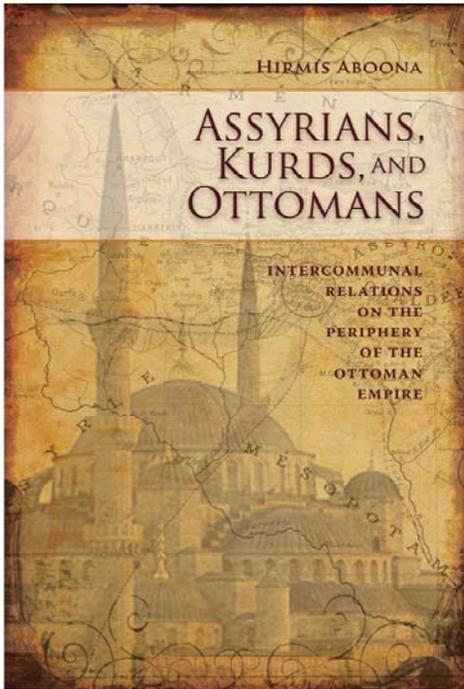


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Anthropology / History / Middle Eastern Studies

Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans

Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire

Hirmis Aboona

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Description

This book presents compelling research into numerous primary sources in English, Arabic, and Syriac on the ancient origins, modern struggles, and distinctive culture of the Assyrian tribes living in northern Mesopotamia, from the plains of Nineveh north and east, to southeastern Anatolia and the Lake Urmia region. Among other findings, the work debunks the tendency of modern scholars to question the continuity of the Assyrian identity to the modern day by confirming that the Assyrians of northern Mesopotamia told some of the earliest English and American visitors to the region that they descended from the ancient Assyrians and that their churches and identity predated the Arab conquest. It details how the Assyrian tribes of the mountain dioceses of the 'Nestorian' Church of the East maintained a surprising degree of independence until the Ottoman governor of Mosul authorised Kurdish militia to attack and subjugate or evict them.

Many scholars, in the United States and elsewhere, have decried the racism and 'Orientalism' that characterises much western writing on the Middle East. Such writings conflate different peoples and nations, and movements within such peoples and nations, into unitary and malevolent hordes, uncivilised reservoirs of danger, while ignoring or downplaying analogous tendencies towards conformity or barbarism in other regions, including the West.



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Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans

Description (continued)

Assyrians in particular suffer from Old Testament and pop-culture references to their barbarity and cruelty, which ignore or downplay massacres or torture by the Judeans, Greeks, and Romans who are celebrated by history as ancestors of the West.

This work, through its rich depictions of tribal and religious diversity within Mesopotamia, may help serve as a corrective to this tendency of contemporary writing on the Middle East and the Assyrians in particular. Furthermore, Aboona's work also steps away from the age-old, oversimplified rubric of an 'Arab Muslim' Middle East and into the cultural mosaic that is more representative of the region.

Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans will stand as a lasting contribution to the history of Christianity in Asia, of the Ottoman Empire, and of one of the Middle East's largest ethnic and religious minorities, given its detailed and ambitious depiction of Assyrian-Kurdish relations in northern Mesopotamia from the Seljuk Turkish invasions up to the mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, the author's attention to the various ecclesiastical sects within the Assyrian community and their history during the period in question is of vital importance, as these religious denominations are rarely discussed in reference to each other, but rather solely in reference to the Ottoman State. The work also details geographically the largely overlooked Assyrian tribal homeland in the nineteenth century.

The chapters, in roughly chronological fashion, discuss the process by which formerly autonomous Assyrian tribes came to be brought under more direct Ottoman rule and suffered cultural and ethnic devastation and the loss of many of their ancestral villages along the way.

Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans is a work that will be of great interest and use to scholars of history, Middle Eastern studies, international relations, and anthropology.

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About the Author

Hirmis Aboona is the author of several books on the ancient and modern history of the Assyrian people. Dr. Aboona holds a PhD from the University of Exeter and has lectured at universities, including the University of Sydney, University of Cambridge, as well as various universities in Syria and Lebanon.



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