Konrad, Felix: *Der Hof der Khediven von Ägypten. Herrscherhaushalt, Hofgesellschaft und Hofhaltung 1840-1880*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag 2008. ISBN: 978-3-89913-597-8; 501 S.

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This book is the revised version of the 2006 Bern doctoral thesis on the court of the khedives, or viceroys, of Egypt by Felix Konrad, meanwhile professor of Middle Eastern History at Kiel University. In his conclusion („Fazit", pp. 445-8), Konrad sums up the results of his socio- and cultural historical enquiry: how in Egypt a ruler's court with a courtly society emerged from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and how they developed and changed over time. Though under Mehmed Ali the ruler's household and the state apparatus had been one and the same to a large degree, they separated under his successors. This process implied that the formation of elites for the state apparatus was no longer necessarily taking place within the realm of the court but came to be subject to training in schools established for that purpose outside the court. With regard to human resources this also meant that the need for male slaves to be trained as the administrative elite of the state diminished because the demand could be met elsewhere.

At the same time, the court became aware of itself as a place and means of communication between courtly elites from inside and outside of Egypt as well as between the courtly elite and an emerging general public in Egypt. The result of this new awareness was the establishment of a procedural and ceremonial setup, which provided the framework for the staging of courtly communication in the form of festivities, celebrations, and the like. Such communicative events became more and more frequent in the course of time and they also changed in character. Whereas these performances tended to be Ottoman and were perceived as 'oriental' by western travellers around 1840, they later appeared as less 'oriental' and more French, European, or western instead. This loss of supposedly oriental elements in court procedures as witnessed by western travellers was indeed only something on the surface indicating deeper societal transformations – this is Konrad's basic hypothesis which he develops with great proficiency in the course of his argument.

The book is made of five main parts of different lengths, each being divided into numerous chapters, subchapters and subsections. Konrad opens („Einführung", pp. 1-38) by developing his research questions and research aims. He describes the sources and literature used, the terminology and categories of analysis applied and the methods and structure resorted to. The work is based on archival material from libraries and archival collections in Cairo, Paris, London and Durham. In addition, Konrad has made intensive use of published documents, newspapers, memoirs, travel literature and a huge amount of monographic publications. He discusses at length how to define the terms and analytical categories of his study listed in the subtitle of his book, which, unlike the title, does not translate well into English. While 'Hofgesellschaft' stands for court society, both 'Haushalt' and 'Hofhaltung' are likely to be translated as household. Konrad distinguishes between social and cultural approaches to these terms within historiography and follows Ronald Asch's analytical distinction between 'Hof' (court) and 'Herrscherhaushalt' (the ruler's household), Norbert Elias' concept of a 'höfische Gesellschaft' (courtly society) as well as Ute Daniel's notion of the court as being both a forum and a means of communication.

On the basis of his adaptation of these concepts, Konrad provides a comprehensive account of the khedivial court in Egypt over a period of four decades in the nineteenth century. He starts with Mehmed Ali, the Ottoman governor of Egypt who succeeded in (partly militarily and partly diplomatically) convincing the Sublime Porte of granting him the right to hereditary rule over Egypt. He ends on the eve of the British occupation, when the Sublime Porte deposed Mehmed Ali's grandson Ismail. He was the first ruler of Egypt whom the Ottomans had officially granted the right to bear the title of khedive (after Ismail and his precursors had already done so without such authorization). In Ismail's stead, his son Tawfiq was enthroned.

The second part on the contexts („Kontexte", pp. 39-56) provides the historical back-

ground of the study, by summing up how Egypt developed from an Ottoman province into a dynastic state and by comparatively exploring the Ottoman and European courts and monarchies of the time. The third part is dedicated to the ruler's household („Der Herrscherhaushalt", pp. 57-130). Konrad discusses its structure and explains changes in a whole number of administrative institutions in charge of its relationship with the state apparatus, such as divan-ı khidivi, the khedivial council of state. In the fourth part, on the courtly society („Die höfische Gesellschaft", pp. 131-297), Konrad analyses how this hierarchically structured elite society was organised in different family circles grouped around the ruler's family or dynastical core and interdependently connected with one another and the ruler. He examines the dynastic nucleus of the courtly society as well as its most inner and more outer circles and outlines the awarding of titles, ranks, distinctions, land, pensions, money and offices in exchange for loyal services and as a category of hierarchical distinction. The fifth part describes how the court was kept and run („Hofhaltung", pp. 299-444) and looks into state ceremonies on such occasions as religious and secular holidays, festivals, anniversaries, the reception of the consuls-general as well as what one might refer to as the staging of the dynasty by means of processions, celebrations of circumcisions, weddings, birthdays, balls, banquets, audiences and the announcement of Imperial Orders.

Konrad covers a time-span during which Egypt saw the reign of five rulers. He found the court to have been one thing under Mehmed Ali, Ibrahim and Abbas and something else under Said and Ismail. The differences between these two periods were many and various and not necessarily determined by who was in power. Therefore, Konrad has abstained from structuring his work in relation to political rule as a category of division of time but has resorted to a chronological as well as diachronic design. As a result the reader is confronted with the differences between these two periods throughout the book.

Has Konrad left out anything? He has not entered the debate on communication and such related topics as the emergence of public spheres and public opinion. But these issues, though of relevance in the context of the cultural history of the court as a place and means of communication would have required the reading and producing of yet another bulk of literature. Here is still room for further research that can build on the present work.

Konrad has not only written an intelligent account of the Egyptian court in the nineteenth century. He has equipped his text with a technical apparatus in such a way that one may almost speak of a handbook rather than a monograph only. The text is highly structured by intermediate conclusions, easily accessible and can be read selectively with the help of the detailed table of contents and the indices. Numerous tables and illustrations, portraits and pictures of court scenes are spread throughout the book as well as a map of Cairo and a very minute genealogical table of Mehmed Ali's dynasty. Helpful is also a short introduction to the currencies in use in Egypt at the time. All this makes this book a reference work, which students of comparative court studies will enjoy reading and students of modern Egyptian history should have on their shelves even if the court is not of their first interest.

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