

Köksal, Yonca. *The Ottoman Empire in the Tanzimat Era. Provincial Perspectives from Ankara to Edirne.* Milton: Routledge. 2019. 208 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0429443589.

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The meaning of the Tanzimat Edict and its effects on the Ottoman Empire have been discussed since the mid-20th century. It is a well-known fact that historians have evaluated the outcomes of the reform edict by placing emphasis on the various actors – the imperial centre, local notables, ordinary Ottomans – and their attitudes towards the course of the reform. Whatever the subject, the writings on the Tanzimat have reflected the historians' view of the relation between state and society. Although state-centred approaches still dominate Tanzimat historiography, for a while now, non-state actors have started to take more place for in written histories. In *The Ottoman Empire in the Tanzimat Era: Provincial Perspectives from Ankara to Edirne*, Yonca Köksal discusses the first four decades of the reform edict with a comparative perspective that challenges zero-sum understandings of state-society relations such as the earlier Westernisation paradigms or the centre-periphery dichotomies. The author, albeit confirming the centralising efforts of the Tanzimat elites that were aimed at increasing state presence at the local level, 'adopts an interactionist approach and re-conceptualizes state-social actor relations to understand survival and continuation of local intermediaries' (p.6).

Yonca Köksal employs this interactionist approach to define the relations between the Ottoman state and local actors as a positive-sum game. Rather than tracing the effects of state policies on societies, the book hints at the material conditions in Ankara and Edirne that shaped the course of the reform. Köksal, in this sense, focuses on the social capital after the Ottoman state initiated Tanzimat policies. As the density of relations between the imperial centre and society and within the society determined the role of intermediaries after 1839, the level of social capital and the introduction of new administrative practices changed the Ottoman social network. As opposed to the historiographical traditions that tell disconnected stories for the Ottoman government and local elites in the course of reform; in Köksal's story, local elites as intermediaries, which is central to the book's coverage, were able to survive and integrate themselves into the new administration.

The backbone of the book is a comparative perspective on the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms in Edirne and Ankara. Chapter Two starts the comparative analysis of Edirne and Ankara by claiming that the Tanzimat was built on different old practices in different localities. The book, therefore, acknowledges path dependency as its core paradigm through which to scrutinise particular outcomes of the Tanzimat policies. As the author mentions repeatedly throughout the book, in Edirne one can observe a higher social capital and a denser social network than in Ankara. By referring to

Tilly's arguments on state transformation, Ankara seems closer to a coercive-intensive path, one in which elite families were stronger and the sole brokers between the state and society in the absence of dense connections, trade networks and multiple local elites. In Edirne, however, 'a developed economy and trade allowed dense connections and competition to form among strong local intermediaries' (p.58). Chapter Three goes further and zooms in on Ankara where the few local intermediaries dominated vertical and horizontal relations in this old Anatolian town. The loosely connected local networks resulted in a handful of local families controlling the regional administration during the first decades of the Tanzimat era. A lack of local initiatives on social issues and developmental projects also led the state to take a coercion-intensive path, that is, one that only cared for the financial revenue from the region. In contrast, the reform process in Edirne, which is discussed in Chapter Four, was nourished by the dense local network and enthusiastic participation of the social elite. Accordingly, the author depicts a brighter picture in this province which was incorporated into the world economy. To gain the prosperity that the Tanzimat offered, Köksal notes that 'many middle-level local intermediaries competed with each other in order to secure their economic and state privileges in tax collection, administration and trade' (p. 70). Furthermore this led to the locals embracing the reforms and actively supporting local development. Finally, Chapter Five displays the distinguishing characteristic of the book, the use of Social Network Analysis. Employing petitions from the *ayniyat defterleri* catalogues, the author evaluates and scores the relationality among the actors in Ankara and Edirne. As a result, schematic representations of the social networks in Ankara and Edirne have been produced illustrating the density in the latter city and the loose structure in the former (pp. 137 and 139).

In general, Yonca Köksal's book succeeds in a huge task – the spatialisation of the Tanzimat. The reform edict has often been portrayed as an overarching paradigm without any reference to local dynamics and the social lives in the provinces. Yonca Köksal, through her comparative approach, manages to narrate the story of the Tanzimat from the locals' perspective, as well as underline the divergences in the aftermath of the reform in Ankara and Edirne. The process of reform, therefore, is told not as a story of failure or success but as the course of different paths concerning Ankara's and Edirne's historical contingencies.

This book examines the effects of the Tanzimat on two Ottoman provinces and ventures into multiple historiographical debates, mostly on the role of local elites and state-making during the Tanzimat era. This eye-opening work should be of interest not only to Ottoman and Middle Eastern history specialists but also to researchers of state-society relations, state transformations and developmentalism studies.