
Reviews of Books

THE SELJUKS OF ANATOLIA: COURT AND SOCIETY IN THE MEDIAEVAL MIDDLE EAST. Edited by ANDREW PEACOCK and Sara Nur Yildiz. pp. xiii, pp. 308. I.B. Tauris, London & New York, 2013.
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Any new book on the Seljuks by Andrew Peacock is always likely to cause a stir even if he is only the editor. Shock waves from his last book on the early Seljuks (*Early Seljuk History: a new interpretation*, 2010) continue to reverberate, with teaching syllabuses on this period still adjusting to the upheaval forced on our assumptions since it first appeared. In the present volume Peacock has contributed only one chapter himself and co-authored the introduction with his fellow editor, Sara Nur Yildiz, but, as Gary Leiser's concluding chapter makes very clear, this book will resound beyond the confines of Seljukid Anatolia. Leiser's overview addresses what he regards as the marginalisation of the study of mediaeval Anatolia, and hence he highlights the incalculable potential that this period contains for the advancement of research into its neighbours' histories. As he points out, both the fact that the prevailing language used in the peninsula was Greek and the fact that Shamanism was probably more widely practised than Islam amongst the immigrant Turkish population are often overlooked. Since many of the ruling Turkish elite were the product of mixed marriages and Turkish was rarely transcribed, Greek would have continued to be used as a vehicle for communication at all levels. Persian was widely regarded as the language of literature and the language of the court even though it was not widely spoken, and the same (but to a far lesser extent) applied to Arabic as well. Leiser hence observes that "with respect to military alliances, political marriages and places of refuge, the Seljuks gravitated more toward Christian Constantinople than the Muslim south or east" (p. 265).

Both the Greeks and the Turks had lost their spiritual guides, with Greek clergy joining the exodus of the ruling elite following their defeat in 1071 and with Turkish tribes cast adrift far from their homeland in Turkistan. The eclectic and syncretic spiritual malaise that rumbled across what was to become known as the Seljukid Sultanate of Rum was symptomatic of the metamorphosis shaping the whole peninsula. Accordingly, Leiser's view is that in order to appreciate properly the full extent of the changes taking place, the Seljuk era should be considered in context. It should also be appropriately compared to similar regional conflict zones such as the Arab invasion of Byzantine Syria with the subsequent Arabisation and Islamisation of that province, and also the Christian re-conquest of the Iberian al-Andalus. Noteworthy in the case of Anatolia was the role that Sufis played in the spread of religion - with Sufi lodges flourishing throughout the province - in marked contrast to the situation in Syria and Egypt. In fact, the failure of Sunnism and traditional Islam to establish a strong base in Rum, combined with the Seljukid sultans' lack of interest in promoting Sunnism, resulted in Anatolia becoming a haven for political and religious dissidents and the heterodox from both east and west. While the Seljuks in Iran and Syria and likewise in Anatolia are justly famous for their distinctive architecture, it is not their mosques that attract most attention but rather their magnificent

caravanserais which remain standing as testaments to the Rumi Seljuks' role as promoters of trade and communication rather than orthodox religion.

Leiser's concluding chapter could have served equally well as an introductory chapter to this volume in that it poses a succession of intriguing questions while offering little in the form of argued conclusions. Indeed it was probably placed at the end of the book because the questions that Leiser poses are not answered in the various preceding chapters that make up this chunky volume. Rather they are suggestions for further and future study and they serve to underline the fact that this is a fascinating and often ignored region in both space and time, a deficiency that Leiser believes should be addressed by those who have completed their reading of the present tome. The middle section of his conclusion is the most compelling. In it he describes mediaeval Anatolia as a "kind of salad, a region with a unique mixture of religions and ethnic groups" (p. 268), whose cultural evolution contrasts sharply with the patterns found in other parts of the Muslim world. The eclectic decorations to be seen on the renowned hospital of Divriği clearly illustrate this point. Greeks, Armenians, Georgians, Kurds who were often simply Armenians who had converted to Islam, Turks, Khwarazmians who were themselves a complex ethnic soup, Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Jews, communities of Europeans, all became acculturated with one another, and during the two centuries of Seljukid domination there was a continuous exchange of "customs and rituals, religious beliefs, forms of administration and taxation, stories and legends, music and dance, crafts, food, women, and words" (pp. 268–269). Underlying and strengthening this integration was the bilingualism or multilingualism of all these communities, which makes the tracing of cultural roots all the more difficult. Traditionally the ties that the Rumi Seljuks maintained with Eastern Europe have been emphasised. Leiser in contrast stresses the importance of Seljuk ambitions to the south and to the east and makes a plea for their complicated history of diplomacy and conflict with their Muslim neighbours, particularly with the Ayyubids, not to be forgotten.

A commonly cited problem with mediaeval Anatolian history is the paucity of sources. This apparent dearth of sources can be explained by the fact that Turkish was not used as a written, literary, language until the fourteenth century. The small urban Turkish community conversant with Persian would have been the limited audience for the Persian chronicles. This lack of narrative sources therefore is reflective of the Turkish presence in Anatolia during this period. However in the collection of essays under review the various scholars involved have made full use of alternatives to Persian narrative sources. Since Greeks and Christians were still a large component of the peninsula's population, Greek, Armenian and Georgian are obvious sources to investigate as well as those in Latin and Syriac. As alternatives or in addition to narrative chronologies, inscriptions, titlature, art and architecture have all been employed by those contributing to the current volume. Scott Redford for one wonders why the patron of the 'Alā al-Dīn mosque of Uluborlu was not mentioned by Ibn Bibi, the chief chronicler of the Seljuks of Rum, while the inscriptions found inside the mosque provide great detail of the royal patron. Not only does Ibn Bibi's narrative fail to identify 'Işmat al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn as the mosque's patron but it does not explain that this *malika* or queen constructed the mosque out of her own funds. In China the ubiquitous steles have long been a major source of chronological and narrative history and Redford provides a clear example of the historical value of inscriptions and titlature and good reasons for why they should not be dismissed or ignored in places where they are less common.

The importance of non-Muslim sources is pertinent to Rustam Shukurov's study of Seljukid identity in a multi-cultural society. The clash of civilisations has endured as a favourite subject for the sensationalist press and the media always appears hungry for scholarly evidence that this explosive issue is grounded in real events and mirrored in history. The clash of East and West, Christian and Muslim, has long been pictured as bubbling away in Anatolia and the fall of Constantinople, with the advance of the Jihadist Ottomans and their expansionist *ghazi* state presented as an obvious example of the dangers of militant Islam. Shukurov's timely study of the pre-Ottoman era examines the reality beneath the rhetoric and presents Byzantine and Seljuk societies as a continuum rather than confrontation,

with the cultural boundaries between the two elements ‘blurred and permeable’ (p. 115), a conclusion he finds confirmed in both Greek and Muslim sources. Shukurov’s paper seeks to define the nature of that “fuzziness and permeability of the borders between the Byzantine and Seljuk cultural spaces” (pp. 115–116). By focusing on the cultural identity of these two neighbours, he dispels at the same time all notions of a clash of civilisation. As he explains, Constantinople had long been a refuge for Seljuk political dissidents and exiled nobility just as Konya had long welcomed Byzantine aristocrats and political fugitives. In addition, the royal harems of both capitals were full of noble ladies belonging to the rival royal families, and it is well known that mothers and sisters and wives wield a great deal of influence on young princes and new kings. Utilising Christian and Muslim sources, Shukurov explores the range of influences that the harem had on the court and reveals the functions of this secretive but central institution. When the sultan took a wife he also welcomed in her retinue which could be considerable. Shukurov cites the case of Özbek Khan’s new Greek wife whose retinue consisted of a hundred mainly Greek female slaves, Greek pages, two hundred Greek soldiers of the escort, a Greek commander, and her own Greek steward, and suggests that a parallel can be made with the Seljuk court where a Greek princess could demand as many of her own compatriots, both male and female and from slave to commander, as she desired. In addition she was afforded full freedom of religion and therefore chapels and priests as well as icons would have been found in all Seljuk courts. It was in this atmosphere that the young princes would have matured and formed their views on the world and, as Shukurov suggests, these views would have been far from black and white. Hence he concludes that far more research is needed into the degree of Hellenisation present in Rumi Seljuk culture. While Claude Cahen remarks on the admirable religious tolerance of the Seljuks of Rum, Shukurov explains this more as dual identity particularly noticeable in three sultans, Kaykhusraw I, Kaykā’ūs II and Mas’ūd II, an example further complicated by their Turkic/Persian/Greek ethnicity.

For Dimitri Korobeinikov this subject of complex self-identity is made more complicated still by the titles with which the sultans chose to adorn themselves. The Ottomans depicted themselves as successors to the Byzantine emperors with Sulyman the Magnificent (1520–66) styling himself ‘*qaysar-i Rūm*’, Caesar of the Romans. In addition, the term ‘Rum’ for Anatolia persisted until recent times even though the alternative, *Türkiyyeh*, was also in common usage. The Seljuks seem to have been content to be referred to as the Seljuks of Rum, but, rather than seeing themselves as the successors of the Byzantines, they regarded their heritage as emerging very much from the Great Seljuks of Iran and so their right to rule was derived from their Seljukid heritage.

The problems of self-identity that beset the sultans of the age were made easier with the help of the official boon companion, an important position as Nizam al-Mulk makes very clear in his *Siasatnama*. Sara Nur Yildiz considers the work of *Rāḥāt al-ṣudūr* which has primarily been viewed as an historical chronicle, but which its author, Rāwandī, compiled in order to further his career as a *nadīm* or boon companion to the sultan. Rāwandī compiled the *Rāḥāt al-ṣudūr*, essentially three works in one, to demonstrate his wide ranging literary skills and deep political and religious understanding. His aim as an agent of cultural continuity, Yildiz concludes, was ‘the renewal of the Great Seljuk political and cultural legacy in the lands of Rum under the rising Anatolian Seljuks’ (p. 105).

The opening essay in this collection underlines the initial frailty of Seljuk hegemony in Anatolia and how far challenges to their ascendancy were serious. Ibn Bibi’s omission of an account of the House of Mengüjek’s first century, for Oya Pancaroglu, suggests the historian’s lack of confidence in the strength and cohesion of the Seljuk polity and that mention of the success and power of this rival house “might detract from his mission to present a cohesive account of the Seljuk dynasty through the twelfth and into the thirteenth century” (p. 26). Citing epigraphic inscriptions located on various impressive religious constructions in Divriği, Pancaroglu finds evidence of the ambitious aspirations of Sayf al-Dīn Shāhanshāh (r. 1171–96). The inscriptions coupled with the magnificent craftsmanship of the stonemasons and architects point to often ignored rivals to Seljuk hegemony.

The third section of this collection of articles concerns the relationship between Sufism and the ruling classes and the *futuwwa* in an Armenian context. Rachel Goshgarian studies the constitutions of Armenian *futuwwa* orders so as to show the similarities with other Anatolian Muslim codes written around the same time and the Armenian Church's attempts to reform its institutions in the face of 'contamination' by Islamic social and religious proximity. Similarities between the Armenian texts and the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish texts suggest that the relaxed cultural permeation, revealed in other papers in this collection, was widespread throughout Anatolia.

Sara Nur Yildiz with Haşin Şahin and then Andrew Peacock consider the relationship between Sufi masters and the political elite. Traditionally Sufi masters were thought to have kept aloof from the material and secular world as they tried to remain detached from possible contamination through seductive contacts with the political elite and the attraction of access to secular power. Yildiz and Şahin conclude that the Andalusian Sufi poet Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) found Anatolia an attractive destination especially after his hostile reception in Cairo had caused him to flee Arabia. The lack of an established or influential 'ulema in Anatolia, which was also a recognised haven of political and religious exile and refuge, meant that Ibn Arabi's audacious spiritual claim to be the "Seal of the Saints" would not be received with such united animosity as it had been greeted elsewhere. His disciple, Majd al-Dīn Ishāq (d.c.1215–20), could also use his contacts at the Seljuk court in Konya to offer the saint security and protection from religious scholars hostile to Sufi teaching and so allow him to propagate his controversial views in peace. For Yildiz and Şahin, it was Anatolia's lack of Islamic infrastructure that allowed Ibn Arabi's teaching to take root and flourish, enabling the saint to become a political asset for the Seljuk sultans rather than the liability that he had become for the leaders elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Peacock's contribution to this collection is characteristically controversial and yet at the same time he seems to be merely stating the obvious. He challenges the traditional portrayal of Sufi masters as saintly figures aloof from the mundane world of commerce, influence peddling and political horse-trading, and provides solid evidence for his depiction of such eminent figures as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and his son Sultān Wāled as just as greedy, scheming, cunning and worldly as their political masters and contemporaries. The Sufi masters wanted money, power, land and influence from their benefactors and they sold the only thing that they possessed, their prayers and blessings and the prayers of their followers. For evidence Peacock turns to two texts in particular which until now have not been closely scrutinised by political or social historians, the letters of Rumi (*Maktūbāt-i-Mowlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*) and the poems of his son Sultān Wāled (*Dīvān-i-Sultān Wāled*). Some of Peacock's chosen quotes are embarrassingly blunt. In a panegyric poem to the commander of the army, Tāj al-Dīn, Sultān Wāled simply declares, "I pray to you every evening and morning to bestow on me that village called Kara Arslan." (p. 218) and before outlining his needs he prepares the king, "I have two requirements of your Majesty, . . ." with the list including such details as "you should give a hundred such . . . Instruct the *şāhib* [-*dīvān*] to do this . . .". Though not as blatant and also not dressed in verse, his father makes his demands equally plain and explains the rewards with which he is prepared to pay for the requested services. Rūmī requires exemption from customs tolls (*bāḡ*) from the Parwāna for an associate and a job for another. Many of his letters are in fact intercessions on behalf of others who presumably had made generous donations to Rūmī's special causes. Rūmī thus emerges as pivotal in a complex system of patronage, providing his followers the 'protection, money, and employment' granted by the political and military elite to whom the saint offers '*du'ā-yi dawlat*' (prayers for prosperity), a phrase that occurs in almost every letter. It is presented as a straight forward business transaction: "Our disciples [their needs having been met] have been pre-occupied with praying for you" (p. 215). Rūmī refers to himself as an intercessor (*shafī*) and he is obviously aware how his actions could be interpreted. The sensitive relationship between rulers and saints is tackled by Rūmī in his discourses, the *Fīhi mā fīhi*, where he claims the sufi master seeks to ensnare the worldly in order to give him illumination, not to gain anything from him (p. 221).

Peacock's paper, however, is restricted to the consideration of just one aspect of these two long neglected texts. While Rūmī's poems, verse, discourses and sermons have all been studied and translated, his collected letters have received little attention. This paper provides a tantalising glimpse of the potential that these texts still retain for both social and political historians. It is clear that as the centre of a network of patronage, Rūmī dealt with a wide circle of people with a diverse range of interests and further study would illuminate anew the workings and the actors of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. Overlooked previously on account of the perceived poor quality of his verse, Sultān Waled's work needs to be studied from an historical perception. Peacock's investigations suggest that, like his father, Sultān Waled was fully involved with the society into which he had been born.

Conceived in the Istanbul conference of 2009, *The Seljuks of Rum* provides a variety of detailed images of the Rumi Sultanate. In academia as well as historically in the shadow of its namesake based in Iran, the Seljuks of Rum have not received the attention they deserve. They serve as the backdrop to the emergence of the Ottomans and it is with their decline that the infamous black hole of the Ottomans' birth formed. The thirteenth century, in particular, was a period of flux and great change, and Anatolia was the melting pot of the remnants, outcasts, fugitives and exiles from all its neighbouring states and countries. It was a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic mix out of which one of the world's great empires emerged and this short volume should do much to re-kindle interest in the region. gl1@soas.ac.uk

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In tandem with his film-making career from the early 1950s until his death in 1992, Satyajit Ray was a noted graphic designer, a distinguished book illustrator and a celebrated writer. His fiction in Bengali was commercially successful, especially a series of novellas about an Indian detective duo loosely based on Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. Most of it was later translated into English. Two novellas were adapted into striking films by Ray in the 1970s: *Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress)*, set in Rajasthan, and *Joi Baba Felunath (The Elephant God)*, set in Benares. As for his nonfiction, his occasional articles on the art and craft of cinema in both Bengali and English are among the most articulate, unpretentious and enjoyable written by any film director—on a par with the autobiography of his friend and admirer Akira Kurosawa.

One of Ray's best articles, 'A long time on the little road', about the trials and tribulations of making his first film, *Pather Panchali* (a title that translates roughly as 'The Song of the Little Road'), appeared in the British Film Institute's journal *Sight and Sound* in 1957. It was reprinted, along with two dozen other articles, in Ray's first collection, *Our Films Their Films*, published in India in 1976. Another article—possibly Ray's finest ever—'Under western eyes', about distorted European and American perceptions of Indian culture including Indian cinema—appeared in *Sight and Sound* in 1982. In 2012 it was published for the first time in a book, a second collection of Ray's articles released in India under the title *Deep Focus: Reflections on Cinema*. This second collection has now appeared in the United States from a university press with a longstanding interest in film, as *Satyajit Ray on Cinema*.