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Author(s): F. Muge Gocek

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lished from 1978 to 1991, with a long introductory chapter, the book gives powerful evidence that economic class is still a relevant category in analyzing the postmodernist world. In wide-ranging discussions of such diverse issues as the logic of the capitalist work process, the role of intellectuals in social change, and the portrayal of the working class in the popular media, Aronowitz drives home the point that class still counts.

He argues that the labor movement cannot be considered dead when local and regional movements such as COSATU in South Africa, Solidarity in Poland, and the Brazilian workers' movement are so active (p. 49). Even in countries such as the United States, the working class engages in covert resistance to the power of capital through sabotage, informal restrictions on output, and graffiti (p. 111). And complete consideration of racial, ethnic, and gender inequality must take account of the impact of economic class; working-class women, for example may have more severe constraints on their ability to control their own bodies than do middle-class women (p. 67).

Aronowitz's chapters on Marxist theories of the work process (chap. 2), the various theories of intellectuals as a force for social change (chap. 3), and his analysis of the place of the working class in contemporary American popular culture (chap. 5) are especially strong. Many readers will find the analysis of postmodernism (chap. 8) a useful introduction to what can be an intimidating field. Aronowitz analyzes how the status of science as "truth" has declined as postmodernists have revealed that even scientists have power

positions, often connected to capital, from which they conduct their analyses.

The idea that class counts is a long way from the Marxist doctrine that the working class is the historical agent of the transformation of capitalism however. The working class under industrial capitalism had the potential to transform society because of its power to take control of the labor process and because industrialization and urbanization concentrated members of the class in factories and working-class neighborhoods. In the United States, vital communities, from Pittsburgh to Chicago, had provided the common experiences and social networks and organizations to produce centers of cultural resistance to capital. Aronowitz argues that the decline of Snowbelt cities and factory towns under the impact of capital mobility and suburbanization has dramatically weakened working-class movements (p. 47). This has its cultural expression in the nearly total absence of working-class figures in contemporary American television and films. Even negative portrayals, as represented by Archie Bunker, have all but disappeared (chap. 5).

Like all good books, *The Politics of Identity* asks more questions than it answers. Women's, antiracist, and environmental movements certainly have radical visions capable of guiding historic social transformations. The important questions for theorists of social change are whether these movements have established—or will be able to establish—communities of resistance and sources of power comparable to those which are disappearing as the labor movement declines.

*Palestinian Identities and Preferences: Israel's and Jerusalem's Arabs*, by **Abraham Ashkenasi**. New York: Praeger, 1992. 208 pp. \$45.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-275-93503-5.

*Palestine and Egyptian National Identity*, by **Ghada Hashem Talhami**. New York: Praeger, 1992. 192 pp. \$45.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-275-94124-8.

F. MUGE GOCEK  
*University of Michigan*

Empirical analyses of identity formation often take a Western vantage point. These two books, which focus on identity in two non-Western countries, Egypt and Israel, are

therefore most welcome. The Palestinian issue as it affects, regionally, the development of Egyptian identity formation and, domestically, identity construction by the

Arabs living in Israel and the city of Jerusalem is the center of both books. Ashkenasi argues that both the Arabs living in the state of Israel and those residing in Jerusalem have a fragmented conception of what constitutes Palestinian identity and polity, because of the segmented nature of Arab social structure. Without major reforms in control and relationships, the author claims, ethnic conflict is unavoidable.

Two surveys conducted in Jerusalem with Palestinian elites and the general populace are Ashkenasi's original contribution to identity formation. His findings demonstrate that both groups desire Palestinian sovereignty but disagree on its exact form and structure. First, after a brief discussion of ethnic conflict, Ashkenasi describes Israel's Arab community before and after 1967, and then compares them with Jerusalem's Arabs. His conclusions about the future of this community as an Israeli ethnic minority is grim; he expects ethnic conflict unless drastic reforms, the nature of which he does not at all specify, are undertaken. Two interrelated factors lead him to this unhappy conclusion: Theoretically, Ashkenasi defines the boundaries of the Arab ethnic minority within a modernization paradigm. The Arab communities in Israel and Jerusalem are his units of analysis, and, with almost no reference to their internal dynamics and societal ties, they appear static and self-contained. Had Ashkenasi followed the insights of scholars such as Anthony Smith, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson, he would have focused, instead, on how these communities "constructed" their identity through interactions with the Israeli polity and the Jewish community. After all, communities cannot form and re-form their collective identities apart from the structures surrounding them; perceptions, attitudes, and policies are crucial to the analysis of identity formation. Rather than look solely at the indigenous qualities of the communities, Ashkenasi should have examined these communities' ties to the outside world. Empirically, then, Ashkenasi needs to include the attitudes and values of the Israeli state and the Jewish community toward the Arab communities. Only then can he fully interpret the attitudes and values of the Arab communities themselves.

Talhmi maintains that the Palestinian issue singularly affects the contemporary

construction of Egyptian national identity. With the rise of Israel, Egypt's ties with Sudan became less important; the bonds with the Arab world around the Palestinian issue came to the forefront instead. The author asserts that Egypt cannot come to terms with its identity or maintain its future leadership in the region if it neglects the Palestinian issue.

The main argument of Talhmi's book centers on her discussion of Pan-Arabism and the Palestinian issue, which, according to her, is, and ought to be, of primary importance in the construction of the Egyptian national identity. Yet, since her argument is a statement rather than a research question, her chapters on the transformation of the Egyptian identity throughout the twentieth century lack narrative coherence. Talhmi discusses Egyptian domestic debate on national identity mostly through detailed summaries of the views of its politicians and literary figures. These descriptions acquire analytical rigor only around the Palestinian issue and, by implication downplay the significance of other issues such as the Sudan question and the formation of the Arab League of States and the United Arab Republic, all of which contributed to Egyptian identity. Talhmi takes the dominant Egyptian discourse at face value as well; she does not look beyond the publicly accepted lectures and editorials to other written or oral sources such as drama, folk songs, and poetry, which would reveal the identity construction of the general populace.

A comparison of the two books reveals a common analytical weakness. Both discussions on identity construction leave out crucial social actors. Identity construction occurs as social actors draw boundaries around their groups and include some groups through "imagined" criteria, take issue with and exclude others, and selectively interpret the demands of the state and other foreign powers. One cannot discuss the Middle East without taking into account its troubled relationship with the West and other regional populations. After all, the Middle East, like so many other Third World regions, cannot avoid Western economic, social, and political influence.

Talhmi leaves out the social actors who, internally and externally, are outside the dominant Egyptian discourse. She overlooks

the protests of the weak—the unrepresented in Egypt—and the significant influences on Egyptian identity of Europe, Israel, and the United States. Ashkenasi's exclusive focus on the segmentation within the Arab communities implies that other groups in Israel, such as the "majority" Jewish community, are unified. Yet one can easily argue that the Jewish community itself is highly fragmented

on all the dimensions that Ashkenasi uses to separate the Arab communities: they too have distinct family structures, collective memories, and ethnic ties.

In all, the two books provide exciting insights into the issues surrounding identity formation in the Middle East, yet they also demonstrate the serious analytical pitfalls one faces in undertaking such an endeavor.

*Origins of Muslim Consciousness in India: A World-System Perspective*, by **Syed Nesar Ahmad**. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991. 311 pp. \$47.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-313-27331-6.

YASEMIN NUHOGLU SOYSAL  
*Harvard University*

The 1947 independence of India opened a new era by inaugurating a world model of decolonization. It also revealed a common feature of the former colonial world: fierce ethnic struggles and partitions. In the process of decolonization and nation building in India, two nations and two states (Indian and Pakistani) emerged. Ahmad's work seeks to explain why and how that occurred. The book is specifically concerned with the rise of "Muslim consciousness" as a separate political identity and as a basis for separate nationhood in the Indian subcontinent.

The question of where national and ethnic identities come from is a very current one. Ahmad disputes the classical arguments about innate national and ethnic identities and conflicts. Making a convincing case for constructed—not primordial—identities, Ahmad adds to the literature that has flourished in the last decade following the works of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm. He has, however, a different take on the issue, offering a historical and structural argument à la Wallerstein. According to Ahmad, the emergence and elaboration of distinct Hindu and Muslim identities should be seen as "a consequence of the structural impact of India's incorporation into the world system" (p. 1).

Ahmad's central thesis is clear: The crisis in the world economy in the late nineteenth century (1873–96) exacerbated conflicts among elites and induced the economic and political conditions under which religious differences were articulated (p. 71). The fiscal and political measures that the colonial state

responded to the crisis with favored the (predominantly Hindu) commercial elite and alienated the (predominantly Muslim) landowning elite, eventually contributing to separatist politics in India. Primarily, the decentralization of the government, the gradual introduction of universal elective principles, and the imposition of new taxes threatened the previously privileged position of Muslim elite classes. When the interests and mobility of Muslim elites were jeopardized, they adopted religious symbols to mobilize Muslim populations around the "elite's demands by creating a strong sense of identification with the group" (p. 71). Ahmad effectively displays how the global crisis brought profound changes to the social texture of the country, creating new forms of social and religious conflicts. His analytical strategy, however, does not answer the question of how Muslim elites managed to mobilize their co-religionists from other classes around collective political identities and to rally behind them.

Ahmad's argument rightly goes beyond specific societal boundaries and "intrinsic" cultural and religious characteristics. His main emphasis is on world-level economic production and exchange but does not incorporate world-level cultural dynamics. Especially relevant are the institutionalization of popular sovereignty regimes in the metropol countries (through universal suffrage) and the increasing international legitimacy of the nation-state model at the turn of the century.