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Ian Coller, *Muslims and Citizens: Islam, Politics, and the French Revolution*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020. viii + 349 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$50.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978030024336-9.

Review by William S. Cormack, University of Guelph.

This innovative new study explores both the importance of Islam and abstract Muslims to the revolutionary conception of universal citizenship and actual Muslims' engagement with the French Revolution. In examining the rhetorical use of Islam and Muslims in debates about citizenship and the role of religion, as well as the experiences of Muslim visitors to France and the Republic's relations with Muslim states, the book's narrative follows the revolution's chronological development from the crisis of the old regime in 1786-88 to the Coup of 18 Brumaire that brought Napoleon Bonaparte to political power in 1799. In developing both themes, Ian Coller emphasizes the revolutionary politicization of Muslims as a category. The ambiguity of this politicization was demonstrated in the French invasion of Egypt in 1798. Bonaparte's expedition reflected the revolutionary preoccupation with Islam as a perceived model of a rational and civic religion and a belief that Egyptians would welcome the French as liberators, yet the invasion caused the French Republic's rupture with the Muslim world and represented the collapse of revolutionary universalism. Along with debates in the National Assemblies, newspapers and pamphlet literature, records from the diplomatic and consular archives, the author makes effective use of the iconographic evidence in engravings and other contemporary images. The book contributes to the study of the global dimensions of French revolutionary history, but it also speaks to the emphasis in recent scholarship on the revolution's contradiction of its own principles. Coller's identification of moments when revolutionaries argued that Muslims could be welcomed as citizens, without needing to abandon their faith or traditions, also suggests an academic challenge to the idea that the contemporary French policy of *laïcité* accurately reflects the revolution's secular ideals.

The book's prologue and the first four chapters examine the changing perception of Muslims and Islam in France before 1789 and in the early revolution. Geopolitical shifts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reflected in France's alliance with the Ottoman Empire and treaties with Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, encouraged the French to view Islam as a distinct religion rather than as a heresy. Enlightenment writers in the eighteenth century used an idealized Islam to critique Christianity, but also condemned Muslims as superstitious fanatics. There were very few Muslims present in eighteenth-century France, but the treaties with North African powers gave them the right to practice their religion and, therefore, political existence in France. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 1783 provoked expressions of sympathy in Paris for the Turks. Coller

argues that the presence of high-profile Muslims, including Ottoman patriot Ishak Bey on a diplomatic mission for Prince Selim and the three Indian ambassadors of Tipu Sahib seeking Louis XVI's support for his resistance to the British, became lightning rods for public frustration with the monarchy's inability to support French allies. Collier also examines the divergent reactions to a 1787 episode in which a Muslim traveller attacked fellow passengers on a Yonne river barge with an axe after some of them set fire to his beard. Denunciations of the violent non-believer and justifications of his defence of religious honour, Collier suggests, represented divergent reactions to the monarchy's edict of toleration for French Protestants.

The ambiguous politicization of Muslims became more apparent in 1789. Some accounts of the October Days claimed that crowds stole the Muslim's axe from the *Hôtel de Ville* in Paris before marching to Versailles and that a black-bearded Muslim used an axe to decapitate royal guards outside the palace. Such accounts used Muslims as symbols of barbarism to denounce popular violence, but another pamphlet critical of the march to Versailles cited Ishak Bey as an honourable witness and representative of a patriarchal society who saw the Duc d'Aiguillon dress as a fish-wife in order to incite the crowd. The book examines a different aspect of this politicization in the National Assembly's debates on freedom of religion. In response to Clermont-Tonnere's call for Jews to be given the rights of citizens, Alsatian deputy François Hell proposed a special degree awarding citizenship to Muslims: rather than support for universalism, Hell's intent was to maintain Jews and all religious minorities in the subordination of special status. The Assembly rejected both proposals, but Collier argues that its decree of 24 December 1789, granting eligibility for elected office to non-Catholics, accorded rights to Muslims by not mentioning them specifically. Muslims continued to be invoked in debates on universal rights. Anacharsis Cloots's deputation of foreigners to the National Assembly on 19 June 1790, a deputation that included Turban-wearing Muslims, was presented as an allegory of diverse humanity to challenge the limitation of national citizenship. Collier examines two engravings that prepared the French public to read Muslims as signs of fraternity, but the book also provides considerable evidence that contemporaries continued to invoke Muslims as symbols of despotism. Critics of Cloots's deputation claimed the Turbans had been borrowed from the Paris Opera. This was denied by Dom Chawich, who identified himself as the "Turk" who appeared as part of the deputation, and Collier suggests that his interventions before the Assembly and in the press demonstrated Muslims' importance to assertions of universal citizenship.

Chapters five and seven consider the complex rhetorical role of Muslims in the conflict over religion that emerged with the National Assembly's expropriation of church property and proclamation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Opponents of the Assembly's imposition of the clerical oath in November 1790 invoked Muslims and mosques as signs of the revolution's sacrilege and imagined Muslims as a real religious minority who could elect Catholic clergy. Collier argues that revolutionaries also employed the fiction of a Muslim France in asserting that the new constitutional order included Muslims whose exercise of rights would demonstrate that these were universal. Yet clergy who refused the oath of loyalty to the nation invoked Islam to argue for religious freedom that should also be accorded to refractory Catholicism, implicitly acknowledging that it had become a minority religion. At the same time, some constitutional clergy contrasted the idea of an intolerant Islam with that of an inclusive Catholicism. By 1793, many radical Jacobins had rejected even the constitutional church and called for the abolition of Christianity itself. Their disagreement on what should replace it was manifested in the struggle between atheist de-Christianization and Robespierre's deist Cult of the Supreme Being. Collier

suggests that Islam was central to the language of religious toleration and that some revolutionaries invoked it as being closer than Christianity to the deist vision of a purified religion. Atheists like Cloots and Lequino, however, employed Muslims rhetorically as weapons against all religions, including Islam.

Rather than Muslims' discursive importance, chapters six and eight examine the experience of actual Muslims in France and the French Republic's relations with the Muslim world. In May 1793, Algiers became the first foreign power to unambiguously recognize the French Republic despite the city-state's diplomatic clashes with France in 1791-92. Jacobins in Marseille thanked Algiers in December 1792 for providing the city with vital grain, and such shipments continued to supply France in 1793. Collier attributes Algerian diplomatic and material support less to increasing French openness to Islam than to the fraternity of Dey Hassan whose relationship with France was based on friendship. This emphasis on the language of emotion is interesting, but perhaps underestimates the importance of economic and political interests. In April 1794, the Indian Muslim Ahmed Khan arrived in Paris from Lyon, where he had been stranded by his brother's illness during their journey from India to London. The brothers arrived just as Lyon began its rebellion against the National Convention, defiance that led to siege and mass executions by forces loyal to the Montagnards. The two Muslims struggled to survive, but local authorities respected their religious practices and treated them with compassion. When Ahmed reached Paris, following his brother's death, the Committee of Public Safety awarded him significant monetary assistance that allowed him to remain and study French. Collier argues that the treatment Ahmed Khan received in Lyon, Paris, and Versailles, where he translated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (the 1793 version) into Persian, not only demonstrated revolutionary hospitality toward foreigners but repudiates the "myth of the xenophobic Terror" (p. 179). Collier places "the Terror" in quotation marks, questioning the standard historiographical interpretation of this phase of the revolution in keeping with the revisionism of scholars like Jean-Clément Martin. Yet critiques of the Terror are based less on the treatment of foreigners than on the Jacobins' imposition of revolutionary justice, repudiation of constitutionalism, and ruthless repression of rebels and perceived enemies. Collier acknowledges the repression at Lyon but characterizes the wider phenomenon of the "Federalist Revolt" in the provinces as counter-revolution, in keeping with the Montagnards' interpretation, rather than a civil war between moderate and radical republicans.

The Terror and its collapse are central to the examinations in chapter nine of Robespierre's attitude toward Muslims and of the comparisons to Mahomet, drawing on Voltaire's theatrical caricature, used to denounce Robespierre before and after the events of 9 Thermidor (27 July 1794). Many revolutionaries believed that the Muslim world was ripe for change but when the Girondins praised the formation of Jacobin clubs and accusations against the ambassador by French residents in Istanbul, Robespierre warned that such agitation could provoke the Ottoman Empire's hostility against the Republic. According to Collier, Robespierre argued for restraint but not against universal principle, hoping for an Ottoman shift toward France that would require engagement between Islam and revolutionary beliefs. Robespierre's sponsorship of the Cult of the Supreme Being in the spring of 1794 encouraged his enemies to accuse him of aspiring to dictatorship by becoming the head of a new religion. Some of these accusations compared him to Mahomet, and Collier examines multiple texts that employed the trope to condemn Robespierre as a tyrant and false prophet. Neither this aspect of Thermidorian propaganda nor Robespierre's stance on Muslims have received substantial scholarly attention. Both issues are fascinating, but the book exaggerates their importance to the fall of Robespierre and the end of

the Jacobin dictatorship. Chapter ten examines Napoleon Bonaparte's fascination with Islam and the Prophet, which began when he was a young officer, in the context of the Directory's equation of revolutionary universalism with conquest and occupation. After Thermidor, many French perceived a transformation in the Muslim world that was relevant to the political and religious turmoil in France, but the lessons drawn from Islam were ambiguous: the Koran was invoked to justify banning political clubs, but also presented as an impediment to freedom. Many also believed Muslim states were on the verge of French-style revolutions. The Republic had positive relationships with those states in 1797, yet two years later was at war with Islam. Collier insists this rupture was not inevitable and that it ran counter to the current of universalism that had brought French citizens and Muslims closer, but he also makes clear that there were multiple conceptions of universalism. This is a cogent argument. The suggestion that Talleyrand planned the invasion of Egypt as part of a coherent scheme to end the revolution in France, however, exaggerates the connection between the alienation of the Muslim world and the Coup of 18 Brumaire: the first did not necessarily lead to the second. The chapter also minimizes Bonaparte's role in promoting the supposed strategic possibilities of the Egyptian campaign.

Despite occasionally overstating its thesis, this book makes an important contribution to the scholarship on the French Revolution not least by pointing out how frequently revolutionaries referred to Islam and Muslims in their debates on religion and citizenship. The book also reminds historians that Muslims were present in the revolutionary Republic that had important diplomatic and commercial ties to Muslim powers. If the politicization of Muslims helps to explain the invasion of Egypt, Collier argues effectively throughout the book that it also thwarted the application of universal rights to Muslims. As he makes clear, this has implications for contemporary dilemmas.

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