

parallel circuits, or political lobbies could have been developed at greater depth, this book, an exhaustive source of documents on contemporary Iran, is essential reading and food for thought about Iran at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

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**The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies**, edited by Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazel, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, ISBN 0-415-35673-3, 283 pp.

*The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies* brings together a number of high quality essays written by an international group of scholars. One might expect to find this book on a library shelf among many others devoted to the subject of Baha'is in Iran, but as editors Dominic Brookshaw and Seena Fazel state in the introduction, very few volumes have been published on the Iranian Baha'i community, and even fewer have focused on the twentieth century. Indeed, until now, scholarly interest, beginning with the work of the Orientalist E. G. Browne, has mostly focused on the earlier Babi rather than on the Baha'i religion. There are many reasons for this; like the Baha'is themselves, the field of Baha'i studies has experienced a complex and sometimes troubled history. However, with the publication of this volume and several recent monographs, scholars are opening and developing new areas of research and inquiry.

The chapters in this book may be somewhat unevenly yet coherently divided into three broad categories: conversions to Baha'ism, Baha'i contributions to Iranian society at large, and the history of persecution and discrimination against the Baha'is of Iran.

The first two chapters, by Mehrdad Amanat and Fereydun Vahman, fall under the first category: religious conversions. Here, essays on Jewish and Zoroastrian conversions to the Baha'i religion explain why members of one persecuted minority would want to become part of another persecuted minority. The complex of answers to this question includes, in part, how the Baha'i community, with normative beliefs in equality, regarded new converts, and then how both Jews and Zoroastrians viewed Baha'i claims as fulfilling messianic beliefs of their faiths. Other elements, such as Iranian cultural practices, informed the conversion process, too. Both essays contain references to sometimes rare and unpublished manuscripts. Although the studies are thorough in their treatment of the aforementioned religious communities, the section as a whole would have been more complete if the editors had also included chapters on Christian and Muslim conversions.

The next four essays, by Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Moojan Momen, Seena B. Fazel and Minou Foadi, and Kavian Milani, address various ways in which Baha'is contributed to Iranian society. The specific themes are diverse and

include analyses on Baha'i women, schools, health care projects, and involvement in the Constitutional Revolution. Most of these topics have received little scholarly attention; these articles thus should be seen as foundational studies that lay the groundwork for future research. For example, we learn that the founder of the Baha'i religion, Baha'ullah, and his son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, wrote numerous letters or "tablets" of diverse content and wide scope to Baha'i women in Iran and India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Baha'is themselves were active in the spheres of education and health, too; inspired by Baha'i scriptural norms that emphasize the importance of education, they founded numerous schools in Iran. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, these schools were closed down during the Reza Shah period. Similarly, Baha'i scriptural pronouncements regarding the importance of human health led to the promotion of Baha'i health initiatives in Iran. Baha'is built public bathhouses (largely because they were banned from such institutions themselves), hospitals, and outpatient clinics in various Iranian cities, most of which were seized after the Islamic Revolution. Finally, contrary to earlier historiography on the subject, the Baha'i community was neither marginalized nor anti-constitutional during the Constitutional Revolution, although Baha'i disappointment in its outcome informed subsequent Baha'i attitudes towards Iranian politics.

The final and longest section of the volume consists of five chapters devoted to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran. Essays in this final section, by Eliz Sanasarian, Abbas Amanat, H. E. Chehabi, and Reza Afshari, explore a number of aspects of that persecution, beginning with a study on how dehumanizing language and stereotyping feed oppression. Anti-Baha'i attitudes have a long history in Iran that, as the next chapter discusses, go back to the early Babi period, when cycles of violence repeated themselves throughout the nineteenth century and enjoyed the support of the state, the clergy, and finally the public. As the essays in this section demonstrate, many different groups in Iran opposed the Baha'is. Two chapters deal with twentieth-century secular, anti-clerical opposition to the religion and Islamic anti-Baha'ism respectively. The fact that secularists accused the Baha'is of causing disunity in the nation and being involved in conspiracies indicates that Baha'is have been internally otherized for many Iranians, despite the fact that the Baha'i religion carries within it elements of Iranian culture that Baha'is have taken with them throughout the world. This process of otherization occurred not only in a secular context, but also within the religious sphere, where anti-Baha'i sentiments led to episodes such as the destruction of the dome and appropriation of the National Baha'i Center in Tehran in 1955. The book appropriately ends with an essay devoted to the history of human rights violations against the Baha'is of Iran during the period of the Islamic Republic. During these decades, Baha'is experienced the execution or murder of their leaders and ordinary adherents, the destruction of their cemeteries, the loss of their jobs and property and much more.

This is a very impressive volume. The articles tie in well together and often address similar themes within their broader categories. Some of the essays

need to be situated more firmly within a wider historical context and incorporate relevant theoretical scholarship. The book would have benefited from the chapters being explicitly divided into the general categories mentioned in the introduction. None of this, though, takes away from the overall value of the book, and the editors and authors are to be congratulated on producing such a useful volume.

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**Mediaeval Persian Painting: The Evolution of an Artistic Vision,**  
A. T. Adamova, New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2008, ISBN 978-1-934283-05-9, 117 pp.

This deceptively-slim volume contains nothing less than a major re-conceptualization of the development of Persian painting and constitutes a capstone to the scholarly career of Dr Ada Adamova, the long-time and widely-admired curator of Persian art at the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, who first presented the texts published here as the 2003 Ehsan Yarshater Lectures on Iranian Art and Archaeology at the University of London. Challenging the primacy traditionally accorded the “book miniature” (i.e., manuscript illustration) and eschewing the usual scheme for the history of Persian painting based on dynastic epochs (Il-Khanid, Jala’irid, Timurid, Safavid, etc.), as well as the thematic model represented by recent books such as Oleg Grabar’s *La peinture persane* (1999) and Eleanor Sims’ *Peerless Images* (2002), Adamova instead defines the critical genres and overlapping stages in the progression of Persian pictorial arts—from wall painting to book painting to album painting—through what she calls “internal characteristics,” including both stylistic and iconographic features. This evolution is laid out in chapters one through three, which all discuss multiple paintings as well as their artistic “schools,” while the fourth and final chapter constitutes a study of a single (albeit multi-part) work of art. In proposing an alternative to the prevailing periodization in the study of Persian painting, Adamova does assign each of her main phases a particular time frame, thus offering what amounts, in the end, to a historical survey and in the process extending the notion of “medieval” well into early modern times.

Adamova’s account begins with the age of monumental painting and draws on both literary sources and the fragments of extant murals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to explore the format, forms and subjects of wall paintings and to expose the impact of these attributes on other pictorial arts of the early medieval period such as *mina’i* pottery. At the outset, Adamova emphasizes two fundamental points: namely, that paintings on the walls of palaces and more modest