish and foreign scholars on particular regions, towns, and economic aspects of Anatolian life combined with Prof. Faroqhi's own extensive research in the Ottoman archival resources. Archival resources include official tax lists (the tahrir registers); kadi-magistrate records of litigation as well as simple registration of deeds and notarization of specific conditions (sijills); inventories of the holdings of waqf (vakif) foundations as well as accounts of the receipts and expenditures of those foundations; the registers of official correspondence (muhimme defterleri); tax-farming records; and miscellaneous contemporary materials — traveller's accounts, chronicles, essays and descriptive narratives of various types. These are prime ingredients and the author has produced an exceptionally rich dish to enjoy.

Although Faroqhi makes admirable efforts at synthesis, the partial and inconsistent nature of some of the materials and the long time span being addressed make hers a Promethean effort. The conclusions, like the material, tend to be partial and often inconclusive but the data presented more than compensates and here and there her research produces welcome revisionist interpretations. While not rejecting the importance of American silver in the rise in prices that Anatolia experienced in the 2nd half of the 16th century, she introduces a number of other factors, especially the population issue, that she suggests might have been of equal if not more importance, especially since information on the extent of the importation of silver is unknown. She confirms the problem of linking public construction to periods of economic growth and emphasizes the phenomenon already

described by Inalcik, Barkan, and others of the Ottoman city-building paradigm, the use of foundations to construct and maintain a commercial centre which attracts population and economic activity, a model which may be applicable elsewhere in the Middle East (e.g. Iran and Central Asia) during the same period. From her study of the waqf-foundation materials (deeds, accounts, inventories) she provides a basis for estimating town size and importance. She also points out that most of Anatolia's cities were inland. Ports, perhaps because of Istanbul's dominance, did not figure much in the urban network. Commercial activity was mostly overland, even long-distance trade, during this period, and the regional and national economies did not depend on, nor was it much involved in foreign trade. Because the Ottoman state prohibited the export of strategic (military) goods (including hemp, cotton, horses, arms, beeswax, grain, and leather among others) much of the record of port activities has to do with contraband transactions in these goods.

The book's appeal is less in the statistical and tabular data than in the wealth of detail about the nuts and bolts of everyday economic life. In one fascinating inventory for probate of the estates of a shoe seller, the list of his creditors shows that, although he was described as a shoemaker, he actually sub-contracted the manufacture of the shoes, boots, and leather stockings he sold and was more a wealthy retailer than a manufacturer. Among other things, the waqf-foundation accounts and deeds describe the 16th century diet. Money was set aside for the preparation of meals whose menus are given in the deeds. These lists are supplemented then in the institution's accounts of food purchased.

The book describes a period of rising national wealth and increasing urbanization even in areas far removed from the capital. The availability of credit both from government loans to manufacturers and from individual and institutional lenders helped fuel the economic growth that characterized much of the period under study. But Faroqhi also highlights a less-evident phenomenon, the great physical mobility enjoyed by the population. Without an almost unrestricted ability to migrate, neither the urbanization process nor the economic growth it spurred could have occurred in the way it did.

R.D. McChesney
Department of Near Eastern
Languages and Literatures
New York University

Silver, Christopher. *Twentieth Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984. Pp. x, 342. Black and white plates, maps, tables, index. \$29.95 (U.S.).