

of Muslims in the world. I do, however, disagree with his emphasis on the role of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i-Islami in the establishment of contemporary Muslim organizations. While these organizations' members were certainly present at the establishment of many Muslim American institutions, they were a small percentage of a larger group of Muslim activists.

The scope of American Muslim history is so broad that no one book can capture the complexities of this community. However, GhaneaBassiri's book is the most comprehensive and exhaustive work of Muslim American history currently available. It is a welcome, innovative and compelling addition to the scholarship on Islam and American religious history in particular. This book is easy to read and will further the knowledge of both academics and other interested readers alike. It is suitable for use in both graduate and undergraduate courses. ✨

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BENJAMIN THOMAS WHITE. *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: the Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 272 pages, maps. Cloth US\$105.00 ISBN 978-0-7486-4187-1.

In Benjamin White's first monograph, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: the Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria*, the author departs from the usual narrative of colonial 'divide-and-rule' strategies to examine the origins of the resulting divisions found there. While nearly all works in the past thirty years have accepted that the physical borders that defined the Middle East after the First World War were arbitrary and illegitimate, White goes one step further to argue that the supposedly primordial ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences that divided the majority from the minorities were also contrived and created by the colonial administration. Attacking both European as well as nationalist historiography, White asserts that one must assume a cohesive territory (such as 'natural Syria') and cohesive majority (Sunni Arabic-speaking) in order to conceive of community relations in this way, and in his view, these are unreasonable assumptions before the advent of the nation-state and state ideological apparatus.

The issue of borders is especially thorny. White seems to echo Sarah Shields's argument in *Fezzes on the River* that the demarcation of borders not only put up boundaries to trade and commerce, turning merchants into

smugglers, but also divided the communities themselves, nationalizing local identities and rivalries. Identity was politicized in an entirely new way. If a Turkish-speaker in the French Mandate of Syria chose to hold allegiance to the Turkish Republic, that person was effectively minoritized, dismissed as a foreign interloper. Conversely, when Christians like Faris al-Khoury and Edmond Homsy joined nationalist parties, understood to be Muslim by default, they were considered by their own communities and French authorities to be incapable of representing their minority identity. This is perhaps the clearest point of his work; majorities and minorities are defined by their relationship with the state. It is a community's willingness to adopt the state ideology that defines its status.

White's intervention is a useful one. Many careful scholars of the Arab Eastern Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire, myself included, deploy the terminology of minorities with little awareness of its twentieth century origins. White writes, "All of this history is elided if the historical origin of the concept of 'minority' is forgotten—if, once applied to a group in the modern period, it is assumed to be a valid description of that group in the past. There is a real danger of anachronism in too carelessly adopting 'minority' as a category of analysis" (27). White's work mandates a reevaluation of the position of communities now termed 'minorities' in these regions, and requires historicizing the vocabulary of minorities' before this period. While White's focus is on the interwar period, his analysis is equally applicable to the Ottoman period. Just as Ben Braude questioned the supposedly static, top-down state-millet relationship in "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," (Christians and Jews of the Ottoman Empire, 69-87) White challenges scholars to think about how communities of all definitions were organized and integrated into the Ottoman or national body politic.

While his sources tend to favor the French archives, this serves his argument. If the terminology of minorities was innovated and projected by French mandatory authorities in Syria, then it makes sense that documents petitioning or created by those authorities would show this development first. Nevertheless, White shows great nuance in portraying French authorities' sometime ambivalence at recognizing non-Christians and non-Jews like Kurds and Circassians as 'real' minorities, despite their adoption of the vocabulary of minority rights. White writes, "we might add that it would suit French interests quite well to retain a right of intervention on behalf of Syrian Christians—a small community, lacking any major external backing from other sources, and with a strong pro-French element. It would be rather less in French interests to take on an obligation to protect, for example, a Kurdish 'minority' whose loyalty to France was far shakier..." (58). It is this duplicity that allows us to

recognize the true nature of the minority question. For France, minority rights weren't a renewed millet system, but rather a renewed capitulations regime—an extraterritoriality and a right of intervention. ✎

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MEHMET ALI DOĞAN AND HEATHER J. SHARKEY. *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011. 392 pages. Paper US\$50 ISBN 978-1-60781-038-4.

American missions to, and American missionaries in, the Middle East have been a marginal topic in Middle Eastern studies and Global History during the twentieth century. Recently, though, they have become a major topic, though research on them is still in its infancy, as Heather Sharkey writes in her introduction to this volume of nine collected essays.

American missionaries represented the largest and most educated group of Americans living abroad before the First World War (x). Their encounters offer as much insight into the U.S. as into the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman world of the Middle East, both its centers and its rural places, particularly in Asia Minor and in Syria. The missionary encounters involved daily lives, histories of faith, and cultural and political dynamics. They were foundational insofar as they form the initial grassroots and mostly educational part of an ongoing intense interaction between America and the Middle East.

Co-editor Mehmet Ali Doğan focuses on the beginnings, marked by the belief, “endemic to American culture” (quoting Carl Ehle, 11), that American missions must prepare the world for the millennium by restoring the Jews to Jesus and to Palestine. Once agreed upon the meaning of the millennialist language it used, one can argue that American agencies have fulfilled elements of this central goal. Generally speaking, and this is a main result of the new research in this field, the targets of the American mission enterprise absorbed from the missions what served their expectations “in spite of missionary pressures to conform and convert” (280).

Though they introduced a culture of English, of trust in science and technology, and of a Calvinist ethos in family, work and marketing, most of the missionaries insisted that their main task was a revival in faith, not civilization. They established their first continuous mission not in Palestine, their primary focus, but in the Ottoman capital Istanbul. Here dissent over faith and civilization in mission soon came into the open, as Cemal Yetkiner explains