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Afacan, S.

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Author: Afacan, Serhan

Title: State, society and labour in Iran, 1906-1941 : a social history of Iranian industrialization and labour with reference to the textile industry

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Propositions:

- I. Although formal labour organizations and collective labour activities were observed in Iran from the turn of the 20th century onwards, petitioning functioned as an uninterrupted and effective channel for expressing labour demands and grievances during the period between 1906 and 1941. Further, the Iranian state, even during the heyday of its authoritarianism, always remained receptive, often as a safety valve, to labour demands and grievances when they were not expressed through collective actions.
- II. From the turn of the 20th century until the industrial leap-forward of 1930s, anti-import movement created class-crossing alliances in Iran which brought otherwise conflicting classes together. Such diverse groups as merchants, tradesmen, guildsmen, intellectuals, the clergy and workers jointly resisted the inflow of foreign commodities. This in turn obscured and hindered, if for a while, a classed-representation of the Iranian workers.
- III. The main expectation of the craftsmen from the Iran Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 was the establishment of a state machine which would ensure security and eliminate the foreign domination over the country. In economic terms, many craftsmen believed that an effective promotion of the crafts industries would waive Iran's dependency on foreign goods. Yet, the industrial leap-forward of 1930s, which was based on large-scale industrialization, hit the Iranian craftsmen at least as much as the foreign imports did in the previous decades.
- IV. Labour history has for long been equated with that of the communist and socialist movements in Iran as elsewhere in the Middle East. In such narratives the working class is often, and somehow facilely, presented as a liberating force from the exploitative economic relationships. For a comprehensive investigation of the history of Iranian labour we need to draw a line between the two and examine Iranian labour on its own terms.
- V. During the 20th century Iran hovered between foreign domination and internal repression. In order to remove the first internal oppression was somehow tolerated, by most people, when it promised to provide security and full independence. Thus, modern Iranian history shows us that a sustainable democratization debate can only commence in Iran in the absence of foreign pressure and threat.

- VI. The existence of three main and different temporalities functioned as the basis of many ideological debates in modern Iran. The secular-modernist perception of time suggested that “the best was yet to come”. To them the present was an imaginary bridge to the ideal future. For conservatives the present was a source of suspicion and the future was even more so. This does not suggest a blind reverence of the past but rather refers to a troubled engagement with modernity. On the other hand, for most of the ordinary people the present and rather immediate concerns mattered more.
- VII. Although Turkish and Iranian modernization processes showed notable structural parallelisms it would be misleading to depict the latter as following the footsteps of the former. The cultural characteristics, the social structures as well as contents and the scopes of the reforms implemented in the two countries throughout the 19th century significantly determined the substantially different courses that their histories followed during the 20th.
- VIII. In order to explain the developments which culminated in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 historians overemphasized those aspects of the Iranian history which related to the Revolution. This in turn revolutionized the Iranian history and largely distracted historians’ attention from those dimensions of it which did not directly relate to the Revolution. This resulted in the insufficient attention paid to the social dimensions. Yet, without due attention paid to such dimensions, our apprehension of modern Iranian history will remain incomplete.
- IX. Historical experiences tell us that democratization has not been an easy and problem-free process for many societies especially in the Middle East. Impatient anti-democratic interventions, both from within and from without, carry the risk of escalating the existing tension. Thus, the interruption of the democratization attempts in the region from 2010 to the present brought about further and wider sectarian divides as well as internal disturbances.
- X. Despite its remarkable offensive abilities, the defensive deficiencies of the *Eredivisie*, the highest professional football league in the Netherlands, prevents it from being one of the best in Europe.