

BOOK REVIEW

Yonca Köksal Özyaşar and Can Nacar, *Anatolian Livestock Trade in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2024. 220 pages.
doi:10.1017/npt.2025.3

The literature on the food provisioning of İstanbul and other major Ottoman cities has only marginally addressed Anatolia's role in meat supplies. Even less attention has been paid to the period after the 1840s. *Anatolian Livestock Trade in the Late Ottoman Empire* aims to fill this gap. By bringing together the events, places, and human and non-human actors with a *longue-durée* perspective, the book tells a comprehensive story about the formation and functioning of livestock trade networks, emphasizing the economic and environmental factors at play. It covers a broad geographical area, from central to northeastern and northwestern Anatolia to the Eastern Mediterranean ports of İzmir, Antalya, Mersin, and İskenderun, and thematically, from wars and financial crises to railways and epizootics.

The book begins with an introductory chapter that provides an overview of the subject, the methodology used, the questions to be addressed, and the sources used for the research. In the late Ottoman Empire, the stories of the expansion of livestock farming and trade in Anatolia and the population growth in İstanbul and other urban centers are intertwined, as the authors argue, “unfolded within the broader framework of economic, social, political, environmental, and technological shifts” (p. 14). They suggest that, significantly, two policies shaped the livestock production and trade in the Empire: a shift from provisionist to liberal policies and the sedentarization of nomadic groups.

Chapters 2–5 address the livestock trade networks and flow of sheep and goats from different parts of Anatolia to İstanbul and other urban centers. Chapter 2 focuses on Konya and Ankara provinces in central Anatolia. As part of its provisionist policies and successive wars in Rumelia, the Ottoman state, by the 1790s, established the quota system to avoid bottlenecks in the meat supply chain. The state granted the Cihanbeyli and affiliated Kurdish nomadic tribes in the region certain rights, such as tax exemptions and free use of pastures, to incorporate them into its provisionist system. The quota system remained in place until the 1860s when the government liberalized livestock trade. Köksal Özyaşar and Nacar argue that the central government's efforts to resettle nomadic pastoralists for economic, social, and military reasons and the sparking of meat prices because of the Crimean War and subsequent financial crises, as well as the ecological stress caused by the droughts, severe winters, and diseases and epizootics were major drivers of the abolition of the quota system.

Chapter 3 explores the changing extent and nature of livestock trade in northeastern Anatolia, particularly in Erzurum province. The region was a hub of sheep trade from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, thanks to its rugged landscape with plenty of pastures and water resources. Sheep from Erzurum supplied Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus markets. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Egypt, Russia, and Iran emerged as buyers of meat from northwestern Anatolia. With the advent of steamships, the sea route came to be preferred over the land route, and northeastern Anatolia became increasingly linked with the livestock markets in İstanbul via the port of Trabzon. Some Erzurum merchants and intermediaries also benefited from this technological advancement. They settled in İstanbul and ran their businesses from there, coordinating the sale and shipment of the livestock from northeastern Anatolia through a network of local partners and agents.


In the fourth chapter, the authors focus on Hüdavendigar province in northwestern Anatolia. The province's favorable geography, topography, and climate made it a major supplier of sheep. Similar to Trabzon's role as the livestock gateway of northeastern Anatolia, Bandırma on the southern Marmara Sea developed as the transfer point of livestock coming from Hüdavendigar province. The province's role as the ranch of Empire sheep became complicated with the settlement of thousands of refugees from the Caucasus and Crimea in the province. As the authors demonstrate, the influx of refugees increased pressure on land available for farming and grazing and intensified the struggle for land. In this chapter, the authors also highlight how the Ottoman state in Hüdavendigar, different than other regions where it had a regulatory function, intervened in livestock raising by establishing imperial farms to supply animal products, mainly wool, to state-run textile factories in Izmid and İslimye. Moreover, these farms served as the laboratories of imperial veterinary science, where animals were fed, bred, and treated according to scientific measures.

Chapter 5 of the book addresses the role of major Eastern Mediterranean port cities – İzmir, İskenderun, Mersin, and Antalya – in livestock trade between Anatolia and İstanbul, but also the Aegean islands, Crete, and Egypt. It argues that the trade networks that these ports (especially İzmir and İskenderun) established with the interior, as well as the development of railways, facilitated the shipment of cattle and sheep. These ports' role in the livestock supply chain became even more pronounced during epizootics when they channeled thousands of sheep and cattle to the troubled regions, such as İzmir coming to the rescue during the outbreaks in Egypt in 1842 and 1863–1864. In this respect, the authors argue that diseases and calamities in one part of the Empire created opportunities for the port cities to sell their animals for cash.

The final chapter examines the organization and transformation of meat provisioning in İstanbul. It begins with a discussion of the provisionist policies in the first half of the nineteenth century, continues to the adoption of liberal policies as a response to socio-economic and environmental changes, and finishes with an analysis of attempts to modernize slaughter and sale of animals in response to urban health issues at the turn of the twentieth century.

The book represents a significant contribution to the history of livestock farming and trade in Ottoman Anatolia. Its focus on various factors that affected livestock trade and meat provision – from changing state policies to financial crises and environmental disturbances – makes it seem more appealing to economic historians

and historians of consumption rather than environmental and animal historians. By incorporating a diverse array of examples, the authors illustrate how political, economic, and environmental factors affected livestock production and trade. Yet, they do not address how millions of sheep and cattle, with their existence or absence, shaped and changed the society, economy, and environment in the late Empire. In this regard, one potential criticism of the book would be that, despite noted connections to relevant non-human actors and forces, the book lacks interest in embracing sheep and cattle as historical agents and incorporating *their* histories and insights into *our* histories. Overall, *Anatolian Livestock Trade in the Late Ottoman Empire* stands as an accessible and engaging account of the growing livestock trade from Anatolian provinces to İstanbul and other major urban centers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The many questions it raises seem likely to inspire further research to shed more light on the relations and interactions of humans with non-human animals in the Empire.

Onur İnal 

Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
Email: onur.inal@univie.ac.at