THE HISSING SECTARIAN SNAKE:

SECTARIANISM AND THE MAKING OF STATE AND NATION IN MODERN IRAQ

Submitted by **Khalil Osman** to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics in September 2012

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ……*Khalil Osman* ………26/09/2012…………………………………

To the memory of my mother, Hajjah Hana, a devoted wife, a loving mother and a wonderful grandmother, whose legacy continues to inspire

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the relationship between sectarianism and state-making and nation-building in Iraq. It argues that sectarianism has been an enduring feature of the state-making trajectory in Iraq due to the failure of the modern nation-state to resolve inherent tensions between primordial sectarian identities and concepts of unified statehood and uniform citizenry. After a theoretical excursus that recasts the notion of primordial identity as a socially constructed reality, I set out to explain the persistence of primordial sectarian affiliations in Iraq since the establishment of the modern nation-state in 1921. Looking at the primordial past showed that Sunni-Shiᶜite interactions before the modern nation-state cultivated repositories of divergent collective memories and shaped dynamics of inclusion and exclusion favorable to the Sunni Arabs following the creation of Iraq. Drawing on primary and secondary sources and field interviews, this study proceeds to trace the accentuation of primordial sectarian solidarities despite the adoption of homogenizing policies in a deeply divided society along ethno-sectarian lines. It found that the uneven sectarian composition of the ruling elites nurtured feelings of political exclusion among marginalized sectarian groups, the Shiᶜites before 2003 and the Sunnis in the post-2003 period, which hardened sectarian identities. The injection of hegemonic communal discourses into the educational curriculum was found to have provoked masked forms of resistance that contributed to the sharpening of sectarian consciousness. Hegemonic communal narratives embedded in the curriculum not only undermined the homogenizing utility of education but also implicated education in the accentuation of primordial sectarian identities. The study also found that, by camouflaging anti-Shiᶜite sectarianism, the anti-Persian streak in the nation-state's Pan-Arab ideology undermined Iraq's national integration project. It explains that the slide from a totalizing Pan-Arab ideology in the pre-2003 period toward the atomistic impulse of the federalist debate in the post-2003 period is symptomatic of the ghettoization of identity in Iraq. This investigation of the interaction between primordial sectarian attachments and the trajectory of the making of the Iraqi nation-state is ensconced in the project of expanding the range and scope of social scientific applications of the nation-building and primordialism lines of analysis.

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AJC	Accountability and Justice Commission
AMSI	Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DPWG	Democratic Principles Working Group
HNCDB	Higher National Commission for de-Ba^{c}athification
IAF	Iraqi Accordance Front
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
IDC	Iraqi de-Ba^{c}athification Council
IFND	Iraqi Front for National Dialogue
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission
IIA	Iraqi Interim Authority
IIP	Iraqi Islamic Party
INA	Iraqi National Alliance
INAM	Iraqi National Accord Movement
INC	Iraqi National Congress
IRDC	Iraq Reconstruction and Development Council
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
IUC	Iraq Unity Coalition
KA	Kurdistan Alliance
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
NA	National Alliance
NCHP	National Council for Higher Policies
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
POW	Prisoner of War
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
RL	Regional Leadership of the Arab Ba^{c}ath Socialist Party
SCIRI	Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SLC	State of Law Coalition
TAL	Transitional Administrative Law
TNA	Transitional National Assembly
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS