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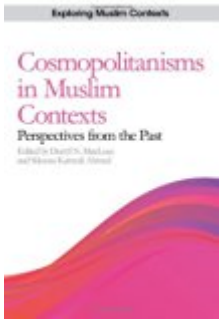

Derryl N. Maclean, Sikeena Karmali Ahmed, eds.. *Cosmopolitanisms in Muslim Contexts: Perspectives from the Past.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. 190 pp. $96.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7486-4456-8.

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This book examines the concept of "cosmopolitanism" in different Muslim societies in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a view to comparing "specific cosmopolitan instances within Muslim contexts in the past and hence [reflecting] on commonalities and differences" (p. 1). Kai Kresse, in his essay on Mombasa, offers a handy definition of cosmopolitanism, namely, "openness to the world (***Weltoffenheit***), experience of the world (***Welterfahrung***), and the skill to deal flexibly with the world (***Weltgewandtheit***)" (p. 33). Cosmopolitanism is thus cast as the antithesis of narrow particularism. Cosmopolitanism and localism exist in tension with one another, often in the same community.

Not surprisingly perhaps, this definition works more successfully in some cases than in others. Given the diversity of contexts, historical periods, and specific topics of investigation in the different essays, it is hard to see how a single definition could work for all of them. Some case studies suggest that the terms "cosmopolitan" and "local" can be reversed depending on one's perspective. Were the nineteenth-century French judges in Alexandria described by Thomas Kuehn acting in a "cosmopolitan" rather than "local" manner--or the reverse--given the fact that they failed to understand the local nuances of the phenomenon of cursing? And in Will Hanley's chapter, was the Ottoman Empire's colonial rule of Yemen in the early twentieth century an instance of a "cosmopolitan" though fading Muslim empire attempting to control a recalcitrant "local" Yemeni shaykh (the Zaydi imam), or simply an assertion of Yemeni political independence against a distant and rather weak overlord? These examples show that the terms "cosmopolitan" and "local" do not serve too well in every case.

This said, the case studies themselves are rich, complex, and full of interest. Felicitas Becker, in chapter 2, looks at the relationship between town and countryside on the Swahili coast of Tanzania in the 1920s-30s. Specifically, she examines the conversion of villagers to Islam in a context in which Islam was associated with cosmopolitanism and urbanization. However, Becker argues

that the Swahili townspeople's "cosmopolitanism was itself parochial and exclusive," while the villagers for their part had a "pragmatic" and "often critical" view of townspeople. They appreciated the towns for the access they provided to much-needed goods unavailable in the hinterland, and for the towns' association with "coastal Islam," Islam in turn being associated with becoming a good person, and with being free (p. 15). But they resented the townspeoples' treatment of them as slaves despite the fact that slavery had been officially abolished in 1922, and had been disappearing even before then. Once the villagers adopted Islam, village elders established mosques in the hinterland as a means of claiming ritual space and asserting political authority at a time when post-World War I Tanzania, transferred from German to British colonial rule, was experiencing a political vacuum in the hinterland.

In chapter 3, Kai Kresse paints a lively picture of Mombasa, Kenya, in which "openness to the world ..., experience of the world ..., and the skill to deal flexibly with the world" jostle with internal hierarchies (p. 33). A vital trade hub on the East African coast since the sixteenth century, Mombasa has a dizzying array of ethnic and religious groups. On the street on which Kresse lived in the 1960s his neighbors were Bohra, Swahili, Hadhrami-Arab, Ethiopian, Baluchi, and Somali.

This diversity is balanced, Kresse shows, by the hierarchical ordering of society and its classification of people as either "civilised" or "wild." Demonstrating that you are civilized happens through "performance-related" behavior, such as using a refined vocabulary, which can be learned over time. But being civilized is also associated with being Muslim, being wealthy through trade, and being free (not a slave) (p. 39). Kresse notes the tension in Mombasa society between the patricians at the top and slaves/dependents at the bottom along with the integration of outsiders that has historically characterized the city. The second part of the chapter focuses on South Asians, both Muslim and Hindu. Here Kresse tells the story of a remarkable Gujarati Patel man known as P. D. Master, who achieved renown among Mombasans for speaking out against colonial racism and promoting the welfare of women, but met with fierce opposition from fellow Gujaratis when he flouted social convention by marrying a child widow.

Chapters 4 and 5, deal with the Ottoman Empire. Chapter 4 analyzes Ottoman attempts in the early twentieth century to control a restive outlying province, northern Yemen under the Zaydi imams, by emulating British strategies of indirect rule. The internal dialogue that took place between three Ottoman officials on the Yemen Commission between 1909 and 1911 reveals the tension between the Committee of Union and Progress's desire to centralize control in Istanbul and the countervailing desire to follow the British model by giving the Zaydi imams considerable local authority (a model that was arguably also provided by the Ottomans' own ***millet*** system). In the end, the Da'an agreement of 1911 gave the Zaydi imam the local autonomy he sought in exchange for allegiance to the Ottoman empire-state.

Ariel Salzmann, in chapter 5, avoids using the word "cosmopolitan" altogether, focusing instead on the spatial and social geography of Istanbul, and secondarily Izmir, to understand transformations in interethnic relations in these cities between the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries. Using a variety of vernacular sources which include an eighteenth-century Turkish treatise on insults, as well as a multilingual late-nineteenth-century lottery ticket from Izmir, she shows that the ethnic composition of Turkish cities had changed so much during this time that "if the 1874 lottery ticket ... fell to earth today in Izmir, few of Turkey's urban residents would understand its meaning," because today's largely Turkish Muslim population uses Roman script and the memory of the Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic scripts

and the people who used them has been erased (p. 84).

How people of different ethnicities lived together through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Salzmann argues, was neither the "Babel-like cosmopolis portrayed by European visitors, nor the paternalistic ... 'tolerant' Islampolis represented in the Turkish Republic's textbooks" (p. 71). After the Ottoman conquest of Anatolia, people in Muslim-dominated but multiethnic Istanbul lived in uneasy harmony within constantly shifting social boundaries. Unlike the very rich, Istanbul's poor in the eighteenth century, regardless of ethnicity, lived in fear of crime in crowded neighborhoods, haggled with one another for goods and services, enjoyed weekly outings to the public baths, and suffered side by side when natural disaster--the 1766 earthquake, the fire of 1782, the 1789 flood--struck. Shared vulnerability united the poor. In the nineteenth century, the balance of power changed as a result of wars with Czarist Russia and European threats to the Ottoman Empire itself. Neighborhoods now became rife with rumors and mutual suspicion. When the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 and the capital shifted to Ankara, nationalists discriminated against minorities and fostered homogenization, a policy continued under the present Erdogan government. The chapter ends as it started, reflecting on the spontaneous outpouring of grief by Turkish Armenians (less than 60,000 today), and Turkish Muslims, Jews, and Christians marching together through Istanbul's streets to mourn the civil rights leader and journalist Hrant Dink after he was murdered in 2007, and suggesting that Turkey's multiethnic history continues to inspire citizens to come together in its defense despite all odds.

Will Hanley's chapter on "cosmopolitan cursing" in late nineteenth-century Alexandria picks up on some of the themes in Salzmann's chapter, showing that "malentendus, misreadings, misunderstandings and meanings inaccessible to outsiders" were characteristic of relations between people who shared social space but inhabited different social worlds and spoke different languages (p. 95). Most important in the colonial context was the imbalance of power. The French consular court in Alexandria that passed judgment on a Tunisian merchant for cursing an Egyptian tax collector, failed to understand the import of the words. More important, it took the words out of context (which witnesses insisted was all-important) and transformed the insult into an injury against an official (the Egyptian tax collector) and by extension, against the state.

Nile Green's chapter on "culinary cosmopolitanism" in early nineteenth-century Persia examines the accounts of three Persian ambassadors to Regency England written for the benefit of an elite Persian audience and for "smooth[ing] the way" for future diplomatic relations (p. 108). British power was growing at the time but the imbalance in power was as yet slight. In their search for Persian parallels to English foods, dining etiquette, and their openness to drinking wine when invited to the homes of the English upper classes, these Persian emissaries' accounts constitute an ethnography of English dining practices, including information on a host of allied subjects such as the practice of eating at restaurants, then unknown in Persia, and offer glimpses of the spirit of reciprocity and conviviality with which the two sides approached one another. The travelogues embody the three elements Kresse identifies as key to "cosmopolitanism" (p. 33). The Persian emissaries took pains to translate British culinary and social practices into recognizable cultural terms, while reciprocally influencing the cuisine of the English upper class. As Green notes, cosmopolitanism emerges in historical context and involves the "remaking of culture" rather than relying on pre-existing and unchanging forms, Muslim or otherwise (p. 120).

Iftikhar Dadi's chapter on Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1897-1975), the twentieth-century artist

from Lahore (now in Pakistan), is a feast for the eyes with its many black-and-white reproductions of Chughtai's work. Most interesting is its exploration of the interface between print culture and painting through the analysis of two ***muraqqa`*** (picture albums illustrating accompanying text), the first of which illustrates Mirza Ghalib's ***Divan*** and the second, poems by Muhammad Iqbal. The first of these, the well-known ***Muraqqa`-i Chughta'i*** (1928), was produced with immense personal effort involving Chughtai's entire family (a printing press and electrical connection had to be installed in their home and a bank loan secured), printing of the album in England, and the financial assistance of the Maharani of Cooch Behar, among other things. Two editions--a deluxe limited edition at Rs. 100, and a larger edition for wider circulation at Rs. 17--were printed, containing thirty illustrations of Ghalib's ***Divan***. The second, ***`Amal-i Chughta'i*** (1968), illustrates not only Iqbal's poetry but also the complex relationship between Iqbal and Chughtai. Chughtai himself recorded Iqbal's deep discomfort with his art: "Iqbal, being a proponent of 'art for life's sake,' used to complain that in fine arts there appeared to be 'no subject other than the female figure. [But] Tasir and myself would look at each other and softly remark that woman is indeed life's subject'" (p. 147).

Chughtai's "cosmopolitan aesthetic" lies in his unique artistic style modeled, among others, on "Bihzad's use of imagination ... rather than direct observation of reality itself" (p. 138). Reaching back to Timurid, Safavid, and Mughal painting traditions, he is nevertheless fully modern without being modernist. Described by critics as an "idealist," he created a new synthesis that Dadi describes as "optimistic," despite its nostalgia. However, it was also "self-orientalist" in its insistence on an essential difference between "East" and "West." In fact, Dadi argues, resistance to colonialism seemed to Chughtai to require that this difference be "further assert[ed]." Self-orientalism also "meant that Chughtai was unable to countenance the idea of change and the transformations of modernity," as he associated these with the West (pp. 144, 146).

Muhammad Khalid Masud's essay, the last in the volume, addresses the issue of cosmopolitanism from the perspective of debates among the ***`ulama*** (scholars of Islamic law) on ***tashabbuh bi'l kuffar*** (imitating non-Muslims), based on a ***hadith*** reported by Ibn Hanbal (d. 855) and Abu Da'ud (d. 888-89) which says that "whoever imitates a people belongs to them" (p. 160). A key aspect of the discussion is the difference between "religious" and "cultural" aspects of "imitation," and the ***`ulama***'s definition of the term ***bid'a*** (reprehensible innovation). Some ***`ulama*** limited it to religious practice while others enlarged it to include food, clothing, and social relations.

Reviewing the opinions of well-known figures such as Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Ibn Taimiyya (d. 1328), and three South Asian ***`ulama*** from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Masud argues that their views must be understood in terms of the historical context in which they were writing. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "political and cultural resistance to the West came to be defined in religious term.... Doctrines of ***bid`a***, notions of taboos, purity and pollution, and alliance and friendship with non-Muslims became part of the political discourse of this period" (p. 166). In contrast, openness to other cultures had been a notable feature of ascendant Islamic empires during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.

To sum up, this volume is rich in content but doesn't always hold together satisfactorily under the overarching theme of cosmopolitanism. Internal evidence from the book shows that the contributors themselves have wrestled with this problem. In the broadest sense, the essays are about different actors' individual and social engagement with cultures other than their own and their willingness and ability in specific historical contexts to transcend particularistic identities.

The essays show the variety of ways in which different people have negotiated the tension between these two poles across time and space, though whether a framework other than cosmopolitanism might have been chosen is an open question.

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