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BOOK REVIEWS

A. AZFAR MOIN, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, South Asia Across the Disciplines (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Pp. 368. $55.00 cloth, $28.00 paper.

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The Millennial Sovereign recovers a shared world of sacred kingship that pervaded India, Iran, and Central Asia in early modernity. A. Azfar Moin argues that a Timurid-based social dispensation produced a particular type of sovereignty in which a ruler promoted his political claims largely through embodied spiritual practices. Beliefs about the turning of the Islamic millennium (1591–92 CE) played a key role in shaping this world, particularly the conviction that a messiah would emerge and usher in a new auspicious era. In this charged atmosphere, kings and their subjects alike looked to astrology, dreams, and omens to understand and lay claim to royal and religious authority. By carefully analyzing this realm of fused popular and esoteric millenarianism, Moin outlines a formidable challenge to the conventional narratives of Mughal and, to a lesser extent, Safavid history that is likely to surprise even specialists. Along the way, *The Millennial Sovereign* demonstrates several innovative methods of historical analysis that have the potential to alter how scholars access and make sense of the early modern past.

Moin devotes his first chapter to Timur (d. 1405) and pieces together the prevalent ideas concerning charismatic royal authority and the Islamic millennium that marked the rise of the Timurid cultural order (and the falling away of the Chinggis Khan world). His account of the Mughals in Chapter 2 begins with Babur, who founded the Indian Mughal Empire in 1526. Moin then proceeds chronologically through the next four Mughal rulers (Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan), devoting a chapter to each, and highlights how they all enacted power through Timurid-based spiritual practices and political ideologies. He periodically compares the Mughals to their Safavid counterparts and highlights connections between the two dynasties, such as Humayun's visit to the court of Shah Tahmasb. Moin carefully notes his interest in the social personas of kings rather than their private lives. This distinction allows him to avoid the pitfalls of personality-based history, a persistent predilection in Mughal historiography, and to rethink several key rulers as saintly, messianic figures.

The book's main strength and source of potential weaknesses are the same: it brings together ideas, concepts, sources, methodological approaches, and world areas typically treated separately. Moin threads together analyses of Safavid Iran, Central Asia, and Mughal India. This renders valuable insights, such as significant parallels between Shah Ismaʿil (founder of the Safavid Empire) and Babur, who are typically viewed as near opposites, the former an esoteric mystic and the latter a practical warrior. Moin convincingly shows how both operated in a world where interpreting dreams, paying attention to omens, and acting as a religious leader were essential to political success. Throughout the book, Moin contends that we must collapse the categories of saint and king, which overlapped more often than not in early modern India and Iran.

The Millennial Sovereign envisions sacred kingship as a social practice that depended on performance more than texts. For instance, Akbar, who represents the height of Mughal saint-kings for Moin, founded an imperial discipleship program, *dīn-i ilāhī* ("the Divine Religion" in Moin's gloss), that relied on a series of rituals to bind initiates to the king. Such groups

often prompted controversy, and some contemporaries harshly condemned Akbar's actions (their writings are largely why we know about such activities today). But all agreed on a playing field where kings modeled themselves as saints. A variety of interacting factors shaped this milieu, including Sufi orders, local geographies, and other imperial claimants (most importantly the Safavids). Kings, although elite and sacred, acted within this bustling world of competing claims. In part, Moin's emphasis on "the everyday world of sacred kingship" seems designed to preempt the criticism that emphasizing the sacrality of rulers has long been a near obsession of Indological scholarship.

One of Moin's greatest accomplishments (which will hopefully be emulated by future scholars) is his use of a sweeping array of textual and visual materials. Moin recognizes early on that he has a problem of sources. We possess relatively few records of Mughal and Safavid tactile, bodily practices, and those that we do have generally assume a great deal about the interpretive social context. Moin takes a multipronged approach to overcoming this paucity of information. For his chapter on Timur, he focuses on the historical memory of this ruler as the "Lord of Conjunction," a millennial title for the would-be world savior, rather than the nitty-gritty of what actually happened. In his treatment of the Mughals, he reads between the lines of the old favorites of historians, royal chronicles and memoirs, to reconstitute a largely oral, performative world where ritual and charisma were as pertinent to rulership as conquest and taxes. He also relies upon a diverse range of texts and objects that are typically thought to lay beyond the historian's gaze, including astrological and magic works, paintings (especially under Jahangir), and architecture (most notably under Shah Jahan). His anthropological approach to some of these materials, particularly images, may raise eyebrows among historians and art historians alike (for different reasons). In part, however, discipline-based challenges to his methodology prove one of Moin's more basic points: by sticking to established categories and disciplinary boundaries we miss crucial features of early modernity.

Many readers will likely be struck by Moin's approach to a time and place often situated squarely within Islamic history. *The Millennial Sovereign* consistently challenges the binaries typically deployed to understand Islamic societies, including orthodox and heterodox, local and universal, and Sunni and Shiʿi. Moin forcefully argues that such distinctions are, more often than not, anachronistic. Moreover, popular spiritual ideas, which we might think of as highly unorthodox today, cut across sectarian, social, and religious lines in both the Safavid and Mughal polities. For example, Moin traces how sovereigns of both dynasties relied on notions of cyclical history and transmigration of the soul, as well as correctly interpreting strange occurrences. When discussing such concepts in the context of 16th- and 17th-century India, Moin introduces the important corrective that we need not assume that the Mughals adapted these ideas from Hindu thought when they were part of their Timurid heritage.

In Moin's view, the audience for the performance of sovereignty shifted depending on the particular act. At various points, the Mughal rulers acted with an eye to their soldiers, the Safavid kings, a small group of inner disciples, and/or the Indian population at large. Moin occasionally recovers how groups that are typically sidelined in imperial chronicles and modern historiography, such as women, witnessed and participated in the enactment of kingship. In his final two chapters, on Jahangir and Shah Jahan respectively, Moin describes a model in which kings, like saints, presented one set of ideas to the public and another to an elite group of followers.

Moin concludes with the ascension of Aurangzeb ʿAlamgir (r. 1658–1707), a king frequently portrayed as a religious zealot who inaugurated the downfall of the great Mughal Empire. One wishes that Moin had continued his narrative through Aurangzeb's reign and thus joined the increasing number of scholars who are reconsidering this crucial chapter of Mughal history. Another desideratum, perhaps to be fulfilled in future research, is a discussion of how Moin's detailed account of sacred kingship connects with other recent treatments of Mughal power that focus on networks, cross-cultural interactions, and literature. *The Millennial Sovereign* leaves the

reader wanting more. It is a valuable contribution to the field that ought to compel scholars to reevaluate key assumptions regarding kingship and sainthood in Mughal India.

CHRISTOPHER DOLE, *Healing Secular Life: Loss and Devotion in Modern Turkey*, Contemporary Ethnography (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). Pp. 304. $69.95 cloth, $69.95 e-book.

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Healing Secular Life is an archive- and fieldwork-based account of therapeutic authority at the nexus of science and religion—and their differentiation as such—in Turkey. One of the strengths of the book is that it examines these both at the analytic level of personal experience and in the historicity of institutions, discourses, and practices. The text is based on fieldwork with "healers" and those who visit them, as well as inhabitants of two *gecekondu* (squatter neighborhoods) in Ankara, and printed sources from the early Republican era. Dole approaches healing as the "remaking of worlds," not merely an attempt to return to "normalcy," and his cases focus mainly on two modalities of healing: *evliya* (sainthood) and *cinci hoca* (healers adept at working with *jinn*, or roughly, "spirits"). Both, Dole argues, are marginal figures in contemporary Turkey, but not unrelated to the center.

Dole finds Jacques Rancière's work on what he calls the "politics of aesthetics" to be particularly useful to his analysis. This refers to not only sensory effects of perceptible phenomena but also the material and discursive processes that render some things perceptible, speakable, or possible in the first place, while rendering other things imperceptible, unspeakable, or seemingly impossible. The approach shows that this is an important, pervasive field in which the political is located, though a commonly overlooked one, and Dole's work demonstrates how rewarding it can be to operate on this analytical level. Interestingly, Dole argues that while a great deal of sophisticated and welcome work has been done on secularity and Islamic traditions of discourse and practice, they tend to focus either on secular arrangements of institutions or fairly orthodox (even Alevis would by now be seen as constituting a degree of orthodoxy) Islamic traditions. Although Dole admits that this no doubt covers much of the territory, it is not the whole picture, and such studies obscure life-worlds that flourish at the margins of both formal secularism and Islamic (and Alevi) orthodoxy.

The first part of the book is a fascinating discussion of early Republican campaigns of medical literacy and the development of a "healthcare system," which involved the establishment of modern medical, religious, and political authority in contrast to the "healer," who comes to represent everything backward to be swept away by modernization. The nation's biological life and the collective health and hygiene of the nation became central problems of political power. (Dole writes that Turkey had one of the first National Ministries of Health in the world.) State-citizen relations and dynamics were thus set up at the level of health. Dole links this to a very insightful discussion of the Halkevleri (people's houses) and the journal *Ülkü*, particularly the presentations of recent scientific advances, medicine specifically, as part of an effort to spread a "scientific mentality" and make explicit connections between these advances and the daily lives of (especially) rural Turks. This was part of a broader effort at improvement addressing everything from hygiene and the layout of homes to the standardization of mealtimes and proper nutrition.

The importance of this goes far beyond the medical and health fields; the prestige of modern science and medicine among practically the entirety of the political spectrum of contemporary