

The Review Section

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The following reviews relate to our understanding of the ways in which identities, geographic spaces, religious concepts, and political formulas are shaped by the movement of people and the transition of ideas. Kıvanç Ulusoy’s review essay, “The Transforming Landscape of Turkey’s Alevi Politics,” presents a comparative review of Necdet Subaşı’s *Alevi Modernleşmesi: Sırrı Faş Eylemek* (The Alevi Modernization: Revealing the Secret) and Elise Massicard’s *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity*. Ulusoy emphasizes the way different scholarly perspectives, such as the national versus the transnational, reflect the limitations of each study and result in different conclusions; he also points out that these differences are not unrelated to the delicacy and sensitivity embedded in the study of identity formation. While Subaşı, in a rather nationalistic take on the construction of modern identity, regards the shaping of the Alevi movement and identity as taking place within the national borders of Turkey, Massicard brings the transnational aspect into the mix, highlighting the dialectical relationship created between Alevis in Turkey and Alevis who migrated and formed communities in European countries.

The second review deals with the concept of migration and takes us to North Africa. In her review Palmira Brummett examines Julia A. Clancy-Smith’s *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900*, highlighting its contribution to the study of the implications and effects of migration. Examining the North African port of Tunis in its nineteenth-century Mediterranean context, Clancy-Smith’s book serves as an account of the ways in which migration changed the social and political realities in the Mediterranean basin. The book demonstrates that migration is not a one-stop operation; further, Brummett suggests that an intimate analysis of the complexities of migrant communities can provide

meaningful insights on the personal, communal, and administrative levels.

Arietta Papaconstantinou's review of Milka Levy-Rubin's *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* highlights the book's merits, which include the tracing of the origins, social implications, and relevance of the *Shurūt*, *ʿUmar* (Covenant of ʿUmar)—the set of rules that administered the life of *dhimmī* communities (Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians). Papaconstantinou points out that the book helps the reader situate these rules in a more complex historical, social, and religious context. She emphasizes that study of the *Shurūt*, *ʿUmar* uncovers the various roles it played in various societies. It was a set of rules that, though used by the Islamic empire from the seventh century onward, were based on earlier, pre-Islamic treaties of surrender; it was a document that delineated a supposedly religious status that was simultaneously a social status; and it was a code of behavior that should not be analyzed as static but rather as a dynamic aspect of the constant adjustments and adaptations made to changing times and contexts.

The last review emphasizes another form of adaptation through change: the idea of nationalism in Iran. Şaziye Burcu Giray reviews Ali M. Ansari's *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, which analyzes nationalism as a political vessel that can be filled with different, sometimes contradictory, ideologies. As Ansari demonstrates, throughout Iran's modern history the political elites utilized different phases and narratives of history to support their political and national goals. From Reza Shah's use of the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi to Khomeini's "Mosaic myth," the book brings to the fore the many faces of nationalism or, perhaps, the overt use of nationalism to support more covert ideologies and agendas. As Giray points out, Ansari calls his readers to view the Iranian experience as comparable to that of other countries in the area, such as Turkey, and thus urges us to look beyond the political phenomena in individual nations to the transmission and influence of ideas.

The four reviews illuminate the transnational character of ideas, beliefs, and people in the Levant. It is our hope that these reviews will not only showcase these interesting studies relating to the transnational migration of people and ideas but also demonstrate the need to look beyond a specific case study in a given historical context in search of the way it was shaped and constructed by other actors, in different circumstances, and in other nations.