

Endnotes

1. Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "The Süleymaniye Complex: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 92-117; idem, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

2. Shirineh Hamadeh, "Splash and Spectacle: The Obsession with Fountains in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," *Muqarnas* 19 (2002): 123-148; idem, "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevi-

table' Question of Westernization," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63 (2004): 32-51; idem, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

3. See, for example, Jale Nejdert Erzen, "Aesthetics and Aisthesis in Ottoman Art and Architecture," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 2 (1991): 1-24.

4. Dana Sajdi (ed.), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), especially 1-40. For Hamadeh, see note 3.

Streets of Memory: Landscape, Tolerance and National Identity in Istanbul

By Amy Mills

Georgia: Georgia University Press, 2010, 248 pp., ISBN 978082035742, \$24.95.

Recent neoliberal/post-Kemalist shifts in Turkish culture and politics have ushered in, among other things, a rekindled interest in Istanbul's cosmopolitan past and in the remaining vestiges of its historical urban fabric. While an increasingly sophisticated culture industry is mobilized to recast the former as an object of nostalgia for popular consumption, gentrification projects are transforming the social landscape of historical neighborhoods in new and often controversial ways. Amy Mills's ethnographic study of Kuzguncuk offers a compelling account of these processes at work in a picturesque neighborhood on the Asian shores of the Bosphorus, widely accepted to be the paradigm of multi-ethnic coexistence, neighborliness and aesthetic charm in a city that has lost most of these qualities to republican urban/social modernization during the latter half of the 20th century. As Mills uncovers in six thematic chapters, this image of Kuzguncuk as the idealized *mahalle*—as the embodiment of belonging and familiarity as well as ethnic/religious

harmony and tolerance—in fact obscures deeper histories of discrimination, conflict and violence that went hand in hand with nationalism, "Turkification" and successive episodes of migration. "Nostalgia constitutes the flip side of silence", writes Mills (p. 210), and *Streets of Memory* makes a convincing case of how cosmopolitan nostalgia, along with its silences, ultimately bolsters the very same Turkish nationalist narrative that it claims to contest.

The first chapter opens with a historical overview of the shifts in Kuzguncuk's ethnic, religious, and class composition, especially the departure of non-Muslim residents in the aftermath of the "wealth tax" imposed on minorities in the 1940s and the pogroms of 1955, and coinciding with these, the arrival of Muslim-Turkish migrants from rural Anatolia. Chapter 2 addresses how these social fragmentations and painful memories are suppressed in the more recent "re-constructions" of an idealized Kuzguncuk, both in the popular media (as a stage-set for television series

and films) and by gentrifying newcomers (mostly architects, academics and professionals). The contested story of the market garden is told in Chapter 3, showing how the confiscation of this property from a Greek family in 1977 is glossed over during the current confrontation between private developers who want to build on the site and Kuzguncuk residents who want to preserve it as a produce garden. By tracing competing claims to property ownership, Mills thus reveals another crack in Kuzguncuk's narratives of neighborhood unity. Chapter 4 focuses on Icadiye Street, the main thoroughfare of Kuzguncuk and the celebrated space of everyday encounters and communal events like festivals, funerals, etc. By juxtaposing these narratives of multiethnic harmony with the powerful silence surrounding the 1955 pogroms against Christians, Mills highlights the ways in which memory produces its own imagined cultural spaces. In Chapter 5, the discussion shifts to gender and the practice of "neighboring" among women in Kuzguncuk. Drawing upon Michel de Certeau, Mills articulates the concept of "propriety" that regulates norms of social behavior, inclusion/exclusion and public/private within the *mahalle*. The final chapter on Jacob Street zooms in specifically on Kuzguncuk's Jewish community, tracing their historical roots in Ottoman Istanbul and their subsequent migrations from Kuzguncuk to other neighborhoods within the city, as well as to Israel after 1948. Through lengthy interviews, Mills finds that Jews in Turkey have aligned themselves with state discourses of secularism, modernity and harmony, while those who have migrated to Tel Aviv are more open to share their stories of discrimination and dispossession. Arguably, Mills's detour to

Tel Aviv introduces some unevenness to the research since the author does not do the same to other non-Muslim groups and does not, for example, follow Kuzguncuk's Greeks to Athens or Armenians to Lebanon or to America. Nonetheless, it highlights how multiple geographies are involved in histories of migration, emigration and exile, complicating place-based ethnography.

Collectively, these chapters convincingly uncover the role of landscape and memory (both personal and collective) in the making and negotiation of identities. The book engages with other authors, contributes to a number of important theoretical debates at large and appeals to a much wider interdisciplinary audience beyond Turkish studies. Particular homage is paid to ideas of "symbolic landscape" (Henri Lefebvre) and "collective memory" (Maurice Halbwachs), as well as to critical theories of landscape that expose how nature is culturally constructed as "landscape" by erasing histories of human intervention (Denis Cosgrove is cited while William Cronon and Raymond Williams are not). With obvious mastery of these theoretical sources, *Streets of Memory* successfully deconstructs the making of Kuzguncuk into the "historical and natural theater of *mahalle* life...even while it erases history" (p. 84). Meanwhile, comparative references to other studies, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty's study of Hindu-Muslim intercommunal relationships in Bengali society during partition of 1947 (p. 133) or Tone Bringa's study of Catholic and Muslim women in a Bosnian village before its collapse in the civil war (p. 160), allow the reader to move back and forth between the specific story of Kuzguncuk and the larger questions pertaining to the making, contestation and negotiation of identities everywhere.

As also acknowledged by the author, by positing “urban landscape as the physical, cultural and geographic dimension of the intertwining of state and society in Turkey” (p. 210), *Streets of Memory* complements Esra Ozyurek’s recent book *Nostalgia for the Modern*. Whether it is nostalgia for Kemalist images of modernity (Ozyurek) or for Kuzguncuk’s lost cosmopolitanism (Mills), both books articulate how nostalgia leads to the privatization and commodification of an imagined/ idealized past and compels individuals to internalize state narratives in their daily lives. Particularly significant is Mills’s notion of “actually existing cosmopolitanism”, a place-based version, which rejects the common identification of cosmopolitanism with globalization and trans-national life styles and instead sees cosmopolitanism and nationalism not as oppositional but as interrelated (especially pp. 214-215). In mid-century Istanbul, Mills writes, “...cosmopolitan social relations existed alongside a process of nationalization of urban space and culture, and eventually were destroyed by the ways in which nationalism and urbanization coincided” (p. 213).

Based on the author’s participant-observations and interviews and amply supplemented by secondary research, *Streets of Memory* is a compelling example of place-based ethnography, with all its merits, as well as its difficulties. The absence of hard data, quantitative analysis and historical documentation regarding Kuzguncuk’s history is one conspicuous gap, also acknowledged by the author (p. 227). Another minor flaw, at least to this reviewer, is that the repetitiveness of the main arguments breaks the narrative flow in the book. In the introduction, at the beginning and end of each chapter, and then again in the conclusion,

the author repeatedly summarizes what she is doing and how she is doing it. The result reads like a dissertation with all the accompanying “wordiness” and academic jargon. Lastly, there is a missed opportunity in that Mills does not look more closely at the actual urban fabric and architecture of Kuzguncuk. She comes very close in different parts of the book: for example, the differentiation between residential streets versus the main street (p. 139), how gentrifying newcomers use space differently (p. 152), or how women watching the street from their windows police *mahalle* propriety (p. 144). Yet such observations remain marginal rather than constitutive of the book’s main arguments and there is little visual evidence other than one very helpful street plan in the beginning (and a few not very helpful photographs). Exactly what kinds of windows lend themselves to such street surveillance? How important are the widths of the streets? Is a cul-de-sac more conducive to the closed community lives of *mahalles* whereas a thoroughfare or grid plan suggests a modern, open society (as Murat Gul argues in his recent book on the modern urban history of Istanbul)? What do old houses “restored” with concrete structures and painted wood finishes say about authenticity, nostalgia and “themed environments”? These and many other good questions can be asked to make this ethnographic study even more strongly “place-based”. Expanding the research in that direction, supplementing it with more visual material and perhaps collaborating with urban/ architectural historians (as, for example, in the recent publication, *The Architecture and Memory of the Minority Quarter in the Muslim Mediterranean City*, 2010) are only some of the many exciting prospects that this book inspires.

Ultimately however, the profound question raised by Mills's study of Kuzguncuk is whether the *mahalle* can truly be "a space of cosmopolitanism". I would suggest that if cosmopolitanism is primarily about urban encounters with alterity and difference (Richard Sennett) and about the blasé attitude that the metropolitan condition imposes upon individuals (Georg Simmel), then it is by definition the opposite of familiarity and closed community life that informs the very concept of *mahalle*. This dilemma appears, for example, in the ambivalence of Kuzguncuk's gentrifying newcomers, especially professional women, towards *mahalle* life: their search for a sense of belonging at the same time that they

reject the invasion of privacy that comes with it (p. 141). That *mahalle* life also implies *mahalle* oppression (*mahalle baskisi*) is a particularly poignant issue today when interest in and idealization of the *mahalle* is rampant, among both conservative Muslim communities and the "white Turks" of gated suburbia who in their own different ways, idealize the presumed homogeneity, safety and familiarity of the old *mahalle*. Compared to these, one is thankful that Kuzguncuk's cosmopolitan nostalgia is at least, urban, ambivalent and interested in minority histories, albeit in the sterilized ways that Mills uncovers.

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Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present

By *Christopher I. Beckwith*

New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009, 472 pp., ISBN 9780691135892.

With the assertion of being the first complete history of Central Eurasia from ancient times to the present day, Christopher Beckwith's *Empires of the Silk Road* is a complex and well argued book. Beckwith unites the history of the peoples of the world's largest landmass into a remarkable history by describing the rise and fall of the great Central Eurasian empires such as the Scythians, the Huns, the Turks, and the Mongols under Genghis Khan.

The book is composed of twelve chapters, a prologue and epilogue, and two appendices exploring the spread of Proto-Indo-Europeans and Central Eurasian peoples. Each chapter opens with a brief

summary of the arguments in the chapter and that makes for easier reading. The other strong aspect of the book, in addition to the footnotes, is that there is an extended set of endnotes that elaborate on the topics discussed in the text.

The author's aim is to clarify some issues in Central Eurasian history through writing "a realistic, objective view of the history of Central Eurasia and Central Eurasians" (p. xii). Beckwith rejects the stereotypes of pastoral nomads as warlike, difficult to defeat, poor, and entirely distinctive peoples. Throughout the book, he seeks to refute the popular notion of Central Eurasians as barbarian nomads (see especially