

However, as Ehud Netzer demonstrated, there is no evidence of *opus sectile* floors at Qumran or Ein Feskha: “One would expect either a large number of opus sectile tiles . . . and even more than this, evidence of the floor’s bedding (which is not an object for looting)”. Netzer concluded that the few paving stones and architectural fragments at both sites must have been brought from elsewhere (“Did any perfume industry exist at ‘Ein Feskha?’”, *Israel Exploration Journal* 55, 2005, 97–100; 98; also see Mizzi, “Qumran period I reconsidered: an evaluation of several competing theories”, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 22/1, 2015, 1–42; 30–40).

As space precludes further examples, I conclude that this volume should be used critically and with caution, and I recommend balancing D and D-V’s presentation by consulting Młynarczyk’s publication of the oil lamps and Mizzi’s study of the glass.

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BEHNAZ A. MIRZAI:

A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800/1929.

xiii, 324 pp. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017. ISBN 978 1 4773 1186 8.

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This book is an indisputably important contribution to the ongoing discourses on Qajar history and slavery in Iran. It is the first monograph on the topic and as such a study that is long overdue. It draws from a considerable number of archival sources, thus presenting new and valuable historical information. It therefore makes for interesting and thought-provoking reading.

The book takes up a challenging macro-history, covering a century-and-a-half, tracking domains from Africa, the Persian Gulf to Central Asia and the Caucasus, while reaching into micro-historical narratives of the lives of individual slaves.

A brief first chapter on “Commerce and slavery on Iran’s frontiers, 1600–1800” lays out how the non-Iranian actors, including Russians, Portuguese, British, Dutch, and “Omani Arabs”, pursuing commercial, geo-strategic advantages for the gain of wealth and power, were involved in trading slaves to Iran. The chapter emphasizes how they were particularly active in gaining “power and wealth” at the expense of Iran. In the mid-1700s Russian–British rivalry supposedly increased slave trading, exacerbated by the “Afghani incursions”, which, moreover, involved the enslavement of “indigenous Iranians” (p. 34). The latter form a defining category throughout this book, although who and what in the eighteenth and for that matter nineteenth century qualifies as “indigenous Iranian” requires further scrutiny.

Chapter 2, on “slavery and forging new Iranian frontiers, 1800–1900” continues to hold external actors accountable, chiefly the “imperialist nations” of Russia, Britain and, rather curiously, Oman. Raids by Turcomans and the Ottoman Empire, argues the author, increased the overall “insecurity”, and led to population displacement and trade in slaves (p. 35). The following pages cover the impact of the Russo-Persian wars, the conflicts over Herat, and military confrontations along the Ottoman–Persian borders and in Baluchistan. Culpability for the enslavement of prisoners of war and captured civilians – a leading theme of this chapter – lay in the above-mentioned external forces’ aggression against Iran. Pursuing this line of argument, Abbas Mirza’s decision to risk the second war with Russia in

1821 is rendered as a reaction to external provocations, thus exculpating the Iranian actors involved of any responsibility or independent decisions.

Focusing on the African slave trade to Qajar Iran, chapter 3 traces places of origin, slave routes and slaving ports (including the towns along the Iranian coast, as well as Muscat, Basra and Mecca), numbers, prices, taxes, physical conditions and diseases. This wide network reflects a stringently organized trade infrastructure also inside Iran. Considering slaves' ethnicities and movements of people, the author argues that the decrease in African slaves through trade restrictions from the 1870s entailed an increase of the enslavement of "indigenous Iranians", particularly from Khorasan, Sistan, and Baluchistan.

Chapter 4 examines patterns and types of enslavement, crucial in assessing the quiddity of slavery in Iran. Exploring slaveholders, numbers, and the treatment of slaves, the discussion also includes groups like war captives, Turcoman ransom slavery, and the enslavement practices of the Baluch. Causes of the widespread practice of slavery include simple poverty, the "weakness" of the Qajar government, and labour shortages. Cultural attitudes, internal social hierarchies or power-relations are not considered relevant factors.

The following chapter examines specific cultural and social contexts with a cross-section through all sectors and roles in which slaves were prominent, including the harem, the military and civil service, rural and urban environments as well as their functions as eunuchs and musicians. Discussing individual cases and ethnic types, the author maintains that slavery in Iran had no racial implications or undertones (p. 93), was ameliorated by an existing "racial diversity", (p. 104), whilst names or attributes would have been void of negative connotations (p. 101).

In chapter 6, entitled "Slave-trade suppression legislation", the author acknowledges Britain's crucial role in the long, drawn-out struggle for abolition (modifying her earlier declamation of Muhammad Shah's 1848 interdiction of the importation of slaves by sea, [explicitly leaving the land routes open] and later Qajar agreements as "abolitionist decrees"). At the same time, interpretative twists conjure up "early voices for reform" in Iran, though these are scantily documented.

British archival materials bear out the extent to which Britain's intervention in the slave trade of the Persian Gulf became entangled with her growing strategic and economic interests there. However, to claim this was the primary motive in British attempts to control the slave trade distorts intents and processes spanning over eight decades, as well as the involvement of numerous actors with very different motives in these processes.

Instead, the author interprets and credits Reza Shah's 1929 decree as the sole progressive, enlightened act that brought to fruition a long-standing internal struggle for abolition and vindicated the situation of the Qajar period, responsible for which had been the exploitation by the imperial powers. According to Mirzai, the 1929 decree thus achieved "full abolition" – in contrast to the Arab world, where slavery was still prevalent beyond the Second World War.

The author presents Reza Shah's decree as a strategy to create a national identity, which successfully "integrated" and "assimilated" peoples from all "ethnocultural backgrounds" and facilitated a pan-Iranian identity. This imputes a normative, "natural" trajectory which dissolves all problems of race, enslavement, social hierarchies, and social limitations to the good of the nation – indeed a narrative that all succeeding governments in Iran would support.

The "anti-slavery debates within Iran" covered in chapter 7 are the core of the historical assessment of Iran as a slave society and attitudes in Iran from the late 1840s to the 1930s, including positions of the constitutionalists, judicial reforms, the Qajar and early Pahlavi states. This cross-section seeks to substantiate the trends

of anti-slavery positions, somewhat convincingly for the constitutionalists. Yet recent articles by Bahai historians on Babi–Bahai attitudes and their handling of slaves are far more (self-)critical and non-apologetic, while the idea that Sufi anti-nomianism inherently defied servitude or enslavement and furthermore distilled into a “Sufi doctrine” needs serious further probing. Some of the historical interpretations about the role and intention of successive state actors dealing with the suppression of the slave trade provide a basis for further debate.

The final chapter, on emancipation, re-states Reza Shah’s will for abolition and his achievement of “full emancipation”, arguing that emancipation in Iran was therefore based on international agreements, Islamic and state laws. At the same time “cultural tradition” as well as Islamic law pre-dated British pressure for legislation. The chapter provides a wealth of details on individual cases, the procedures and circumstances of the liberation of various groups and types of slaves in different parts of Iran.

Numerous partial interpretations throughout the book, in addition to concrete terminology, betray a nationalist as well as a palliating bent. With one or two exceptions, it replaces the term slave strictly with “enslaved people”. Although in Iran, too, slaves were bought, sold, and treated like chattels, the term is used only once. The concern about “indigenous Iranians” as a distinct category inevitably produces a nationalist prism. To explain (and vindicate) racial and social attitudes as well as conditions of enslavement in the Qajar period, the author devises the label of a “vulnerable state” and “vulnerable coast” (pp. 51, 31). This is not a viable analytical category in the theories of state and government in the fields of international relations, political science, history or even imperial and post-colonial studies; these disciplines have discussed concepts like weak (vs. strong) states, weak (in the sense of ineffective) military systems, rouge, failed, or aggressive states, despotic and dictatorial regimes, dependency theory, colonial structures and in Marxist theories semi-colonial structures to assess the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian monarchies. But these models or approaches do not exculpate the Qajar state and society as does the notion of a “vulnerable state”.

Notwithstanding these issues, the book provides a wealth of information and case studies as well as plenty of material and arguments that will inspire further debate and research.

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SOUTH ASIA

SEBASTIAN R. PRANGE:

Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast.
(Cambridge Oceanic Histories.) xvi, 344 pp. Cambridge: Cambridge
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The expansion of Islam in late medieval times is often associated with conquest, political dominance, missionary activity, or the combination thereof. This narrative gives a leading role in the process to sultans, military men, Ulama, and Sufis. The picture changes considerably when considering the world of maritime Asia, where the regularity of the monsoon winds enabled transoceanic movement, shaping communication, commerce, cultural exchange, and migration. *Monsoon Islam* offers an engaging look into the Muslim maritime communities on the Malabar Coast