

no other description of the photograph suggests that he expects his readers to be familiar with the photograph. Similarly, while there is a map of the Ottoman Empire in 1881 provided early in Chapter 1 (p. 2), it has remarkably little detail. Almost all of the remaining maps are battle maps, with the exceptions of a map showing “Foreign Occupation, 1918-19” (p. 70) and one showing the “Treaty of Sèvres, 1920” (p. 117). A more detailed map of Turkey early in the book would have been of enormous help to the non-specialist. Furthermore, readers who do not have a background in military history may find some of

the details of troop movements excessive. As these are not given in large blocks, however (never more than a page or so at a time) they do not distract from the larger ideas for the general reader, and serve to provide important evidence in support of those ideas for the military historian.

Scholars and students of Turkish history and politics, political science, military strategy and planning, as well as general readers, will benefit from Gawrych’s insightful analysis of the leadership qualities and characteristics of Turkey’s ablest military and political leader.

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## Religious Conversions in the Mediterranean World

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*Edited by Nadia Marzouki and Olivier Roy*

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 208 pages, £60, ISBN 9781137004888.

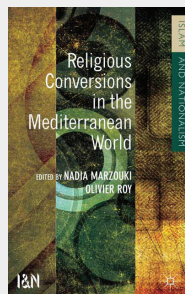
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*Reviewed by Alexandros Sakellariou*

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*RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD* is an edited volume focusing on a neglected issue within the social sciences, at least until very recently. Conversion was usually studied under the prism of history, especially in times of religious turbulence and conflicts (e.g. the expansion of Islam, the Reformation, the Ottoman Occupation, etc.) and mainly under its collective form. However, from the collective conversions of previous centuries we have been witnessing new types of conversions, especially from the ‘60s onwards; an observation that is underlined in the conclusions of the book (p. 176).

This well-structured volume is edited by Nadia Marzouki, a Research Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the



European University Institute (EUI) and Olivier Roy a well-known scholar specializing in Islam and Head of the Mediterranean Program at the same institute. The book originates in a conference about conversions, organized in Florence (EUI) in 2011 (p. 2). It contains an analytical and well-informed introduction by N. Marzouki and a critical conclusion by O. Roy on the issue of conversions. Between them, nine interesting chapters written from scholars from the fields of anthropology, history, political science, and sociology are discussing the issue of conversion in the Mediterranean world (Lebanon, Algeria, Israel, France, and Egypt).

As it is stated in the introduction, social sciences have primarily focused on collective

conversions, while individual ones represent a minor place in the social scientific study of conversion (p. 2). Nevertheless, as it is stated in the volume's conclusions even isolated conversions may carry strong political consequences, even in countries where freedom of religion is supposedly a given (p. 177), and this is a critical reason to study conversions today. As a consequence, this volume tries to fill this lack of knowledge and seeks to go beyond the common assimilation of the practice of conversion within a controversial or revolutionary act of protest or recession and in my view achieves this goal. The book also insists on the numerous resemblances between the everyday practice of converts and members of religious minorities in places as different as France, Algeria, and Israel (pp. 1-2).

Describing the paths through which individual conversion takes place in different social contexts, from dominant Islamic to secular ones, the book makes an in-depth approach to a very sensitive and difficult to reach subject and manages to give the reader a thorough image of this very interesting field. In N.Marzouki's words, independently from the differences of contexts, motives, policies and history that are examined in this work, the practice of conversion reveals an ambivalent process that simultaneously aims at rejecting and finding religion (p. 8).

Having in mind that it is not easy to analytically discuss each chapter in a brief review, I must admit that all of them contribute equally on the subject and provide useful information of the trajectories people follow when deciding to change their religion. The first chapter studies Evangelicals in Lebanon, where Shi'ite Islam and Maronites dominate the public space. The second chapter studies conversions to Evangelical Protestantism in Algeria, while chapter three studies the case of the

many African Christian migrants living in Cairo and chapter four focuses on the situation of Ethiopian Jews and Pentecostal Israelis in Israel. These first four chapters constitute a first part that basically examines the legal and policy challenges that conversions represent for the nation-state focusing mainly on the Islamic world and Israel.

The second part addresses the issue of the ambivalent relations of converts with the broader society and consists of five chapters. Chapter five studies the meaning of conversion back in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in North Africa (Egypt, the Maghreb, and Sudan), having a primarily historical content. In addition, this chapter introduces the interesting concept of 'ambiguous conversion' meaning that conversions could be partial, private, and unknowable to others in addition to being incremental in nature (p. 77). Furthermore, these historical examples of ambiguous conversions are crucial for understanding conversions today, according to the author, since they remind us that conversions may not entail a total reversal of faith and identity, but may instead generate cultural hybridity, as religions move into new contexts (p. 78). Despite the fact that such a term could trigger interesting theoretical and methodological debates - O.Roy in his conclusion (p. 184) argues that converts themselves would contest this term, I think it is really important that such theoretical and terminological suggestions are made, because this way the scientific dialogue evolves and leads to new and fruitful interpretations. Chapter six demonstrates how in the French secular context, religious conversions are often perceived by the broader public as threatening and abnormal events, reminding us that it is not only Islamic or religious oriented societies that are critical of conversion and usually characterize it as apostasy. This is also an interesting

chapter in terms of theory, since it addresses the issue of conversion on a more general basis and especially in a secular age, despite the fact that all the examples are derived from the French social context.

The following chapter discusses the issue of black converts to Judaism in France, an issue of high interest in a dual way, since it is related both to the issue of Blackness within a European secular society, but also with the way these people are accepted within a religion, Judaism, that conversion is not easy to take place. Chapter eight studies conversion to Mormonism in France, while the last chapter examines the case of Muslims attending St. Antony's church in Istanbul, an issue that is not related with conversion, at least not in a direct way.

In my view this is an edited volume of high quality that deals with a very interesting and less studied issue. Conversions, especially after 9/11 and particularly conversions to Islam, both among men and women, have caused serious debates in the West. I think that what this book brings in the field is that it focuses mainly on the micro level examin-

ing various forms of conversion in the contemporary Mediterranean space, without neglecting the macro level and the historical background of a region extremely rich in religious terms. It is understandable that in a small volume it isn't always easy to include all the cases needed in order to form a representative sample. However, I would contend that other Mediterranean countries, especially European ones, like Spain, Italy or even Greece and Portugal could have found a place in this volume. Finally, another point of criticism could be the lack of methodological information in each chapter. Most of them lack such data, for example about the sample of each case study, the method followed, etc., that would help the reader understand how the researcher worked in the field (the obstacles he/she faced, how he/she confronted them, etc.)

Nevertheless, I would like to stress the fact that this volume is a useful tool for scholars and readers, who are interested in the issues of religious conversions or religion in the Mediterranean and I truly hope and expect that future publications of the same quality will follow.