

BOOK REVIEWS

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ROSWITHA BADRY, *Die zeitgenössische Diskussion um den islamischen Beratungsgedanken (shūrā): Unter dem besonderen Aspekt ideengeschichtlicher Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten*. Freiburger Islamstudien, Bd. 19 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998). Pp. 654.

REVIEWED BY FELICITAS OPWIS, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

While contemporary Muslim countries are not exactly textbook democracies, the desire for (more) popular participation in the political decision-making process exists. With the current polarization of anything Western as bad and anything Islamic as good (one notices the opposite use of these adjectives by some Westerners), the odds are low that Western political systems will provide the vocabulary to articulate demands for popular participation. Many Muslims look to the concept of *shūrā*, which broadly means consultation, to address the problem. *Shūrā* is considered a truly Islamic principle because it is mentioned in the Qur'an, practiced by the Prophet Muhammad, and makes up part of classical Islamic thought. The Qur'anic and sunnaic references, however, are very general, and early Islamic history imbued the actual practice of consultation with the negative connotation of *fitna*, or civil unrest. Nevertheless, in the modern period, Muslim authors took renewed interest in the concept of *shūrā* to structure their political landscape.

Roswitha Badry's *Habilitationsschrift* analyzes the Muslim debate on *shūrā*. Although the focus of her study is on the discussion among Sunni authors from the 1960s to 1994, she gives an overview of the classical literature (chap. 2), presents current Shi'i voices (chap. 3.9), and looks at today's implementation of *shūrā* in some Muslim states (chap. 4). In her Conclusion, she presents the continuities and discontinuities in the discussion of the Islamic concept of consultation and evaluates whether contemporary writings on *shūrā* offer solutions for the crises of participation, identity, and legitimacy. Badry's approach is deliberately thematic (p. 47). Her main concerns are, first, to contribute to the debate on Islamism by analyzing the heterogeneity of current positions on *shūrā* (p. 44 ff); and second, to contribute to the intellectual history of Islam by comparing the classical and modern interpretations of *shūrā* (p. 47).

The approach and aims may be laudable, but the execution is unfortunately far from satisfactory. Although Badry's scholarship is thorough, diligent, and broad, her presentation skills are poor. The reader is hit with a massive amount of information, spread shotgun fashion onto the pages and accompanied by footnotes that read like an annotated and biographical bibliography. Sometimes she presents the materials according to themes (e.g., p. 293 ff), sometimes according to ideology (e.g., 3.5.3.2), and sometimes according to author (e.g., 3.6.2.4). But without an index to access either persons or topics the reader is left to flip through the pages to find what, if anything, an author such as Wasfi has to say about sovereignty. The confusion about who says what and where is exacerbated by Badry's repetitive style; her convoluted sentences, which frequently run over six to seven lines, with half of them bracketed; and the general lack of a compelling narrative. Her summaries at the end of chapters are a saving grace. When presenting her findings, she usually makes recourse to a typology laid out in the first chapter (see *infra*). This typology should have served as the main organizing principle for the *Habilitationsschrift*.

It would have enabled a reader not steeped in the who's who of the modern Muslim world to learn from Badry's tremendous effort of detailing and analyzing the thought of a wide spectrum of authors. As it is, the book is a tedious struggle that only someone deeply interested in the subject matter will undertake—and benefit from. One hopes that the author will either re-issue the work in an abridged version or as separate sections.

Badry classifies the modern authors who write on *shūrā* into four broad categories (p. 46 f): secularists who reduce Islam to the personal realm but endorse its ethical values and cultural heritage; reformers—modernists who advocate a dynamic Islam and who attempt to contextualize and systematize Islamic (legal) principles; traditionalists whose interpretations and methods are close to the classical Islamic works without disregarding the exigencies of modernity; and Islamists—fundamentalists who consider Islam an ideology and all-encompassing system. This typology presents ideal types in the Weberian sense. The lines between them are blurry, and each category includes a spectrum of opinions that overlap with another.

Authors in her four camps have different motivations for writing on *shūrā*. Secularists attempt to prove the compatibility of democracy and Islam by arguing that Islam does not prescribe a specific political system with trans-historical validity; a democratic system, therefore, cannot be contrary to Islam and its general principles (p. 440 ff). They garb Western democratic practices in Islamic terms, with *shūrā* being translated into popular representation in a parliamentary system. Reformers—modernists want to demonstrate based on the Islamic teachings that Islam is itself democratic. *Shūrā* becomes the Islamic political system per se—obligatory and participatory in nature. These authors advocate the institutionalization of *shūrā* in the political process as a means of control between the Islamic community (*umma*) and those in command (*ʿulā al-amr*), as well as among the legislative, executive, and judicative powers. They end up, like the secularists, arguing for an Islamic political system based on consultation as a form of representative democracy (pp. 200, 442 ff, 457, 518 f). In contrast to these two types of authors, traditionalists as well as Islamists aim to establish that *shūrā* is different from democracy. They perceive *shūrā* as the perfect system that applies to all areas of life, not just the political sphere. Consultation becomes the general foundation for all affairs and is elevated to a form of worship (*ʿibāda*) by which the consultant and the one seeking consultation come closer to God. Not only is the Islamic order based on *shūrā* unlike any existing political system, but it is superior to them because it is divinely ordained and founded on Islam's religio-ethical values (pp. 198 f, 457 f, 469).

In meticulous detail, Badry presents in Chapter 3 what various contemporary authors have to say about the political process in a consultative system. She discusses questions about the scope of *shūrā*; whether it is obligatory and should be institutionalized; who participates in the consultation, whether parties and elections are permitted; how to arrive at decisions should the result of the consultation be binding; the role of women and non-Muslims in the decision-making process; how much freedom of expression the system allows; and how conflicts are resolved. We find a wide range of positions, all of which are justified on the basis of the Qur'an and sunna and the historical experience of Islam. Badry details the evidence adduced by the authors to support their claims. The same Islamic heritage results in such a diversity of interpretations, as Badry points out, because the sources are never interpreted *tabula rasa* but according to the author's pre-conceived positions on the social order. Consequently, authors use sources selectively and manipulate them to fit their desired system (p. 596 ff).

Many of the authors' positions on consultation rest on their general understanding of the term *shūrā*. Badry demonstrates that the main dividing line regarding the meaning of the term is whether consultation is viewed in political or non-political terms (p. 196). In the first case, usually advocated by secularists and reformers—modernists, *shūrā* is understood as expert consultation and participation of the community or its representatives in politics (p. 596). Most traditionalists and Islamists conceive of *shūrā* in terms of good advice (*naṣīḥa*). It becomes a religious obligation on every Muslim for every aspect of life, a moral right without institutional-

ized effects. At the state level this approach implies that *shūrā* is merely strategic consultation without formal political participation or control of the government by the populace. As such, it is compatible with an authoritarian or totalitarian regime (p. 595).

Badry criticizes contemporary writers, regardless of their understanding of *shūrā*, for discussing individual characteristics in isolation rather than looking at the system as a whole. Consequently, there are no works that present a comprehensive political or social theory or that pay attention to the implications and practicability of the proposals (pp. 471, 605 ff). Claims that there is such a thing as the Islamic political system (*niẓām islāmī*) are refuted by the plurality of *shūrā* conceptions. In Badry's evaluation, the current literature on consultation even fails to elaborate what is specifically Islamic about this concept (p. 602).

Badry concludes that Islamists and traditionalists do not offer any convincing solutions to the demands for participation, legitimacy, and identity. Participation remains confined to the moral right to give advice (*naṣīḥa*); rulership is legitimized on a personal-charismatic basis, with accountability primarily toward God; and the application of the shari'a serves as a symbol of unity and social justice. The unity envisioned, however, sanctions intolerance toward religious minorities, dissidents, and women (p. 610 ff). Although the proposals of reformers—modernists and secularists imply varying degrees of popular participation, political rights, and checks and balances on the government, without a clear stand on the concept of shari'a and a delineation of legal from ethical norms, their writings also leave many ambiguities (p. 613 ff).

The absence of consensus among Muslims on the Islamic political system will, in Badry's opinion, strengthen the reformer—modernist position and may benefit secularizing tendencies (pp. 602, 608). She thinks that the failure to indicate concrete ways to implement the concept of *shūrā* in a comprehensive manner, as well as the unsuccessful practical experiences with consultative bodies (chap. 4), will most likely support the ongoing marginalization of Islamic law (p. 608). This conclusion seems to disregard the current reaffirmation of Islamic law in much of the Islamic world. Perhaps the non-existence of consensus among Muslims over the Islamic system of governance will provide the flexibility and adaptability to create the synthesis of normativism and pragmatism that Badry hopes for (p. 616). Just as no one system of democracy exists, *shūrā* may provide the intellectual resources for a variety of political experiences.

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ASMA BARLAS, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). Pp. 254. \$50 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY KRISTIN ZAHRA SANDS, Department of Middle Eastern Studies, New York University

Asma Barlas's objective in this book is to uncover the essentially egalitarian message of the Qur'an by defining the best methodology for reading the Qur'an and by applying this methodology to better understand its message concerning the ontological and social status of women. In Part I, she draws on the work of previous scholars to fashion a critique of interpretations that conflate the Qur'an with secondary texts such as a hadith and *tafsīr*, texts she views as instrumental in the incorporation of misogynist beliefs and customs into Islam. She calls for a reaffirmation of the primacy of the Qur'anic text but read in a new way—holistically and as a historically situated text. A Muslim who does not question the divine origin of the Qur'an, Barlas insists on the individual responsibility of its readers correctly to uncover its meanings through the use of their intellects, using the tool of *ijtihād* rather than the blind acceptance of traditional interpretations.

Using examples from the Qur'an as well as insights derived from contemporary discussions in semiotics, theology, and feminism, Barlas applies her exegetical methodology to such issues as the nature of God, the concepts of human vice-regency and prophethood, moral agency,

marriage, sexuality, and sexual differences. She concludes that the teachings of the Qur'an are absolutely incompatible with any belief system or social practice that views God as father-male and privileges men over women, although the text does reflect the fact that the first recipients of its message were members of a patriarchal society.

"Believing Women" in Islam is not a study of Qur'anic exegesis from outside the genre. Rather, it is exegesis itself. In suggesting correct ways to interpret the Qur'an and critiquing other interpretative methods, Barlas is engaged in a believer's struggle to understand the meaning of a sacred text. Building particularly on the work of Fazlur Rahman and Farid Esack, her book joins those of other Muslim scholars calling for new ways of reading the Qur'an. Barlas acknowledges her debt to Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman* but distinguishes her work from the same by engaging with feminist critiques of the Qur'an and Islam using their own terms and concepts.

As a work of exegesis, it is worth noting that *"Believing Women" in Islam* relies on English translations and secondary sources for its discussion of the Qur'an and *tafsir* tradition, a fact that raises an important question. Is it necessary to have mastered classical Arabic in order to discuss the meanings of the Qur'an or are the existing translations sufficient for the purposes of new interpretation and the critique of other interpretations? Barlas argues that the Qur'an is real and knowable in all languages (p. 215, n. 60), and it certainly seems reasonable to concede to believers the right to explore its meanings in their own languages. However, Barlas is on less certain ground when she herself refers to the Arabic in the Qur'an and criticizes English translations. Although it is true that there are many references to God in the Qur'an that are sex gender-neutral, and there is nothing wrong with encouraging the use of these terms (pp. 23, 105), one cannot fault English translations that accurately reflect their Arabic equivalents. While the English word "lord" is a problematic translation of the Arabic *rabb*, the translation "king" does accurately reflect *mālik*. Barlas is on even shakier ground when she makes the decision to substitute *rabb* for the usual English translations "He" and "His." The latter correspond precisely to the Arabic masculine pronouns *huwa* and *hu*, used repeatedly in the Qur'an to refer to God. If we start removing the Qur'an's androcentric language, why not remove its problematic verses, as well?

However, I consider these minor issues when compared with the opportunity lost in not engaging more fully with the Arabic interpretative tradition. Far from being uniform, as Barlas suggests (p. 78), exegetical literature in Islam is replete with competing views on hermeneutics and interpretation. The issue Barlas raises concerning the conflation of a hadith and early *tafsir* with the Qur'an has been addressed from the very beginning of Islamic scholarship, and revisiting these works of methodological criticism would greatly enrich contemporary discussions. The argument for uniformly patriarchal interpretations is a stronger one, but here, too, there are valuable nuances of thought in traditional exegesis.

Barlas is a scholar-activist seeking concrete changes within Muslim communities. She is rightly outraged by Muslim men who read the Qur'an in such a way as to give license to "unbridled debauchery" (p. 157) and marital rape or abuse (p. 162). Nevertheless, in the interest of solidarity, the phrase "many Muslim men" she uses repeatedly here is unfortunate. Although however many men we are talking about here is too many, I am uncomfortable reading a sentence such as, "[T]he very mention of chaste women conjures up in many men fantasies of rape and defilement" (p. 157), because the wording might be taken as an accusation directed at too large a part of the Muslim male population.

These comments aside, the strength of Barlas's work is its dual focus on methods of reading and the specific issue of patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an. It is an interesting contribution to contemporary Muslim thought that will be useful in teaching a broad range of undergraduate and graduate courses. The book might need to be used selectively in an introductory class for undergraduates, because its terminology and concepts will be best understood by students with some background in Islamic studies and feminist theory.

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THEODORE HALL PARTRICK, *Traditional Egyptian Christianity: A History of the Coptic Orthodox Church* (Greensboro, N.C.: Fisher Park Press, 1996). Pp. 240. \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY JOHN ISKANDER, Department of Philosophy, Georgia State University, Atlanta

Of all of the "Oriental churches," it is the Coptic church that has garnered the greatest scholarly attention. Nevertheless, the state of Coptic studies leaves much to be desired. Certain aspects have been studied in some depth at the expense of others that are equally important. Thus, while the Gnostic texts, the Christological controversies, the position of the Alexandrine church, and—to a lesser extent—the modern Coptic renaissance have received a good deal of attention, social history in the pre-modern period is sorely lacking, as is any serious attempt to understand the Coptic community in its Islamic context after the 7th century. Several previous synthetic works on the Coptic church, moreover, now appear problematic for their apologetic or polemical approaches to the subject. The present book, while not filling the lacunae, does provide a welcome, balanced synthetic history of the Coptic church.

In eleven chapters, the author moves chronologically from the earliest evidence of Christianity in Egypt through the 1980s. The early sections are divided largely according to the history of the theological and institutional development of the Coptic church. After the Muslim conquest of Egypt, however, the book is divided according to the conventions of Islamic historical periodization by dynasty. While the first chapter provides a useful discussion of the limited evidence available for 1st-century Christianity in Alexandria, the second and third chapters are valuable, concise expositions of Clement, Origen, Arius, and Athanasius. The teachings of Clement and Arius in particular will interest those concerned with the medieval Islamic arguments over the nature of the Qur'an and the relationship of reason to revelation. These chapters also explain clearly the history of the Christological controversies that established the independence of the Coptic church, culminating in the disastrous council of Chalcedon in 451. Chapters 5 through 8 cover the history of the Egyptian church from the arrival of Muslim armies in 640 until the brief but crucial conquest by Napoleon in 1798. The major focus in these chapters is on the patriarchal leadership of the church and on the fate of the Egyptian Copts under Islamic rule. Perhaps the most interesting chapters are the last three, dealing with the modern period. Here what Partrick writes is quite fresh and interesting. The past 200 years have witnessed a real renaissance in the Coptic church, and Partrick describes this well. By the end of the 19th century, the position of Copts had improved tremendously, and a religious revival was under way. Partrick's descriptions of the development of a Coptic lay movement in the late 19th century and the conflicts that developed between lay leaders and the Coptic patriarchate are genuinely valuable contributions. One of his comments, about the anti-intellectualism of modern Copts, is quite interesting and was independently explored more recently by John Watson. Despite the fact that the author's expertise lies primarily in early Coptic theology, the later chapters are by far the most interesting in this book.

There are some problems with the book, some of a minor nature, others more serious. In what is clearly an editorial error, it is stated that the Ottoman janissaries were forcibly converted to Christianity (p. 109). Partrick takes for granted Renan's famous statement that Islam was born "in the full light of history," a claim that has been deeply problematized in Islamic studies. Islam is dealt with, in the main, only insofar as Copts were, or felt they were, oppressed by Muslims, despite the tremendously complex inter-relationships between the two religious communities over the past fourteen centuries. To his credit, however, in the eighth chapter Partrick notes that, in the Ottoman period, class rather than religious affiliation largely determined whether one did well or poorly. He accepts the theory, lately widely questioned, that the majority of Copts converted to Islam in the 9th century. His claim that "Gnostics failed the crucial test of taking seriously the humanity of Jesus" (p. 8) is strikingly theological. The use of terms such

as “nation” and “nationalism,” too, is problematic for the pre-modern period. Finally, the very nature of Partrick’s project limits the overall appeal of the work at hand. The problem, as Partrick notes, lies in part in the nature of the textual sources, which focus on elites, leadership, theology, and politics, and often ignore topics such as art, ritual, and the history of common people.

However, Partrick draws on a wealth of contemporary research on the Copts, the Gnostic gospels, Coptic historiography, and his own experience in modern Egypt, often referring to valuable sources that are rarely examined. We have lacked a synthetic and updated history of the Coptic church in English that addresses its topic in an accessible and sympathetic fashion while remaining reliable and fundamentally critical in approach. This book will be valuable to anyone whose interests include the history of Coptic Christianity and should obviously be part of any major university’s library. It provides a summary but intelligible sketch of the historical and theological developments of the Coptic church over the whole of its twenty centuries of existence and admirably brings to life aspects of the modern history of the community. Other books remain to be written about the Coptic church and community, particularly innovative studies that take into account non-elite history, and allow us to get beyond the broad generalizations that are still far too commonly made about the Coptic community in the pre-modern era.

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URI RUBIN, *Between Bible and Qur’an: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol. 17 (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1999). Pp. 293. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DEVIN STEWART, Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.

This book, adopting the method of Rubin’s earlier work on the image of the Prophet Muhammad, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (1995), examines hadith reports of the first three Islamic centuries that draw on Qur’anic/biblical material. He analyzes these reports as attempts on the part of Muslims to define themselves vis-à-vis the People of the Book—primarily Jews, and to a lesser extent Christians. Each of the work’s three parts reflects a particular historical attitude toward the Jews and definition of the relationship between Jews and Muslims.

Part I, “The Bible: Virtuous Israelites,” treats traditions that portray Jews and Muslims as sharing a background and a religio-political outlook. In these traditions, Israelites and earlier prophets are portrayed as having come to Arabia in the remote past and frequented the Meccan holy sites. Together with the Muslim armies, Jews participate in a messianic mission to conquer the Promised Land from the Christian Byzantines. Here the Sons of Israel are allies of the Muslims, Judeo-Muslims who accept the authority of the Prophet and the validity of his mission as consonant with their own messianic aspirations. Rubin argues that biblical material used in this way is less a reflection of an actual alliance between Jews and Muslims than a strategy on the part of Muslims to legitimate the conquest of Jerusalem and Syria and to wage holy war on Byzantium. Taken up by Christian writers, as well, this portrayal serves the opposite purpose: the association of the Islamic expansion with the Jews merely corroborates the Christians’ negative impression of the spread of the false religion of Islam.

The second and third parts are joined in Part II, titled “The Qur’an: Sinful Israelites.” The three chapters of Part II(A), “Superior Arabs,” show how the Israelites serve as examples of the disobedient followers of Moses and are contrasted with the obedient Muslims in particular. The incident of the Golden Calf, the Israelites’ idolatrous disobedience during Moses’ absence on Mount Sinai, and their refusal to enter the Promised Land for fear of the Canaanites are all used by the Prophet’s Companions for contrast. While the Israelites disobeyed Moses, they

would not disobey the Prophet in such a fashion. Rubin argues that these reports reflect a changed historical and social situation. After it became clear that the Jews were not going to accept the Prophet's mission as valid and that they would be treated not as partners in a Messianic conquest, forms of discourse arose to explain their lost status as God's chosen community, which was taken over by the Muslims.

Part II(B) is titled "Arabs and Others Alike." In this stage, Rubin argues, the Muslims are equated with the Sons of Israel, stressing that the conflicts the Muslim community faces are similar to those faced by the Israelites. Chapter 6 deals with the group of traditions that report that the Muslim *umma* will divide up into seventy-two or seventy-three sects (*firq*), most of which will go to hell, and one of which will be saved (*al-firqa al-nājiya*). Rubin points out that these traditions serve to criticize schism and heresy in general as following a negative practice of the Israelites, and stresses the reference of this tradition, in a number of instances, to the Kharijis in particular. "The *Sunna* Statement" (chap. 8) refers to the many traditions that portray the Muslims as bound to follow the ways of "those who came before you," often specifying the Sons of Israel, Jews, or Jews and Christians. Such reports imply that the Muslims will engage in the same kinds of disobedience, shirking, and sinful behavior shown by the followers of Moses and earlier prophets. In many instances, these traditions seem to be directed specifically against contemporary Islamic schisms and divisions. "The Halaka Statement" refers to a related group of traditions stating that certain behaviors will lead Muslims to perish (*halaka*) like those who came before them. Singled out as causes in such traditions are the armed conflict at Siffin, dispute over the text of the Qur'an, manipulating scripture through individual opinion (*ra'y*) and analogy (*qiyās*), writing down hadith, ostentation, and others. The image of Jews or the Sons of Israel as apes and pigs (chap. 10), deriving from a passage in the Qur'an in which God transforms Jewish Sabbath-breakers into those animals, is used in traditions to criticize various Islamic groups, including Qadaris, the city of Basra (a Qadari center), the Umayyads, the Kharijis, those who vilify Abu Bakr and Umar (Shi'its), and others. Excursus A, on Mice and Lizards, is really an extension of the chapter on apes and pigs; it comments on various traditions that claim that mice and lizards are actually members of the Lost Tribes of Israel who have been transformed because of their sins. Excursus B, on the Twelve Princes, treats the use in apocalyptic predictions of the biblical trope of twelve princes (*neṣīrīm*) in Genesis 17:20, referred to in *Sūrat al-Mā'id*a (5:12) as chieftains (*nuqabā'*).

Rubin's work contains a great deal of useful information culled from a wide variety of hadith collections and other sources. The result is a rich understanding of the early Muslim use of Qur'anic and biblical material in commenting on and arguing over the issues of their day. The work's shortcomings mainly have to do with framing and presentation and can be seen in microcosm in the following sentence from the conclusion: "[t]he traditions selected for the present study establish a direct link between the Israelites and the Arab believers" (p. 234). First, Rubin uses "Arabs" throughout as a synonym for "Muslims." Although this has some justification in the Qur'an—the Qur'an is in Arabic, directed at an Arab audience, and so on—it would seem important, even in the very early period, to distinguish between the community of believers and the Arabs per se. Second, a "direct link" between the Muslims and the Israelites is not the main point; they are tied together by salvation history and above all by pattern. The Prophet Muhammad is parallel to Moses (and the other biblical prophetic figures of the Qur'an), the chieftains of Quraysh are parallel to Pharaoh (and the opponents of other prophetic figures), and the Muslims are parallel to the Hebrews (and other groups of believers in earlier prophecies), in terms of their experience. Third, the strategy of using the Israelites and other peoples of the past to whom prophets were sent as a model for the Muslims or means of commenting on their contemporary situation is a fundamental feature of the Qur'an itself. The traditions Rubin writes about are not establishing a strategy of commentary but merely extending a Qur'anic mode of discourse. The main issue is not how the Muslims defined themselves vis-à-vis Jews and Christians, but how they used biblical material to comment on contemporary

situations, and Rubin has collected and analyzed for the reader excellent and revealing examples of this type of discourse.

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M. R. GHANOONPARVAR, *Translating the Garden* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). Pp. 196. \$32.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY SOHEILA AMIRSOLEIMANI, Department of Languages and Literature, University of Utah, Salt Lake City

In this book, M. R. Ghanoonparvar describes his experience of translating Shahrokh Meskoob's *Guftugū dar bāgh* (Dialogue in the Garden), a fictionalized dialogue between a writer and his painter uncle during the course of which many aspects of Iranian culture are discussed through the prism of gardens, long held to be significant to the Persians. The author clearly states the thesis of his book on the very first page: "[this book] is about the act of translating, the actual process of translating." In what follows, the reader accompanies the author–translator along the path that leads from the latter's interest in *Dialogue in the Garden* to his numerous struggles and decisions regarding individual words, passages, and concepts, and then ultimately to the completed translation of the work, which is presented at the end of the book (pp. 125–68).

Ghanoonparvar's personal and humorous style in writing about his travails as a translator suits the subject matter. The book consists of six chapters along with a Prologue and an Epilogue. Also included are the translation, an index, and a bibliography. The choice of chapter titles deepens the pervading metaphor of the original work in the reader's mind ("Invitation to the Garden," "Renditions of the Garden," "Reflections of the Garden," "Artificial Paradise," "The Garden of the Soul," and "The Garden in Exile"). By the end of the book, having read the translation once in piecemeal form in the course of the analysis, and then again as a polished product at the end of the book, one is strongly overcome with a desire to read Meskoob's original work in Persian. The poetic diction of Meskoob, the sincerity that comes across in the confessional style of Ghanoonparvar, along with the author–translator's successful rendering of the sense of nostalgia, loss, and exile that seems to lie deep in the original text lead to reveries of one's own involving gardens and their meanings. One reads about many gardens, both real and imaginary, in the course of this book, and the connection that both Meskoob and Ghanoonparvar draw between gardens and the mystical state is especially powerful.

Translating the Garden is an engaging work that scholars in Persian studies and translation studies, as well as literary critics at large, will find useful and enjoyable. It is especially reassuring for other translators, whether experienced or not, to read that a work of translation, as viewed by the translator himself, is ultimately a failed enterprise, despite its many small successes. One of the many ways in which Ghanoonparvar succeeds in this book is in depicting the internal life of a translator as he painstakingly translates a work of literature.

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DAVID J. ROXBURGH, *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran*, Studies and Sources in Islamic Art and Architecture, vol. 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001). Pp. 289. \$59.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PAUL LOSENSKY, Departments of Central Eurasian Studies and Comparative Literature, Indiana University, Bloomington

The title and publication series of *Prefacing the Image* initially suggest that it treats a topic of interest only to specialists in art history—a dozen or so rhetorically ornate prefaces composed

for bound albums of calligraphies, drawings, and paintings (*muraqqa'*) during the 16th century. However, it quickly becomes apparent that the scope of this study extends far beyond such disciplinary boundaries. "The primary objective of this book is to study the preface through a variety of approaches—historical, cultural, social, and intellectual" (p. 17). By integrating the album preface into a broad network of social practices and literary discourses, Roxburgh's well-researched and probing study should be of interest not only to art historians but also to any reader with an interest in the cultural and intellectual life of the later Persianate world.

Chapter 1, "Introduction to the Prefaces," lays out the topic of the work and many of its guiding principles. The author begins by questioning the scholarly preoccupation with questions of attribution and provenance and the resulting use of prefaces as normative, transparent, and evidentiary documents. Rather than viewing the complex rhetoric of the prefaces as so much bombast that must be cleared away to get at the facts, Roxburgh sets out to study literary tropes as a mode of discourse that serves "to organize modes of perception," (p. 14), convey evaluative judgments, and present theories of art. He proposes a methodology based on inter-textuality and the creative use of past models to analyze the factors that gave shape and meaning to the prefaces and to show how figurative language serves as a medium for intellectual and experiential communication.

From these general matters, Chapter 2, "The Authors and their Milieu," turns to the historical and social setting of the album prefaces, starting with the identity and status of their authors. These biographies are scrupulously documented, showing a thorough mastery of the sources. This discussion can be usefully supplemented by Appendix 1 and its bibliographic survey of the texts. Roxburgh next places these individuals in the context of court life in the late 15th and 16th centuries. His discussion of the influence of the Timurid legacy on the Safavid patronage of the visual arts is persuasive and is in many ways valid for the literary arts, as well. The chapter ends by attempting to explain "the rise of art historiographic literature" (pp. 46-51) during this period. The argument is carefully nuanced, refusing to force a single cause onto a complex phenomenon, and is exemplary of the conscientious and subtle reasoning evident throughout the book.

Chapter 3, "Composition and Context," initiates the literary analysis of the prefaces. Roxburgh argues that the "preface's flexibility of structure" (p. 58) allows it to fulfill a variety of functions, such as praising the ruler, recounting the history of art, and glossing the album's contents. The visual aspects of the preface and its location in the album are illustrated by sixteen black-and-white reproductions of manuscript folios. These illustrations segue well to an inquiry into the uses of the album, which is based on its material characteristics and the other cultural activities of the court. Instead of being an occasion for silent, individual appreciation, the album, in the author's words, was enjoyed in a "discursive and performative setting by a small group of culturally gifted participants" (p. 71).

Chapter 4 elaborates more fully on the "literary dimensions" of the preface by developing its field of inter-textual relations. Sacred texts, poetic images and devices, manuals of quotations and *inshā'*, and prefaces in other genres all contribute to the language and themes of the album preface. Through brief outlines of five prefaces, Roxburgh shows how these elements were organized within a stable but flexible structural framework. He picks out several thematic complexes for special attention: the album as a microcosm of the world, album-making as authorship, and the album as a memorial. These themes all emphasize the creative and ethical aspects of the album. In an insightful textual analysis, Roxburgh demonstrates that rhetoric, borrowing, and imitation do not obfuscate a literal message; in fact, they constitute the message and reveal "critical views" about the album and "the benefit thought to derive from contemplating its contents" (p. 107).

The inter-textual field of the album preface further expands in Chapter 5, "Art in History and Practice," to encompass *Ṭabaqāt* or *tadhkira* literature, the biographical component of

general histories, “books of firsts” (*avā’il*), and even works of ethics. Roxburgh utilizes these materials to help identify a particular “consciousness of a history of art” (p. 125). Beginning with a search for origins, history in the prefaces is “driven by the episteme of genealogy and heredity” (p. 137). This mode of thought is extended to include teacher–student relationships and imitations of models without direct personal contact, leading to a linear and progressive view of history. The implied notion of hereditary nobility also entails a sense that the work of art was inseparable from the moral character of its creator, as work and maker are subsumed in a rhetoric of praise. One must admire Roxburgh’s ability to coordinate such a vast range of material in a historiographical analysis with applications beyond the field of the visual arts.

The argument culminates in Chapter 6 with a close reading of the masterpiece of the genre, Dust Muhammad’s preface. Against the inter-textual background, we can now recognize that this preface is shaped by “the author’s particular aesthetic constructs and historical conceptions” (p. 162). His preface, for example, presents an exclusionary view of art history that leaves out the western Iranian tradition. More important, Dust Muhammad uses a series of stories to propound certain claims: to legitimate depiction by indicating its prophetic origins, to define the role of images, and to distinguish among the picture-making traditions of Persia, Europe, and China. In keeping with the main thesis of the book, Roxburgh shows how Dust Muhammad re-inflected earlier stories and layered traditional poetic images to put forward precise and complex intellectual arguments. Of particular interest is the book’s closing argument that the “optical naturalism” prized in European art was ethically suspect in the Persian tradition, which embodies “the creative concept of transforming what is seen into its absolute or trying to transform the phenomena of the visible world so they point back to some hidden form” (p. 193).

Prefacing the Image is scrupulously annotated throughout and includes a full bibliography and useful index. The glossary of terms commonly used in writing about art (pp. 241–48) further adds to the work’s value. As a specialist in poetry, this reviewer might point to the somewhat awkward format of poetry quotations or an occasional glitch in translation. Specialists in other fields might find similar small blemishes. But such minor lapses are trivial in a book of such intellectual scope and generosity as this.

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ANTHONY SHAY, *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2002). Pp. 290. \$65.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ARZU ÖZTÜRKMEN, Department of History, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul

Anthony Shay’s *Choreographic Politics* fills an important gap in the research of the history of folk dancing, a gap opened by the controversial status of “state folk dance ensembles,” whose performances have often been neglected or despised by folklorists and dance scholars. Staged folk dances have always charmed audiences with the energy they embed in their performances but they have also puzzled them, because it is clear that they are more of a “representation” than a true reflection of a locality’s reality. The analysis of “state folk dance ensembles,” then, moves on the edges of folklore and “fake lore,” the art of dance and the ethnography of dance. *Choreographic Politics* touches on this very sense of illusion and disillusion, focusing on the politics of state folk dance ensembles, a cultural product of the post-war era.

Shay focuses on the history and structure of six major state ensembles. They include the legendary Moiseyev Dance Company, which he calls the “ancestor of the genre”; the Ballet Folklorico de Mexico; the Croatian LADO Ensemble; the Egyptian Reda Troupe; Dora Stratou Greek Dances Theatre; and the Turkish State Folk Dance Ensemble, which he sees as the “last of the great ensembles.” The difficulty in covering such a broad topic in a single work is

obvious, as each case needs to be presented within its own historical framework. This is an effort for which Shay should be credited, but with some reservations. His historical narrative is informative, but there is no doubt that the discussion of such concepts as nationalism, colonialism, and Orientalism, and the account related to Ottoman history, is far more complicated than presented in the book.

Each case is an outcome of a different historical process and operates as a different movement system that undoubtedly deserves further research. In his analysis of these processes, Shay looks into the "anatomy" of the state folk dance companies, with elaborate discussions of their founders, dancers, choreographers, repertoire, and training, while situating their "choreographic politics" in relation to the audience for which they were produced. The book's Introduction is devoted to the concepts of "ethnicity" and "nationalism," around which Shay analyzes these companies as cultural representations that are "multilayered political and ethnographic statements designed to form positive images of their respective nation-states" (p. 2). Shay also acknowledges that the performance of the state folk dance ensembles often creates and perpetuates national prejudices, class strife, and ethnic and religious tensions, citing examples from Serbian, Hungarian, Philippine, Bulgarian, and Iranian companies.

In another chapter, the author focuses on the concept of "parallel traditions" to distinguish between "dance as a living tradition," which is transmitted through participation, and "urban dance tradition," which is taught in the classroom, borrowing elements from ballet or modern forms of dance. The study of urban folk-dance movements is indeed a complex phenomenon. To understand and analyze their performances in their own authenticity, one should examine them as "structured movement systems," a concept coined by the dance anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler (1967, 1985, 1992), an important reference missing from Shay's bibliography.

Shay goes into a deeper analysis of the "anatomy" of these folk-dance companies, drawing more on their common characteristics, such as "stereotypification; the selection and development of a repertoire; methods of research to underpin the creation of dances; financing; the selection and training of artists; music; costume acquisition and production; creation and use of sets; behind-the-scene support, both administrative and technical; and publicity" (p. 38). To Shay, stereotypification refers to a phenomenon that affects the choreographic choices designed for specific visions of national representation. In other words, these companies usually foreground a geographic area that is emblematic of the whole nation, a decision made under government regulation.

Shay's analysis also points out that there is a historical context that determines how these companies choose to represent their countries. Outperforming the Western nations in the field of dance was, for instance, an underlying goal for the Moiseyev Company, which had its golden age during the Cold War. Similarly, the portrayal or removal of Muslims from the repertoires of the Serbian, Hungarian, Philippine, Greek, and Bulgarian companies represents what Shay calls "choreographic politics." Shay also acknowledges that the degree of authentic elements used by each company is also political and varies widely. Whereas, ballet is used extensively in Moiseyev Dance Company and Ballet Folklorico de Mexico, for example, the Egyptian El Tennoura, Greek Dora Stratou, and Croatian LADO claimed authenticity on stage. The degree of authenticity depended, as Shay shows, on the expectations of the audience—usually the upper-middle-class elite, be it local or international. The role of diaspora communities in keeping alive the tradition of these ensembles is best illustrated with the Greek case.

A comparative framework reveals that most of these companies covered a wide range of movements and regions, usually performed in the "suite" form. They all aimed to create a perfect spectacle, in which folk dances were presented using geometric floor patterns and the troupe's corps was emphasized more than the soloists. Many also contextualized the dances in popular events such as weddings, festivals, rituals, or work scenes. Character sketches and historical reconstructions were also used. Loyal or not to their authentic forms, the majority of

these ensembles chose primary colors in their costumes and were accompanied by a wide range of instrumental music, symphonic and traditional. As was the case for Moiseyev Dance Company, the Ballet Folklorico de Mexico, and the Reda Troupe, many of these ensembles were founded by a leading artistic director whose choreographic skill defined the repertoire. In other cases, such as the Dora Stratou Greek Dances Theatre and Turkish State Folk Dance Ensemble, other choreographers were involved.

Shay's *Choreographic Politics* is the first work of its kind. It will be an important reference for both folklorists and dance scholars who study urban forms of folklore and hybrid genres. But foremost, the book provides its reader with an engaging narrative, an outcome of Shay's genuine love for, and experience and competence in, the field about which he writes.

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MOLLY GREENE, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). Pp. 228.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT FINLAY, Department of History, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

In 1669, after twenty-four years of devastating war, Venice surrendered the island of Crete to the Ottoman Turks. As a Venetian commander described it, Crete was "the most beautiful crown to adorn the head of the Most Serene Republic" (p. 4). It was a grievous loss for Venice, which did not resign itself to the loss of its beautiful crown for another fifty years, until the end of the last Ottoman–Venetian war in 1718. The period of early Ottoman rule between 1669 and 1718 is the subject of Molly Greene's excellent study. Her emphasis throughout is on multiple identities, mixed narratives, hybrid solutions, cross-cutting allegiances, and historical continuity. Along with historians such as Leslie Pierce and Jane Hathaway, she rejects the model of Ottoman decline, styling it a "meat-grinder" (p. 20) of a thesis that focuses on a weak sultanate and ignores both the complexity and vitality of Ottoman imperial governance. She also rejects the notion that the transition from Venetian to Ottoman control in Crete marked a sharp dividing line, an event that helped wring the ambiguity out of the Mediterranean world (p. 5).

According to Greene, Cretan society and the economy did not experience a revolution with the imposition of Ottoman control. Despite a new ruling elite and a new center of metropolitan power, Crete remained a place where three variants of Mediterranean civilization met and largely coexisted: Latin Christianity, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam. Religious identity remained fluid and ambiguous, without the radical divisions among faiths usually assumed by previous scholars. Under the Venetian and Ottoman regimes, culturally mixed marriages were common, blurring ethnic and religious animosities. Of course, Greene realizes that it would be foolish to argue that things did not change. Rather, she shows how change took place within the context of problems common to Venetian and Ottoman rule. Both imperial powers had to deal with peasant discontent, island provision, pirate attacks, coastal defense, rural decline, and long-distance control. Neither the Serene Republic nor the Sublime Porte proved up to the task, however. The struggle that led to a change of rule in 1669 took place between two powers that were past their peak, vulnerable alike to "northern intruders" (p. 5) in the Mediterranean—France, England, Holland, and (later) Russia. If Ottoman Crete dealt with these threats with a measure of success, it was by virtue of building on and extending what it had inherited from the Venetians.

Perhaps Greene's most interesting conclusion is that Eastern Orthodoxy gained the most from the Ottoman conquest. "Now, at last," she writes, "the Ottomans were driving the hated Latins out of the Greek world" (p. 6), completing a process that began with attacks on the Latin Crusader states in the 12th century and that enjoyed its greatest triumph with the conquest of

Constantinople in 1453. Under Ottoman aegis after 1669, Crete rejoined the Orthodox world after half a millennium of Latin domination. Many of the churches of Candia, the capital city, became mosques under the Ottomans, but the new rulers gave the Orthodox a more independent voice on the island than the Venetians had ever done, and they encouraged ties with the larger Orthodox world, above all with the patriarch of Constantinople (pp. 177–78). This helps explain why, in the long term, Crete did not remain an island outpost of Islam. After World War I, the last Cretan Muslims were removed to Turkey, and Crete was formally united with the mainland Greek world, which regarded Islam and Latin Christianity with almost equal hostility.

Almost certainly, however, those “repatriated” Muslims were descendants of the pre-Ottoman, Christian population of the island. In fact, there was no large-scale migration of mainland Muslims to the island after 1669. The pasha, top janissary officers, and some regiments were outsiders, but they were relatively small in number. It is striking, then, that under the Ottomans, Crete became “the island par excellence of the janissaries” (p. 33) and Candia became “a city of soldiers” (p. 78). The capital city had a population of about 10,000 people, some 3,000 of whom belonged to janissary regiments, which themselves represented about half the military population of the port (p. 37). Despite these numbers, Crete was neither fervently Muslim nor highly militarized. Most of the Muslims were converts from Christianity for reasons of economic and social self-interest, a process accelerated by the disruptions of warfare in 1645–69 and 1684–99. Moreover, as in other areas of the Ottoman Empire, the military and urban populations of Crete overlapped considerably, with most Muslims claiming some sort of membership in the janissary corps. No fewer than 1,000 children younger than twelve drew military stipends in the late 17th century, and when the Venetians attacked the port of Chania in 1692, the Ottoman administration could not round up more than 4,000 military men on the entire island. Militarized and Muslim on the surface, Crete remained “Grecophone” and Orthodox at heart.

Greene aspires to provide a corrective to the views of Fernand Braudel and Andrew Hess, who (she says) see the Mediterranean dividing into two distinct cultural arenas in the 16th century (p. 4). But she overestimates the extent to which Braudel’s view of the Mediterranean and cultural transformation is so different from her own. The master of *la longue durée* would have found nothing exceptional in her demonstration of the continuities that persist beneath the superficialities of conquest and political disruption. In the preface to the English edition of *The Mediterranean*, Braudel wrote that “the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, that the whole sea shared a common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences.” With subtlety and sophistication, Greene shows that the “shared world” of Ottoman Crete co-exists nicely with Braudel’s global perspective.

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JOSEPH A. KECHICHIAN, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). Pp. 297.

REVIEWED BY F. GREGORY GAUSE III, Department of Political Science, University of Vermont, Burlington

In any monarchy, court gossip is the coin of the realm. Every observer of Saudi Arabia has his or her own theories of who is up and who is down, who is joining with whom and who has betrayed former allies, and who is with America and who is against America among the princes of the al-Sa’ud. Like most gossip, most court gossip is wrong. The safe rule regarding the family politics of the al-Sa’ud is that “those who know do not talk, and those who talk do not know.” Joseph Kechichian has therefore tackled the hardest question there is in the analysis of Saudi Arabian politics, and does as good a job as any outsider can hope to do. While those

who talk usually do not know, Kechichian has talked to some who do know, including many members of the ruling family. His conclusions about future successions in Saudi Arabia, of necessity are speculative, but they are well informed.

The strength of this work is the care that Kechichian takes in outlining the past and the future of family politics in the al-Sa'ud. He outlines those instances in the past when the family has divided into factions struggling for power, and the effects (almost always deleterious) such struggles have had on the dynasty. He pays particular attention to the conflict between King Sa'ud and Crown Prince Faysal for power between 1958 and 1964 (though he treats this episode at various places in the text, this reader would have benefited from a more sustained and focused analysis). The Sa'ud–Faysal struggle, with other historical episodes of al-Sa'ud conflict, refutes the superficial assertion that in a crisis the family draws together. That might be so in the past few decades, but it has not always been the case. As Kechichian emphasizes, it might not be the case in the future.

The prospects for a struggle for power within the family are exacerbated by the lack of precedent or procedure for passing power from the sons of the founder of the modern kingdom, 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Abd al-Rahman Al Sa'ud, to his grandsons. The old king had so many sons that succession has passed laterally among them since his death in 1953, and there are still a few waiting in the wings. But at some point, succession will have to pass to the next generation. Kechichian provides useful biographies of a number of the important princes of this generation and highlights the crucial, dangerous turning point the al-Sa'ud will face when that generational shift has to take place.

In limning the present outlines of family politics, Kechichian basically accepts the conventional wisdom. He paints a picture of group solidarity among King Fahd and his full brothers ("the Sudayris") and balancing alliances against them among other senior princes, centered on Crown Prince 'Abdallah. The analysis would have benefited from a bit more probing of this conventional wisdom. Kechichian does not examine the policy consequences, if any, of this family split, aside from the important point that the split makes it difficult to take quick decisions. Do these factions represent specific policy interests in terms of domestic reform or foreign policy, or is the split simply about intra-family power? Is there any evidence that these neat divisions break down or cross-cut on different policy issues? Kechichian indicates that Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh and one of the youngest surviving sons of King 'Abd al-'Aziz, could emerge as a compromise candidate for king in the event of a split in the family. However, Salman is one of "the Sudayris," so how he would emerge as a compromise among the factions is unclear. It is extremely difficult to get reliable information about these questions, even for as thorough a researcher as Kechichian. But some exploring of them, given the access the author had, would have been interesting.

Kechichian also drops a number of interesting hints about contemporary politics in Saudi Arabia but leaves them insufficiently developed. He talks about connections between Islamist opposition forces and members of the ruling family and about the greater role that the business community plays in the politics of both the ruling family and the country at large. Both themes are extremely important for the future of Saudi politics, and I was hoping that the author would spend more time on them. He cogently argues that demographic, educational, and social changes have made the Saudi population more politicized than in the past. It would be interesting to speculate how that greater level of politicization might play into succession struggles in the future. Might princes in effect try to form "parties" to mobilize popular support if intra-family struggles come out into public view? What consequences might that have for the future of monarchical rule in Arabia?

This book was published before the attacks on New York and Washington of 11 September 2001, and Kechichian therefore could not explore the consequences of that episode for Saudi Arabia, particularly for the Saudi relationship with the United States. The even closer relation-

ship that developed between Riyadh and Washington after the Gulf War of 1991 will clearly change, with consequences that are currently unforeseeable. The direction of that change might itself become an issue among the senior princes, particularly if the United States is serious about its post-11 September talk about moving democratization to the forefront of its Middle East agenda. So, too, might Crown Prince 'Abdallah's statements about the need for domestic political and economic reform that have become more serious and more detailed since 11 September. Kechichian could not have foreseen how the relationship with the United States would get tied up with issues of internal Saudi reform, but that connection has the potential to complicate politics among the al-Sa'ud.

The book contains nearly ninety pages of very useful appendixes. Among them are concise biographical information on the sons and many of the grandsons of King 'Abd al-'Aziz, the text of important petitions sent to the king calling for political reform after the Gulf War, and the Basic Law issued by the king in 1992. I have referred to these appendixes frequently since I received the book. They are an invaluable reference.

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SCOTT C. LEVI, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550–1900* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002). Pp. 319. \$93.00.

REVIEWED BY ADEEB KHALID, Department of History, Carleton College, Northfield, Minn.

This fine book provides the first comprehensive account of the Indian merchant communities that arose in Central Asia in the 16th century and continued to occupy an important niche in the local economy until the turn of the 20th century. The subject of India's relations with Central Asia and Russia has often been addressed, but it has usually fallen afoul of methodological and linguistic boundaries that divide the historiographies of the two regions. This is the first work that is equally at home in both Indian and Central Asian history. Levi's greatest contribution is to bring Central Asian sources to bear fully on his argument. He uses Persian-language narrative and documentary sources from Central Asia (housed in the manuscript collections of the Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent) and the state archives of Uzbekistan to glean useful new information about life in the diaspora and the activities of its members. He backs these up with accounts of European travelers, which he has mined with great thoroughness for all references to Indian merchants.

The book is primarily a contribution to South Asian economic history and its recent debates on indigenous forms of capitalism and the reach of the South Asian economy beyond South Asia, but it also makes important contributions to the history of Central Asian–Indian relations and the economic history of Central Asia itself. Indeed, the book sprawls in many directions. Although its central concern is with the communities of Indian merchants, it also provides brief essays on Asian overland trade and the commodities involved in it, Indian–Central Asian relations, and the Indian family firm. The geographical scope is also flexible, and we encounter Indian merchants in Astrakhan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Kashgar at different points in the text.

The diaspora communities emerged in the 16th century, as Indian family firms expanded their economic interests into Central Asia. The usual mode of operation was to send agents (*gumāshta*) equipped with goods in demand in the region of destination for a period of several years. The agents then used the cash obtained from the sale of goods to engage in local money-lending. Indian capital thus met the credit needs of local society. Levi musters considerable evidence to show that the moneylenders were dispersed across the countryside, although their presence was most notable in the cities. The agents stayed in location for several years, but they never intended their stay to be permanent. The community was overwhelmingly male and insistent on remaining aloof from the host society. The fact that the majority of the merchants

were Hindus heightened this sense of separation. Local political elites, Levi notes, recognized the important role the Indians played in the local economy and gave them protection and support.

Levi uses his study of the diaspora to make a number of broader arguments. He notes the great reach of the Indian economy into Central Asia and beyond, which predated the arrival of the English and Dutch East India Companies and which continued to flourish even after the commencement of maritime trade. The European companies loom larger than they deserve in the economic history of Asia because they left better records and because the scope and scale of the overland trade linking South Asia to Iran, Central Asia, and beyond is underestimated. The presence of the diaspora is also a major argument against the still conventional notion of Central Asia's decline and marginalization in the post-Timurid era. Commercial relations between South and Central Asia "not only remained active throughout the early modern period but . . . continued at an escalated level" (p. 261). Indeed, the 18th century was a period of "prosperity and economic growth in Tashkent and the Farghana valley" (p. 28).

The Russian conquest of Central Asia, in Levi's account, was the decisive moment in the decline of the diaspora. New imperial legislation and alternative sources of small credit rendered the Indian moneylenders economically vulnerable. The new authorities were wary of what they saw as the Indians' exploitation of the native population (particularly the threat to peasants' land), and they quickly moved to restrict the Indians' activities. Indians were denied the right to own, lease, or pawn land, and their money-lending operations were brought under strict control. By the end of the century, the diaspora had shrunk drastically.

Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that Levi ends his study in 1900. The diaspora might have declined in Turkestan, but it continued to flourish in Bukhara, where the laws of Turkestan did not apply. It was the Russian Revolution and the installation of Soviet power that finally destroyed the diaspora. It is equally a pity that Levi did not complement the Central Asian sources he uses so well with materials from British or Indian archives (of the kind used by Claude Markovits in *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947* [Cambridge, 2000]). The Central Asian sources are rich, but they do not yield details of human lives easily. Indeed, the most interesting human material comes from European travel accounts.

These are minor reservations, however. Scholars in the fields of South Asian, Central Asian, and world history will profit equally from the book's solid research and use of new sources.

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MONTY NOAM PENKOWER, *Decision on Palestine Deferred: America, Britain and Wartime Diplomacy 1939–1945*, Cass Series: Israeli History, Politics and Society (London: Frank Cass, 2002). Pp. 397. \$62.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE DAVIDSON, Department of History, West Chester University, West Chester, Penn.

Monty Noam Penkower has written a detailed and documented account of the diplomatic relations of American, British, and Palestine-based Zionists with the American and British governments from 1939 to 1945. His theme is that these governments showed a callous disregard for the suffering of Jews in the Holocaust because they refused free immigration into Palestine. The author's scholarship is sound in terms of the people and diplomacy with which he deals. The probable audience for the book is scholars and researchers who are interested in the history of the Holocaust and the response to it by both the Allied powers and Zionist leaders, as well as those interested in the origins of the Israeli state. However, the events covered in this work are explicitly tied to Palestine and its fate, and in that regard the author has produced only a

“half history.” Penkower’s treatment of Palestine is incomplete because the subject of the Palestinian Arabs, who bear the consequences of the negotiations, planning, and conspiring that the work details are mentioned only in passing and then almost always in negative terms. It is as if one were to write the history of Nazi planning for the Holocaust and only rarely and disappointingly mention Jews.

Penkower manages to construct this sort of “half history” by working from a series of unquestioned assumptions. For instance, he assumes that Palestine properly belongs to the Jews. He consistently refers to it as “the promised land.” Taking this position allows him to give minimal attention to the plight of the Palestinian Arabs, much less consider that their claims and grievances might be legitimate. He also assumes that the concerns of the British Foreign Office and U.S. State Department about keeping the Arabs from rising up against the British to the benefit of Nazi Germany (part of what Penkower considers a persistent “anti-Zionist mantra”) were not serious worries. He dismisses British fears of civil strife in Palestine and beyond as a consequence of massive Jewish immigration as “exaggerated.” At the same time, he claims that most Arab leaders were Nazi sympathizers. The unquestioned assumption behind this claim seems to be that Arabs acted the way they did during the war because they were somehow inherently against the Allied cause. The author never considers the possibility that Arab ambivalence during World War II might have come from the fact that Britain and France, and not Germany, were their colonial masters. As for Amin al-Husseini’s wartime alliance with the Nazis, which the author does mention often, this would appear from the Arab prospective no more reprehensible than Churchill and Roosevelt’s alliance with a mass murderer such as Stalin.

The truth is that, in the author’s view, all other aspects of World War II fade to insignificance when seen against the backdrop of the Holocaust. And for Penkower, the Holocaust and Palestine meld into a single issue. Once more, approaching the subject this way allows him to make only passing reference to the struggle for other venues for Jewish refugee immigration. He rightly points out the inexcusable “apathy” toward Jewish suffering at the 1943 Bermuda Conference on Refugees, but fails to mention the distinct lack of interest expressed by Zionist leaders for any serious lobbying for venues other than Palestine. Again, we get only half the story.

Because this is a “half history” it should be read along with other works that do give some attention to the Palestinian position. To name just a few, William Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey’s *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (University of Texas Press, 1988) has a chapter devoted to the “Arab Perspective.” In terms of the development of American policy, Dan Tschirgi’s *The Politics of Indecision* (Praeger, 1983) and my own *America’s Palestine* (University Press of Florida, 2001) give balanced attention to the Palestinian situation. And a search of the literature would certainly have given Penkower access to research specifically dealing with British–Arab relations that takes into account the Palestinian position.

One comes away from this book with the feeling that the author cannot emotionally or intellectually take interest in the Palestinian Arabs because he has bought into the assumption that Jewish victims of the Holocaust could have been saved only through the commandeering of Palestine. Like so many other Zionist historians (it is hard to read Penkower any other way), the author presents “the promised land” apart from the real lives, joys, sorrows, aspirations, hopes, and desires of its millions of Arab residents. Assuming that the homeland of these real people was the “most logical and accessible [*sic*] haven” (and not a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy of Western anti-Semitism and Zionist single-mindedness) for European Jewry, Palestinian Arab reality is simply forfeit. Further, any disapproval, reluctance, or procrastination over the creation of a Jewish Palestine, be it by the U.S. State Department, British Foreign and Colonial Offices, or Palestinian Arab leadership, becomes, in the author’s view, “callousness in the face of primordial barbarism.” Thus, the author’s work fails to take a well-balanced and thorough

historical approach. It is now a half-century since the events of World War II and the Holocaust. That should be sufficient time for historians to be able to acknowledge the enormity of Jewish suffering and also recognize that Palestine's Arabs were made to pay a heavy and undeserved price for it. In failing to acknowledge this fact, Penkower's position takes on anachronistic colonialist overtones.