

indigenous systems if they propose to have any chance of success. I would go further and propose that the volume suggests an important research priority.

Downs and Reyna (1988) and Reyna (1987) have argued that African land distribution is becoming increasingly inequitable. The essays in this volume support this view. However, they document that the processes by which land inequalities are maturing are complex. Certainly, men acquire land at the expense of women; equally certainly, elites are concentrating land at the expense of everyone else. But, as Watts informs readers, women contest land grabs by their men, so that gender inequalities are not a foregone conclusion. Further, the concept of "elite" turns out to be extremely intricate. There are different sorts of local elites--including chiefs, nobles, religious leaders, regional officials, and regional businessfolk--as well as different sorts of national elites such as politicians with positions in the central government, officials in non-African bilateral or multilateral government agencies, and the officers of national and multinational firms. Sometimes these different elites can be in alliance, as appears to be the case Bloch describes for Senegal. At other times, they are in competition, as Werbner emphasizes for Botswana. Evidence from other areas of the globe with long established patterns of land concentration indicates that such distributions can be associated with indifferent agricultural performance. This means that explanation of growing inequalities in land distribution, especially as these are related to output and productivity, may be central to improving African agricultural performance, and thus should be accorded a priority in forthcoming African land tenure researches.

Finally, Thomas Bassett and Donald Crummey, the volume's editors, are to be congratulated. They have crafted one of the richest documents concerning African land tenure to ever appear. It is a must read for those interested in agriculture, development, and Africa.

References

Downs, R.E. and S.P. Reyna (editors).

1988. *Land and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

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1987. The Emergence of Land Concentration in the West African Savanna. *American Ethnologist*, 14(3):523-541.

An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860, by Leila Fawaz, University of California Press (1994) xv, 302 pp.

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Leila Fawaz's book, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*, is a mixture of rich historical detail and bare thread analysis. This discordant combination stems from the author's central purpose for writing this book. As Professor Fawaz states in her preface, she consciously digs up the events of the civil conflicts of the nineteenth century in order to find lessons pertinent to the civil war that wracked Lebanon

from 1975 till 1990. In particular, she is looking for clues on how to (re-)gain communal harmony in a sectarian Lebanon. Such a formidable task, by any means, clearly constrains Professor Fawaz into walking a thin line of objective history even when she is aware of the subjectivity inherent in any historical narrative. Professor Fawaz believes that clues to understanding these incidents of sectarian strife are to be found in the relationship between state and society. Specifically, she believes that weakening of central state power--Ottoman in these cases--and the disruption of traditional urban-rural leadership networks, coupled with socioeconomic changes, led to a political space that was filled by sectarian networks. In other words, sectarianism is a sociocultural construction that is induced by external factors. In the remainder of the book Professor Fawaz attempts to demonstrate these arguments through a historical narrative of the events.

Starting with sketches of these areas before the outbreak of hostilities, Professor Fawaz writes of societies that maintained some semblance of harmonious co-existence between sects. Yet such communal equilibrium was upset by a variety of historical changes. After the 1830s, both Damascus and Mount Lebanon were being drawn into the world capitalist system. Trade and agriculture were the two conduits through which European capitalists obtained raw material for their factories and in return sent finished goods for the markets of Beirut and Damascus. In the process, local industry and merchants--mostly Muslim--were hurt by European competition for markets and primary material. At the same time a new bourgeoisie--mostly Christian and Jewish -- prospered as the go-between for local markets and international financiers. Politically, these economic changes exacerbated the decline in the control of the existent elite, which was mostly made up Muslim, with some Christian, families. At the same time the Ottoman empire was suffering from economic distress caused by a similar growing dependency on the West. Political reorganization meant to alleviate the financial difficulties of the central government translated into weakened control over the outlying provinces, including Mount Lebanon and Damascus.

With the stage thus set, Professor Fawaz proceeds to write of the conflicts. Alternating between Damascus and Mount Lebanon, she writes of the events of the conflicts, Ottoman and European responses to the violence, and settlements reached in both places. Professor Fawaz chronicles the incident of Damascus as a clear case of violence perpetrated by Muslims against Christians. Whether in telling of the events leading to the outbreak of death and destruction, or in the story of atrocities committed, she clearly and squarely places the blame on the Muslims of the city of Damascus. Although she punctuates her description by telling of many prominent Muslims who tried to assist the attacked Christians as much as possible, she leaves no doubt that other leaders of the community participated directly and indirectly in the violence visited upon the Christian quarters. Moreover, she argues -- quite effectively -- that the local Ottoman governor and garrison did nothing to stop the massacres, and if anything, many of the irregular soldiers took active part in the atrocities. In sharp contrast, Professor Fawaz paints a most laudatory picture of the special Ottoman emissary Fuad Pasha, who was sent to re-establish order in the region, and of his decisive actions in meting out justice and paying retributions for the Christians of the city.

Events in Mount Lebanon were hardly portrayed in so clear-cut a manner. There, Professor Fawaz argues, the blame for violence rests more or less equally with both parties. On one hand, she highlights the belligerent attitudes of the Christians' leadership, secular and religious, toward the Muslim communities and their political chieftains. Furthermore, in her narrative of the civil war she points to many instances where it was the

Christians, particularly the Maronites, who launched attacks on Druze communities. And although she acknowledges that numerous massacres were committed by Druzes against Christian communities, especially in southern Lebanon, she is quick to note that the Christians were not absolutely guiltless but rather leaderless. In other words, their loss did not result from their status as victims, but rather from tactical problems coordinating efforts against their highly unified enemies. Ultimately, this conflict was also squelched with the arrival of Ottoman and French troops who forcibly separated the belligerents and set about restoring order. Even more than in Damascus, in Mount Lebanon European consuls played an important role in arriving at a settlement of the problems that would guarantee relative peace in that region. With each European power supporting a particular sectarian community, (French and Catholics, British and the Druzes, Russians and the Greek Orthodox), and the Ottomans attempting to reassert a centralized control over Mount Lebanon, negotiations were complicated and drawn out. A resolution was reached by which Mount Lebanon would be governed, however, as a semi-independent province, by a Christian Ottoman administrator approved by the European Powers.

Professor Fawaz concludes by drawing comparisons between the 1860 and 1975 civil conflicts in Lebanon. Here, again, she finds re-affirmation of her belief that as long as strong central governments maintained a balance between the different sectarian communities, then social relations were harmonious. Furthermore, she finds a twentieth century equivalent for disruptive socioeconomic changes in the ascendancy of a Christian bourgeoisie faced with a dispossessed Shi'ite community. Finally, she points to the susceptibility of internal factions to manipulation by foreign forces during a period of crisis.

Overall, Professor Fawaz clearly presents in this book an impressive and exhaustive archival research into the history of the civil conflicts of Mount Lebanon and Damascus. Furthermore, for the first time we have a well-written and comprehensive narrative of the events of these conflicts. Yet, this book is less successful in many other respects. Most evident is the lack of a strong analytical framework that brings together the various elements of the book. For example, although Professor Fawaz spends at least one third of the book on describing the conflict in Damascus, she does not make use of it in her final analysis, and one is left wondering why she included that whole section in her narrative.

Equally troubling is the cursory attention that Professor Fawaz pays to the changes in the social and economic structures of Mount Lebanon and Damascus. Despite her claim to a history that straddles the society-state nexus, Professor Fawaz distinctly places greater causal weight on the political structures and maneuverings. In fact, she has done little to integrate the elements of social and economic change in analyzing why peasants in Mount Lebanon and urbanites in Damascus resorted to sectarian violence. Whenever she touches upon social historical issues, she does so with overly general statements resorting to the same essentialist descriptions of Lebanese society which previous observers have exhausted. For instance, the Druzes are portrayed as warlike and far too homogeneous in their political outlook. Honor is presented as a monolithic structure that cuts across social structures in a wide swath with little attention to the variations that existed within this sociocultural institution. One could dismiss such criticism as overly particular, if it wasn't the case that Professor Fawaz goes to great pains to nuance all the political maneuverings at the same time that she indulges in such frivolous generalities. This is not a case of lack of ability -- for Professor Fawaz distinguishes herself with exacting attention to detail--but rather a failure to take into serious account the socioeconomic factors that led to civil

conflict in Mount Lebanon and Damascus, and that later influenced the outcome of these historical events.

Such failure is hardly academic. If one is to accept the purpose of Professor Fawaz's travails, namely the construction of a solution for Lebanon's current problems from the lessons of the past, then the final question is: are the lessons complete? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Professor Fawaz contends that the lack of a strong central government to keep harmony between various communities is the ultimate cause of the conflicts. What she fails to acknowledge, however is that such equilibrium can never be maintained for a long time, regardless of the central government, because the latter is in many ways a reflection of the mosaic of communities. It is only when these communities find a common sense of identity and purpose that a strong central government can emerge. Thus, by paying almost exclusive attention to the political details of the conflicts, Professor Fawaz has failed to truly straddle the society-state nexus, and thus to provide her readers with a complete account of the conflicts. Yet, despite these shortcomings I would recommend *An Occasion for War* as a very good narrative history of these particular civil conflicts, as well as a starting point for understanding sectarianism.

**Claims-making as Social Science: A Review of
Environmental Values in American Culture, by Willett
Kempton, James S. Boster, and Jennifer A. Hartley;
Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press 1995. xii, 226 pp., 4
appendices.**

**Reviewed by Thomas Greider, Associate Professor of Community and
Environmental Sociology University of Kentucky.**

This book is easy to read. It will likely be popular among environmentalists globalist-oriented politicians, and social scientists who have adopted the now taken-for-granted mantra about “global environmental change” and the anthropogenic “causes” of such. The premises of this book fall easily in line with a number of “global environmental change” books written by people who are funded by NSF, NOAA, and NASA. Indeed, the first paragraphs of many of these books are interchangeable and are familiar to many. In the words of Kempton, Boster, and Hartley:

The natural world is constantly changing. But today's multiple simultaneous changes are unprecedented and, in the view of some scientists, potentially catastrophic. For the first time, the primary driving force of planet-scale change is humanity, with our growing numbers and increasingly disruptive activities. Major global-scale changes include ozone depletion, species extinctions, and global warming. Scientists cannot predict the ultimate effects of these global changes--their scope and pace have no precedents in human history and few precedents in the geological history of the earth (p. 1).