

Rodger, Richard. *The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. xix, 540. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US\$80.00

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With this substantial tome, resting on an impressive quantity of archival research, Richard Rodger buttresses his reputation as one of Britain's most distinguished urban historians. Its mass of accumulated detail does not make for an easy read or render it accessible to a broad audience. In spite of its lavish and helpful illustrations, including photographs, maps and charts, one imagines that it will not find a place on the shelves of popular histories of Edinburgh in the city's bookstores, nor even that any but the most diligent of undergraduates will be prevailed upon to plough through it. But for its intended readership of specialists and connoisseurs it will prove indispensable, its wealth of challenging insights elevating it well above a mere urban biography.

The last vestiges of feudalism in the Western world, as Macaulay's schoolboy will tell you, were of course swept away by French Revolutionaries and classical liberal ideas about property. And that was "A Good Thing". Not so in Scotland. Rodger constructs his account of Edinburgh's transformation around the reinvention of a form of Scottish feudalism during the nineteenth century. In contrast to England and Wales, land in Scotland was feued – sold outright subject to a fixed annual levy in perpetuity and to other occasional payments. This encouraged vendors to hold on to land in the hope that, with a burgeoning population, its value would rise, and then to charge an initially high feu-duty to compensate for likely erosion in real terms. Through the practice of subinfeudation, the levy – generally substantially increased – was passed down the line from landowner to developer to builder to house agent to purchaser. A landmark House of Lords ruling in 1818 stimulated an elaboration of the feuing system by encouraging landowners and developers to add detailed clauses controlling the future use of the property.

The downside of all this was that tenants paid more in Scotland than in England and Wales, so could afford to rent less space; and, to cover the feu-duties on the land, developers built higher, denser tenements. Rodger eloquently describes the appalling overcrowding and abysmal sanitation that often resulted and gave rise to dismal morbidity and mortality rates. The upside was that the system encouraged a wide range of small investors to place their modest capital in the hands of solicitors and property investment companies to buy heritable securities (i.e. feu-duties on a property in the future). This had pleasing dual benefits. First, it elicited and circulated limited capital supplies within Scotland, encouraging economic expansion and urban transformation, staunching a potential hemorrhaging of capital toward tempting English stocks and bonds. Second, petty capitalists, as low down the social scale as shopkeepers and skilled workers, became participants in this extension of property rights and thus benefited from rising land and property values. Rodger contrasts Scotland favourably with England and other less fortunate na-

tions. "Where property owners had an individual right to the exclusive use and disposal of plots of land," he writes, "then under free market conditions this resulted in a concentration of ownership, resources and power which infringed equality of status, the central tenet of liberalism. The very freedom of contract on which the capitalist market system was constructed could not logically prevent individual and unequal appropriations of wealth and power." (506) Scotland avoided this paradox of liberalism and property.

Questions remain. For example, if capital leakage from Scottish cities was prevented by the peculiarities of Scottish property law, did northern English cities suffer from this phenomenon, and if not, why not? Did Scottish cities, building on this relatively favourable foundation, do better than other British cities during the course of the twentieth century, and if not, why not? Rodger only touches on comparisons in time and space, but he might reasonably argue that the book is long enough already and that it is for others to make hay with these contrasts. In guiding us through the tricky business of raising capital, negotiating the law, and constructing the fabric of Edinburgh; in introducing us to pivotal estate developers like the Heriot Trust and Sir James Steel; in explaining the spatial configuration and class relationships in the city's architectural layout and building types; in detailing municipal and cooperative responses to urban squalor and attempts to mould civic pride: Rodger has already served up a handsome feast upon which scholars can gorge themselves.

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Brumfield, William Craft; Boris V. Anan'ich; Yuri A. Petrov, eds. *Commerce in Russian Urban Culture, 1861–1914*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press / Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Pp. xiii, 239. Illustrations, index. US\$49.50 (hardcover).

The first post-communist decade in Russia saw a massive flight of historians from social history into a booming field of "archival revelations." However, when the dust settled by the beginning of the new millennium, the profession realized that declassified party archives yielded little new information. Russian political historians have produced dozens of descriptive volumes about the executions of the Romanovs, Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin, and about the Cold War. But the real contribution to knowledge has been made by those few who stayed with social and economic history, which was traditionally strong in Russia owing to the prolonged supremacy of Marxist theory. Given the financial woes of post-Soviet historical scholarship, specialists on modern Russian economy and society were fortunate to have secured some additional support from the country's new entrepreneurs and foreign endowments. The collection under review once again proves that Western sponsors made excellent use of their money.