

service employees. Only the latter receives a substantial discussion (pp. 86–91). De Vries is not hostile to Arab workers. But ultimately, *Strike Action and Nation Building* is consistent with the “dual economy” model of Mandate Palestine—a nationalist conceptual framework that has been criticized for over two decades.

De Vries ends the book in 1951, not the more obvious endpoint of 1948, in order to include the forty-three-day seamen’s strike of fall 1951, the best known and politically most significant strike in the history of the Jewish labor movement (pp. 106–8). It constituted the climax of the strikes of the late 1940s and early 1950s over both economic demands and what De Vries calls “democratization” (p. 97). The seamen rebelled against the undemocratic character of their union and their subjection to centralized control of the Histadrut. Mapai, the Histadrut, and the Mapai-led government fiercely opposed the strike. The left-Labor Zionist Mapam and the Communist Party supported it. The government broke the strike by drafting thirty-four strike leaders and unleashing a violent police assault on the Haifa port and ships occupied by strikers.

However, De Vries’ characterization of this period and his focus on the struggles of Jewish workers obscure the character of Labor Zionism as a settler movement. While Jewish workers were striking for “democratization” in the early statehood period, the Histadrut, Mapai, Mapam, and the military government imposed on most of Israel’s Arab citizens from 1949 to 1966, collaborated in undermining even narrowly economic struggles of Arab workers. They conspired to break the Arab Workers Congress—a communist-led union formed in 1945. The Histadrut actively opposed the organization of Arab workers in any framework other than the Israel Labor League, which it fully controlled. At the same time, it refused to accept Arabs as members until 1959.

De Vries argues that strikes to promote the “conquest of labor” were largely a thing of the past by the 1930s. The poststatehood history of the Histadrut demonstrates that even though the “conquest of labor” was never fully accomplished, the ideology and practice of excluding Arab workers persisted. Today it has morphed into a comprehensive exclusion and marginalization of the Palestinian Arabs who comprise 20 percent of Israeli citizens.

VANESSA MARTIN, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2013). Pp. 286. \$110.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781780766638

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One of the things that intrigues any student of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 is the question of how Iran, the basket case of secular modernization in the Muslim world, lapsed back into the “Islamic” mold. Was the “Islamic” turn in 1979 an aberration or, at the very least, an accident? Or was 1979 one of the many possible outcomes (if not the only) in light of the historical trajectory of 20th-century Iran? The latter line of inquiry has given a great fillip to the study of Qajar rule in Persia, and in particular the *inqilāb-e mashrūṭa* (Constitutional Revolution) of 1906.

The dominant narrative on the Constitutional Revolution has tended to revolve around how the disenchantment with the weak and ineffective Qajar rulers brought together a wide cross-section of the people of the kingdom of Persia in their demand for a constitution, on which the shah relented in 1906. Once the constitution was granted, however, revolutionaries fell out over the question of whether it would be secular or in strict conformity with shari’a. After a bit of a struggle, the secularists prevailed, forcing the Islamists back into the woodwork (from whence they emerged in 1979, as it were, to finish the unfinished business of 1906).

Most of the historical accounts of the Constitutional Revolution available in English, however, have tended to center around the developments that took place in Tehran, where the secular

reformists acquired a critical mass. That particular focus lends strength to the view that votaries of Islamic order were simply not numerous enough to prevail on the matter. In the book *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*, Vanessa Martin furnishes us instead with a thorough study of the provincial theater in the run-up to 1906, and then during the period from 1906 to 1908, when the question of *mashru'ā* (i.e., rule in conformity with the *shari'ā*) was thrashed out in the political arena.

Looking at case studies of Tabriz, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Bushehr, Martin contends that there was no uniformity among the preferences of the people of these provincial cities, and that there is need for a much more nuanced understanding of those preferences. The author argues that the dislocation caused by European economic penetration of Iran and the inability of the shah of Persia to prevent the suffering of his subjects were the principal reasons behind the demand for reform of the Qajar state. She identifies three events in particular—the opening of the Imperial Bank of Persia in 1889, the Tobacco concessions of 1892, and the handing over of the customs operations to the Belgians in 1898—as having generated a lot of opposition across the country and brought home the need for reform.

While the need for reform was clear, its prospective character was not. There was a general recognition among Iranians at that time that Persia had to be modernized in order for her to hold her own against more advanced powers such as Britain and Russia. This involved not merely limiting the powers of the shah (and therewith his capacity of doing damage to his country) but also introducing modern education, especially the study of natural sciences, so that the technological backwardness that made Iran dependent on more advanced Europeans could be done away with. But while some of the reformists believed such changes required the gradual relegation of religion to the private sphere, others maintained that such reforms were perfectly compatible with the principle religion practiced in the country—Shi'ī Islam.

Martin argues that such a neat convergence between the secularist and Islamist or reformist and loyalist would be misleading. She contends that in the provinces of Iran, reformists were not necessarily secularists (in fact, barring Tabriz, hardly ever). The experience of economic dislocation wrought by foreign penetration affected the mercantile community most, who therefore were among the prime subscribers of the reformist agenda. Accordingly the 'ulama', traditional spokesmen of the merchants before the ruler, also began to subscribe to the reformist cause in large numbers across the country. A close study shows that of the various provincial centers, Tabriz was probably the only city that weighed in favor of the cause of reforming the absolutist Qajar state along secularist lines. Exposed to radical political ideas flowing from the Caucasus to its north, the state of political discourse in Tabriz was qualitatively different from the reformist discourse elsewhere in the provinces. Bushehr (situated on the Gulf, thus effectively on the frontier), which was generally better funded by Tehran and thus better administered, seemed almost indifferent to the revolution until the post-1906 disorder began to adversely affect its trade. Shiraz was too absorbed in the power struggle among its elite groups to participate meaningfully in shaping the discourse of reform. In Esfahan, with the weakening of the reformist governor Zill al-Saltan, the city's powerful 'ulama' gained in stature, voicing the need for still greater reform and reducing the scope of the secular reformist discourse.

In writing her third major work on the late-Qajar era in Iran (and the second major work on the Constitutional Revolution itself), Martin takes up the issues she left unresolved in her earlier two works—*Islam and Modernism* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1989) and *The Qajar Pact* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005). Her principal thesis in the first book had been that quite often the votaries of constitutionalism included those who did not subscribe to secularism, and that Islam was not considered by them to be incompatible with either modernity or modernization. That of the second was to explore the kind of politics of resistance to absolutism that developed during the later Qajar era, and the role Islam played in shaping that language of politics. In this book, the author effectively connects the two books by looking at the provinces where the reformist agenda

(subject of her second book) was powered mostly by those who did not find Islam incompatible with modernity (principal thesis of the earlier one).

Taking a close look at the politics of the provinces, Martin makes a compelling case that not all who campaigned for reform, nor all those who opposed it, were necessarily committed to either cause from any ideological conviction. Frequently, local factional preoccupations at the level of elite politics propelled individuals or groups to move toward or away from the direction of reform (particularly if their rival was not in that camp to start with), as it seems to have been the case in Shiraz or Esfahan; there were even occasions, as in Bushehr, where serious engagements with the reform agenda began only after the drift of developments in Tehran became clear in the provinces. There were still others, such as the more radical elements in Tabriz, who joined the fray in order to capitalize on opportunities that had suddenly become available in pressing the demands of the city's underclass.

The question that is left tantalizingly open by the author is no less important than the ones she chooses to address: What made the "Islamic" agenda of reform (or politics) "Islamic"? Is it simply the involvement and the agency of the 'ulama' that made some concerns of 1906 "Islamic"? Clearly not, for, as Martin herself shows, there were as many 'ulama' who made their peace with the *mashruta* option as those who clamored for *mashru'a*. Should that not qualify even the secularist *mashruta* agenda as an Islamic option? Similarly there were many outside the ranks of the 'ulama' who solicited for *mashru'a*—how does one categorize them? Or is it merely the use of Islamic terms of references (i.e., the notion of instrumental use of religion) for mobilization of popular support—even when protagonists of such Islamic agenda might be involved in local elite power struggles that are patently unrelated with the cause of the faith, such as Haji Mirza Hasan in Tabriz, Haj Aqa Nurullah in Esfahan, and Mu'tamid-i Divan in and around 1906? Is it both of these considerations together—the agency and the language—or maybe something altogether different? Towards the beginning of her book, Martin is quite emphatic that contrary to what Ahmed Kasravi and others like him used to believe, the secular agenda was neither clearly formulated nor clearly understood at the time of the *Mashruta* revolution. Perhaps it is time to acknowledge that neither was the "Islamic" agenda clearly formulated or understood, except in an instrumental way.

MATEO MOHAMMAD FARZANEH, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khusani* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2015). Pp. 329. \$45.94 cloth. ISBN: 9780815633884

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Since the early 20th century, historians of social movements and revolutions have found themselves in a dilemma. How can we understand revolutions as structural transformations if they occur as a result of contingent and heterogeneous factors, many of which are marked by distinct characteristics with significant historical consequences? In a theoretical sense, one can arrive at an understanding that writing about revolutions is at best a mode of historical thinking, or a way of making sense of a particular historical configuration whose presence can no longer be felt but whose specter continues to haunt the present moment. The task of a historian is to reveal these ambiguities and yet seek to understand the role of the agencies through which revolutions become possible in the first place.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–11) continues to fascinate historians for how it opened up a new democratic ethos, which led to the creation of a parliament with long-term impact