

Along with this failure to acknowledge analyses which complicate his argument, the author, at times, does not cite sufficiently or provide evidence for statements he makes. When, in the second chapter, for example, he addresses interpretations of Algeria's violence and refers to debates between those privileging one interpretation or another, there are few names and few sources. In his appraisal of peacebuilding through "transitional justice," he makes the damning claim that the organizers of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission "selected testimonies and confessions on a dramaturgical basis," for their "entertainment value" (138), but provides not a single piece of evidence, nor even a source to which readers could refer. As a result, the reader is unable to evaluate the author's assertions.

Overall, and despite some quite lucid discussions about the ways conflicts are understood and managed, Jacob Mundy's book is disappointing. Not only does the author's misrepresentation of scholarship on Algeria render unconvincing his association of the Algerian case with the flaws of "conflict science," but also, by the end, following Mundy's persistent effort to identify all that's wrong with existing analyses and policies, the reader still does not know how to make sense of the Algerian experience and how the violence should have been addressed. ✂

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MIRI SHEFER-MOSSENSOHN. *Science Among the Ottomans: The Cultural Creation and Exchange of Knowledge.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. xvi + 246 pages, preface, note on transliteration, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$ 55.00 ISBN: 978-1-4773-0359-7.

Science in the Ottoman Empire is still a relatively marginal field in both the history of science and Ottoman studies. One of the earliest and most important works on the topic was published in 1939 by Adnan Adıvar under the name *La Science Chez les Turks*, whose enlarged version appeared a few years later in Turkish as *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*. Though Adıvar's book includes a number of important points that help us understand some characteristics of science in the Ottoman context, his account has been controversial because of its Eurocentric approach that assumed stagnation and decline in Ottoman scientific activities. Since then, important works on science in the Ottoman Empire continued to be produced. For example, the eighteen-volume publication of Ottoman bio-bibliographies for scientific

works between 1997 and 2011 under the auspices of the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) in Istanbul marked a major leap forward for the field. The work exposed untapped potential for further research on science among the Ottomans.

Miri Shefer-Mossensohn's work is a welcome contribution to the relatively small bookshelf on the topic in English. It relies upon a revisionist historiography of science that focuses on the social, political, economic, and cultural context of scientific activities. She argues that a scientific tradition called "Ottoman science" did exist, one that has its own unique epistemological characteristics, combining various intellectual traditions in what she calls the "Euroasian matrix." Considering the prevalence of the twenty-year-old journal, *Studies in Ottoman Science*, Shefer-Mossensohn is not the first scholar to coin the term "Ottoman science." The significance of her contribution stems from her attempt to integrate Ottoman science into recent historiographical approaches. In fulfilling this aim, she is primarily concerned with understanding science as a cultural phenomenon associated with other features of the culture within which scientific activities take place. She is less concerned with the scientific contents of representative works and the technical aspects of instruments produced or used by the Ottomans.

The Introduction of the book deals with changes over the last fifty years in the historiography of science in general and in the Islamic and Ottoman contexts in particular. The author argues that in order to investigate the Ottoman experience of science in its own right, as well as to make sense of the various ways through which Ottoman "innovation and creativity in science" occurred, we must do away with such terms as "borrowing or imitation" and adopt instead the term "*generics*," which commonly refers to "products that are comparable to patented brands in performance" (17). Having said this, it should be added that the book does not extensively elaborate this term and its relevance to the Ottoman experience. Chapter 1 draws our attention to the fact that multiple sources of knowledge comprise Ottoman science. Shefer-Mossensohn's classification of knowledge is largely based on the work of two of the most important Ottoman representatives, namely Taşköprüzāde and Kātib Çelebi. She also discusses the place of pre-Islamic and modern European sciences in the Ottoman intellectual sphere, stressing that there were various mechanisms through which these were received and used by the Ottomans.

Chapter 2 deals with different modes of Ottoman educational experiences throughout history. Shefer-Mossensohn notes that even during the modernization period from the late eighteenth century onwards, different

types of educational institutions, namely the madrasa and new military and civic schools, coexisted. In other words, there was a “fluid transition rather than a rupture” in Ottoman educational policies (78). She also touches upon the role of transmission of knowledge across three early modern Islamic empires, namely the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals, emphasizing the existence of interconnectedness between different intellectual spheres in the Islamic East. Chapter 3 continues the discussion of how knowledge was transmitted not only across different cultures but also within Ottoman lands. In addition, she examines writing, reading, and illustration as the basic modes of Ottoman literacy and communication. Shefer-Mossensohn also explains the role of translations and translators, and the roles of several religious and ethnic communities, as well as European travelers, who brought various kinds of knowledge to the Ottoman Empire.

Chapter 4 investigates how the state and ruling elites were involved in patronizing the production of knowledge. The author notes that while the pre-modern period marks the agency of the ruling elite in patronizing scholars, state organs nonetheless carried out scientific and technological policies, especially in the nineteenth century, in order to sustain the state’s power and legitimacy. The conclusion of the book takes two scholars, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī from eighteenth century Ottoman Egypt, as exemplars of Ottoman science. This part of the book is thought provoking and worth considering. However, it does not discuss in an extensive way how these individuals represent the fundamental characteristics of an Ottoman “scientist,” which would have required comparing them with scholars from different eras and geographies in the Ottoman context. Shefer-Mossensohn concludes her book by reemphasizing the fact that her intent with this book was to reformulate Ottoman “novelty” with reference to science and technology (166).

By dedicating her book to science in the Ottoman context, Shefer-Mossensohn fulfills an important objective with respect to the history of science and Ottoman studies. By proposing important generalizations about Ottoman science, her work will stimulate new research on various sources and agents of that science. However, I think that one of the most significant obstacles for making such generalizations, at least for the time being, is that the majority of Ottoman scholars, their productions and intellectual networks, and the institutions in which they carried out their intellectual activities are yet to be studied deeply and comparatively. Therefore, in my opinion, the book’s remarkable conclusions do not seem to be supported proportionally by detailed evidence. Again, the reason why the book does not show the precise ways in which different intellectual traditions came

together to shape Ottoman science has a lot to do with the situation of the available literature. These concerns notwithstanding, *Science Among the Ottomans* will be a useful work for those interested in Ottoman science in particular, and early modern and modern science in Islamic societies in general. ✂

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