Book Reviews


This compact but handsome volume presents many of the papers presented at an international symposium organized by the editors in Berlin on September 17–21, 2004. The conference brought together 27 scholars from Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Turkey, and the Ukraine as well as western Europe (France, Germany and the UK). As the brief preface to the volume spells out (p. 9), it was intended “to give a voice to historians of art and architecture, archeologists, and curators of museums from what can be termed the European periphery, and to initiate a dialogue with specialists from Western Europe studying art and architecture in the central areas of the Islamic world.” The publication contains twenty of the papers presented there (all in English, some translations from Russian or German, some in revised form) organized under geographic rubrics (5 papers on the Ukraine; 7 on the Crimea; 2 on the Volga-Ural region; 3 on the northern Caucasus; and 3 on the southern Caucasus). It opens with a short introductory essay by one of editors, Joachim Gierlichs, setting out two topics he deemed worthy for further research, perhaps at a second conference, namely the “art marketplace” in the Caucasus, Daghestan and Georgia at the turn of the 20th century and unknown collections of Islamic art in the Ukraine.

As an introduction to a relatively unknown area of the Islamic lands, this volume is particularly welcome. Such ignorance on the part of the general public is understandable, given that the region is inaccessible not only geographically but also linguistically. So the decision to publish all the papers in English makes it a valuable resource to Western scholars. And in general the translations are well done, despite the differences is style and content.
The papers cover a wide range. Many deal with architecture, mainly stone, but some treat portable arts, ranging from oil painting and printing to horse trappings and leatherwork. The researchers also use a variety of methodologies, from archeological survey and excavation to stylistic analysis. As befits the spread of Islam in the region, the papers deal with the later period, from the 13th century to the present, with occasional references back to earlier events. Many concern the period of Ottoman domination, but there is a welcome interest in the arts of the 19th, 20th and even the 21st centuries. Mostly papers are short (5–7 pages); Holger Schuckelt’s essay on the gifts and other objects now in Dresden (16 pages) is the longest and illustrates the continued German interest in the region, which in the case of Saxony and the Crimea goes back for centuries.

Topics range as well. Some are studies of individual sites (Ninel Bokii, Irina Kozyr and Tatyana Pozywei on a ruined bath and necropolis near Torgovytza in Podolia; Mark Kramarovsky on Solkhat, the capital of the Golden Horde) or individual buildings (Yuriy Boltryk and Svitlana Bilyayevo on the Akkerman Fortress at the mouth of the Dniester River near Odessa in the Ukraine, “the most advanced military and trading post of Ottoman empire in the region;” Ekaterine Kvachatdze on the west façade of St. Peter and Paul Church in Sarajevo, Georgia). Other monographic essays present the holdings of an individual museum (Irina Koshoridze on the Qajar oil paintings in the State Museum of Art in Tblisi) or the work of an individual artist (Elisabeth Tietmeyer on the collection of 163 oil paintings by Wilhelm Kiesewetter in the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin, many depicting scenes of the Crimea from his long travels there in the 1840s; Victor Gankevish on Ismail Gasprinskii’s printing house in the Crimea at the turn of the 20th century).

At the other end of the scale are surveys. Some cover the architectural heritage of entire regions (three surveys of Ottoman monuments in the Ukraine, one by Svitlana Bilyayevo and Bozkurt Ersoy; a second by Bozkurt Ezkoj, and a third by Inci Kuyulu Ersoy; Nicole Kançal-Ferrari on the Crimean Khanate). Other essays treat architectural techniques (Elena Aibanbina on stone carving in the Crimea; Mine Kadrioğlu on Islamic motifs in architecture in the buildings of the Tao-Tlrdjet region of Georgia). Many cover what might be called artistic schools (Anife Akhmetchina on the revival of traditional Islamic art in the Volga-Ural region in the 1980s and 90s; Fuad Pepinov on political caricature and the satirical magazine *Molla Nasreddin* published in Tblisi in the early 20th century) or cultures (Ismet Zaatov on the Crimean Tatars; Swietlana Czerwonaja on the Karachais and Balkars; Leyla Geybatova on Daghestan).
The papers thus present a wealth of new information that is not readily available elsewhere. Their footnotes underscore the organizers’ perception of a need for dialogue, as almost all the notes refer to publications unknown in the West and most omit the standard ones used there. The plates alone make this volume a valuable tool.

It is all the more regrettable therefore that the editors made no attempt to string together the individual contributions or to provide an overview showing the relationship of one to another. Even a map showing the individual sites or even the major regions mentioned in the essays is missing. There seems to be no order in the presentation beyond the geographic subgroups, and as essays on specific sites are interspersed before, in the middle of, and after regional surveys.

There is also no attempt at coming to terms with the distinctive qualities of this particular region. Studies of the “periphery” of the Islamic lands are very much in the limelight today, whether the Anatolian borderlands on the west (as in the 2007 volume of *Muqarnas* devoted to the “Lands of Rum”) or those of the Indian subcontinent in the east (as in the 2004 issue of *Ars Orientalis* devoted to “Communities and Commodities: Western India and the Indian Ocean, 11th–15th Centuries”). The data presented in this volume would form a similar regional study, one that deserves a synthetic and thematic essay, and one can hope that the editors will pursue their interests and produce such a study.

**Sheila S. Blair**


With his experience in lecturing on Muslim-Christian relations and his publications on the thought of Zayn al-‘Abidin [‘Ali b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 94/713)] along with other topics, the author of this book has studied sermons that are delivered in Shi‘i gatherings (*majālis*) in Hyderabad, Deccan (India) to mourn the martyrdom of Ḥusayn b. ‘Ali (d. 61/680).