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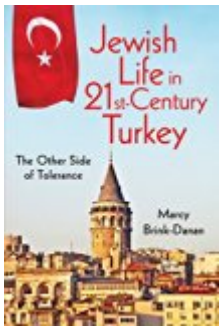
Marcy Brink-Danan. *Jewish Life in Twenty-First-Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012. xviii + 218 pp. $24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-253-22350-0.



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What is life like for Jews in Turkey today? Do they appear anywhere in academic scholarship? Marcy Brink-Danan's *Jewish Life in 21st-Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance* attempts to fill in the blanks by contributing a richly researched and theorized work of linguistic anthropology to a range of disciplines--Jewish and Sephardic studies, anthropology and cultural studies, Turkish and Middle Eastern area studies--that lack serious scholarship on this contemporary Jewish minority of a Muslim-majority nation. The book is a welcome addition to the few studies of present-day Jews residing outside Israel and around the Mediterranean. Like André Levy's work on Casablanca's Jews, it convincingly demonstrates that historical Jewish populations of currently "insignificant" numbers not only deserve scholarly attention on their own terms but also generate indispensable insight into their society as a whole.[1] Turning our attention from twentieth-century narratives of the region that follow mass emigrations of Middle Eastern and North African Jews to Israel, Europe, and beyond, Brink-Danan telescopes our gaze into the daily lives of a polyglot, polycultural community that remained in Turkey, navigating "with cosmopolitan caution" (p. 100) their Muslim-majority national landscape. The occasional references to Turkey's Kurdish minority, moreover, lead this reader to imagine significant comparative projects ahead that would locate and probe cross-minority interconnections in Turkey today, occluded from our scholarly attention by ethnic disciplinary divisions in the academy.

Framed by substantive introductory and concluding remarks, the book is composed of six chapters, each offering distinctive ethnographic material related to Jewish life in twenty-first century Turkey. From a tour of the Jewish museum in Istanbul in the first chapter to an analysis of silence and secrecy among Turkish Jews in the last, the book moves from the concrete to the immaterial--a valuable organizational choice for drawing less semiotically inclined readers into analyses based in both linguistics and anthropology. The chapters in between elucidate how intricately in-

terwoven are the visible, material conditions of Turkish Jewish life with the invisible (the erased, unspoken, locked away) through carefully researched analyses of patterns of Jewish naming (chapter 2), security systems (chapter 3), and performances for the national public (chapter 4), and within intimate community spaces (chapter 5). Throughout we gain an understanding of Turkish Jews as "reluctant cosmopolitans" (p. 29), exhibiting a "tolerance for tension" (p. xii) through methods of strategizing, silencing, securing, and dissembling in a nation mythologized as "tolerant." Drawing upon research conducted between 2002 and 2009, the study focuses on Jews in Istanbul after 1992, the date of the Quincentennial celebrations commemorating the arrival of Jews from Spain to the Ottoman Empire in 1492. In the context of Turkey's application for membership in the European Union a few years earlier, the starting point of the study represents a key public moment projecting Turkish Jews as a "model minority" in an empire and nation historicized as tolerant through the celebration's performances, media, scholarship, school curricula, and tours. Within a semiotic anthropological framework Brink-Danan "reads" diverse evidence from textual and visual media, interviews and participant-observations, built structures and street life to investigate "the other side of tolerance"--the lived experience of Turkish Jews.

A central argument of the book revolves around how we understand "cosmopolitanism" in Turkey and among Turkish Jews. Rejecting a range of spatial, political, and Orientalist usages, Brink-Danan revises the term to reflect her case study, arguing for a cosmopolitan "triple consciousness:" that is, Turkish Jews have developed not only an encyclopedic knowledge of diverse social and linguistic codes, but also a heightened ability to interpret such codes toward action or restraint, performance or erasure, publicizing or securing themselves. The book thus fits squarely into academic debates on the nature of cosmopolitanism today. Whereas the multilingual, multicultural, and multijuridical status of Turkish Jewish citizens have fostered their collective "encyclopedia," their cosmopolitanism does not end, according to Brink-Danan, with mere knowledge of difference. Using the highly interpretative antennae of a "third consciousness," Turkish Jews respond to a complex sociopolitical terrain in which they are frequently perceived as foreigners--a terrain fraught with contradictions through the public rhetoric of Turkey's "tolerance," particularly in reference to its Jewish citizens. Within this social pressure-cooker, the author argues, such triply conscious cosmopolitanism is ascribed as a survival skill rather than achieved as a free choice. An analysis of the Jewish museum in Istanbul poignantly conveys the tension at the heart of navigating and interpreting sociopolitical incompatibilities in Turkey today: the curators not only showcased Jewish assimilation into "tolerant" Turkish society in the main exhibit, but also, in the basement, particularistic Jewish culture, reflecting the dilemma that "in order to claim that Turkey is a tolerant place, Jews have to remain eternally different, that is, be a subject that continues to demand tolerance" (p. 47).

This enlarged understanding of cosmopolitanism as acquired discernment by Jews runs through the book's analysis of verbal, visual, architectural, textual, and performative evidence from Turkish Jewish life today. At the same time, the author is careful to accentuate the ways in which perception, memory, and audience reaction shape interpretation and, by extension, individual or collective response. In the discussion of Jewish naming patterns (chapter 2), for example, we meet Lusi, who is regularly assumed to be a non-citizen or foreigner in Istanbul because of her name. But it is the family story of her Ottoman great-grandmother, who suffered interrogation in France during World War One because of her "suspicious" two names (Judeo-Spanish and French)--motivating her to give her daughter a single Turkish name--that leads Lusi "to wonder what border guards lie in wait for her" (p. 68) and

"socializes a new generation of Turkish Jews into an awareness of the precariousness of social classifications" (p. 73). What was before thus shapes what will be through the mediation of the past. In another example of influential precedents, the author interprets the most visible surveillance systems at Istanbul synagogues as well as the public erasures implying perceived safety concerns, such as signs removed from Jewish institutions, Jewish star necklaces not worn in public, and Judeo-Spanish accents educated out of speech. It was an attack on Neve Shalom synagogue over fifteen years ago, she argues, that serves as a metonymic device (a stand-in for the whole) by which the community can justify pervasive visible and invisible security measures motivated more by general perceptions of social insecurity rather than by real threats of violence.

Alongside its mainline argument about cosmopolitanism and the highly interactive and contextual nature of interpretation, the study draws fruitfully on theoretical approaches not central to semiotics, such as theories of citizenship, performance, and minority politics. The analysis of the election of the chief rabbi in 2002, for example, benefits from the concept of a "politics of presence," arguing that the nominally democratic process represented not so much the familiar "politics of ideas" related to campaigns, but rather a safe public space for Jews to be both political and different.[2] The inauguration of the newly elected chief rabbi as well as community activities in intimate spaces (chapter 5) are framed in terms of performance theory, demonstrating the significance not only of context but also in-context performance to Turkish Jewish cosmopolitans. Here we understand how fluid are the notions and enactments of what is "Jewish" and what is "Turkish" as they are reinforced or challenged in such arenas as marriage counseling and ceremonies, parent-teacher meetings at the Jewish school, or public and in-community musical events. The role of audience--composition of, interactions with, assumptions about--is key to interpretation-based choices by the author's performing informants. The final reflection on silence, secrecy, and irony among Turkish Jews and those who research them (chapter 6) engages in linguistic analysis of what is said, not said, or said ironically (and why)--but with a twist: it offers readers a real-life experience of the communal absences pervading the study. Through a series of quotes the author discusses "secret" community knowledge without revealing names or key words, enabling her to honor confidentiality without silencing her own research. If readers recognize the blacked out names or words, they inhabit their status as insiders to the community; if not, they experience the very impenetrability of the community to tourists, novice researchers, and non-Jewish citizens that forms the central concern of the book.

This meticulously researched study of a community focuses on collective patterns of speech and discourse rather than a myriad of individual utterances, emphasizing language patterns and generalizable interpretative stances over individual agency. An arguable position, this approach nonetheless raises questions about individual or subgroup differences within the community: were gender or generational distinctions observable in speech, interpretation, performance, or political position among Turkish Jews? If so, how might possible differences nuance the sociopolitical analyses? Scholarship on memory that firmly incorporates all ages into the conventional investigative categories of gender, race, and class, for example, has interpreted topical silences or "nostalgia" among the elderly as age-related modes of sociability and construction of individual legacies--an interpretation that could either challenge or more finely texture a primarily political analysis of silence among Turkish Jews.[3] The book also provides a valuable critique of historical Ottoman-Turkish-Jewish friendship narratives underpinning the representation of Jews as model minority in Turkey today. It is important to note, however, that certain apparently conciliatory histories (some even subsidized by the Quincenten-

nial Foundation circa 1992) were written in the context of scholarly debates over, for example, the longtime trope of the "Oriental Despot" and Ottoman Jews and Christians as segregated, subordinate communities. These works began re-envisioning Ottoman administrative structures and intercommunal relations by making innovative use of primary Ottoman textual sources and establishing new methodological standards in Ottoman and Sephardic studies. As subsequent scholarship has shown, apparent juridical "inequalities" (laws on non-Muslim clothing and architectural height limits, for example) in fact played out in unique ways on the ground in diverse locales, time periods, and local courts, with some legal distinctions (non-conscription linked to a special tax, for instance) arguably increasing "power" (as human and economic resources) among certain non-Muslim communities over time.[4] The historical record on Ottoman daily life and economies would enrich discussions of the relationship between the empire and the nation, specifically changing modes of citizenship and the empire as remembered in a politicized present.

Taken as a whole, Brink-Danan's volume offers a complex and thought-provoking portrait of Jewish life in twenty-first-century Turkey through the compelling lens of linguistic anthropology. It not only elucidates multiple facets of a Jewish community generally overlooked by scholars, but also encourages us to rethink the nature of "cosmopolitanism," "tolerance," and minority politics more broadly through the example of Turkey. Several welcome references to parallel phenomena between Turkish Jews and Kurds, moreover, suggest the potential for future comparative explorations on Turkish minorities not conceptually paired across Muslim/non-Muslim or rebel/non-rebel lines, but linked, for example, as borderland peoples targeted equally by state security interventions.[5] In addition, the writing is beautifully accessible to specialists and general readers alike. The book thus makes a significant contribution to both academic scholarship and public intellectual life as an essential counterpoint to media depictions of Turkey as the sole secular democracy in the Middle East--and now a model of governance for "Arab Spring" nations.

Notes

Epigraph: Rabbi Howard Siegel, "Turkish 'Welcome' Not All It's Cracked Up to Be," ***American Jewish World***, April 10, 1992, quoted on 42.

[1]. For example, see André Levy, "Notes on Jewish-Muslim Relationships: Revisiting the Vanishing Moroccan Jewish Community," ***Cultural Anthropology*** 18, no. 3 (2003): 365-97.

[2]. Anne Phillips, "Dealing with Difference: A Politics of Ideas or a Politics of Presence?" ***Constellations*** 1, no. 1 (1994): 74-91.

[3]. For example, see Kathleen Woodward, "Telling Stories: Aging, Reminiscence, and the Life Review," ***Doreen B. Townsend Center Occasional Papers*** 9 (1997).

[4]. For several early Ottoman examples of how Islamic and Jewish law played out in diverse ways in daily life, see Matt Goldish, ***Jewish Questions: Responsa on Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period*** (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[5]. Erol Ülker, "Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization in Interwar Turkey: The Settlement Law of 1934," ***European Journal of Turkish Studies***, Thematic issue: ***Demographic Engineering Part 1***, 7 (2008), accessible at http://ejts.revues.org/index2123.html.

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