

Note from the Editor

The three main articles in this issue (those by A. Ashraf, S. Bakhash, and G. Nashat) were originally presented as papers at a conference on "State, Society and Economy in Nineteenth-Century Iran and the Ottoman Empire," which was held in Babolsar, Iran, in June of 1978. The conference was co-sponsored by the Joint Committee on the Near and the Middle East of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council and by the then Reza Shah Kabir University (now part of a group of institutions of higher education in the Mazandaran Province).

The conference brought together a group of about twenty scholars of modern Iran and late Ottoman history for a comparative analysis of the experiences of these two societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The comparative focus seemed well justified in view of a number of rather striking parallels between these two regions. Both are Islamic societies that are geographically peripheral to the Middle East and populated by non-Arab speaking, non-Semitic peoples; both have had periods of strong centralized rule interrupted by weakening of the center, but, despite this weakening, both managed to escape direct Western colonialism; and both experienced the overthrow of their political order in the early decades of this century and the reassertion of state power by avid "modernizers." Significant dissimilarities were also noted between the two societies. The nature of Islam and its relation to the state differed markedly in Iran and the Ottoman Empire during the period under consideration; exposure to the West began in different periods and the nature and intensity of the subsequent interaction between each society and the West were quite different; and, finally, different paths of economic transformation were pursued by the two in the early twentieth century, with the state playing dissimilar roles in their economic development.

Every effort was made by the organizers of the conference to promote comparative consideration of the issues, and indeed much productive exchange of this nature took place among the participants. However, in the end, when it came time to decide whether the conference proceedings should be published as a single volume, it became apparent that the papers did not cohere together sufficiently as had been hoped originally. Thus, as is so often the case with conferences with a comparative agenda, it was concluded that much more communication and discussion of the issues among the potential participants *prior* to the conference itself should have taken place. Accordingly, the sponsors of the conference decided to release the papers to their authors for separate publication. Several of the papers from the conference have since appeared in print.

In publishing the present set of papers from the Babolsar Conference, we would like to express our gratitude to S. N. Eisenstadt, Şerif Mardin and Marvin Zonis (members of the conference planning committee), Rowland L. Mitchell (from the Social Science Research Council) and Mary Catherine Bateson (from R.S.K.U. and now at Amherst College). The Journal is also indebted to the ACLS/SSRC Joint Committee on the Near and the Middle East for its financial contribution to defray the cost of publication of this special issue.

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