Record Nr. UNINA9910460144103321 Religious origins of nations? [[electronic resource]]: the Christian **Titolo** communities of the Middle East / / edited by Bas ter Haar Romeny Pubbl/distr/stampa Leiden;; Boston,: Brill, 2010 **ISBN** 1-282-94952-7 9786612949524 90-474-4436-1 Descrizione fisica 1 online resource (384 p.) Collana Brill ebook titles Altri autori (Persone) Haar RomenyR. B. ter Disciplina 281/.50956 Soggetti Christians - Middle East - History Christian communities - Middle East Religious minorities - Middle East - History Identification (Religion) Church history - Primitive and early church, ca. 30-600 Church history - Middle Ages, 600-1500 Electronic books. Middle East Church history Congresses Middle East History Congresses Lingua di pubblicazione Inglese **Formato** Materiale a stampa Livello bibliografico Monografia Note generali Proceedings of a symposium held at the castle Oud Poelgeest near Leiden, Netherlands, 2007. Includes bibliographical references and indexes. Nota di bibliografia Nota di contenuto Preliminary Material / B. Ter Haar Romeny -- The Formation Of A Communal Identity Among West Syrian Christians: Results And Conclusions Of The Leiden Project / Bas ter Haar Romeny, Naures Atto , Jan J. Van Ginkel , Mat Immerzeel and Bas Snelders -- Family Matters: Community, Ethnicity, And Multiculturalism / Willem Hofstee -- The Psalm Commentary Of Daniel Of Salah And The Formation Of Sixth-Century Syrian Orthodox Identity / David G.K. Taylor -- Syriac Historiography And Identity Formation / Muriel Debié -- Michael The Syrian And Syriac Orthodox Identity / Dorothea Weltecke --Iconography And Identity: Syrian Elements In The Art Of Crusader

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Sommario/riassunto

Though nations are nowadays seen as the product of modernity, comparable processes of community building were taking place even earlier. Thus the history of the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syrian Christians shows that close-knit ethnic groups already existed in Late Antiquity and early medieval times. These communities have endured to the present day. However, there is much debate as to how they came into existence and defined themselves. The role of religion is central to this debate. A major interdisciplinary research project conducted at Leiden University investigated the identity formation of the Syriac Orthodox. It is argued that they started as a religious association. This volume presents the results of the Leiden team together with reactions from a number of other specialists. The cases of the East Syrians, Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians, and Byzantine Orthodox are discussed in five additional contributions. Contributors include: Naures Atto, Annemarie Weyl Carr, Muriel Debié, Jan van Ginkel, Wim Hofstee, Mat Immerzeel, Steven Kaplan, Theo van Lint, Glenn Peers, Richard Price, Gerrit Reinink, Bas ter Haar Romeny, Uriel Simonsohn, Bas Snelders, David Taylor, Herman Teule, Jacques van der Vliet, and Dorothea Weltecke.