Syria’s Kurds: History, Politics and Society

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Abstract

Far away from the often too global approaches that abandoned the Syrian space, and far also from the studies that focused exclusively on the humanitarian dimension of the question, the author of this monograph, equipped with a strong theoretical background in anthropology and political science, traces the course of an unknown history. This way he ceases the modality of emergence of the Kurdish nationalist mobilization in Syria. The multiplicity of views and approaches allows the author to present complex and sometimes paradoxical historical moments and evolutions, avoiding any rash judgment or essentialism.

Full Text:

Historically the role of the Kurds and Kurdish parties in Syria has been shaped by the Syrian government's regional power politics. Within Syria, the status of the Kurdish population ranges from being tolerated to being actively oppressed. At the same time, the Syrian government used the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) as a proxy to wage war in response to Turkey’s “water-dam politics” that left Syria vulnerable to droughts. Within this complicated and ever-changing power landscape, the Kurds and the PKK had to adapt their aims and strategies. However, with the looseni

Using unpublished material, in particular concerning the Mandatory period (French records and
Kurdish newspapers) and social movement theory, Tejel analyses the reasons of this “exception” within the Kurdish political sphere. In spite of the exclusion of Kurdishness from the public sphere, especially since 1963, Kurds of Syria have avoided a direct confrontation with the central power, most Kurds opting for a strategy of “dissimulation”, cultivating internally the forms of identity that challenge the official ideology. The book explores the dynamics leading to the consolida Shedding some light on Syrian Kurdish politics using Social Movement Theory as a theoretical framework, this article deals with how and why Syrian Kurds choose a specific political party. Interviews with Syrian Kurdish political activists in Iraqi Kurdistan provide the data. The interviews point out that a striking cleavage exists: Respondents sympathizing with the dominant political party preferred social equality, while interviewees belonging to other parties have a preference for non-violence. Article excerpt. Jordi Tejel. Syria's Kurds: History, Politics, and Society. Translated from French by Emily Welle and Jane Welle New York: Routledge, 2011. Paperback $41.22. In his original French work, Tejel documents the history of the Kurds in Syria since the French Mandatory period. He offers an analysis of the formation and consolidation of a Kurdish national identity over time. Tejel states in the book's introduction that the Kurds in Syria is an understudied area in research. The introduction explores the different reasons behind this marginalization of the Kurdish issue in S...