

The second part of the book, which focuses on a detailed exploration of the two Ancient and Islamic Museums, is thorough, detailed, and persuasive. However, the chapters in the first part could have benefited from the support of more evidence, and references to previous scholarship or existing gaps in the literature. For example, while the discussion on Muharram ritual sites in Chapter 3 contains valuable remarks, it suffers from generalizations. The author simply extends his observations in Takiyeh Tajrish to *takiyeh* as a place type in general.

To his credit, Mozaffari effectively uses drawings and diagrams to help the reader imagine the spaces and spatial interventions discussed in the book. Nevertheless, the book is not very easy to navigate. A brief overview of its structure and a summary of the chapters in the introductory section could have helped the reader to better follow the narrative. Likewise, the title of the book is somewhat misleading. Using the phrase “Ancient Persian and Islamic Imagination of Place” implies the existence of a particular perception of space that is informed by ancient Persian or Islamic philosophy. However the book’s discussion of the ancient versus Islamic period has more to do with the preference that each identity narrative gives to a distinct period of Iran’s history as the golden age.

Overall, the book is a welcome addition to the literature on architecture and national identity in Iran. It offers a framework applicable to other countries in the region, and to other place-making experiences in Iran.

RASMUS CHRISTIAN ELLING, *Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and Ethnicity after Khomeini* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Pp. 267. \$100.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780230115842.

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The people of Iran, once known in the West as Persians, came over the course of the 20th century to be identified in a global context as Iranians. A variety of languages that were previously considered non-Persian also came to be categorized as dialects of that language. Today, the presence of non-Persian speaking heroes and mythical figures in Iranian history is often highlighted inside Iran, and new social movements discourage ethnic or linguistic bias in society. These historical changes may show the degree to which the concept of ethnicity has been politicized in Iran. Rasmus Christian Elling’s *Minorities in Iran* examines this history, which has so far remained underexplored. There are very few works in English that treat the issue of Iranian minorities in history, sociology or anthropology, and the works that do exist focus on a single community or a few ethnic groups. However, the scholarship in Europe (particularly in French) is more wide ranging. A few examples include Fariba Adelkhah’s works on Baluchistan and Khorasan; Stéphan A. Dudoignon’s studies on Iranian eastern frontiers, the Baluch, and the Sunnis; and Jean-Pierre Digard’s research on Iranian ethnology and the nomadic tribes. The question of minorities is a politically sensitive topic inside Iran. Consequently, various restrictions and limitations are placed on serious scholarship and research on this topic. Although these barriers forced Elling to complete most of his research outside of Iran, he provides a critical overview of the subject.

The book considers four major ethnic groups: the Kurds, the Azeri Turks, the Baluch, and the Arabs. Each of these groups speaks a non-Persian language and inhabits a particular borderland region in the country. The Kurds and the Baluch largely adhere to Sunni Islam, while the Azeris and the Arabs are predominantly Shi’i by religious affiliation. In exploring these four different ethnic minorities, Elling has a unique opportunity to make an analytical comparison and run the conditions of these groups against one another. His interest in the political nature of ethnicity has

resulted in an emphasis on these four groups. However, there are many other communities—for example, various nomadic tribes—that the author could have included in this work. Elling explains his exclusion of the *Ilal* (nomadic tribes) by remarking that they do not play key roles in the politics of modern Iranian history.

Elling undertakes discursive analysis toward this subject. This is not, in other words, an ethnographic research project. The discursive analysis is understandable because of the restrictions that exist on ethnographic research. The author uses various theoretical frameworks, but he ends up drawing mostly on the work of Rogers Brubaker and Sinisa Malesevic. He emphasizes ethnicity as a politicized concept and employs the word “minority” to illustrate “unequal practices, policies of disparity and institutionalized discriminative norms that express, generate and fuel complex dynamics of socio-economic and political competition” (p. 6). While Elling introduces two dominant discourses, the “nationalist” and the “ethnicist” (p. 9), he classifies the actors of this discourse within his own three analytical categories. The principal actors are noted to be the government officials and scholars who work for the state or support its policies; scholars, intellectuals, journalists, and political activists inside Iran who are not affiliated with the state; and scholars in the academic field of Iranian studies outside the country. The author draws on an impressive number and variety of sources, including media articles, online sources, archival materials, and official reports. To give but one example, in his analysis of the unrests in 2005–7, Elling consulted more than 400 journal articles.

At the heart of this book is the question of the Persian language and its role in shaping Iranian national identity. The author demonstrates in different chapters that Iranian national identity is erroneously based on the Persian language whereas many communities in Iran speak non-Persian languages. One idea that runs throughout this work is the existence of an Iranian-ness in ancient times that fails to be translated to a modern sense of national identity or collective consciousness. As such, the author argues that much of the literature produced on Iranian identity misunderstands the problem of Iranian identity and as such stresses one single language. It is in this context that the author carefully distinguishes between the historical transformation of concepts such as ethnicity (*qowmiyat*), race (*nezhad*), and nation (*mellat*) in Persian, and gives their closest translations and meanings in English. Although Elling’s argument about Iranian national identity being erroneously based on the Persian language is rather persuasive, the work suffers from the repetition of this theme.

The book addresses the question of minorities from the Islamic Revolution until 2009 and the unrest that resulted from the presidential election that year. The arguments are nuanced and the evidence well documented. Several useful statistics are put forward regarding the population of each community. An important part of this research focuses on a series of disturbances among these four communities during 2005–7. Although the disturbances in each community had varying origins, the demands were the same. People asked for equal rights and respect for their local culture. State officials, for their part, interpreted these tensions in the same way: that they were examples of foreign intrigue and outcomes of the activism of the separatist groups outside the country.

The main narrative of the book follows the history and actions of some of resistance parties among the aforementioned ethnic groups, including the Jund Allah in Baluchistan, the Party for Kurdistan’s Free Life in Kurdistan, and Pan-Turkism in Azerbaijan. The post-Khomeini period is tackled with remarkable insight into different governments’ attitudes toward the question of minorities. The reader is made aware of crucial periods such as the Iran–Iraq war as well as the Khatami and Ahmadinejad eras. Elling explains the contours of the relatively open political space during the Khatami period and contrasts it with the harsher atmosphere that existed during Ahmadinejad’s presidency. One rather persuasive argument advanced by Elling here is that even with the emphasis on equality and Islamic religious brotherhood, nationalism and the othering of ethnic minorities existed throughout much of the postrevolutionary period in Iran. All along political personalities—such as the presidents and presidential candidates—employed the concept

of equality or rights of ethnic minorities for propaganda without pursuing any concrete policy to address substantive issues.

Following his three forenamed main categories of the actors, Elling studies a variety of theories on Iranian national identity. On one side of the spectrum stand nationalists who emphasize the Persian language and consider all other non-Persian speaking communities in Iran as guests whom Iranians are kindly hosting. They ridicule non-Persian languages and view them as inferior and subordinate to Persian, and they deem these languages to be foreign imports that are alien to authentic Iranian culture. On the other hand, there are ethnicists who consider the Persian-centrism a recent anomaly rather than a long-term historical development. These groups emphasize the role of ethnic minorities in defense of their homeland and argue that the majority should respect Iranian minorities' cultures and languages. Both parties use Aryanism as a myth to prove their superiority. But they have different takes on the centralization of state power. Whereas the nationalists prefer a highly centralized governance, the ethnicists favor a decentralized administration. Regardless of these differences, Elling shows that neither one of them is necessarily against the Islamic Republic.

Throughout much of the book, Elling highlights the recent local unrest in the areas where the Kurds, the Azeris, the Baluch, and the Arabs live. He focuses on well-known cases that have appeared in the Iranian media, and draws on his extensive research to contextualize and analyze these events and their significance. Cases that are extensively discussed include football matches, journal caricatures, environmental movements, TV programs, university protests, as well as arrests, imprisonments, and executions.

Elling's work is impressive and raises questions that future research should consider addressing. For example, we do not yet know how the theories put forward by scholars and political activists are implemented or experienced in the daily life of the communities in question or how they influence the participation of minorities in national elections. Future research can also address the ongoing discourse of public meetings inside these communities. We now know much about the material from the virtual world of the Internet and media. But questions remain as to the characteristics of the quotidian discourse of people in their lives and meetings—in places such as mosques, buses, shops. How does the issue of ethnic background come up in the conversations of “ordinary people” in such public places? The case of “minorities of minorities” has also yet to be addressed. For example, women—which this book discusses only briefly—and non-Muslims provide another area of research that can be dealt with in the future.

This said, Elling's work is extremely valuable for theorizing and giving an analytical framework to the ways in which average Iranians perceive their national identity. It is an important contribution to modern Iranian studies and to scholarship on postrevolutionary politics, history, and ethnic minorities.

MAJID SHARIFI, *Imagining Iran: The Tragedy of Subaltern Nationalism* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013). Pp. 374. \$110.00 cloth, \$44.99 paper. ISBNs: 9780739179444, 9780739186398.

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Critical studies of nationalism and identity by scholars such as Rasmus Christian Elling, Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, Kamran Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi, Farzin Vejdani, and Abbas Amanat have proliferated the recent scholarship of modern Iran. These works critique the usage of categorical