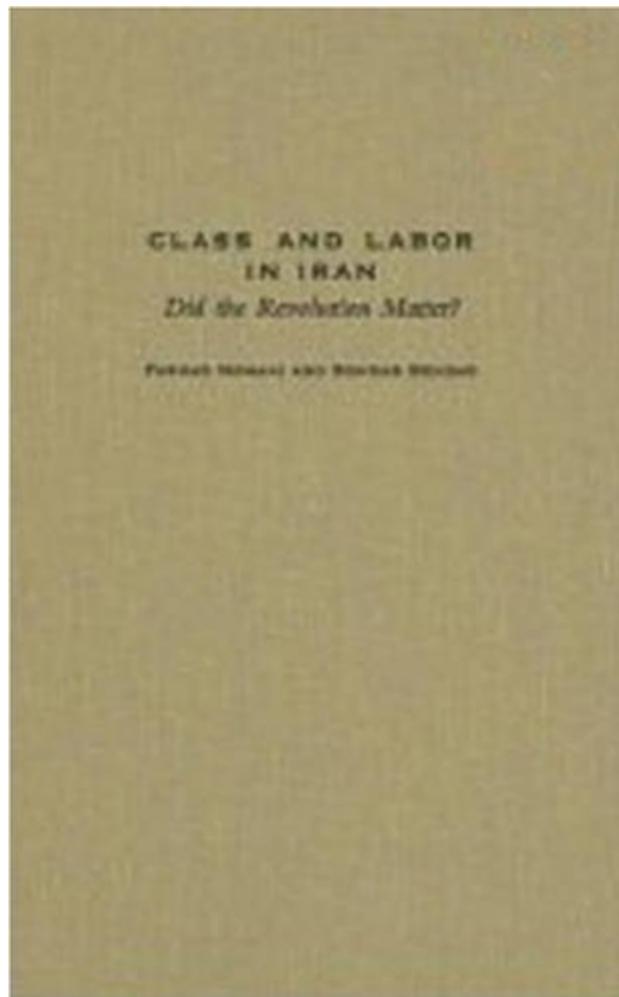


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Class And Labor In Iran: Did The Revolution Matter? (Modern Intellectual And Political History Of The Middle East)



Synopsis

In the past twenty-five years Iran has experienced a revolution and a turbulent post revolutionary period under an Islamic state that declared itself the government of the oppressed while it struggled to establish a utopian Islamic economy. In this pioneering work Farhad Nomani and Sohrab Behdad provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of change and class configuration in Iranian society. Using a theoretical framework, they map the trajectory of class changes over time, specifically noting the movements between pre revolutionary and post revolutionary Iran. A centerpiece of the book is its analysis of the changes in the pattern of employment of women in the post revolutionary period. Despite its conceptual and quantitative approach, the book is written in a clear and lucid style, making it accessible to a wide audience. The authors provide a fresh look into Iranian society by exploring the changes in its essential underlying economic structure, and in doing so, the book lays the foundation for comparative studies of social hierarchy of labor in other Middle Eastern countries.

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Customer Reviews

The book is a laudable attempt to illuminate the extent to which regime stability of the Islamic Republic can be explained by the organization of the Iranian economy and the high degree of state involvement. Overall, the authors show how the regime has transferred considerable wealth to the thin stratum of 200 or 300 clerics in the top political positions. The greatest shortcoming of the book is, however, that the empirical data that lie at the basis of the analysis only go up to 1996. In particular, the authors make wide use of the 1986, 1991 and 1996 census data. To be fair, they also refer to one 2001 household income survey, but this is only relevant in one chapter. The bulk of the analysis rests on the census data. The authors never explicitly concede that the arguments made in the book can really only apply up to 1996, because this is where their data ends, and most readers will walk away thinking they have learned much about the Khatami era too, because numerous arguments are made that refer to the post-1996 years. The 2006 census data that would have been needed to analyze economic politics during the Khatami era is not taken into account by the authors, however. One wonders why the authors did not wait 18 months with the publication of the book in order to incorporate the 2006 census data into the analysis, which would have enabled them to compare economic policies under the Khamenei, Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies. Apart from this very serious shortcoming (in particular because the authors do not alert readers to the limited time frame on which they do have data), the analysis is dotted by marxist terminology that strikes one as slightly inappropriate for the Iranian context.

Whether you are a passive student of Iranian affairs or an avid scholar of political economic history, this book is a must read. Its content does justice to its unique title. In the past thirty years, no book has tried to tackle the complex economic-cultural underpinnings of Khomeini's revolution and its many stages of class warfare, which have had enormous consequences for both Iran and the world dealing with Iran. The authors have attempted to explain and make sense of extremely complex economic, religious and political developments, data and history, and have by and large succeeded.

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