

kendisinden sonra İbn Rüşd üzerine yapılan pek çok çalışmaya öncülük etmesi açısından da hayli önemli bir konuma sahip olduğu rahatlıkla söylenebilir. Eserin bu öncü niteliği, büyük ölçüde kapsayıcılığından ve İbn Rüşd'ü, onun Aristo'yu şerh ederken kullandığı yöntemi kullanarak, yani onu kendisini ortaya koyduğu gibi anlayıp aktarmasından kaynaklanmaktadır.

M. Cüneyt Kaya

*Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*,  
Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. xx + 304 pp.

Kashani-Sabet's *Frontier Fictions* deals with Iranian self-definition in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries by examining the concept of national geography in Iran. As Kashani-Sabet notes, scholars have considered an array of concepts, including language, religion, history and land as salient features of Iranian, and for that matter Turkish and Arab, nationalist discourses. *Frontier Fictions* attempts to identify the "primary impetus" for Iranian nationalist discourse and national consciousness. The study focuses on land as an understudied cultural construct, which she argues, "provided the primary impetus for Iranian nationalist discourse."

Starting with the Russo-Persian war of 1804, geography, land and frontiers became the locus of patriotism, vision of unity, desire for reform and economic independence, despite the painful realities of political and social fragmentation, loss of territory and constant frontier frictions. *Frontier Fictions* highlights how the imagined Iranian landscape, expressed in a wide-ranging printed media, became the cornerstone of religious and political discourses (including ideas of unity and independence) that defined the Iranian nation and set in motion political changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Approaching the subject with the assumption that territory was a cornerstone of Iranian nationalist imagination, Kashani-Sabet asserts that the conception of land was not just an idle dream, but rather it was a tangible and visual element that provoked a sense of community projecting itself vertically in history and horizontally in geography. It is argued also that the "*Imagined Communities* undermined the long-standing tendency of societies to define territories that set themselves apart from others." *Frontier Fiction's* conceptual stance does not completely tally with that of *Imagined Communities*. However, Kashani-Sabet could have helped the reader by providing a more detailed examination of previous land-based approaches to nationalism

in Iran and their nuance vis-à-vis the theory of Imagined Communities. Precisely because her argument is concerned with land, one expects to read a more directed assessment of Anderson's thesis, and a critical review of previous scholarship on the subject.

The book is divided into six chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. In the first chapter, "A Manifest Destiny Diverted, 1804-1896," Kashani-Sabet points out how the idea of *Iranshahr/Iranzamin* was employed for self-definition since late antiquity, and has continued in the memory of the inhabitants of the land, despite religious, social and political changes. She argues that when Qajar intellectuals evoked the idea of Iran being embedded in the land, referring to Qajar territories, they surely hoped to see a flourishing and expanding empire. However, the Qajar dream of imperial expansion was not realized; instead, the idea of the nation belonging to a land began to emerge out of diverse ethnicities, cultural traditions and the de-centralized political landscape. The chapter derives evidence from archival and primary source material, in addition to up-to-date scholarly works and makes the writer's argument a well-supported thesis.

Chapter two, "Limning the Landscape: Geographical Depictions of the Homeland, 1850-1896," deals with the birth of the geographic discipline as an expression of national consciousness manifested in the idea of belonging to a homeland (*vatan*). Disappointed by territorial losses, and financial and military weakness, Qajar intellectuals recalled the ancient Iranian glory, facilitated by the generosity of *Iranshahr*, which made the inhabitants of the land superior people who had once towered over the Greeks, Egyptians and Romans. In an attempt to protect their homeland and restore its greatness, Iranian intellectuals studied Iranian geography and mapped out its territories, creating a new image of their homeland. Strategic, military or political use of geographical information provided leverage for the Iranian government in negotiations, but more importantly it created a vision, a myth of a homeland (*vatan*) with a cultural uniqueness, the content of which was contested by competing ideologies. Geography provided knowledge about the homeland's landscape and its riches, which projected an image of unity, brought together the periphery and redefined the army's *raison d'être* (as that of defending and protecting the homeland). However, Dr. Kashani-Sabet's exposition of the religious notion of martyrdom and *jihad* falls short of substantiating the argument that such religious ideas were molded into a nationalist discourse by religious intellectuals themselves. Given that that might have been the case, the examples she cites reflect a universalistic religious-legal discourse, which is in apparent disregard of nationally definable territorial unity. The same note applies to chapter five as well, where the textual support appears too concise to provide enough evidence for the proposition that the religious

scholars/intellecutuals reinterpreted *jihād* to fit a nationalist framework. Only once, a vocabulary reminiscent of nationalism (*vatan*) was employed by "Muslim intellectuals".<sup>1</sup> This inadvertently brings up the issue whether the incorporation of nationalist themes into religious discourse is a relatively late phenomenon.

The following chapter, "From Riches to Ruins: The Political Economy of Frontiers, 1897-1906", is a spectacle of the reform ideas that were directed to the Qajar dynasty in a hope to minimize administrative flaws and to find ways for economic self-sufficiency in the face of penetrating foreign economic dominance during the final decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Targeting the same apparent problems, reform treatises written by individuals with diverse religio-political backgrounds offered a range of solutions, extending from the revival of Perso-Islamic administrative practices to radical solutions, such as economic liberalism. Kashani-Sabet notes that notions of state (*dawlat*) and nationhood/citizenry/religious community (*millat*) infused the reformist jargon of the time.

Chapter four, "Political Parables: Iran's Frontier Crucible, 1906-1914", deals with the constitutional revolution and its role in forging an Iranian nation within a delineated territory, and under a constitution. Kashani-Sabet points out that the revolution promoted the Persianization of Iran and Shiism more forcefully, thanks to the availability of printed media, in order to realize national unity. The nationalists felt that national unity had been undermined by the growing ethnic nationalism of the Kurds, Turks, Arabs and Afghans. Unlike the Qajar nationalists of the previous century, who recognized ethnic diversity and stressed territorial commonality, the nationalists of the new era aspired to melt diverse ethnicities in a distinctly Persian and Shiite pot.

The nationalist discourse of this new era was saturated with new concepts, such as freedom, law, citizenship, political egalitarianism and unity, which in many cases remained unfulfilled in the political realities of the Iranian landscape. The revolution provoked new hopes and much optimism for "a new homeland" that would be liberated, united and free from despotism. The writer demonstrates how the Iranian intelligentsia labored hard to perfect the constitutional achievement with agricultural, monetary, political and educational progress.

Enriched with examples and illustrations, this chapter demonstrates how successive crises, most notably the reign of Muhammad Ali Shah, dubbed as a "minor despotism", intensified the sense of patriotism among nationalist

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1 The writer uses Muslim intellectuals, a term, which is in itself vague. Lay intellectuals or mullahs?

intellectuals. The writer notes that the dream of the constitutional revolution remained largely unrealized, creating a sense of failure. However, it did pull off the political transition of the land from being the king's patrimony to the citizens' homeland.

The next chapter, "Coercing Camaraderie: The War, the Military, and the Myth of Riza Khan, 1914-1926", traces the process by which religious mythical and historical symbols were deployed to rid Iran of foreign domination. The author argues that religious discourse, most notably the notion of Jihad, was appropriated and redefined in secular terms by the nationalists in their endeavor to defend "the homeland" against foreign, particularly Russian and British, aggression. Similarly, secular symbols, such as the legend of Kavih, appeared in a nationalist garb. The uprising of Kavih against Zahhak became "a national uprising" (*qiyam-i milli*) against "the tyrannical foreign king." Kashani-Sabet points out, however, that foreign occupation was not the only challenge to nationalist projections. Provincialism, Shaykh Khaz'al's movement in Khuzistan in the second decade of the twentieth century for instance, was another big problem which threatened Iranian territorial unity and undermined the power of the central government already embattled by frontier quarrels. The achievements of Riza Khan in subduing provincial separatism, she asserts, were a victory of centralization efforts which came with a price: dependence on militarism and warfare and shelving the hopes of democracy.

The final chapter, "Parenting Little Patriots: Domesticating the Homeland, 1921-1926", deals with the nationalist agenda attempts to forge cultural homogeneity through education in the face of centrifugal tendencies that claimed legitimacy based on cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences. The writer examines how Iranian intellectuals supported local schools, hoping to instill patriotic values and cultural homogeneity in new generations. She also notes that education and the social involvement of women became a primary concern of nationalist intellectuals since the nation was viewed as a larger family whose members not only had love for one another, but also certain filial/civic duties. Kashani-Sabet recognizes, however, that cultural homogeneity was never achieved. Iranian ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity was too large to be molded into one shape. Nevertheless, along the way, *hubb-i vatan* (patriotism) was able to instill fictions of obedience and patriarchy among the population.

The conclusion, "What's in a Name: From Persia to Iran, 1926-1946", examines the dialectic between nationalist fictions and cultural, social, linguistic, ethnic and political frictions that faced the country between the two world wars. For decades, Kashani-Sabet notes, "schools, newspapers, and treatises had promoted the Persian language throughout the provinces... yet... Persian had not yet assumed cultural dominance in the country." While this

obviously was a set back for claims of unity and purity, especially when linguistic diversity was coupled with territorial claims, it did however enhance the attachment of Iranian nationalists to their national fictions. Starting with the military campaigns of Rıza Khan, Iranian nationalists relentlessly renamed Iranian territories, including fashioning a single name –Iran– for the country in 1934, in an attempt to ward off competing linguistic and ethnic claims. Such attempts enhanced the fiction that Iranian meant Persian, but did nothing to prevent territorial disputes from persisting in shaping the nationalist discourse.

Kashani-Sabet has contributed substantially to the discussion of Iranian nationalism by bringing to the fore the significance of land. This is a theme, admittedly not totally new, that finds an echo in other Middle Eastern nationalisms and sheds light on how and why nationalist fictions still endure, despite many challenges to their persistence. In particular, the story of language and land in the Iranian nationalist imagination is reminiscent of the still unfolding Turkish experience in more than one way.

Hayrettin Yücesoy

*Anlam ve Yorum: Dinî Metinlerin Anlaşılması ve Yorumlanması,*  
Tahsin Görgün.

İstanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2003. 184 sayfa.

Dinî metinlerin yorumu hakkında çağdaş Batı düşüncesinde geliştirilen yöntemlerin İslâm düşünce geleneğindeki yorum anlayışı ile karşılaştırılması, Türkçe’de az işlenmiş bir konudur. Bu konuda ortaya konmuş yazıların hemen hepsi makale seviyesindedir. Analitik, hermenötik ve yapısalcı olmak üzere –ilk ikisi hâlâ etkin ve üçüncüsü kısmî ölçüde yerini başka tavırlara bırakmış olan– çağdaş Batı düşüncesindeki mevcut yorum anlayışları ile klasik İslâm düşüncesinin yorum konusundaki tavrını konu edinen eser, bu bakımdan önemli bir boşluğu doldurmaya yönelik bir adım olmaktadır. Eseri önemli kılan diğer bir husus ise, konuyla alakalı yazılar daha çok metin anlayışlarını karşılaştırmaya dayalıyken, burada ilgili karşılaştırmaların Müslümanların var oluş sorunuyla bağlantılı olarak ortaya konmasıdır. Buna göre kitap, Müslüman olarak var olmanın gerekliliğini tartışmakta ve sömürgeleşmenin zorlamasıyla küllî düzlemde gerçekleşme şartlarını yitirmiş Kur’an’ın, İslâm medeniyetinde geliştirilmiş aklî ve naklî ilimlerin mirasının yeniden kazanılarak bir varlık kaynağı haline getirilmesinin zorunluluğunu vurgulamaktadır.