Book Review/Compte rendu

Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: or How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, 360 pp. $US 65.00 cloth (978-0-8047-5697-6)

Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, thousands of Jews from all over the world have immigrated there. They were divided into two categories: *Mizrahim* and *Ashkenazim*. Mizrahim are Jews whose origins are from Africa and Asia and Ashkenazim are from Europe and America. The latter have dominated every aspect of the state politically, economically, and culturally through the exclusion of the Mizrahim and Palestinians (the indigenous people of the country). Aziza Khazzoom's book *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel* deals with the origins of the exclusion of the Mizrahim and tries to explain why one group excludes another by focusing both quantitatively and qualitatively on the labour market and its connection to education. Her innovative methodology strengthens and enlivens the analysis.

Studies of the exclusion of the Mizrahim are not new; over the last decade it has become a popular field. The analysis of this topic can be traced to the classic works of Deborah Bernstein and Shlomo Swirski (1982) and Ella Shohat (1989), and continues with the recent works of Yehouda Shenhav (2006) and Gil Eyal (2006). Even so, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel* deals with the subject in a new and complex way, accepting the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy while problematizing it. In contrast to other scholars, she asserts that this dichotomy did not appear immediately, but rather developed over the years. The subtitle, *How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, hints at the process through which initially large internal differences were reduced between groups on each side of the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi boundary, while the latter was strengthened. The book shows how immigrants from Poland did not enjoy the same access to education and inclusion as other Ashkenazi groups but their children did.

Most immigrants from Africa and Asia suffered from exclusion in the labour market, with one significant exception. Khazzoom found that immigrants from Iraq enjoyed inclusion and high access to education similar to some Ashkenazi groups; she calls it the "Iraqi Paradox." However, this paradox has been diminished, as the children of Iraqi immigrants

do not enjoy the access to education which their parents had. Again, an initially large internal difference between groups has been reduced. This closing of differences, whether Polish-Ashkenazi or Iraqi-Mizrahi, marks the point at which the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy was finalized and ethnic formation occurred in Israel.

According to Khazzoom, this ethnic formation and the development of the two groups are connected to the dichotomization of west (i.e., Ashkenazi) and east (i.e., Mizrahi). The Ashkenazim were the first to arrive in Israel and were determined to create a western state and exclude every eastern aspect. Khazzoom writes that "Israelis became more interested in marking east/west differences than in collapsing them" (p. 12). Her articulation of the Iraqi paradox shows how a group can succeed in Israel if it is perceived as western. The Mizrahim, who were associated with the east, had to prove their westernness if they were not to be excluded.

Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel provides a way to study more recent immigration processes to Israel. Over the years, ethnic formation in Israel has changed. After its collapse in 1990 almost a million immigrants from many parts of the former Soviet Union (FSU) came to Israel. Some were from Eastern European countries such as Russia and the Ukraine, while others were from Asian republics such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Georgia. The latter group particularly suffered from exclusion in the labour market. While the results of this exclusion are different from those of the 1950s, there are some common elements. Immigrants from the Asian republics are perceived as eastern, and therefore are excluded. They also have to prove westernness to be included in the labour market. At the same time Ethiopian immigrants started arriving in Israel. They also suffered from exclusion, undoubtedly connected to east/west relations, as they were also perceived as eastern.

Today, these large immigrations have expanded ethnic formation in Israel. The immigrants from the FSU, who are referred to as Russians, would formerly have been included in the Ashkenazi group, but were not. The Ethiopians would have been added to the Mizrahi group; this did not happen either. Instead, these new groups expanded ethnic formation in Israel to four groups: veteran Ashkenazi, veteran Mizrahi, Russian, and Ethiopian.

Khazzoom's book is well written and addresses the question of ethnic formation in a vivid and clear way. The use of quantitative and qualitative methods is innovative and helps make her point more strongly. The book highlights the problems of ethnic formation and the exclusion of one group by another. It makes a significant contribution to the study

of race and class, and students can learn much from this book, given its clear and straightforward thesis and well-analyzed results.

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