

**Class and Labor in Iran: Did The Revolution Matter?**, by FARHAD NOMANI and SOHRAB BEHDAD. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006. 268 pages, appendix, bibliography, index. US\$24.95 (Paper) ISBN 0-8156-3094-8

*Class and Labor in Iran: Did the Revolution Matter?* by Farhad Nomani and Sohrab Behdad is the latest addition to a growing body of scholarship on the condition of Iranian society. In this book, the authors examine the reconfiguration of classes in post-revolutionary Iran through empirical and statistical means over the past 30 years.

This book examines how different features of class and society have changed from the pre-Khomeini era to the current one. The authors use statistical data found in the Markaz-e Amar-e Iran (MAI, Statistical Center for Iran) censuses conducted in 1986 and 1996 and compare them to the 1976 census conducted before the Revolution. For this research, the dates of the censuses are perfect because they allow access to data from three different phases of Iranian history: pre-revolution, Khomeini's rule, and the post-Khomeini period. Using census data, the authors compare and contrast different aspects of Iranian society to investigate what changes have occurred and to what degree.

The authors characterize post-Revolution Iran as having gone through two major stages. The first stage, which they term "structural involution" (p. 34), involved the structural degeneration of

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the Iranian economy. The second stage, "deinvolution," is a rebuilding of the economy through an awakening of capitalist mechanisms. These findings indicate an attempt to reverse the problems the country encountered immediately after the revolution. Though the economy has not fully recovered from the revolution's devastating effects, there are "striking similarities between the two periods (1976 and 1996)" which may indicate a trend that the country is rebuilding itself both in its economic sector and class structure. (p. 118) However this trend has been a slow and often painful process.

In comparison to works of others, Nomani & Behdad's definition of the marginalization of women in Iran is broader and more practical (p. 119). While many scholars characterize marginalization as exclusion from the workforce, Nomani & Behdad describe women's marginalization in terms of "Islamization, gender segregation, and defeminization of labor" (p. 121). They incorporate the concepts of asymmetrical gendered power relations as inequality in the workplace. A return to traditions has meant decreased economic opportunities for women in Iran during the structural involution phase in terms of female unemployment and discrimination.

The authors also examine the modes of production and their drastic changes through the two decades after the revolution. The first period saw a large reduction of capacity in the economic sector. This occurred in both urban and rural settings where the economy became more "deproletarianized, peasantized and...traditional" during Khomeini's rule (p. 168). In the decade following Khomeini's death, the economy saw a reemergence, but only in the urban areas.

There are important observations made by this book. Most notably, *Class and Labor in Iran* claims that the Iranian Revolution, distinguished by its populist uprising nature, can be explained in terms of Marxist or socialist language. This is ironic because the revolution's ideology was to purge secular concepts in favor of fundamental Islamic principles. This work also contributes to comparative studies of the Middle East region on class structure change and relates to works on the political economy of Iran. Another interesting aspect of this book is the implementation of the quantitative design as a tool for class analysis of Iran based on the three periods in cotemporary Iranian history.

No book is perfect; and this study is not an exception to such a rule. While the authors do a superb job on their conceptualization of the effects of the revolution on Iranian women, there is no mention of economic factors such as the politics of ecology that play a significant role in the country. Considering that their findings are mainly a reiteration of qualitative analyses that have already been done on this topic by others, this book illustrates the divisions of class and labor in Iranian society during the three earlier mentioned periods; this in itself is an important finding.

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