BOOK REVIEW

Chryssides, George D. (ed.) 2019. *Minority Religions in Europe and the Middle East: Mapping and Monitoring*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. xiii + 253 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4724-6360-9 £105 (hbk); 978-1-3155-9555-9 £35.99 (e-book).

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Minority Religions in Europe and the Middle East, edited by George Chryssides, examines a wide range of religious minorities, many of whom are the classically defined new religious movements (NRMs), using a multidisciplinary perspective, and drawing on historical, political, sociological and anthropological data. The seventeen chapters that comprise this collection come together in an in-depth portrait of religious belief, political and human rights struggles, representing an important and timely commentary of the contemporary dynamics of religious identity and its role in global geopolitics. The volume covers such diverse contexts as Albania, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Lithuania, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Syria and Turkey, yet every chapter traces the global connections and transnational character of religious affiliation, particularly relevant in the case of minority groups that are intricately interwoven in the European and Middle Eastern tapestry.

In his editorial introduction, George Chryssides contends that looking at how new religions arise and develop alongside dominant cultures can provide a more textured portrait of the religious landscape of Europe and the Middle East. Chryssides outlines the complexity of this field, showing that both the freedoms religious minorities enjoy, and the restrictions they are subjected to, are further compounded by a myriad of other identities and minority statuses, such as gender or sexuality. The chapters that follow thus offer nuanced examinations of religious minorities, looking at the complex constructions of a sense of belonging and religious identity in a diversity of cultural and political contexts. Part I of the volume focuses on mapping minority religions. The first few chapters demonstrate that using data on minority religions is only useful in conjunction with reflecting deeply on the wider cultural and historical context, as well as the dynamic relations that lead to their particular social construction. In Chapter 2 Ringo Ringvee provides a historical context for the unique religious mosaic in Estonia. Ringvee illustrates the fascinating trends that can be identified by comparing, contrasting and analysing Census data on religious minorities, from a historical perspective. In Chapter 3 Brigitte Knobel and Camille Gonzales map the religious mosaic of contemporary Geneva, showing that while Protestant Christianity maintains a visible presence in the city, enjoying symbolic and historical links with

the city's past, many new groups, such as Soka Gakkai, the Focolare Movement, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are also beginning to acquire a certain degree of visibility, which is, at least in part, dependent on the groups' relations with the local authority. Knobel and Gonzales show that belonging to a religious minority is a dynamic process, constructed by power relations, including the negotiations taking place between the state and religious communities. In Chapter 4 Milda Ališauskienė looks at minority religions in contemporary Lithuania, after the fall of the Communist regime. This investigation is also a political commentary on the negotiations between communities and the state, as Ališauskienė scrutinizes the privileges and concessions religious groups (and in particular Orthodox Christianity) was able to secure in the late Soviet era. Furthermore Ališauskienė shows that discrimination against minority religions is layered and influenced by other social categories, such as gender and age.

In Chapter 5 Eugenia Roussou looks at spiritual movements in Europe in the context of economic recession and political instability. Her chapter paints a rich picture of the continuity between religious plurality and alternative spirituality in Europe, as she discusses "homemade" spirituality in Southern Europe, in the context of New Age spirituality. Roussou is perhaps not sufficiently critical of the neo-liberal discourses of spiritual freedom, choice and entrepreneurial agency she is keen to identify in these contexts, and furthermore how these discourses may conflict with an impoverished population. Chapters 6 and 7 both address issues of belonging and the ways in which this is constructed in minority religions. In Chapter 6 Paulina Niechcial examines how Zoroastrians in Tehran partake in a sense of belonging that is conferred by a "primordial" religious identity, which is perceived as given and unchanging, similar to ethnicity, race and gender. Niechcial observes how this sense of belonging is reinforced by claims of legitimate links to the land—which are often symbolically constructed through processes of remembrance and memorialization. In Chapter 7 George Chryssides explores the contemporary significance of Middle Eastern geopolitics for the Jehovah's Witnesses in Israel. In this context a sense of belonging is established through history and prophecy. Thus the Middle East does not become for the Witnesses, despite its important role, a site of pilgrimage or present "sentimental attachment"—but gathers significance both through the past and the future—as "a locus of Jehovah's creative work" (p. 94).

Chapter 8, authored by Alain Garay, is the overture to Part II of this volume—concerned with monitoring, regulations and opposition to NRMs—assessing their legal situation in France. Garay looks critically at the terminology of NRMs, showing that legal precedents dictate the present-day legal treatment of these movements in Europe and beyond. In Chapter 9 Claude Proeschel returns to the issue of belonging in an investigation of religious minorities in Spain. Proeschel examines how the state manages issues of religious diversity in a context where historic polarization between Christianity and Islam is still deeply felt. Proeschel talks about the role of citizenship education in establishing a discourse of plurality and in shifting public attitudes. In Chapter 10 Titus Hjelm, Essi Mäkelä and Jussi Sohlberg investigate the context of the resistance shown by the Finnish state in recognizing the Wiccan community as a religious community in Finland. The authors address the role of the media in legitimizing and de-legitimizing minority religions, as well as the challenges Finnish Pagans faced in proving that, despite the characteristic orality of their tradition, they do have a coherent practice, creed, and even "sacred texts".

In Chapter 11 J. Eugene Clay discusses how religious movements cope with the legislative restrictions in the Russian Federation, considering the "predominant and ruling status of the Orthodox tradition" (p. 143). In Chapter 12 Holy Folk looks at the Church of

Scientology in Hungary through the lenses of globalization and recognizing the wider trend towards “Eurosecularity”. In Chapter 13 Shai Feraro looks at Neo-Paganism in Israel and the politics of identity in this context, observing the translation of a Western countercultural model in the Middle East. In Chapter 14 Inez Schippers looks at Turkish politics and the Sufi brotherhood of the Gülen movement. Schippers examines Fethullah Gülen’s ideology, which developed in the context of the early twentieth century’s prevailing secularizing and nationalistic modernization of the Turkish Republic. Schippers further comments on the uncertainties over Fethullah Gülen’s present political intentions, particularly in light of recent accusations from Turkey’s President Erdogan (2016). In Chapter 15 Kishan Manocha and Saba Tahzib talk about the persecution of the Bahá’í community in Iran, looking at how religious minorities withstand oppression. The authors recognize the “constructive resilience” (p. 211) shown by the Bahá’í in Iran, in the face of violent oppression. In Chapter 16 Stephen Suleyman Schwartz looks at religious minorities in the context of conflict and war, examining the Islamic Bektashi movement in Europe (Albania) and the Middle East (Syria). Bektashism, with its emphasis on diversity, social justice and gender equality, is a good choice for ending this exploration, as it makes the important point of protecting religious minorities from (some) oppressive majorities even more poignant.

The collection ends with an informative survey of key data of religious representation across Europe and the Middle East. At this point any reader will have a much fuller and nuanced understanding of the religious plurality, diversity and transnationalism of minority religions in these regions, as well as the dynamics of religious identities and their complex countercultural constructions in Europe and the Middle East. The collection is a *sine qua non* for the scholar of religion.