

ever, despite the Church's influence in the public and social sphere, its influence over Russian politics remains limited. Regarding religious pluralism, the author refers to the Polish Catholic Church as an outlier and exception in the Catholic model, but attests that the least pluralist model is in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church has acted as the biggest impediment in the way of religious pluralism in Russia in the post-communist era, alarmed by the challenge posed by the new religious movements, particularly the neo-Protestant churches that became active in Russia after the 1990s as well as demands of separation by the Ukrainian, Estonian, and Moldovan Orthodox Churches.

The book is a theoretical work based on a meticulous interdisciplinary research process and opens up new research avenues for comparative studies on religion and secularization. Therefore, it could be of interests to the reader working in different disciplines ranging from political science, history and international relations to sociology and sociology of religion. The length of the book, detailed account of events and theoretical discussions at certain points could be somehow distracting for the general reader. However, this does not undermine the valuable contribution it makes to the understanding of the role of religion in European history, identity, politics, and public space.

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## The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture

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*Edited by Christian Lange and Songül Mecit*

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 318 pages, ISBN 9780748668571.

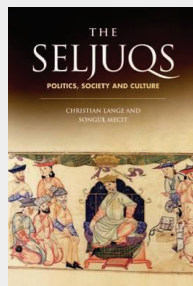
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*Reviewed by Osman G. Özgüdenli*

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AFTER the passing of such researchers in Seljuq history as Osman Turan, İbrahim Kafesoğlu, Mehmet Altay Köymen, Faruk Sümer, Sergei G. Agajanov, Claude Cahen, and Ann K. S. Lambton, there was, from the 1970s onwards, a serious dearth of studies in the field, both in Turkey and Europe. However, it is with great pleasure that we state that from the 2000s onwards, Seljuq studies have been revived by the training of new young researchers in the field and by the organisation of symposia and the publication of new books and articles, among which is the book reviewed here.

The book in question contains 15 papers originally given at the 14-15 September 2008



Edinburgh conference on “The Seljuqs: Islam revitalized?”. The book consists of three sections containing these fifteen articles, prefaced with a “List of figures” (p. vii), an “Acknowledgements” (p. ix), a “List of abbreviations” (p. x) and an editors’ “Introduction” (pp. 1-9).

As the introduction (pp. 1-9) states, the volume seeks to engage with areas going beyond the traditional scholarly concerns with political and military history, through explorations of such themes as ideology, legal theory, justifications of authority, the politics of ritual, display, spatial organisation, and the relationships between nomads and settled peoples.

The first section of the book deals with the Central Asian origins of the Seljuqs and their concepts of political authority and legitimacy. C. Edmund Bosworth's "The Origins of the Seljuqs" (pp. 13-21) deals with the origin of the Seljuqs in the Turkish tribe of the Oghuz and discusses the portrayal of the Oghuz by travellers and chroniclers of various nationalities, including their negative portrayal by Islamic geographers such as Ibn Fadlān. Finally, it discusses the legendary account of the origin of the Seljuqs in the *Malik-nāma* and the problematic question of the relations between the branch of the Oghuz who were to become the Seljuqs and the senior Yabghu line of the Oghuz who remained pagan until the turn of the millennium.

Carole Hillenbrand (University of Edinburgh) discusses the court life and ceremonies of the Seljuqs and their relations to earlier cultures in "Aspect of the Court of the Great Seljuqs" (pp. 22-38). First, she analyses the presentation of court life in the frontispiece of the *Kitāb al-Diryāq* of Pseudo-Galen, which presents the world of the Seljuqs in microcosm, stressing the informality of the central presentation of the ruler as opposed to representations of court life in classical sources. She then analyses three important aspects of court life: the *nawba*, or drum-beating ceremony, and its significance in bestowing degrees of status to adjunct rulers; the role of men of letters at the Seljuq court and court rivalry between poets; and finally, the importance of hunting as the sport of sultans. These three aspects are then analysed in terms of the assimilation of Persian culture: while hunting was a natural extension of the culture of the steppe, the presence of literary scholars at court was something entirely new, and the *nawba* ceremony, in which ancient Turkic colour symbolism was retained, was a composite of Muslim and pagan Turkic culture.

D. G. Tor (University of Notre Dame), in "Sovereign and Pious': The Religious Life of the Great Seljuq Sultans" (pp. 39-62), discusses the religious life of the great Seljuq Sultans, and takes an intermediate position between the original view of the Seljuqs as Sunni heroes and the revisionist view, which stresses their persecution of the Abbasid caliphs, and their use of religion for propaganda purposes. She provides textual evidence of the Sultans' religious scruples and deathbed confessions, their relationship with Sunni men of religion, saints and shrines, and the apparent effect of their religious convictions on their public policy.

Songül Mecit (University of Edinburgh), in "Kingship and Ideology under the Rum Seljuqs" (pp. 63-78), discusses the evolution of the official ideology of kingship under the Rum Seljuqs in the reigns of 'Izz al-Dīn Kilij Arslan II, 'Izz al-Dīn Kay-Kāwūs I and 'Alā al-Dīn Kay-Qubād I. She shows that while the inscriptions and other sources from these periods describe an ideal rather than a reality, they are nevertheless significant political tools.

A. C. S. Peacock (British Institute at Ankara), in "Seljuq Legitimacy in Islamic History" (pp. 79-95), analyses the way in which the Seljuqs justified their grip on political power, and suggests that their most lasting legacy was in fact not any of their specific achievements, but rather the use to which their name could be put as a means of legitimising authority by future generations.

The second section of the book deals with Seljuq society. Jürgen Paul (University of Halle), in "Arslān Arghūn – Nomadic Revival?" (pp. 99-116), discusses the career of Arslān Arghūn and his attempt at establishing a Khurasan, during which he established his

rule at Merv and Balkh. Although in the latter period he relied for support on Turkmen warriors and followed the policy of tearing down city walls and fortresses, the question of whether he was in fact a nomadic leader and whether his short period of rule was one of nomadisation or renomadisation must, Paul concludes, be left open.

Vanessa Van Renterghem (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris), in “Controlling and Developing Baghdad: Caliphs, Sultans and the Balance of Power in the Abbasid Capital (Mid-5th/11th to Late 6th/12th Centuries)” (pp. 117-138), discusses the relations between the Seljuq Sultans and the Abbasid capital from Tughril Bey’s first entry into Baghdad until the beginning of the reign of the Caliph al-Nāsir. She begins with an analysis of the balance of power between caliphs and sultans from the period of Seljuq domination to that of Abbasid recovery, questions the concept of ‘Sunni revival’ as a deliberate and organised policy of the Seljuqs, discusses urban development in Baghdad in Seljuq times and the way in which the shared control of the Seljuqs and the Abbasids over the city functioned, and concludes that Seljuq rule over the city increased the integration of Baghdad into the eastern Islamic world.

Daphna Ephrat (The Open University of Israel), in “The Seljuqs and the Public Sphere in the Period of Sunni Revivalism: The View from Baghdad” (pp. 139-156), continues the analysis of Seljuq Baghdad by putting forward a new approach to the question of the relationship between the official and public spheres during the period of Sunni revivalism. It challenges the view of the Seljuqs as an alien élite estranged from the society it ruled through an analysis of the role of patronage, the relationship of the ruling class with schools and factions and the Sultan’s

contact in public spaces with ‘the people of the Sunna.’

Christian Lange (Utrecht University) discusses the transformation of the office of market inspector (*muhtasib*) during the Seljuq period in “Changes in the Office of *Hisba* under the Seljuqs” (pp. 157-181). The *muhtasib* is seen as negotiating the boundaries between the inviolability of Muslim households and the dictates of government. Lange discusses the role of the *muhtasib* under the Umayyads and the early Abbasid caliphs, focusing on what he sees as two contrasting prototypes in the persons of the pious Abū Sa’īd al-Hasan b. Ahmad al-Istakhrī and the obscene and scatological poet Ibn al-Hajjāj. He then shows how, under the Seljuqs, more interventionist and repressive punishments were brought into force with a new emphasis on the subjugation of women and ignominious parading for offences against public decency.

David Durand-Guédy (University of Halle), in “An Emblematic Family of Seljuq Iran: the Khujandīs of Isfahan” (pp. 182-202), gives us a new perspective on the rise and fall of a (Shāfi’ī) family of religious scholars brought to Isfahan by Nizām al-Mulk, showing how their relationship with the Seljuqs was a classic example of an alliance between knowledge and power and how their conflict with the Hanafī community led by the Sa’īds was not simply a matter of doctrinal difference, but of power and the control of wealth.

The third section of the book goes on to deal with the question of culture. Robert Gleave (University of Exeter), in “Shii Jurisprudence During the Seljuq Period: Rebellion and Public Order in an Illegitimate State” (pp. 205-227), argues that Shii jurisprudence during the early Seljuq period was not as dependent on imitations of al-Tūsī as was previously

thought, and that opposition to certain aspects of his thought was not confined to his more well-known critics, such as Ibn Zuhra and Ibn Idrīs, but was also to be found in dynamic debates among his pupils.

Massimo Campanini (L'università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'), in "In Defence of Sunnism: al-Ghazālī and the Seljuqs" (pp. 228-239), places al-Ghazālī's political thought within the context of the Seljuq sultanate and the Abbasid caliphate. He argues that the Seljuqs, despite their defence of the caliphate against its adversaries, were its enemies in the sense that they effected the transformation from an Islamic state to an Islamic model of the state dependent on their temporal political power. Al-Ghazālī was well aware of the realities of this new order and believed that religion could only be supported by a strong political power, and that forty years of tyranny were better than a week of turmoil, yet he nevertheless recommended wise men and sufis to stay clear of both caliphs and sultans.

Vahid Behmardi (Lebanese American University), in "Arabic and Persian Intertextuality in the Seljuq Period: Hamīdī's *Maqāmāt* as a Case Study" (pp. 240-255), uses Hamīdī's *Maqāmāt* as an example of the way in which previous Arabic texts were used by authors using the Persian language and creating a new Persian literature. This was not merely

a process of imitation, but incorporated new rhetorical strategies, such as the creation of a mystical atmosphere through the use of an anonymous narrator and main characters.

Scott Redford (Georgetown University), in "City Building in Seljuq Rum" (pp. 256-276), discusses rebuilding and architectural recycling in the medieval cities of Sinop, Antalya, Konya, and Alanya and shows how inscriptions from this period reveal tensions between the sultan and the ruling élite.

Finally, Robert Hillenbrand (University of Edinburgh), in "The Seljuq Monuments of Turkmenistan" (pp. 277-308), gives us an account of the setting, distribution, and political context of a compact body of medieval monuments – mausoleums, mosques, and palaces – in Turkmenistan. He discusses their baked brick construction, its parallels with the Justinianic architecture of the Eastern Mediterranean and differences from the more decorative Iranian styles, and closes with a detailed description of the mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar (1118-1157), 'a dry run for the Taj Mahal.' This chapter is illustrated with a number of impressive black and white photographs. The book ends with an index (pp. 309-318).

All in all, the work constitutes a serious contribution to Seljuq research, for which the symposium organisers, contributors, and editors deserve our thanks.