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David Ziskind. *Labor Laws in the Middle East, Tradition in Transit*

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in a debate like this while the Buddha was quite willing to go along with the assertion that women were capable of ‘attaining nirvana.’ Another interesting civilizational point is that while the three heterodoxies were founded in opposition to the caste-promoting, racist, and sexist Brahmanical movement in traditional Indian society, Jainism could turn around and promote some of the same prejudices against women. One wishes that Professor Jaina clearly explained how these original concerns of equality got lost to concerns about the hellish status of women, and their biological inferiority. However, it is amazing how similar some of the teachings about the status of women by the so-called historical, organized religions of contemporary society are to those of the Jainas.

As civilizationists we are being constantly challenged to join contemporary feminist scholars in investigating how we have historically used language to teach ourselves "that all life is constructed on the principles of the human patriarchy" rather than the human matriarchy even in the face of new, contrary archeological and other scientific discoveries. Professor Jaini’s *Gender and Salvation* may provide us with something with which to begin. Therefore, a roundtable on the civilizational evolution of the female may be an idea whose time has come.

*Korsi Dogbe*

**COMPARATIVE LEGALITY**


Since work of all kinds is basic to society, it is also basic to civilization. Work takes place within a political and economic context that is imbedded within a civilizational context. Laws and the institutions that apply law are certainly part of the context of work.

The heart of David Ziskind’s book, *Labor Laws in the Middle East, Tradition in Transit*, summarizes constitutional provisions, statutes, conventions of the International Labor and Arab Labor Organizations signed by some of the countries, and the United Nations covenants to which the countries have agreed, relating to employment, remuneration, hours of work and leisure, occupational safety and health, unionization, collective bargaining, strikes, settlement techniques, and agencies worker housing, worker education, and human rights affecting labor. There is a chapter on special classes of labor, and one on the status of labor. There are summaries of how much actual conditions conform to the law, a useful overall summary chapter, and an appendix with chronological lists of selected labor statutes. The author’s goal has been to be factual, but his decency and benevolence shine through. He is explicitly aware of the relevance of civilization; he does address the issue; but he does not offer a thorough civilizational interpretation.
Most of the historical chapter presents what the Bible (plus the Talmud) and the Koran (plus other classical sources of Islamic law) say about labor. There is a very brief section on the law of the medieval Christian crusaders. The Ottoman empire is scarcely mentioned. There is mention but no analysis of the influence of Roman law among others and the impact of the French and British legal systems, despite the fact that the Romans were in the Middle East for some centuries, several of the countries were European protectorates in the 20th century, and Israel patterned much of its secular law on British common law.

Differences among Muslim sects have not shaped labor laws. The author states (p. 338): “Nationalist goals of Arabs and Jews have probably had a greater bearing upon their labor laws than have their religions.” Therefore, brief histories are given of 13 Islamic countries, Israel, and the Israeli-occupied territories (Israel has assumed no responsibility for employment of persons in the West Bank and Lebanonese refugee camps). This book does not cover Turkey or Muslim states on the continent of Africa or east of Iran. A Palestinian might quarrel with some of the facts presented about post-1945 Israel, but the author is not explicitly an advocate for Israel. He does note that labor laws are similar throughout most of the Middle East, despite either religious or national differences. Comparisons are made of the differences that do exist between the countries.

Labor law is not the same for all residents of a country. Some tribal distinctions remain. Many countries contain cultural minorities. Israel allows Christians and Muslims to apply their own law in some circumstances. All Middle Eastern foreign workers lack the legal rights enjoyed by native workers. Despite the fact that all the constitutions provide for equality before the law, Israel and Iran have been charged with job discrimination against people of certain minorities.

Several labor codes and numerous treaty provisions ban discrimination against women in employment, but of course discrimination does exist. None of the countries’ constitutions sets specific standards for child labor. Some have statutes offering protection to children. I.L.O. conventions and U.N. covenants on child labor have been signed, but the enforcement of child labor laws has not been a priority.

Differences between the one communist and two socialist countries and the many capitalist countries appear significant. However, cooperatives are traditional in the Middle East and there is a general predilection for development planning. The author gives an historical summary of practices pertaining to slavery and forced labor. Israel has made special provision for worker participation in management.

Overall, this is a useful book, clearly written, pleasant in style, and logically organized. For scholars engaged in analyzing how civilization affects polity, economy, and society, it provides reliable factual raw material. Much detailed analysis remains to be done.

Corinne Lathrop Gilb