

GHOLAM REZA AFKHAMI, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2009). Pp. 740. \$34.99 cloth.

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Gholam Reza Afkhami, professor and government official in prerevolutionary Iran, has produced a lively and engaging work based on numerous interviews and thorough research into primary and secondary sources. The reader will enjoy dipping into sections of this book at random and learning about so many colorful characters in Iran's recent history. In addition to Muhammad Reza Shah and his family, Afkhami portrays the politicians with their huge egos, ambitions, virtues, and faults: Mossadegh, Qavam, Alam, Forugh, and so many others. And of course he introduces the scoundrels and opportunists who inhabited the Pahlavi court just as they have inhabited every royal court in history.

The author deals with the fundamental dilemma of Iran's contemporary history: why did the shah—to all appearances so powerful—fall so far and so fast? The author puts the problem as follows:

The shah's life hovers on tragedy in that his personality, seemingly inexorably, moves to certain decisions that contain the germ of his undoing. On the other hand, disaster was never inherent in what he did unless things got out of hand. And things did not seem to be getting out of hand until they actually did (p. xi).

Afkhami has drawn a fascinating portrait of the shah as an Iranian Rodney Dangerfield, an unappreciated figure who "got no respect" and, for some reason, no credit for anything. Instead he had to make do with self-interested, insincere, and halfhearted adulation. However, the reality was obvious: behind the facade of statues, pictures, uniforms, military displays, ceremonies, and so forth lay a reality of active dislike, distaste, or, perhaps more damaging, indifference. Those who hated him would always hate him; those who might have supported him didn't care about his fate. In the end, this indifference and vague, unfocused resentment from those who apparently benefited from the shah's rule were at least as damaging to him as was the open enmity of Khomeini and his allies.

Why did those who might have supported the shah remain hostile or indifferent? I would have liked the author to explore this question in greater depth. Why could the shah not win the loyalty of those who benefited from his rule? Why, as the historian Shaul Bakhash so aptly writes in the dedication of his classic 1984 study *The Reign of the Ayatollahs* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), did so many members of the Iranian intelligentsia "love the [1979 Islamic] revolution, not knowing it would not love them back"?

I would not agree that the Iranian middle class—so many of whom demonstrated in favor of an Islamic Republic, celebrated the shah's departure, and supported the 1979 revolution—was either delusional, as the author suggests in this book, or possessed of a collective death wish, as he suggests in a 1985 work, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale*. Although I never enjoyed the author's access to the highest circles of Pahlavi Iran, based on what I saw and heard in the 1960s and 1970s from Iranian friends, students, and colleagues—most of whom were neither religious nor Marxist ideologues—I suggest different answers to the question "why."

To use the phrase of the writer Darryl Pinckney, Iran had become "one of those societies . . . where the state and society have less and less to do with each other." (Darryl Pinckney and Joan Didion, "Obama: In the Irony-Free Zone," adapted from comments at a symposium at the New York Public Library, 10 November 2008, *New York Review of Books*, 18 December

2008, 16). For many Iranians the shah was not “authentic.” He was irrelevant. He was not one of them. His values and vision of Iran’s future did not coincide with theirs. He could impress foreign journalists and lecture foreign political leaders, but he could speak only with difficulty to his own people.

The shah was also seen—rightly or wrongly—as serving foreign interests before those of his own country. The events of 1953, when a CIA-backed coup removed the nationalist prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and established the shah’s supremacy, were of course central to this view, but subsequent events reinforced it. The shah did not protest in 1963, when the United States made its ill-advised request to alter the existing Status of Forces Agreement. He also did not object in 1973, when President Nixon proposed sending Richard Helms, former head of the CIA, as ambassador. The shah must have known that appointment would publicly confirm his dependence on America and its CIA. Why did he not stand up for himself and his country? Was this widespread view of the shah wrong? It may not have been entirely so. Although most people did not know about this incident, Asadollah Alam provides a telling account of it in his book, *The Shah and I: Confidential Diary of Iran’s Royal Court, 1969–77* ([London: I. B. Tauris, 1991], 233). According to Alam, President Nixon apparently asked the shah to contribute cash to his infamous Committee to Re-elect the President organization during the 1972 presidential campaign. The shah felt obliged to pay up—hardly the act of the self-confident and sovereign ruler he wanted to appear to be.

Afkhami’s book has one major gap. There is little or no discussion of the shah’s fatal illness—first diagnosed in 1974—and its effect on his ability to rule. Does the illness explain his failure to react decisively to the revolutionary uprisings in 1978? What about his searching for ways to end the uprisings from foreign friends? Does knowledge of his illness contribute to an image of a weak shah sitting behind his façade of power and self-confidence? In an Iranian political context, where foreign enemies and internal centrifugal forces have always been ready to tear the country apart, weakness is perhaps the unforgivable sin of a ruler. People will tolerate many shortcomings, but weakness never.

Although Afkhami’s book leaves some questions unanswered, it is still a well-researched and very readable account of what remains a very controversial figure and very controversial times. The general reader will find much to enjoy and the specialist will find much to learn.

ARANG KESHAVARZIAN, *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Pp. 324. \$103.99 cloth, \$39.99 paper.

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Bazaar and State in Iran is a novel and masterfully argued study of economics and politics in contemporary Iran. With the Tehran bazaar as its focus, the book invites a close and engaged reading by social scientists interested in the Middle East and the effects of modernity on the marketplace. This is significant, for it has mass appeal beyond the political science field, for anthropologists, sociologists, economists, and historians. Arang Keshavarzian has framed his study in a very accessible and thought-provoking manner. The book makes a wonderful contribution to the study of markets and represents a model approach for understanding post-colonial Iran. *Bazaar and State in Iran* takes an in-depth look at the debates, ideologies, and political and social legacies that have animated and shaped Iran’s economy since the 1960s.

The significance of Keshavarzian’s seminal text is twofold: it offers a nuanced view of how the Tehran bazaar functions and a genealogy of how to study this social space’s complex