The Jewish Athletes of Iran: The Sports Activities and Achievements of the Jews of Iran, Arsalan Geula, San Bernardino, CA: Author, 2019, ISBN 978-1-6538-7808-6 (pbk), 86 pp.

This is book is a welcome addition to the relatively small corpus of writings on the social history of Jews in Iran. It also provides valuable information on sports in Iran, an underdeveloped field of inquiry in Iranian studies. After introducing the reader to the main traditional athletic disciplines of Iran and giving us a capsule history of Iranian Jewry, the author comes to the main part of this short book, Jewish Iranians' involvement in modern sport.

When physical education became a compulsory subject in Iranian schools in 1926, the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle introduced their students to gymnastics and later to other sports. Soon some Jews developed a taste for modern athletics, and a master craftsman by the name of Joseph Geula made the garden of his house available for exercise and training. Gradually a number of clubs were formed, most of them ephemeral. Three figures stand out for their achievements at the national level: Soleyman Binafard, twice Iranian flyweight wrestling champion in the 1950s; Janet Kohan-Sedq, national 100-metre dash champion and Iranian "athlete of the year" in 1965; and Houshang Mashian, who was Iranian chess champion in 1958.

Beyond introducing the lives and times of these outstanding athletes, the book at hand also provides valuable insights into the social settings surrounding athletes, in particular the members of the various soccer teams, as they engaged with both the state and wider Muslim society, having to navigate the shoals of prejudice, politics, and bureaucracy. Of particular interest is the last section of the book, which discusses chess, the game at which the author himself excelled.

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Afghanistan Rising: Islamic Law and Statecraft between the Ottoman and British Empire, Faiz Ahmed, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017, ISBN 9780674971943 (hbk), 448 pp.

The past decade has been an exciting time for Afghanistan Studies, as the burgeoning field has been enriched with the methodologies of Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Studies. Scholars have replaced the common perception of Afghanistan as economically and geographically isolated with one that emphasizes the role of Afghans

in shaping the course of their own histories, ideas, and networks.[1] Nevertheless, a simple Google search on "Afghan history" or "Syllabus on Modern Afghanistan" still yields results that echo Islamism, fundamentalism, and warring factions. Scholars working on Afghan state formation within modernization-motivated analytical frameworks have tended to focus on diplomatic histories that rely on reading state documents at face value. Building from his dissertation, Faiz Ahmed's book *Afghanistan Rising: Islamic Law and Statecraft between the Ottoman and British Empire* is an important study that promises to go beyond such isolationist histories and challenge Afghanistan's image as a conflict-ridden "perennial war zone" (p. 2). The book sets out to "present an account of the first Muslim-majority country to gain independence, codify its own laws, and ratify a constitution after the fall of the Ottoman Empire" (p. 2), and more importantly to suggest an alternative "multiregional perspective," involving Ottoman Turks, Arabs, and Indians, through which to see Afghan state-building.

Historians of Afghanistan have often seen 1919 as the beginning of a self-styled modern Afghan state. How far back can the monumental reforms post-1919 be traced? What regional, transnational, and imperial frameworks of analysis are relevant for understanding Afghan state-building in different periods? Faiz Ahmed's book addresses these important questions. Stated most simply, the book studies Afghan–Ottoman geopolitics through the novel framework of migration and Islamic legal exchange by setting the point of inquiry at the earliest signs of exchange. This is an important contribution, especially in light of the paucity of historical studies that primarily focus on Turkey's role in Afghanistan after the Second World War.[2] The result is an intriguing exploration of an intertwined and interdependent tripartite alliance among Afghans, Indians, and Ottomans that challenges the commonly held view of Afghanistan as static and isolated.

The book is organized around the reigns of three Afghan sovereigns: ʿAbd al-Rahman Khan (r. 1880–1901), Habib Allah Khan (r. 1901–19), and Aman Allah Khan (r. 1919–29). The chapters provide insight into the level of intensity through which each Afghan amir drew on the ideologies of Ottoman and Indian migrants, as well as religious and state figures, to inform their distinct vision of Afghan statecraft. These influences ranged from the indirect or possible Ottoman involvement in shaping the late nineteenth century Afghan code of civil procedure, *Asas al-Quzat*, to the employment of Ottoman and Indian experts in the military, educational, and technocratic projects of the state, to finally the direct role of Ottoman and Indian legal experts in framing Afghanistan's 1923 Constitution.

The tripartite exchange and political collaboration (Afghan–Indian–Ottoman) connects the four themes discussed across the six chapters of the book: Afghanistan viewed as the nexus of "the Muslim world"; the legal and administrative importance

[1]Nile Green, ed., *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Benjamin Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[2]For instance, see Johannes Glasneck and Inge Kircheisen, *Türkei und Afghanistan: Brennpunkte der Orientpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1968).

of "interislamic networks" that challenge a militant or radical view of Pan-Islamism; the historically evolving and loose nature of the religio-legal tradition of Islamic shari'a; and the creation of a constitutional monarchy as the emergence of a modern theory of Muslim kingship.

Chapters 1 to 4 can be viewed as introductory, setting the discussion up for an in-depth examination of the 1923 Constitution. Chapter 1 briefly explores the prehistory of Afghan, Turkish, Iranian, and Indian Muslim relations in an attempt to resist the commonly studied turning points of 1772 (the rise of the Afghan Durrani Empire) and 1919 (the birth of a new independent state). Yet the core aim of the chapter is to contextualize the Ottoman Empire's first official mission to Afghanistan in 1877. The story is told through the biography of Şirvanizade Seyyid Ahmed Hulusi Effendi (d. 1889), a jurist previously involved in the compilation of the Mecelle-i Ahkam-i 'Adliye (the 1876 Ottoman Civil Code). Effendi's direct impact on shaping Afghan law is unclear, but shortly after he departed, the Amir began to experiment with "the first recorded attempt by the government of Afghanistan to extend a regularized judiciary over the whole country while establishing the Hanafi school of *fiqh* as the official law of the state" (p. 61). Another layer to the inter-Islamic plot is developed in chapter 2. The chapter traces 'Abd al-Rahman Khan's death and the ascension of his son, Habib Allah Khan, which prompted the return of formerly exiled Afghans from the Ottoman Empire and India. Alongside Afghans, the court also welcomed Ottoman and Indian technocrats, teachers, and military personnel poised to engage in a series of state-building projects in administration, education, and the military. Ahmed points to the activities of the Afghan diplomat and journalist, Mahmud Tarzi (1865–1933), who drew on his Ottoman education and popularity in the empire to recruit Ottoman experts to Kabul.

Away from war rooms and western battlefronts, chapter 3 examines the years leading up to the First World War as it played out in the Afghan court, and the war's ensuing impact on the country as a whole. Over the course of these years, Afghanistan became "a pivotal meeting ground for disparate Pan-Islamic networks active during World War I" (p. 123). Despite the continual wave of Ottoman military officers, Deobandi clerics, and Indian revolutionaries pouring into Afghanistan hoping to rouse support for the Ottoman Empire, Amir Habib Allah refused to officially ally with the Ottoman cause and remained neutral.

Chapters 4 and 5 accomplish the book's main aim, namely to demonstrate the impact of the inter-Islamic political networks tying Afghans to Ottoman and Indians as they collaborated on Afghanistan's constitutional and legal codes. Both chapters are situated around the reign of Amir Aman Allah and the aftermath of the third Anglo-Afghan war. The end of the war resulted in Afghanistan's proclamation as an independent Muslim state and the freedom to pursue a sovereign foreign policy. Chapter 4 examines how the newfound sovereignty quickly attracted Ottoman officials fleeing Allied-occupied Istanbul, and Indian Muslims (resulting from the Khilafat and Hijrat movements) in search of "economic advancement, acquiring land, and escaping the oppressive circumstances of semifeudal overlords

in India," but with "a singular desire to live under a modern-day Dar al-Islam" (p. 193).

The author's training in international law is most apparent in chapter 5, "Legalizing Afghanistan." Centered on examining the Nizamnamihha-yi Amaniyyih ("Aman Allah Codes"), a collection of civil and criminal laws with accompanying manuals for judges, teachers, and military personnel, Ahmed begins the chapter with a series of important questions. These questions tease out the inter-Islamic elements involved in the construction of the codes, and more importantly identify different strands of Muslim legal thought in its production. He makes an important argument that these legal codes were not merely a diffusionist construction that simulated Kemalist and European precedents, or even Salafi modernism, but rather "a synthesis of the Islamic jurisprudential heritage with the requirements of modern statehood, legality, and governance" (p. 209). Ahmed argues that because the Aman Allah Codes resisted transplanting "European legal codes," to a Muslim-majority society, they can be considered the "hallmark of Islamic legal modernism."

The brief biographies of five individuals involved in drafting the constitution strengthen Ahmed's argument about the importance of coalescing inter-Islamic influences involved in shaping the codes, which included Afghan ulema trained in Deobandi madrasas, radical members of the Young Afghan republican movement, and two individuals, namely an Indian Muslim physician and an Ottoman Turkish lawyer. What ensued was "an attempt by Muslim jurists to develop an Islamic legal theory of the modern nation-state in a noncolonial context through a process that cannot be dismissed as unwarranted innovation, capitulation, or misrepresentation" (p. 230). Ahmed supports his case by pointing to the copious references in the Aman Allah Codes from medieval, early modern, and modern sources of Hanafi law. Nevertheless, the discussion could have been strengthened further with specific examples showing in what ways Hanafi texts were cited, and what new ideas were advanced through such references in terms of legal history. A close reading of these examples may have been a welcome addition to show how Islamic laws were transformed into a uniquely Afghan modern statecraft, especially considering Ahmed's argument that Afghans did not carelessly adopt new ideas.

The final chapter 6, which has the purpose of functioning as a historical postscript, seeks to reflect on and conceptually connect turbulent regime changes in Afghanistan, India, and Turkey. These events include the formation of the ultra-secularist-nationalist Kemalist republic in Turkey, the collapse of the Khilafat movement in India, and the downfall of Aman Allah's rule in 1929.

The noteworthy strengths of his book are situating Afghanistan's inter-Islamic exchange with Ottomans and Indians in a much longer trajectory preceding 1919, and disassociating the reign of Aman Allah from the commonly held view of it as "secular," by highlighting vibrant intellectual interchanges among Muslims. This contribution to a new periodization of Afghan history is possible in large part due to Ahmed's ability to read Arabic, English, Urdu, and Persian sources in a manner that does not diminish the deliberate choices and distinct visions for Afghan

statecraft that each of the dynastic rulers pursued over the course of Afghanistan's development.

The rich history of pan-Islamic linkages successfully problematize the view of Amir Aman Allah as agent of a seemingly secular sovereignty, yet this comes at the price of limiting the historical place of European influence. The author notes that: "Although it cannot be assumed ʿAbd al-Rahman Khan looked exclusively to the Ottomans to guide him in building a strong, centralized government, no longer can we presume he relied on British or Russian advisors or other European 'officers for hire' as the impetus for his reforms" (p. 67). Ahmed rightly criticizes diffusionist interpretations of the Aman Allah reign, but ignores the specific history of significant European migration to Afghanistan in the period 1921–41, especially when examined or put in relation to Islamic influences. In this context he suggests that accepting Aman Allah's reliance "on Western, especially French, advisors and legal codes in building a newly independent state ... reflect[s] diffusionist models of historical change in which European legal cultures and colonial practices were exported to a passive Asia, Africa, and Latin America" (p. 215).

While it is important to highlight Afghanistan's deliberate engagement with new legal and political ideas, it is difficult to ignore the growing European (especially German) partnership with the Afghan state. Just as the inter-Islamic exchanges were intensifying after 1920, through treaties and the exchange of students, the Aman Allah state fostered exclusive relations with several European nations.[3] Therefore, just as it is important to consider internal diversity among Islamist actors and ideologies, it is also important not to homogenize "Europe," and to remember that the French Third Republic or Weimar Germany did not necessarily evoke the same connotation to Afghans in the early twentieth century as the British and Russian empires did. In fact, it had been the same Turcophile, Mahmud Tarzi, who facilitated the archeological activities of the French Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) in 1922. For the same period, it might be useful to consider also the distinct and methodical ways Afghan reformers in the Kabul court as well as Afghan students in the German diaspora creatively drew on German goods, ideas, and personnel to become the purveyors of technological and scientific innovation.

This need not weaken Ahmed's argument; the contrast between a heavy European physical presence and its lack thereof in the Aman Allah Codes show the agency of the Afghan state to direct influences and ideas from several points of origin and mold ideas into something inherently Afghan, while remaining autonomous all the while. This is especially significant in light of mounting European imperialism in early twentieth-century South Asia and the Middle East. We are still building the foundations for a critical, transnational, connected, global, and regional history of Afghanistan in the world, and Ahmed's work is a significant contribution to that emerging scholarly

[3]These treaties included among others: Italy (1921), Soviet Union (1921), Britain (1921/22), France (1922), Belgium (1923), Germany (1926), and Poland (1928).

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project. *Afghanistan Rising* is bound to be of interest to scholars from a wide range of area studies and fields.

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The Pearl of Dari: Poetry and Personhood among Young Afghans in Iran, Zuzanna Olszewska, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015, ISBN 978-0-253-01760-4 (pbk), 264 pp.

At the outset of *The Pearl of Dari*, Zuzanna Olszewska states that the title itself contains the three interlocking layers of significance that unfold throughout her book on "poetry and personhood among young Afghans in Iran." *Dorr-e Dari* is the title of the Afghan émigré cultural institute in Mashhad, the main scope of Olszewska's fieldwork —*Dari* being the main dialect of Persian spoken by many in Afghanistan and *Dorr* being its precious gem, a Persianate literature. Furthermore, as an excerpt from a poem by Naser Khosrow, the eleventh-century poet and traveler, "the pearl of Dari" harks back to a cosmopolitan era when Persianate societies were not divided by national borders, a time when "Afghans" and "Iranians" would be sharing—rather than contesting—Naser Khosrow's intellectual heritage. Finally, the image of the "pearl" embedded in the title highlights the struggle "between outside appearance and inner truths" (p. xi), which is to Olszewska definitive of Afghan refugees' self-determination, as a disenfranchised minority, in present-day Iran.

Whereas most studies of diasporic literatures tend to focus on the displacement of exilic authors from the so-called "periphery" to the Euro-American "core," *The Pearl of Dari* takes a regional route and offers an ethnography of Afghan refugee lives and poetic output within the field of cultural production in contemporary Iran. The Introduction poignantly sets the tone for the writing of Afghan lived and felt experiences into a transnational history of modern Iran, as Olszewska recounts her visit in 2005 to a poor neighborhood in Mashhad to attend her first session of Dorr-e Dari, depicting the precarious lives of Afghan refugees as migrant laborers of second-class status. Yet against the backdrop of such dilapidated ghettoes on the margins of "Iran's postrevolutionary urban expansion" (p. 1), some Afghan refugees have found in writing poetry a mode of self-expression and negotiation of collective identity.

After the first poetry recital—a poem titled "Mona Lisa" by Rahimeh Mirzaʾi: a critique of gender relations in her community—Olszewska begins her reflections on a diasporic culture that articulates its social and historical predicaments in a worldly, transnational, yet distinctly Perso-Afghan manner. *The Pearl of Dari* is thus intro-