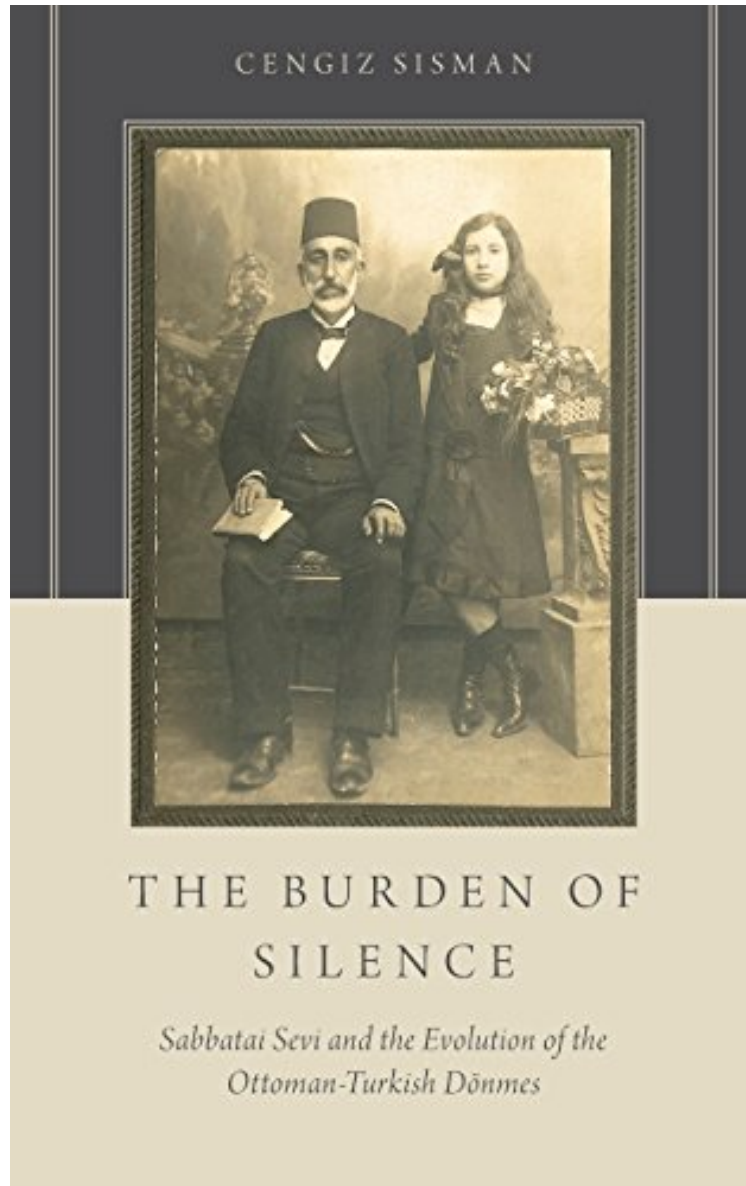


The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dnmes

Cengiz Sisman

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Cengiz Sisman : The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dnmes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dnmes:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Light on the hidden history. A masterpiece. By AYSE BEZMENI love history and was very much fascinated with this this masterpiece. This book contains a lot of scientific work and not a fiction. It brings a hidden history to light. Very pleasant to read, by the way. I have already bought several of those books to make presents to my friends who also loved it. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Sabbatean paradox By Clara Rockmore The great accomplishment of this book is to render plausible the paradox of the Sabbatean position that Sevi's failure as a Messiah was of one piece with his expected successful Second Coming. The author seems to write from within the Sabbatean experience at the same time that he reconstructs it objectively from surviving documents in seven languages, mystical prophecies from the Kabbala, photographs of esoteric symbolism in the tombstones of Istanbul's Nightingale Stream cemetery, and interviews with contemporary Dnmes which must have been masked or edited so as not to betray secret knowledges. These elements shift in perspective as the reader considers them, employing a sophisticated literary strategy appropriate to the subject matter. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. This insightful book fills an important gap in Ottoman, ... By OTTOMAN This insightful book fills an important gap in Ottoman, Jewish and Ottoman Jewish studies. The second and the third chapter are particularly fascinating. Sisman's close reading of the Ottoman sources is an invaluable contribution to the study of Sabbatai Sevi's movement.

The Burden of Silence is the first monograph on Sabbateanism, an early modern Ottoman-Jewish messianic movement, tracing it from its beginnings during the seventeenth century up to the present day. Initiated by the Jewish rabbi Sabbatai Sevi, the movement combined Jewish, Islamic, and Christian religious and social elements and became a transnational phenomenon, spreading throughout Afro-Euroasia. When Ottoman authorities forced Sevi to convert to Islam in 1666, his followers formed messianic crypto-Judeo-Islamic sects, Dnmes, which played an important role in the modernization and secularization of Ottoman and Turkish society and, by extension, Middle Eastern society as a whole. Using Ottoman, Jewish, and European sources, Sisman examines the dissemination and evolution of Sabbateanism in engagement with broader topics such as global histories, messianism, mysticism, conversion, crypto-identities, modernity, nationalism, and memory. By using flexible and multiple identities to stymie external interference, the crypto-Jewish Dnmes were able to survive despite persecution from Ottoman authorities, internalizing the Kabbalistic principle of a "burden of silence" according to which believers keep their secret on pain of spiritual and material punishment, in order to sustain their overtly Muslim and covertly Jewish identities. Although Dnmes have been increasingly abandoning their religious identities and embracing (and enhancing) secularism, individualism, and other modern ideas in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey since the nineteenth century, Sisman asserts that, throughout this entire period, religious and cultural Dnmes continued to adopt the "burden of silence" in order to cope with the challenges of messianism, modernity, and memory.

"What distinguishes Sisman's book is its original, comprehensive integration of all three primary types of sources on the subject: Jewish, Christian-European, and Muslim-Ottoman. Especially praiseworthy is the effort to collect all Ottoman sources on the subject, both the well-known and the unknown, under one research roof, and further, to put them through an impressive historical analysis against the familiar sources used intensively in past and current research." DAAT: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy Kabbalah "The biggest contribution of the book is its objective to complement and correct the literature on Sevi written by Gershom Scholem and other scholars by putting the Dnme phenomenon within the context of Ottoman and Turkish history."--Israel Affairs "The book contextualizes this crypto-Judaic community in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic and enables a decolonial re-thinking of the Dnme history from an Ottoman-Turkish-Muslim point-view."--Reorient: The Journal of Critical Muslim Studies "This book is very important not only for students of Sabbateanism but for a much wider circle of readers interested in Jewish mysticism, modern Judaism, the sociology of religious mysticism, Ottoman Islam as well as crypto-religious sects. This wide range is an indication of the importance of the book. The contents are fascinating, the author is very perceptive, and the book raises many issues for further thought and research. The book is also a lesson in the moral importance of respect for privacy on the part of scholars. Indeed, current political developments in Turkey may give this book added importance for the study of Turkish popular and political culture."--Religious Studies "Sisman's own research into different branches of the Sabbatean movement is substantiated and enriched by his personal encounters with surviving members of the sect. Cengiz Sisman's historical account also reminds us how little has changed in our confused attitude to questions of religion and ethnicity."--Times Literary Supplement "This is the first comprehensive study of the history of a unique religious phenomenon: the development and survival, for three and a half centuries, of a sect of messianic Jews, who believed in the Messiah Sabbatai Sevi, and following him converted to Islam and lived as a secret group in Turkey. Sisman brilliantly analyzes the religious, social, and cultural background of their history and presents in this volume an intriguing picture of their beliefs and social integration in their surroundings. It critically yet nicely complements Gershom Scholem's magisterial work, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah." -- Joseph Dan, Gershom Scholem Professor of Kabbalah (Emeritus), The Hebrew University of Jerusalem "By engaging with the available sources, Sisman elegantly constructs the history of one of the most mysterious communities, the

Dnmes, within the broader Ottoman-Turkish and Eurasian contexts. This is a path-breaking study, which demonstrates how this enigmatic community survived through the early modern and modern times, and made significant contributions to Ottoman and Turkish modernizations along the way." --Heath W. Lowry, Ataturk Professor of Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies (Emeritus), Princeton University "This book, based on years of research in various sources in multiple languages, is a highly significant study of the phenomenon of Sabbateanism over the centuries. Meticulously researched and contextualized, it makes a very important contribution to Ottoman, Turkish, and Jewish history." --Aron Rodrigue, Charles Michael Professor in Jewish History and Culture at Stanford University
About the AuthorCengiz Sisman is Assistant Professor of History at University of Houston, Clear Lake.