

**Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, foreword by Victor Ostapchuk.** *The Ottoman Survey Register of Podolia (ca. 1681): Defter-i Mufasssal-i Eyalet-i Kamanice, part 1: Text Translation, and Commentary, part 2: Facsimile..* Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and Institute of Oriental Studies, 2004. xv + 1034 pp. \$75.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-916458-78-2.

**Reviewed by** Yucel Terzibasoglu (Department of History, Bogazici University, Istanbul)

**Published on** H-Mediterranean (January, 2006)

This large format, two-volume book is a recent addition to the increasing number of reprints and editions, in various formats, of the early modern Ottoman tax registers. In the foreword, V. Ostapchuk defines the aim of the volume, which is to provide "a template for a model edition" and set a standard for future publications of other Ottoman tax registers. The book claims to furnish a fresh perspective on the registers "in a more nuanced and critical manner." The first volume contains a comprehensive seventy-page introduction by the editor; transcription from Turkish in Arabic script of the entire text of the survey; translations in English of the narrative portions of the text; a sample register entry for a typical village; a useful glossary; indices of personal and place names; toponymic and fiscal tables arranged by the editor; and a series of professionally drawn, detailed maps of the surveyed region. The second volume is the facsimile of the register. The guide on how to read the register will make it easier for the non-specialist to make use of the data and contents. In fact, the book is produced with a view to its intelligibility not only for the specialist on Ottoman history, but also for non-specialists, and this is a welcome consideration for purposes of comparative research with tax and land surveys of other parts of the world.

Most of the extant Ottoman land and tax surveys, and the resulting registers, date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were compiled every thirty to forty years for a particular region or province, starting in most cases in the immediate aftermath of the conquest. The registers showed the distribution of revenue sources of the empire among the purse of the sultan and the high bureaucrats in Istanbul, local military fief-holders, religious foundations, and holders of other revenue/land grants in return for military and other services. From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards, these revenue sources were farmed out, and this earlier form of revenue distribution was phased out. Omer Lutfi Barkan, who pioneered research on Ottoman tax registers (*tahrir defterleri*), calculated that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the tax assessment and collection system as represented by the *tahrir* registers was at its peak, the possessors of military fiefs alone, that is about 37,000 persons, were allocated nearly half of the taxes levied in the territories of the empire through these grants.[1]

The surveyors, appointed by the central state, were men of substance, some fief holders themselves, with knowledge of land law and local conditions. They were accompanied by the local judge and a group of local fief-holders. They carried out the survey by individually visiting every village/

town quarter or fief (which could contain more than one village or urban revenue source, such as customs dues) and were accompanied by the holder of the revenue grant for that source. The surveyor had to "see" each and every taxpayer in a village. The primary intention was to include in the purview of the survey and the register all revenue sources, and to catch those revenue sources that might have escaped being recorded since the previous survey.

From this survey, two types of register resulted: the first--the so called "detailed register" (*defter-i mufassal*)--lists the names of all the taxpayers, that is, all the adult males by village or town quarter. Next to each adult taxpayer's name is recorded the name of his father; occupation; marital status; obligations and privileges; extent of the land held; quantity of production; and the price of the produce. In fact, this was a tax register by revenue source. A *kanunname* (provincial law book), which formulated the rules for taxation to be effective in that province, typically preceded the detailed tax register. These law books represented the settlement between the local elite and the central state on the share and distribution of revenues, and, consequently, were highly malleable documents.

The second type of register--the so called "summary register" (*defter-i icmal*)--lists the distribution of revenue sources by the local fief-holders in accordance with their share of the revenues. It gives the name of the fief holder, describes the source by its nature and location (and boundary demarcation), and specifies the total amount of the assessed tax, and the number of taxpayers in that tax unit. Therefore, the "summary register" was in fact a tax register by revenue settlement/distribution. There were also complementary registers: the book of changes (*defter-i derdest*) and the daybook (*defter-i ruznamce*). They updated regularly the detailed and summary registers by recording, respectively, changes that took place in the borders and legal status of each fief and changes in the deeds of grant (transfers of grant).

The survey register of the Ottoman province of Podolia (ca. 1681), as reproduced in this book, is a "detailed register," although it is not typical. It is an example from a later period as far as *tahrir* registers go, compiled at a time when the land and tax regime it corresponded to was changing, and when the compilation and use of these registers was becoming less frequent in the core provinces of the empire. It is the third of a series of survey registers for this border region, which remained under Ottoman rule for a total period of twenty-seven years, prepared by the new Ottoman administration within a period of ten years. The first one was another "detailed register" in addition to a special survey of the urban revenue sources of Kam'janec, the capital of the province. The register, the original of which is located at the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive in Istanbul, unfortunately does not include a law book (*kanunname*), which we may only assume was prepared for the first, now non-extant, survey register. Importantly, it includes a protocol of the border demarcation between the new Ottoman province and the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. The Ottoman province of Podolia covered only part of the geographic plane of Podolia, which stretches between the Boh and Dnister rivers, and extends from

Galicja, to the west, and the Black Sea lowlands, to the southeast. It was an ethnic Ukrainian territory and the only province of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth to fall under the direct rule of the Ottoman empire.

Ottoman tax registers have mostly been used by historians for reconstructing the demographic history of a region or for drawing local snapshots of social and economic conditions from the data under the purview of the survey.<sup>[2]</sup> Here, too, the editor reconstructs a rich demographic and social picture, drawing also on a wealth of East European and Ottoman sources. Among other things, for instance, the register shows that the Ottoman conquest, if anything, contributed to the population decline in the area which had started before the conquest, in the middle of the seventeenth century. Political turmoil and uprisings were the main instigators of demographic decline in the period before the conquest. In the wake of the conquest, large numbers of Ukrainian peasants, not always voluntarily and against the stipulations of the peace treaty, were compelled to leave the territory with their Polish lords. As a result, the register lists a total of 868 settlements, of which only 277 were inhabited at the time of the survey. Perhaps more dramatically, the Ottoman conquest also changed the ethnic makeup of the towns and facilitated the "Ukrainianization" of the largest Podolian city of Kam'janec as a result of Polish emigration. The register provides a good window for looking into the different urban communities (which included Armenians and Jews as well as Poles and Ukrainians), their economic activities and settlement structures.

Overall, however, the register gives a better view of rural life than of urban centers. It lists all the inhabited and uninhabited settlements in the Podolian countryside, with a view to not only taking stock of the actual sources of income, but also to figure out the potential taxable income from the province. Thus it gives a good picture of the settlement history in the region. Regarding settled vil-

lages, it is possible to deduce the average village size (which was about twenty households) as well as the average burden of tithes and sources of other revenues, in each settlement, and to extrapolate the population size based on the household numbers provided. In Podolia, the largest tax intake came from grain tithes, a tithe on honey and the *ispence* poll tax. In general, a comparison of pre- and post-Ottoman tax structure shows that, although the composition of the taxes paid in the Polish and Ottoman periods differed, the total tax burden per household remained similar. Although the editor finds that the peasantry who lived in the *vakif* villages paid less tax to the state than their counterparts in the state lands, we do not know what the total tax burden on the *vakif* peasantry was after taking into account the special taxes and duties as specified in the *vakif* privilege of the three vizierial *vakifs* in the province. Indeed the editor rightly cautions against taking the tax figures too literally. Firstly, the taxes assessed were not based on actual production but on an estimate based on the average production of the previous three years. Secondly, the total tax figures written down in the register included the potential revenues from the uninhabited villages and reflected potential tax revenues if and when the province was fully settled. Thirdly, the taxes registered did not include the "extraordinary" taxes that the cash-strapped Ottoman administration increasingly resorted to, at this time. Nevertheless, the money transfers made to the province from the center far exceeded any taxes collected locally, reflecting the political rather than the economic logic of the conquest.

In carefully mining for information and bringing together disparate accounts in the register, as well as drawing on other registers and local historiography, Kolodziejczyk also reconstructs the way the surveyors actually carried out the survey. This is an important contribution for the understanding of the production of the survey as well as of the concerns and preoccupations of the local and central officials in compiling the detailed list of taxpayers and taxes to be collected

from the province, and in drawing land boundaries. This attention to the mechanics of survey-taking activity alerts us, among other things, to the role played by the local fief-holders and, more importantly, by the village headmen in making the local picture legible for the Ottoman officials. The double role that these men played in one of the most crucial administrative practices of the new conquerors must have made them suspect both to the official and the local peasants, and needs more consideration.

Arguably, the importance of this register rests on its uncommon characteristics. Firstly, we observe the increasing importance of the system of farming out tax revenues at the end of the seventeenth century. The growing need of the state for ready cash made farming out an increasingly common method of taxation during this period. In Podolia, it was not only state officials and other individuals who undertook to pay a lump sum down payment in return for the right to collect taxes, but also some peasants acquired tax collection rights, for example, from fishponds in return for down payments.

Secondly, the role of the *vakıfs* in the Ottoman urban and rural economy and society, as it appears in this register, is illustrative. True, *vakıfs*, as religious foundations, were central in the upkeep and maintenance of religious institutions, since they tied certain revenues to these institutions in perpetuity. The role of the *vakıfs* in the urban topography was also crucial in the promotion of public works, buildings and spaces. But the aspect of *vakıfs* that this register crucially underlines is how they, in effect, defined the lands that were to be kept outside the state land and tax regime, and represented land grants to high bureaucrats in Istanbul. This was rendered in the colorful formula: "separated from the pen and cut off from the foot," which meant no interference in the *vakıf* by the central bureaucracy nor trespassing by its representatives (fiscal, legal or law enforcement). The tax and other exemptions provided for the peas-

antry living in these lands (usually for a set period of time) were aimed at encouraging settlement and "enlivening" the area by making unsettled or depopulated areas attractive to would-be settlers. The defining and demarcation of the boundaries of the foundations was therefore very important, and explains the preoccupation of the surveyors as well as the register on the point regarding the lands and other revenues granted to three Ottoman viziers in Podolia.

As such the extent of such land grants was, by definition, a contentious issue. (The register includes the texts of two very detailed privilege certificates for two *vakıf* villages.) Consequently, we see here—as in many other tax surveys—that the surveyors were entrusted not only with determining the borders and marking their location, but, more fundamentally, with settling land boundary disputes during the survey in consultation with the central administration. In correctly emphasizing the demographic and economic information contained in the registers, the editor neglects to discuss this aspect, in spite of the fact that he points to it at several points in his introduction (pp. 16, 19-20), and provides the full translation of the privilege certificates (including the report of the boundary demarcation and an account on how the actual survey was carried out) in appendices 2 and 3. In this otherwise meticulously produced volume, the lack of discussion on the legal nature of the survey text is the only drawback, but that is not untypical in the general study of the survey registers. The legal nature of the surveyors' work was fundamental to the survey, and therefore makes the register a valuable legal text to be read in relation to the legal status of the land. They allow the researcher to determine which actors had conflicting claims over the sources of revenue (consequently over land) and over local customary rights to land. (We would have more information on this if we had the "law book.") They also provide an understanding of the value of the registers not simply as tax registers, but also as land registers (hence the rendition of them sometimes as "cadas-

tral surveys"). It is usually here that one can read the contentious issues in the legal status of the land, the constitutive nature of the survey text in relation to landed and urban property, and the political aspects of the distribution of revenue from land in an agrarian empire.

Finally, Kolodziejczyk should be congratulated for single-handedly embarking on what usually requires a team work, and accomplishing it with exactitude. These two volumes will be of great use not only to historians of the Ottoman empire and of the lands surveyed, but to historians and historical geographers who are interested in comparative analysis of land and tax surveys, of fiscal regimes, and in urban and rural history of the early modern period in general.

#### Notes

[1]. Omer Lutfi Barkan and Enver Mericli, *Hudavendigâr Livasi Tahrir Defterleri I* (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1988), p. 5.

[2]. For a recent review article see Oktay Ozel, "Population Changes in Ottoman Anatolia during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries: The 'Demographic Crisis' Reconsidered," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): pp. 183-205. Also see Heath Lowry, *Studies in Deftology: Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1992).

Copyright (c) 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses contact the Reviews editorial staff: [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-mediterranean>

**Citation:** Yucel Terzibasoglu. Review of Kołodziejczyk, Dariusz; Ostapchuk, foreword by Victor. *The Ottoman Survey Register of Podolia (ca. 1681): Defter-i Mufassal-i Eyalet-i Kamanice, part 1: Text Translation, and Commentary, part 2: Facsimile..* H-Mediterranean, H-Net Reviews. January, 2006.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11048>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.