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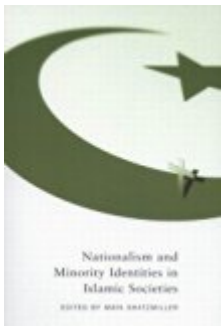
Maya Shatzmiller, ed.. *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. xiii + 346 pp. $27.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7735-2848-2.



Reviewed by Karen M. Kern

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This volume of essays, edited by Maya Shatzmiller, is a timely, solidly researched collection on the topic of national identity formation among religious and ethnic minorities in Muslim-majority countries. These essays were presented on December 8-9, 2001 at a conference called "to discuss current research and to analyze recent developments in the field of ethnicity in Islamic societies" at the University of Western Ontario (p. xiii). Shatzmiller establishes the volume's thematic basis by noting that the secular model of nation-building excluded any minority identity that was not aligned with state ideology. Therefore, minority communities separated themselves from the Muslim majority by creating identities that were based on culture, religion and language. Shatzmiller suggests that certain factors such as state-sponsored hostilities and exclusion from institutional structures resulted in the politicization of minority identities.

The editor's declared aim is to create a broader framework for comparative analysis, and with this goal in mind she has chosen essays in political science, history and anthropology. The minority populations included in this volume have been examined before by other scholars from various disciplines. Studies of minorities in the Middle East have a long history dating back to Albert Hourani's seminal work *Minorities in the Arab World* (1947). More recent books focus on minority communities in specific countries, on religious intolerance and religious-state relations. Broader regional surveys concentrate on civil rights and conflict resolution, and the rights of minorities under national and international law. Shatzmiller's volume is in a close dialogue with a recent volume of essays, *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (1999), edited by Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor. These two books include many of the same groups but have different unifying thematic reference points. Bengio and Ben-Dor's theoretical approach involves studying the regional and global factors that lead to ethnic politicization. Shatzmiller considers the dynamics between religious and ethnic minorities and the state, and how these relationships have propelled the formation of national identity within minority communities. Five essays focus on religious minorities including the Copts of Egypt, Maronite

Christians in Lebanon, Christian communities in Pakistan, and the Baha'is of Iran. The last set of four essays concern two ethnic minorities that cross national frontiers and are united by culture and language, the Berbers in Morocco and Algeria, and the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq.

In chapter 1, Richard C. Martin undertakes the difficult task of defining the term "minority." His essay frames the succeeding chapters by examining how Islamic law and theology delineated minority status during the formative Islamic centuries. According to Martin, religion was the only determinant of minority status. Polytheists who refused to accept Islam could be enslaved or killed. However, Peoples of the Book, who included Christians, Jews, Sabaeans and later Zoroastrians, were *dhimmia*. They received protected status and were allowed to regulate their own affairs and to live under their own religious laws. The concept of *dhimmia* was later transformed into the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire which brought non-Muslim subjects into its administrative structures. Minority status among Muslims included groups such as the Kharijites and the Shi'a who were formed in the early sectarian divisions that refused to accept the line of political succession to the Prophet Muhammad. Another Muslim minority were non-Arab converts, clients of Muslim tribes who were not accorded the financial or cultural advantages that benefited the earliest Arab converts. Martin maintains that "the textual record of modern discourses about Kurds, Armenians, 'Alawites, Baha'is, Hindus, Christians, Jews and the Shi?a, among others, reflect the theological and legal classifications that developed in the first centuries of Islam" (p. 7).

The following two essays discuss identity formation among the Copts in Egypt and in the diaspora. Pieternella Van Doorn-Harder's research relies on published sources and interviews with important intellectuals and religious officials in both the Coptic and Muslim communities. She begins with a brief description of the Coptic religion, history and culture and then emphasizes the importance of the Coptic revival in maintaining and strengthening Coptic identity, and solidifying their identification as nationals of the Egyptian state. Even Copts who have moved, or been born abroad, continue to consider themselves fully Egyptian. The Coptic community is not considered a protected (*dhimmi*) community, and is guaranteed equality and basic civil rights. Nevertheless, when she discusses the relationship between the community and the state, she notes the low representation of Copts in government positions, anti-Christian polemics in the state-sponsored media, and the lack of protection of the Coptic community that leads to inter-religious conflict.

Van Doorn-Harder does not suggest that the Coptic revival has created a separation between Copts and Muslims. She argues just the opposite. Utilizing Anthony D. Smith's theory of "ethnic survival potential," outlined in *National Identity* (1991), she maintains that the church's revival has brought about various projects that strengthened inter-communal relations between the Copts and Muslims. But this revival has also developed its own nationalism, one that is peaceful and expects full civil rights. According to Van Doorn-Harder, the main challenges for the Coptic community today are anti-Christian, Islamist thinking and the lack of basic human rights that affects all citizens of the Egyptian nation. Whether the Copts receive full equal rights, especially freedom of religion and of expression and laws to protect them from hate crimes, depends on the development of a transparent democracy in Egypt, something that is outside of their immediate control.

In chapter 3, Charles D. Smith analyzes the role of the state in defining Coptic identity. Smith begins by contrasting the Coptic experience to Thomas Hyland Eriksen's definition of ethnicity that "refers to groups considering themselves culturally as well as racially distinctive."[1] The Copts do not easily fall into this definition because "other than religion, they are neither culturally nor

ethnically distinctive" (p. 59). Smith also presents an interesting challenge to Benedict Anderson's theory of secular nationalism when he maintains that modern communications technology such as the computer and fax machine has turned loyalty away from secular nationalism and back to religious identity. In discussing Anderson's territorial nationalism, Smith contrasts the Copts of Egypt, who are more firmly bound religiously and historically to the territory of Egypt, to other minorities represented in this volume. For example, according to Smith the Berbers in Morocco are integrated into the society while the Berbers of Algeria are not. In addition, no state accepts Kurdish national ambitions even though those communities have long-standing territorial claims. Smith maintains that the question for the Copts is not one of territorial nationalism but instead the attainment of full civil rights. He is concerned that without this equality they may be forced into *dhimmi* status under an Islamic legal system.

In chapter 4, Paul S. Rowe draws a comparison between the Christians of Egypt and Lebanon. He notes that scholars have historically described Egyptian Christians as "passive and cooperative" and Lebanese Christians as "aggressive and at times militant" (p. 85). According to this model, Egyptian Christians accept their place within a secular Egypt, while the Christian sects of Lebanon do not accept any national identity that is not connected to Christian domination. Rowe rejects reductionist analysis and demands a more nuanced approach that recognizes the diversity of development, beliefs, doctrines and historical experiences of the Christian groups. He refers to the current status of the Christian community in Egypt as a "neomillet system" whereby the state accepts the authority of church leadership as designators of Coptic identity and as partners with the state. Rowe notes that the lack of church authority in Lebanon led the development of religious-based political parties, the creation of militias and, eventually, to civil war. Only recently, after the end of the civil war, has a "neomillet system" begun to function in Lebanon since various church authorities have begun to reclaim their position as the holders of traditional values and spokesmen for their communities.

In chapter 5, Linda S. Walbridge takes on the marginality of the Christian community in Pakistan. Walbridge's discussion is informed by Clifford Geertz's view that identity is formed both by the desire to have a recognizably acknowledged nation-state and by local bonds such as blood, race, language locality, religion and tradition. She also applies Samuel Huntington's thesis, that religion is the primary motivating force in peoples' lives, to the Pakistan context. [2] After a detailed historical description of the status of the Christian minority, Walbridge turns to the most important challenges to Christians today. She highlights the discriminatory blasphemy laws which prohibited any words or actions that would desecrate the Qur'an or denigrate revered persons in Islam. The punishment for these crimes included life imprisonment or the death sentence. The Christian community has been the main target of these laws and this has led to their further marginalization within Pakistani society. Christian human rights workers have joined forces with secular Muslims in an attempt to overturn these discriminatory laws. Walbridge also points to the ineffectiveness of the separate electoral system which gives proportional representation to minorities. Christians are often scattered among Muslim villages, and they are represented by Muslims who have little regard for their needs. Both the blasphemy law and separate representation has eroded the sense among Christians that they are members of the nation.

Walbridge does not ignore the role of caste as an important factor in the marginalization of Christians. Most Punjabi Christians are ***chuhra***, or from the lower class. Noting Benedict Anderson's discussion of the use of racist terms to "erase nation-ness," Walbridge stresses the racist connotation of the word ***chuhra***, which is connected to

poor economic conditions that force Christians into jobs which were considered unacceptable in the past. However, Walbridge does not intend to focus on the role that the economy plays in this marginalization. Instead, her analysis is based primarily on religious ideology and its use to persecute the Christian community. In conclusion, she maintains that an end to discriminatory practices would allow for more integration between Muslims and Christians.

In the final essay on religious minorities, Juan R. I. Cole examines the position of the Baha'is in post-1990s Iran. Cole outlines the history of the problematic relationship between the Baha'i community and the state, which has swung between accommodation and persecution. With the rise of Khomeini, however, the Baha'is were confronted with persecution on a level not seen before. Khomeini's exclusionary nationalism called for a pan-Islamic union of all Muslims. In a challenge to Partha Chatterjee's thesis of the separation of the public and spiritual realms presented in his seminal work ***The Nation and Its Fragments*** (1993), Cole maintains that in the post-Khomeini theocracy the "spiritual" realm was moved into the public sphere and overthrew Western discourses of national identity. Khomeini's exclusionary nationalism has impacted minority communities, particularly the Baha'i. Cole places them within Bengio and Ben Dor's definition of a "diffuse minority" who have no strong regional base or access to the centers of power. The Baha'is have been denied ***dhimmi*** status because they are not considered a religion but a political party that was formed at the behest of the British, cooperated with the Shah's regime, and is a part of Israeli imperialism. Many have emigrated, or were jailed or executed. In recent years, as Iran has moved towards an opening of the economy and rapprochement with some European countries, persecution of the Baha'is, and religious minorities in general, has become less frequent. However, the sect is still considered "misguided" and the Baha'is have been excluded from consideration as Iranian nationals. Their situation remains precarious and dependent on the dynamics between liberalization and isolationism.

David Crawford begins the discussion of ethnic minorities with his research on the place of the Berber communities in Moroccan national consciousness. The vehicle for his study is the October 2001 decree by King Mohammed VI establishing a Royal Institute of Amazigh (Berber) Studies (IRCAM). Because this decree is so recent, it is impossible to know its impact on Berber national consciousness. Therefore Crawford's essay focuses on the potential for change in Berber politics. Crawford disagrees with Ernest Gellner's assertion in ***Saints of the Atlas*** (1969) that the Berbers are more tribal than ethnic. He notes the diversity in Berber culture and dismisses the long held view that Berber-Arab society is divided along rural-urban modalities since not all Berbers are rural and not all Arabs are urban. Furthermore, Berber culture lives within Arabic, French and Spanish-speaking societies. He suggests that the royal decree will take different forms in different regions, and that Berber identity will be just as diverse. However, Crawford maintains that this diversity does not diminish the possibility for a Berber identity. The main thrust of Crawford's chapter is to show that the rural-urban/Berber-Arab binary division is a false construct and that Berber society is not monolithic. But it can play an important political role in the diverse social and political map of Morocco. Crawford emphasizes that Berber culture has been given important fundamental human rights by the royal decree which aims to address linguistic discrimination in the legal and educational systems. This decree is the first such experiment in North Africa with the goal of creating a multicultural national identity, and it is an important example for the rest of the region.

Azzedine Layachi, in chapter 8, attempts to answer an important question about recent Berber activism in Algeria: whether the Berber

movement in the Kabylie region forms an ethnicity or is, instead, a civic movement searching for full citizenship rights. Ethnicists believe that the Berbers are a minority that should be granted independence, whereas the civic view seeks a more socially and economically democratic society. Layachi also seeks to answer a number of other important questions, including whether it is possible to distinguish between Arabs and Berbers, if there is an "imagined" Berber community, and what factors have mobilized the Berber community? Like many of the other authors in this volume, Layachi carries on a dialogue with Benedict Anderson. He notes that the Berber community does not have all of the necessary ingredients of Anderson's "imagined community." For example, the Berber of the Kabylie are not a sovereign state, the majority of the people are not politically conscious or mobilized, and political action is at the "pre-national" stage, otherwise described as "ethnicity" (p. 196). In fact, the question of Berber minority identity is complex. Intermarriage and internal migrations make it difficult to be certain about a person's Berber origins. Additionally because of the Arabization program begun after independence from France, many young Berbers do not speak the Berber language. There is also no obvious economic or social discrimination, because many Berbers form the elite among political, economic and cultural leaders. Nevertheless, ethnicity remains the main identifying force among the Berber. Layachi cites Walker Connor's view that "an ethnic group turns into a nation when its members become aware of their uniqueness."[3] In contrast, Berber activists have not called for nationhood because they consider Algeria to be their nation. Instead, these activists seek to remake Algeria into a more inclusive civil society--a cause that requires identifying the country as a Berber nation, officially acknowledging the Berber language, and granting full citizenship rights to all Berbers.

In conclusion, Layachi calls for the state to acknowledge the diversity of Algeria and to transition to a democratic system based on a just and fair economic and social system. He cautions that without this transformation, Algeria faces a growing Berber secessionist movement on the scale of the Islamist rebellion of 1992.

Kurdish minority groups are the subject of the final two chapters of this volume. In chapter 9, M. Hakan Yavuz discusses Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Yavuz finds the origins of Kurdish "ethnonationalism" in the final years of the Ottoman Empire when the multiethnic and multicultural model was undermined in favor of a Turkish national identity. In the centralizing policies of Atatürk's nation-building process, ethnic groups such as the Kurds, who refused to assimilate, became "ethnopolitical movements" that developed their own identity in opposition to the dominant culture. Relying on Anthony D. Smith's definition that "a group must qualify as an ***ethnie*** (i.e., share a collective name, a myth of descent, a history and culture, a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity) if it is to form a nation," Yavuz explains that the Kurdish sense of nationalism is derived from sharing "common ethnic roots, shared myths, and collective memories and values" (p. 232).

Yavuz's essay presents a detailed description of the development of Kurdish identity through five historical stages that identify the impact of imperial and republican centralization projects on the politicization of Kurdish national identity. He also mentions the importance of Articles 62 to 64 in the Treaty of Sevres at the end of the First World War that called for "local autonomy for the land where the Kurd element predominates" (p. 236). According to Yavuz, although this article never became a reality for the Kurds, the both the Kurds and Turks remember it in their historical memory. For the Turks it represented the intention of the major powers for dismemberment of the state. For the Kurds it was a dream unfulfilled. Kurdish national identity was thus formed through a slow process that resulted from both domestic and international causes.

The challenge to Kurdish tribal structures by state centralization, as well as Kurdish involvement with the left in the 1960s and 1970s, led to a development of a sense of Kurdishness. As Turkish nationalism hardened against the establishment of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978 and the resulting civil war, Kurdish nationalism grew more sophisticated, creating political parties and calling for political and cultural rights. Yavuz's fifth stage is currently underway and marked by Turkey's candidacy for admission into the European Union (EU), which has demanded resolution of the Kurdish crisis. According to Yavuz, there is a possibility of accommodation between the Turks and Kurds as the result of the internationalization of the Kurdish question.

Michael M. Gunter examines the Kurdish minority in Iraq in chapter 10. He maintains that the Kurds share history, language, territory, religion and culture, and form a nation more than any other minority in the Middle East. He discusses in detail the ancient origins of the Kurds, and calls on the historical record from seventh-century Arab conquerors, to Saladin, and early chronicles that described a land called Kurdistan. Like Yavuz, Gunter notes the geographic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity of the Kurds, and he also maintains that Kurdish identity remains strong. However, Kurdish nationalism is a vision without realization because of the immutability of national borders.

Gunter gives a very detailed survey of the history and current situation of the Kurdish minority in Northern Iraq. He describes the rise of the two main families and their associated political parties that have dominated Kurdish politics--the Barzanis and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), a conservative nationalist party located mostly in the mountains of the northwest, and the Talabanis and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), a socialist party based mostly in the southeast. After the Gulf War in 1991, the United States carved out a safety zone that led to the creation of a Kurdish state in all but name. In 1992, the Iraqi Kurds declared a federated state but quickly denied that this was a step towards independence. Turkey reluctantly accepted the establishment of the federated state, but has continually refused to allow a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, fearful of the rise of similar nationalist fervor within its own territory. Gunter noted with some optimism that a new generation has grown up under Kurdish administration where freedoms are enjoyed in a vibrant civil society with independent newspapers, television, radio, and numerous new political parties contesting local elections. His predictions about the future of the Kurdish state are predicated on the Iraqi Kurds remaining a federated state and attempting to forge mutually beneficial relations with Turkey that will outlast the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

This volume is a valuable contribution to a growing field examining the interaction between minority status, ethnicity and national identity formation. The contributors' essays are firmly grounded in empirical and documentary evidence, while also utilizing some of the most important recent studies on nationalism, ethnicity and minority issues. They carry on a dialogue that reinforces, and often challenges, the seminal works of Benedict Anderson, Partha Chatterjee, Walker Connor, Clifford Geertz, Ernest Gellner, Samuel Huntington and Anthony D. Smith, to mention only a few of the works cited. Richard C. Martin's theoretical discussion of the meaning of the term "minority" in theology and law is an important contribution in defining the term in theory and practice. However, there is still much work to be done in understanding the term "minority" in Islam. A more theoretical discussion of the meaning of "minority status," examining the particularities of time, place and geopolitical exigencies, and particularly with reference to the minorities included in this volume, would help to further unify this collection. Additionally, important terms such as "***dhimmia***" and "***millet***" are repeatedly used throughout this volume. These

terms are contested and have meanings that shift across time and place. These essays would be aided by nuanced descriptions and definitions of their meanings. But these comments are minor in comparison with the important contribution that these authors have made to the field. This book will be a welcome addition for scholars in many disciplines who are searching for a comparative framework in which to examine minority national identify formation in majority-Muslim countries. It will also be a valuable contribution for advanced seminars on Islam, the Middle East and North Africa.

Notes

[1]. Thomas Hyland Eriksen, ***Ethnicity, Race, Class, Nation***, 3-7, cited in ***Ethnicity***, eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 28-34.

[2]. Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution," in ***Nations and Identities***, ed. Vincent P. Pecora (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001). Samuel P. Huntington, ***The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[3]. Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a ...,"***Ethnic and Racial Studies*** 1/4 (1978): pp. 377-99.