

Eurasian exchange. The book would have also benefited from further attention to questions of gender and female agency, especially in chapter 10, when Jackson discusses Ilkhanid succession, and 12, where he could have also drawn attention to the role of female members in Mongol conversion and acculturation. All this notwithstanding, the book is a remarkable achievement, one that in the long run is sure to become an essential and authoritative reading for all students of the empire.

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MONA HASSAN:

Longing for the Lost Caliphate. A Transregional History.

xviii, 390 pp. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. £37.95. ISBN 978 0 691 16678 8.

HUGH KENNEDY:

The Caliphate.

xxx, 418 pp. London: Penguin Books, 2016. £8.99. ISBN 978 0 141 98140 6.

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The self-proclaimed “Islamic State” has answered the “so what?” question directed at scholars working on the history of the caliphate. The appeal of the concept is no longer relegated to the past and the almost mystical court of Hārūn al-Rashīd but suddenly has a very contemporary ring to it. Given the strong public interest in Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī’s now crumbling realm and the ideas behind its political structures, the two publications by Mona Hassan and Hugh Kennedy are more than timely. While Kennedy aims at a broad, general audience, reading him alongside Hassan’s specialized work is highly rewarding. Kennedy succeeds in distilling the complex history of various Muslim dynasties located on three continents and spread out over several hundreds of years into a compelling narrative. Students and general readers will appreciate the accessible discussion of the succession to the Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphate. The author focuses in particular on how caliphs were chosen, which obligations their office entailed, and based on which evidence these thorny questions were decided by the Muslim community. The oath of allegiance (*bay‘a*) to the caliph is stripped by Kennedy of its religious significance since this ritual amounted to nothing more than an “Arab idea expressed in Arabic words and Arab gestures” (pp. 50–51). The author not only discusses the splendour of ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705), the piety of ‘Umar II (r. 717–720), and the supposed debauchery of Walīd II (r. 743–744) but interweaves these accounts with colourful anecdotes. We hear about Ibn Faḍlān’s diplomatic mission in the year 921 to the Volga Bulgars whose king had asked the Caliph al-Muqtadir to provide him with religious instruction (pp. 124–30). Kennedy also introduces his readers to al-Ma’mūn’s (r. 813–833) scientific experiments that were meant to confirm Greek calculations of the earth’s perimeter (pp. 158–60). The author revels in descriptions of Baghdad as perhaps the first city “in the history of the world in which a man or a woman could make a living as an author” (p. 148). Kennedy is definitely partial to the “sheer vigour and variety” of the intellectual and cultural

atmosphere under the Abbasids (p. 172) but this does not mean that he would neglect other important manifestations of the caliphate. Individual chapters are devoted to the Shi'ī caliphates of the Fatimids and the Zaydis (pp. 233–75), the Umayyads in Spain (pp. 277–309) and the Almohads (pp. 313–33) in North Africa. The Mamluks and the Ottomans, by comparison, get a rather short, combined treatment (pp. 335–61).

In his synthesis of existing secondary literature and primary sources, Kennedy aims at being “quietly polemical”. He wants to show that there is “no one way, no single template or legal framework which defines the caliphate”. Rather, the author emphasizes the puzzling multitude of conceptions which the caliphs themselves had of their office throughout history. According to Kennedy, there has never existed a consensus regarding the extent of the caliph's powers. This flexibility, he holds, partly explains the appeal of the idea (pp. xv–xvii). At the same time, Kennedy highlights how even the late – and officially only ceremonial – Abbasid caliphs managed to exert “real power” by appointing *qāḍīs* and making claims to define Sunnī doctrine (pp. 181–2).

In some crucial ways, however, Kennedy is not polemical at all but presents a very conventional narrative. According to him, the murder of the last Abbasid caliph of Baghdad al-Musta'ṣim on the command of the Mongol commander Hülāgū in 1258 went almost unnoticed. There was “no widespread and immediate sense of shock or general lamentation in the Muslim world” (p. 214). Even earlier, when the Abbasid caliphs had basically retired to Samarra in the years 861–870, “people found that they could do without a ruling and effective caliph” (pp. 117–118). Especially with the increase of non-Arab converts over the centuries, the loyalties of these new Muslims lay with their fellow believers while “the caliphate was for them at best an irrelevance and at worst a source of vexatious tax demands” (pp. 132–3). Kennedy observes a similarly muted reaction to the Turkish Grand Nationalist Assembly's abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924. This step was not met with “popular dismay” or any “mass movements among Muslims” that would have rallied the believers to work for the restoration of the caliphate (pp. 366–7).

Mona Hassan in her engaging, revisionist, and all-around brilliant work takes issue with such established narratives. Her book compares Muslim reactions towards the disappearance of the Caliphate in 1258 and 1924, respectively. Hassan maps how Muslims tried to “recapture that perceived loss” and how they reimagined the caliphate in this process. Contrary to Kennedy, the author highlights the “deep and abiding anguish” (p. 2) and “cultural trauma” (p. 46) which Muslim observers perceived in the face of a world void of a caliph. Drawing on Peter Brown's notion that elite discourses are not created out of thin air but should be seen as intimately related to broader currents in society, Hassan's goal is to explore “deep-seated cultural associations” with the caliphate (p. 3). In the context of 1258, her research has uncovered a trove of new sources, among them twenty contemporary poems along with references in historical chronicles, biographical dictionaries, and eschatological treatises (p. 22). These works circulated from Muslim Spain in the West to India in the East. In her analysis, Hassan opens up a fascinating world of political intrigue in thirteenth-century Egypt and the Levant. She shows how Mamluk rulers inaugurated surviving members of the Abbasid family as caliphs in Cairo and utilized them for their own purposes. Elaborate public ceremonies underlined that “state affairs, public finances, court judgements, marital contracts, and even congregational prayers” all hinged on the existence of a caliph (p. 72). Rebels justified their uprisings with claims of the caliph's mistreatment at the hands of the current sultan (p. 93). Given this widespread acknowledgment of

the caliph's importance, Hasan makes out in her literary sources a "near universal elation" about the restoration of the caliphate under the Mamluks (p. 87).

The author presents a related revisionist reading by arguing that the caliphate enjoyed continuing importance in Muslim political theory beyond the influential eleventh- and twelfth-century writers al-Māwardī (d. 1058), al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who are also covered by Kennedy. Authors such as Ibn Jamā'ah (d. 1333) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) still grappled with the role of the caliph. The latter placed him at the pinnacle of the state's hierarchy while also acknowledging that he had transferred "his essential functions over to the Mamluk sultan" (p. 113). This delegation of powers became entrenched in the fourteenth century when Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1370) turned the sultan into the "actual chief executive" (p. 120), whereas al-Suyūfī (d. 1505) continued to claim that the caliphate would remain in the hands of the Abbasids until the return of the Messiah (pp. 140–1).

Turning to 1924, Hassan uncovers "multiple meanings of loss" (pp. 142–83) and the very few voices of opposition within Turkey to the abolition of the caliphate, such as the independent deputy Zeki Bey (d. 1952). He fearlessly reminded Atatürk that his resistance movement had initially focused on the salvation of the caliphate and argued that Turkey should not willingly abandon its global Islamic leadership role that came with the seat of the caliph in Istanbul (pp. 164–5). Beyond the Turkish Republic there was significantly more enthusiasm for restoring the office. Yet, efforts to convene a Caliphate Conference in Egypt became derailed after international invitees largely backed out. They feared that King Fuad would exploit the occasion in order to declare himself caliph, thus amassing more power in his prolonged battle with the Egyptian opposition parties (p. 206). In delineating these fascinating dynamics, Hasan does not subscribe to the established view in the literature that the conference was an utter failure. Rather, she makes the intriguing point that some of the ideas for the establishment of a revamped caliphate, floated as a result of the Cairo gathering, enjoyed influential afterlives. Suggestions relating to a supreme council headed by a president or caliph, a general assembly, and an Eastern League of Nations that was supposed to cause an intellectual and cultural renaissance all left their imprint on the formation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the late 1960s (pp. 215–7). Hassan's last chapter (pp. 218–52) is fully devoted to six further reimaginings of the Caliphate in the twentieth century with a palpable tendency to conceptualize it in non-political terms. The most striking vision is perhaps offered by Said Nursi (d. 1960), who advocated for a superior, spiritual caliphate. In Nursi's view, the Prophet's grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn had lost a "transient, superficial rule only to gain a permanent, resplendent one and thus became the authorities of the world's spiritual poles instead of commonplace governors" (pp. 250–1).

Hasan's pathbreaking study has uncovered a rich archive of the complex ways in which Muslims in the pre-modern and modern period made sense of the caliphate and how they reinterpreted its meaning after two traumatic experiences of loss. The book also opens up exciting new avenues for future research. In particular, Hassan's focus on the central Arab lands and Turkey invites further comparative explorations of the Indian Subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa, or Southeast Asia. Hassan only briefly hints at a potential shift in Muslim intellectual history away from the primacy of the caliphate toward "alternative modes of connectivity to the prophetic heritage", such as the "chains of transmission that bound one generation to the next through classical Islamic scholarship and spiritual training" (p. 97 and p. 259). It is hoped that other scholars will follow up on this lead with their own investigation of these tantalizing questions. Finally, the puzzle remains

why ISIS has managed to bring back the caliphate as a powerful political vision despite the dominance of spiritual reinterpretations of the office in the aftermath of 1924 as shown so powerfully by Hassan.

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ROGER OWEN:

A Life in Middle East Studies.

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Part memoir and part history of the development of area studies as it relates to the Middle East, Roger Owen's new book, *A Life in Middle East Studies*, offers readers a text that successfully combines a charming account of a lifetime in academia with an insightful assessment of the development, and possible future, of Middle East area studies on both sides of the Atlantic. As such, while the region-specific material might at first glance have limited relevance to those in other areas, it actually deals with matters that concern area studies more widely, and academia as a whole.

Arranged in seven chapters, the book can more broadly be divided into two halves: the first deals more or less with Owen's experiences living and working in the Middle East; the second with academia and professional development, more particularly, his own and that of Middle East area studies at Oxford and Harvard. Taken together, the book's final two sections, "Lessons (By Way of a Conclusion)", and "Epilogue: My Sixty Years of Studying the Middle East", provide a pithy, not to say poignant, summation of the author's involvement in a field that has been transformed almost beyond recognition since he started out.

As one might expect from a man known as much for his generosity as a teacher as for the rigour he brings to his scholarship, there is a lack of bombast in these closing pages. Instead, one is confronted, in the gentlest possible fashion, with some decidedly undogmatic parting thoughts, which instead of being didactic encourage the reader to a more reflective response.

The early chapters take readers back more than half a century to a very different time in the life of the modern Middle East. Owen's first encounters with the Middle East took place in 1955–1956, during his National Service in the British Army, when he was based in Cyprus, then Britain's base from which to keep a beady eye on the eastern Mediterranean and wider Middle East. While doing his DPhil in Economic History at St Antony's, Oxford, Owen speaks fondly of working under Albert Hourani, the celebrated historian of the modern Middle East and a leading figure in the establishment and growth of Middle Eastern area studies at Oxford.

With the development of Middle East area studies in mind, Owen is able to offer a unique perspective on how this unfolded on both sides of the Atlantic. After serving four terms as Director of St Antony's College Middle East Centre, Owen moved to Harvard in 1993, where he became director of that university's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES).

Although familiar territory to anyone involved in area studies, Owen deals in brief with the very different contexts under which Middle East studies developed