

want that for us. If you want law for yourselves, want that for us. If you want unity, solidarity, fraternity, if you want a unified legal state, for yourselves, want that for us. When this happens, true Islamic *kardeşlik* will be realized' (p. 178).

Kurdish Islamists manage to expose Turkish Islamists' hypocrisy when they point out that Turkish Islamists are usually outraged when they witness Muslims suffering at the hands of the West, but show no sympathy, let alone any solidarity or active engagement, with the suffering of Kurdish Muslims in Turkey. As a result, Kurdish Islamists explicitly reject any religious nostrum for the Kurdish problem proposed by Turkish Islamism. They accuse Turkish Islamists of wanting to avoid, or of actively delaying, full redress of the Kurdish problem until after the final denouement and victory of Islam.

Houston ends his study with a rather gloomy conclusion: 'Islamism in Turkey, as an identity discourse in its own right, cannot supersede but only offer as a competing practice its own Islamic ethnicity. "We are not Kurdish or Turkish nationalists, we are Islamic nationalists". As long as that is the best Islamism can offer, many Kurdish Muslims will remain on a war footing' (p. 196). It is difficult to disagree. However, one hopes that the democratization process underway as a consequence of the EU's acceptance of Turkey as a candidate state will pave the way for the removal of the many regulations and prohibitions against the Kurdish identity and existence. This will prepare, in the long run, new ground for tolerance, pluralism, democratic representation, and reconciliation between Turkey's different religious and ethnic groups.

In short, *Islam, Kurds and the Turkish Nation State* is a well-argued, well-researched, and profound analysis of an important issue in a country filled with modern paradoxes, haunting both the population at large, politicians in power and in opposition, as well as the country's neighbours and allies.

*Khaled Salih*

*University of Southern Denmark*

*Rethinking Central Asia: Non-Eurocentric Studies in History, Social Structure, and Identity*

Edited by KORKUT A. ERTURK (Reading, Berks.: Ithaca Press, 1998), 304 pp. Price HB £35.00. ISBN 0-86372-240-7.

This 304-page collection of eight articles by seven different authors raises a number of questions, of which two are foremost. What approaches and perspectives are appropriate to the study of Central Asia? And do these particular studies provide an accurate picture of Central Asian history and society? Having been involved in the study of Central Asia for many years, organizing five international conferences in the 1980s and establishing the Central Asian programme at my university, I have gained firsthand knowledge of the state of the field and especially of the problems that

continue to undermine its development. So I will address the questions within that context.

Prior to the disintegration of the USSR, there were probably not more than a dozen competent scholars in the Western world who dealt with Central Asia. But of those, including the late Joseph Fletcher and Alexander Benningsen, the breadth and depth of their inside knowledge more than compensated for their small number. On the other hand, after the 1950s the bulk of so-called Central Asian studies in the United States were conducted under the auspices of Soviet area studies, principally in the Russian language. The resulting theses and books, as Erturk notes, depicted Central Asia as a backward society, with a dismal tribal-nomadic past, waiting for Soviet liberation. When the disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of some eight independent states in Central Asia and the Caucasus, federal funding for Soviet-Russian studies in the USA declined along with the demand for academic staff. At the same time, sudden interest in the newly independent states produced opportunities for Central Asian 'experts' who, it turned out, still relied on the Russian language and brought the old, negative Soviet-Russian approaches into the burgeoning field of study.

Today, Russian remains indispensable for the study of Central Asia, but it is being challenged by increasing use of the indigenous tongues and local sources, and by the demand for an authentic 'national' perspective on the native society, culture, and history. Although the Central Asian 'experts' trained in the old Soviet mould now find themselves at a disadvantage in meeting the challenge to study Central Asia within this new frame of reference, the field is still dominated by the disciples of the old Soviet-Russian school and their anti-Islamic paranoia. Most of them refuse to view Islam in Central Asia as a unique source of identity and the moving power behind *jadidism*, modernism, and nationalism, despite the abundance of native sources on the subject. It is these problems that the present volume seeks to overcome by looking at Central Asian society from inside.

The first article, by Andre Gunther Frank, is a passionate attack on Eurocentrism and a valuable effort to place Central Asia in the general stream of world history. Frank's concept of the 'Centrality of Central Asia' is that 'this region has been central to Afro-Eurasian history for several thousand years' (p. 12). Frank sees the supposed 'decline of Central Asia', in the way many young scholars now do (and Joseph Fletcher earlier did), as part of the world economic decline in the seventeenth century. Frank, therefore, believes the decline of the Silk Road resulted from the elimination of the states established along it and from the loss of their role as intermediaries in trade with the rise of Russia and China, that is, in relation to the power of the sedentary empires.

Isenbike Togan further develops the economic theme by emphasizing the need of local animal breeders to unload their surplus perishable livestock in faraway markets. She also provides a rather schematic history of the Turks from 552 to 1991, emphasizing the rise of the large centralized states, such as the Seljuki and Ottoman, and illuminating their methods of legitimization

and connection to Central Asia. The other article by Togan, daughter of the well-known historian Zeki Velidi Togan, is a welcome and very interesting historical study of the use of elite women by local political groups to consolidate power and reinforce patriarchy. In it, Togan employs the comparative gender approach to understand the inner working of societies.

Sharon Baştug regards the segmentary lineage system as playing a seminal role not only in the formation of tribes, confederations, and states, but also in the rise of internal subgroups and supratribal organizations among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

Lois A. Giffen's short piece is an excellent entry into the oral literature of epic heroes. Because this literature's personages, story patterns, and narrative styles were common to all the Turkic peoples, it is of crucial importance for understanding the social and political history of the Central Asian peoples, and its study could be greatly expanded by further use of the local epics.

A. Aydin Çeçen attempts to devise a comparative Ottoman Turkish–Central Asian frame of study by analysing the forces that account for the differences between them. It is an excellent beginning, for Ottoman–Central Asian relations actually go back to the sixteenth century, although they intensified in the nineteenth. During the latter part of the nineteenth century Ottoman modernization and the political activism of the Young Turks provided the Central Asian intelligentsia with an Islamic 'national' model of cultural and social change that challenged the old Russian stereotypes of assimilative modernization. (For more on this topic, see my *The Politicization of Islam* (Oxford, 2001), chapters 13–16.) In the case of this article, however, twenty-five pages are insufficient to treat the histories of both Central Asia and Turkey and to squeeze in economic theories without creating unwanted gaps and inconsistencies.

Şerif Mardin's piece, based on secondary sources, discusses Abdurresîd İbrahim and Zeki Velidi Togan, both of whom were Tatars of Russia. It does not fit well with the rest of the book.

The volume as a whole suffers from the lack of a common theme and continuity, a shortcoming typical of collections written by different authors on different subjects even within a simple geographical or cultural area. Yet the book represents a refreshing new approach and contains much useful information as well as an 'inside' perspective on Central Asia, all of which make it a most welcome addition to the existing literature.

*Kemal H. Karpat*

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

### *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*

By OLIVIER ROY (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 239 pp. Price HB £39.50. ISBN 1-86064-278-0.

The political history of the states in the southern region of the former Soviet Union continues to be of scholarly as well as popular interest. Of the eight