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Solar Calendar and the Development of Iranian Identity

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Abstract:

*Year 1401 Sh/ 2022-23 CE is the centennial of Iran's official calendar. It also denotes the endurance of Persian solar timekeeping and its unique place in temporal awareness throughout Iran's history. With Nowruz festival at its heart (celebrated on vernal equinox), the Persian solar calendar has been in uninterrupted use throughout the Iranian world at least since the Achaemenid Empire of the 6th century BC. Concurring with nature's seasonal turn, this solar calendar cultivating function allowed it to survive even the introduction of the lunar Hijra calendar, which came with Islamic conquest of the seventh century CE. It went through a number of calendrical corrections but it was only in 1911, during the Constitutional Revolution, that a greater need for an accurate and universal timekeeping persuaded the Constitutionalists to adopt a new version of the Persian solar calendar with Hijra (Mobammad's immigration to Medina in 622 CE) as its starting point. By 1925 Zoroastrian names for months were reintroduced and it was ratified as Iran's national calendar. The innovative marriage of the solar Persian calendar with the Hijra point of departure exhibited the two sides of Iran's national identity: its time-reckoning memory of the ancient past and its Shi'i Islamic loyalties. This calendar, today one of the two non-Gregorian in the world, resisted not only Christianization but imperial reorganization under late Pahlavi era and onslaughts under the Islamic Republic, the latter's mainly directed toward Nowruz. This essay aims to answer two interrelated questions: first, what are the circumstances leading to the adoption of the solar Hijra calendar? And second, how viable it is to view the Persian calendar as a distinct feature of Iran's national identity, given all the challenges it has encountered over the past four decades? This essay is part of a forthcoming book in Persian, *Gahshomari-ye Khorshidi va Hoviyat-e Irani*, which explores the cultural significance of timekeeping in Iran in pre-modern and modern times.*

Keywords

solar calendar, Iranian/Persian timekeeping, Nowruz, Iranian identity, Constitutional Revolution, Iran and Islam

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The University's Autonomy, Academic Freedom, and the State: A Century of Tension and Mistrust

Saeed Paivandi

Abstract

At the beginning of the 14th SH century, the Iranian university was a small, utilitarian, masculine, and state-dependent institution with less than one thousand students. At the end of the SH century, the university has grown to be an important institution in terms of size and geographical spread, with over 3.2 million students (48.5% of whom are women). Nevertheless, despite this remarkable quantitative growth, higher education in Iran has failed to achieve autonomy and academic freedom. This article investigates the reasons for this historical failure and the role of governments in violating university autonomy and academic freedom. The first section of the article highlights the significance and meaning of autonomy and academic freedom in the university's and society's scientific activities. Other sections examine the relationship between the university and the state, and the role of the institution from the turn of the SH century to the period following the Cultural Revolution and the Islamization of higher education.

Keywords

university autonomy, academic freedom, turn of the SH century, Islamization of higher education

Sociologist and professor at the University of Lorraine (Nancy, France). His research focuses on the sociology of higher education and young people. He also works on intellectual and social movements in Iran. His latest books are Paivandi, Saeed, and Nathalie Younès, eds. *À l'épreuve d'enseigner à l'université: Enquête en France*, Peter Lang, 2019, and Fontanini, Christine, K. M. Joshi, and Saeed Paivandi, eds. *International Perspectives on Gender and Higher Education: Student Access and Success*, Emerald Publishing, 2020.

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One Century and Two Uprisings: Toward the Women's Liberation Movement

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Abstract

The women's movement in Iran, since the Constitutional era, has entered the field of struggle with three demands: the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to establish an association. In the past century, although women have had successes in establishing their proper legal recognition within the society, discriminatory laws have prevailed in every historical cycle, from the Constitutional era to the era of the National Oil Movement to the reform era known as the first Pahlavi White Revolution to the Islamic Revolution. Although women were the targets of various discrimination throughout these historical moments, they not only insisted on the recognition of their legal movement, but by the end of the century, they had stood up to reclaim their confiscated bodies and identities from government inequity. During the period from the mid-sixties to Homa Darabi's self-immolation in the seventies, and with the phenomena of the girls of Revolution Street and White Wednesdays in the late nineties, the seeds were sown in women's everyday struggles for the emergence of the women's movement in a new way, leading up to the Iranian #MeToo movement. These successive moments, along with the protest of women, both secular and religious, to the ban on running screening tests during pregnancy, the ban on pregnancy prevention, and the plan to increase the population, have led to a physical stage of the women's liberation movement in Iran. This article enumerates the characteristics of the present stage of women's liberation in Iran and acknowledges the role and effect of those who prepared the women's rights movement to advance in this way. With reference to a two-stage definition moving from legal movement to women's freedom movement, this article examines the impact of individual and collective contributions towards the women's freedom movement in Iran. Examples include: the first movement of Tahera Qurrat al-'Ayn, the singing of Qamar al-Maluk Vaziri, the popularization of "white marriage", women's use of sperm donation banks, and the current wave of singing and dancing in public streets. These examples are used to demonstrate how, with the turn of the century, the women's rights movement in Iran has clearly turned into the women's freedom movement.

Keywords

women's movement in Iran, women's rights movement, White Revolution in Iran, Islamic Revolution, Qurrat al-'Ayn

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Clergy and the Turn of the Century: From Clergy Against Power to Clergy in Power

Mohsen Mottaghi

Abstract

This article examines the development of the clergy in the fourteenth SH century. The foundations of this institution date back to the time of the Safavids, who, upon ascending to power and establishing Shiism as the state religion, laid the groundwork for the establishment of this institution to legitimize the monarchy. After this period until the success of the Iranian revolution in 1979, this institution and its relationship to political power and social movements have seen enormous upheavals and transformations. To facilitate comprehension of these developments, we have split them into two stages. The first stage, spanning the first half of the fourteenth century, begins with the defeat of the constitutional movement and continues with the foundation of the Pahlavi regime. In this era, the clergy confronts the modern world and its values, forcing them to reconsider the relationship between religion and the modern world. For some, the wind of modernity, and for others, the storm of this event, prompted the clergy to consider sustaining its institution. The establishment of Ayatollah Haeri Yazdi in Qom and the establishment of the Qom seminary played a significant role in the stabilization of this institution in the 14th SH century. The first event was the attempt to transfer the center of clergy and marja'yyat from Najaf to Qom, which began with the establishment of the Qom seminary. The second event was the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi in 1340 SH, which precipitated a crisis of marja'yyat within the clerical institution and gradually paved the way for the ascension of Ayatollah Khomeini and the foundation of his power. The clergy was put to a new test with the success of the Iranian revolution and the installation of the theocracy, which marked the beginning of the second stage. In the second half of the 14th century, beginning in the 1360s SH, the institution of the clergy formed a government that controlled political authority and depended on political power to establish Sharia law. The article examines religious fundamentalism led by Misbah Yazdi, who favored the implementation of Sharia law, as well as Muslim reformers or neo-thinkers who wished to activate the republic and implement modern procedures within the government and the clergy. The article focuses on presenting the perspectives of two mujtahids from outside the government, Mehdi Haeri Yazdi and Seyyed Kamal Heydari, who support the participation of the people in government and their representation in the occultation era.

Keywords

Iran and clergy, transfer of authority , Haeri Yazdi, Seyyed Kamal Heydari

Sociologist, the author of *La pensée chiite contemporaine à l'épreuve de la Révolution iranienne*, L'Harmattan, 2012, and a contributor to *Religions de la libération: Espérance, justice sociale et politique*, Van Dieren, 2021. His forthcoming book together with Farhad Khosrowkhavar is *L'islam et le christianisme au défi de leurs théologies*, Rue de Seine, 2022.

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Investigating the “Oil Curse Theory”: Political Economy and Development in the Pahlavi Period and the Islamic Republic

Nima Emdadi

Abstract

The oil curse theory emphasizes that the damages which oil has imposed on oil-owning nations are more than its benefits. This study engages the oil curse theory to examine historical planning and organization issues around oil in Iran in political perspective with a focus on the history of oil revenues in the country. The methods used to conduct this study include: objective hermeneutics, discourse analysis, meta-analysis, and narrative analysis. The simultaneous inflow of oil revenues into Iran coincided with the phenomenon of modern state-building by the Pahlavi government, which implemented dictatorial Western development practices without understanding their various dimensions or setting appropriate conditions for progress, growth, and efficiency. In the Islamic Republic, oil revenues were viewed in the form of distribution and charity, so that the speed of oil consumption and the distribution of rents were linked in their increases. The Plan Organization, as the developmental architect of the country, warned of the serious dangers of unregulated spending of oil revenues. This paper argues that, rather than being a simple gift or curse, in the absence of a democratic government, oil revenues are powerful tools that, if not contextually understood, may lead to social degradation and bankruptcy instead of development and progress.

Keywords

oil curse theory, Iran and Plan Organization, development programs, corruption

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Intermediary Intellectuals, Civil Society, Democratization, Women, and Labor Movements in Iran Over the Past Twenty Years

Hadi Miri Ashtiani

Abstract

This article examines the role of civil society organizations in the formation of social movements over the last twenty years in Iran. Civil society can be considered as an area between social, economic, and cultural sub-systems in which the focus is on non-governmental organizations, labor unions, trade unions, and voluntary organizations, such as guilds. In this study, using the content analysis method and reviewing articles written on this topic in the last twenty years, several main themes and categories are identified as being central to understanding social movements in Iran. The essay particularly advances understanding of the role of civil society and its institutions such as unions and non-governmental organizations in Iranian social movements by linking the two concepts of the intermediary intellectual and civil society.

Keywords

social movements, civil society, public sphere and Iran, intermediary intellectuals

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Iran and the Shift Towards Nonviolence in Post-Revolutionary Generations

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Abstract

One of the developments coinciding with the turn of the century in Iran that has shaped the society's political culture and revolutionary discourse is the shift towards a non-violent method of political struggle, which is clearly seen in the mode of thought and behavior of post-revolutionary generations. This shift has also been accompanied by a change of orientation from state to society, as well as increased attention to women and gender, which has been evident in the protest movements in the last two decades. In addition, the prevalence of non-violence as a political philosophy among political activists and civil rights advocates has disburdened the revolutionary left of the past tradition of violent struggle, thus contesting the equation between radicalism and violence advanced by conservative circles. This turn towards non-violence is indicative of a new political realism wherein change, unlike during the 1979 Islamic revolution, is neither identity-oriented nor ideological, but demand-driven. From this perspective, the shift to non-violence is related to a new discourse for dealing with systematic repression that seeks changes in legal, cultural, socio-economic, and gender terms on a national scale. This discourse aims at uniting diverse groups of people against the institution of velayat-e faqih through a conceptual appeal to human honor. Historical parallels may be seen in the way that the idea of a House of Justice (Edalat Khaneh) functioned during the Constitutional era as a central and unifying concept across diverse groups. This paper assesses how, at the threshold of a new century, Iran might achieve historical political change through non-violence, especially with reference to excluded and marginalized groups. This prospect is discussed with particular reference to Mohandas Gandhi and Judith Butler and especially engages strategic and philosophical views of non-violence from secular and radical perspectives.

Keywords

non-violence, Iran and political change, radicalism, secularism

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The Islamic Republic's "Look to the East" policy and the Formation of a New World Order

Kazem Alamdari

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to study the "Look to the East" policy of the Islamic Republic in the context of the formation of the new world order around the two axes of liberal democracy and dictatorship. Russia's attempt to regain its past superpower position, and China's "New Silk Road" economic project are two columns of the formation of the new world order. For the Islamic Republic, the economies of Russia and China form the "Eastern Dawn" that they can rely on for the development of their society and their survival. At the same time the Islamic Republic's "Look to the East" policy serves Putin's illusion of "returning history" and has also led to a 25-year cooperation agreement between Iran and China that is distinct from China's Silk Road plan.

Keywords

Look to the East, new world order, Islamic Republic, Putin, Silk Road, hegemonic power

Retired faculty member, Department of Sociology at California State University, Northridge, who has published nine books. His latest book is *Why did the Soviet Union collapse? From Leninism to Putinism*. Iran Academia University Press, 2021.