

*Spiritual Subjects: Central Asian Pilgrims and the Ottoman Hajj at the End of Empire*. Lale Can. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020. xi + 257 pp. \$25. Paperback ISBN-13: 9781503611160.

Lale Can provides a story of pilgrims and empire that both centers on individuals and the spaces they encountered while being astutely aware of the state structures which both shaped and were shaped by hajj pilgrims. Many works, such as Eileen Kane's *The Russian Hajj* (2015) and John Slight's *The British Empire and the Hajj* (2015) fixate on how colonial empires and state structures define the pilgrim's experience of the hajj, oftentimes relegating the pilgrim to an actor upon the empire's stage. This is something I often fall victim to in my own work as well, which makes Can's work a refreshing new perspective. The new perspective that Can provides pairs well with the other recent groundbreaking work on the modern hajj, Michael Christopher Low's *Imperial Mecca* (2020). Can's work manages to shift the narrative that most work on the hajj during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is caught up in, showcasing the ways in which pilgrims themselves shaped and contested the spaces, imperial policies, and identities pressed upon them. This view of the hajj from the pilgrim's perspective, or as seen from a Sufi lodge, helps to destabilize the state-centered archival baggage which shapes the many historical perspectives of the hajj. *Spiritual Subjects* does not focus on individual stories simply to escape the overbearing presence of state and colonial archives that domineer many studies of the hajj, but rather, Can expertly navigates different perspectives and showcases the ways in which pilgrims, along with the physical and legal spaces they encompassed, engaged with the state thereby defining their own subjecthood, though with varying degrees of success. The strength of this work is the centering of the agency of pilgrims in their relations to power and the meaning they impress upon the state structures which scaffolded the world around them. This profound perspective helps to place *Spiritual Subjects* as a foundational text for not only the study of pilgrimage in the Ottoman world, but also for our understanding of imperial subjecthood and citizenship in both Ottoman and global history.

*Spiritual Subjects* navigates the relation between state, pilgrim, and space best in Chapter Two, "Sufi Lodges as Sites of Transimperial Connection." In this chapter, Can relies on the guest register of a Sufi lodge for Central Asian pilgrims and travelers in Istanbul. The guest register and the space of the Sufi lodge take center stage and for Can they provide a useful window into the social relationships which constituted the transimperial networks which crisscrossed the Ottoman world. The pilgrims who traversed this world brought with them complicated questions of subjecthood and citizenship between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, with Central Asian pilgrims defining the spaces both inside of and between empires. Through the institutionalization of the guest house within this Sufi Lodge and the state record keeping that came with it, Can locates this pivotal space for pilgrims as the intersection of the transimperial subject and the Ottoman state. Many other analyses of the hajj often provide either a strictly anecdotal examination solely told through personal pilgrimage narratives while for others it is purely structural, top-down, and driven by imperial policies from above. This is particularly true of work on the hajj from the 1990s which saw the publication of F. E. Peters's *The Hajj* and Suraiya Faroqhi's *Pilgrims and Sultans*. Often-

times these different historiographical perspectives of the hajj concern vastly different questions and fail to demonstrate effectively how the individual experience of the pilgrim intersects with the larger structural and global connections that make the study of the hajj so fascinating. It is here, through a mezzo analysis that *Spiritual Subjects* navigates these questions. It is not a study which only relies upon individual travel narratives or central state archival material, but rather locates the space of these encounters in late Ottoman Istanbul in the courtyard of a Sufi Lodge, thereby revealing the complicated lives of the pilgrims who found their names transcribed in its guestbook and the petitions they wrote for aid and legal status to the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul.

*Spiritual Subjects* utilizes its unique perspective to disentangle expertly the complex questions of subjecthood, extraterritoriality, and citizenship that Central Asian pilgrims tried to carve out for themselves, oftentimes to the backdrop of a reluctant Ottoman state. The stories presented in Can's work demonstrate the global reach of the transimperial hajj networks which connected Muslim communities around the world and brought together global Muslims not just in places like Mecca but also in those cities along the way, such as Istanbul. As Can presents their work through this unique lens, *Spiritual Subjects* is as much about Central Asian pilgrims and the hajj as it is about one of the many faces of late Ottoman Istanbul. *Spiritual Subjects* is not only an important study with a new and fascinating perspective on our understanding of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century hajj but also a fundamental reading for Ottomanist scholars who wish to better understand a global perspective of Istanbul at the end of empire.

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