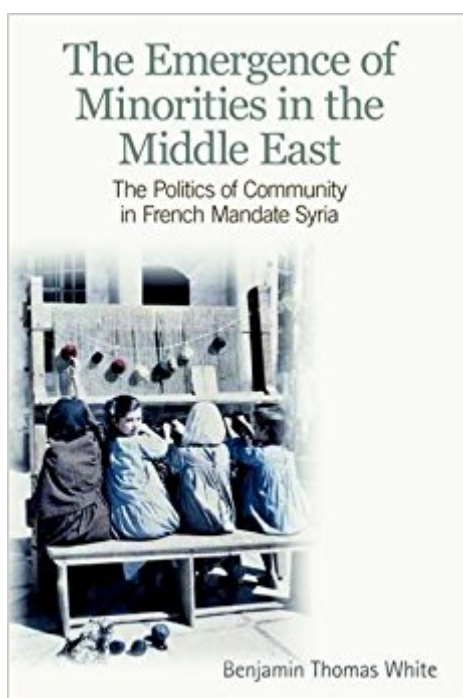


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The Emergence Of Minorities In The Middle East: The Politics Of Community In French Mandate Syria



Synopsis

Shows which historical developments led people to start describing themselves and others as 'minorities' Through close attention to what changed in French-mandate Syria, and what those changes entailed, Benjamin White argues for a careful reappraisal of the term 'minority'. Within a few years of World War I, the term had become fundamental to public understandings of national and international politics, law and society. Minorities (and majorities) were taken to be an objective reality, both in the present and the past. In Syria, the mandate period saw the consolidation of the nation-state form, despite French attempts to create territorial, political and legal divisions. There was a trend towards a coherent national territory with fixed borders and uniform state authority within them, while the struggle to control the state was played out in the language of nationalism - developments in the post-Ottoman Levant that closely paralleled events in Europe at the same time, following the demise of the Austro-Hungarian and tsarist empires. Through close attention to what changed in French mandate Syria, and what those changes meant, the book argues for a careful rethinking of a term too often used as an objective description of reality.

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Customer Reviews

"A must-read, not only for scholars of the Middle East, but also for the general public interested in placing contemporary events in general, and regional sectarian politics in particular, into the wider historical context." -- Melanie S. Tanielian, English Historical Review

Benjamin Thomas White is Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Birmingham

White's book is already a classic. He succeeded in showing the historical developments that pushed people in the Middle East to start self-perceiving themselves as "minorities". So many books have been published in recent decades in which the concept of "minority" was taken for granted. White shows, in a very convincing way, that this should not be the case.

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