

Recent Theses

Rachel Goshgarian. “Beyond the Social and the Spiritual: Redefining the Urban Confraternities of Late Medieval Anatolia.” Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2008. Pp. 311.

Thesis supervisor: Cemal Kafadar

Contact: rachelg@zohrabcenter.org

Abstract: This dissertation is the first comprehensive study of the phenomenon of the urban confraternity in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Anatolia. Urban confraternities in late medieval Anatolia played a range of roles in cities like Ankara, Erzincan, Konya and Sivas. The important political and social void filled specifically by akhī organizations in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Anatolia can only be understood within the context of the growing significance of the relatively stable urban centers during this time period of political instability. At the same time, various hierarchies (the Armenian Church, the Caliphate, etc.) continuously attempted to reform these associations in an effort to reign in the growing power of the brotherhoods that were sometimes, at least, better able to maintain peace and stability in regions undergoing immense political and social change.

Despite the fact that these associations of men living in urban centers in late medieval Anatolia have been considered in scholarship, a real understanding of what functions the organizations performed, how they were organized, their relationship with cities and with various contemporary religious and political authorities has not been established. This is due both to the adaptable nature of the brotherhoods and also to the ability of the concept of *futuwwa* (Arab., qualities of youth)—upon which these brotherhoods were founded—to transform itself depending on the social and political reality within which it existed. This dissertation presents a detailed reconstruction of the basis of the moral code of *futuwwa* as it changed over time; it is also a study of the way in which that code was articulated in Anatolia (in Arabic, Armenian, Persian and Turkish). This study attempts to reconsider one aspect of the history of thirteenth and fourteenth-century Anatolia from the perspective of regional urban history rather than a standard rule-oriented (i.e., Seljuk, Mongol or Cilician) viewpoint. The goal in doing so is to present a more complete picture of one significant social mechanism of the time. This dissertation shows that all over Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, urban associations of men existed playing similar roles and interacting with authorities (whether they were Christian or Muslim, Armenian or Turkish) in similar ways. Re-assessing the history of the region from this new perspective allows us to better understand the social realities of the age and to recognize the importance of this particular pattern of organization—the urban confraternity—in late medieval Anatolia.