

misunderstandings born out of a view that Babi sacred writings are of purely “archaeological” interest (p. 3). When used with caution, despite its limitations, *Gate of the Heart* will doubtless be much appreciated by those seeking an introduction to the life and writings of the Bāb, the Sayyid of Shīrāz, who gave his life in promoting a new sacred book and a new religious law for the revolutionary transformation of humankind. In this way it is a worthwhile volume that contributes significantly to the neglected field of Babi-Baha’i studies.

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*The Baha’is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Edited by DOMINIC PARVIZ BROOKSHAW and SEENA B. FAZL. Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies, vol. 12. London: ROUTLEDGE, 2008. Pp. xv + 283. \$160.

This important volume of collected papers contains eleven brief essays in the somewhat neglected, but now fast-evolving field of academic Babi-Baha’i studies, focusing on Iranian “socio-historical” topics. The subjects dealt with often utilize new data and methodological approaches leading to refreshing insights in a field sometimes dominated by anti-academic apologetics. The foregoing possibly limiting concerns are here largely transcended and there is much to praise about most of the outstanding essays published here.

The first essay by Mehrdad Amanat, “Messianic Expectation and Evolving Identities: The Conversion of Iranian Jews to the Baha’i Faith,” contributes to an area of long-standing though increasing interest, Jews and Baha’is in Iran. This entry contains a very useful summary of early Jewish converts to the Babi-Baha’i religions (pp. 14–18) and has it that the conversion of many Jews to the Baha’i “persecuted minority religion” was a “unique phenomenon in Islamic Iran, if not the entire Muslim world” (p. 22). It goes way beyond the now inadequate viewpoint that Jews converted to the Baha’i faith for purely socio-economic reasons.

The second essay by Fereyduun Vahman deals with “The Conversion of Zoroastrians to the Baha’i Faith” (pp. 30–48). It responds to the vexed question of why Persian Zoroastrians, as members of an ancient, perhaps three-thousand-year-old conservative Iranocentric religion, should be moved to embrace a new, persecuted, Arabic-embracing neo-Islamic faith. Factors highlighted by Vahman include empathy with persecuted members of the Babi-Baha’i faiths, messianic fulfillment through the advent of Saoshyant or Shāh Vahrām-i Varjāvand, etc., as well as the hope for and contribution towards religious renewal. His article provides a rich, detailed, and valuable synopsis of historical information pertaining to a previously largely neglected subject.

The next essay, by the co-editor Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, “Instructive Encouragement: Tablets of Baha’ullah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha to Baha’i Women in Iran and India” (pp. 49–93), goes beyond hagiographical biography in a detailed and fascinating consideration of around 250 primary Baha’i scriptural writings dating between 1870 and 1921, Arabic and Persian texts addressed to believing women resident in the countries mentioned in his title. Baha’i women in the well-known and prominent Babi-Baha’i families of Mīrẓā ‘Alī Muḥammad, Ibn-i Aṣḍaq (d. 1928), Shaykh Kāẓim-i Samandar (d. 1918), and his brother Ḥājjī Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī, Nābīl ibn-i Nābīl (d. 1890) were significant, among other things, for their courageous faith and sacrificial contributions to the evolution of Baha’i ideals.

Moojan Momen opens his “Baha’i Schools in Iran” (pp. 94–121) by highlighting the importance given by Bahā’u’llāh and his successors to education. Every child is potentially the “light of the world.” It contains a very useful synopsis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century missionary practices and other attempts to set up schools in Iran (pp. 95–96). The establishment of Baha’i schools for boys and girls went way beyond the traditional Shi’i Islamic *maktab* and *madrassa* systems. It is alleged that from the 1890s Baha’is from Iran and outside (Western Baha’is working in Iran) stood in the forefront of the advances in modern education (pp. 97, 117).

The co-editor Seena Fazel and Minou Foadi in their “Baha’i Health Initiatives in Iran: A Preliminary Survey” (pp. 122–40) point out that in his *Kitāb-i aqdas* (Most Holy Book, ca. 1873), *Lawḥ-i Tibb* (Tablet of Medicine), and other writings, Bahā’u’llāh incorporated a number of medical or health directives and recommended the consultation of “competent physicians.” Such statements inspired Baha’is to take important health initiatives in Iran and elsewhere such as the replacement of some of the often fetid Iranian public bathhouses with new, more hygienic ones (pp. 123–25). Some Baha’i medics worked towards the establishment of new Baha’i-run hospitals, the first apparently being the early twentieth-century Şihhat Hospital. Their subsequent history is detailed as is their closure along with Baha’i medical centers following the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

The contribution of Kavian Milani, “Baha’i Discourses on the Constitutional Revolution” (pp. 141–55), argues that Baha’is contributed “both to the conditions that made the Constitutional Revolution [1905–1909] happen, and to the development of the constitution itself” (p. 141). From the 1860s Bahā’u’llāh favored *mashrūṭiyyat* (constitutional government) and his followers were not exactly anti-constitutionalist. Rather, they championed certain of its key ideologies though its failure proved “determinative” in their attitude of non-involvement towards Iranian politics (pp. 152–53).

Eliz Sanasarian in “The Comparative Dimension of the Baha’i Case and Prospects for Change in the Future” (pp. 156–69) opens by commenting upon an example of the sometimes severe consequences of “the ongoing Muslim non-Muslim diatribe in the Islamic Republic of Iran” (p. 157) between outspoken members of the Iranian Islamic regime and minority religionists (e.g., Zoroastrians, Jews, Baha’is) and their leaders unjustifiably viewed as persons plotting against Islam. The sad consequences of the voicing of rigidly negative “stereotypical views” about religious minorities and of the “verbal dehumanization” of fellow human beings by religio-political authorities is eloquently and courageously articulated (pp. 157ff.). Recent decades have seen little change in the legal and social status of “the Baha’is, Iranian Christian converts, or the recognized religious minorities.” Governmental institutions must learn to govern justly a heterogeneous society (p. 166). They should consult with Baha’is about institutional recognition.

In his “The Historical Roots of the Persecution of Babis and Baha’is in Iran” (pp. 170–83), Abbas Amanat acknowledges the preliminary nature of his contribution, given the great deal of further academically informed research that needs to be done in this area (p. 171). He restricts himself to the Qājār period, attempting to detect “a historical pattern in recurring cycles of anti-Babi and anti-Baha’i violence and highlight its doctrinal and societal dimensions” (p. 172). Not recognized as protected *dhimma*, the Babis–Baha’is were subject to a particularly virulent ulama-generated hostility (p. 175). State-generated persecutions and other aspects of the Babi–Baha’i persecutions dealt with by Amanat in his wide-ranging, insightful contribution cannot be adequately summarized here.

The first-class entry “Anatomy of Prejudice: Reflections on Secular Anti-Baha’ism in Iran” (pp. 184–99) by H. E. Chehabi focuses on negative “social attitudes” towards Baha’is (as the “internal Other”) rather than “state attitudes” generating anti-Baha’ism (pp. 186, 195). Secular Iranians, it is argued, are wedded to a Twelver Shi’i “confessional conception of Iranian nationhood,” leaving little or no room for a Babi–Baha’i post-Islamic religiosity deemed by certain of its clerical and other critics as (among other things) socially divisive, culturally alien, anti-Islamic, and anti-Iranian.

In his “Anti-Baha’ism and Islamism in Iran” (pp. 200–231) M. Tavakoli–Targhi offers a pioneering analysis of the Iranian “otherization” of Babis and Baha’is, concomitant with a move in the 1320s/1940s toward a growing politically and clerically self-centered, self-aggrandizing Iranian consciousness. A creative or rather destructive symbiosis between emergent Baha’i perspectives and Shi’i anti-Baha’i Islamism came about. His extensive bibliography shows how many previously unstudied materials he drew upon in researching his well-argued thesis regarding the baseless Iranian charges against Baha’is as “instruments of Zionism, agents of Imperialism, and the antagonists of Islam and Iran” (p. 221).

The final lengthy and learned essay, by Reza Afshari, entitled “The Discourse and Practice of Human Rights Violations of Iranian Baha’is in the Islamic Republic of Iran” (pp. 232–77), recounts and comments upon aspects of human rights issues in Iran, despite the fact that there is “a dearth of detailed information with reference to the Baha’is of Iran” (p. 271). This contribution is a fitting conclusion to a volume that will hopefully herald many more dealing with the important topics covered therein.

The often expert coverage of such major themes registered in this worthwhile volume as Zoroastrian and Jewish conversions to the Baha'i religion, Baha'i relationships with and contributions to Iranian society, and the sad and ongoing history of Iranian Babi–Baha'i persecutions and minority human rights violations offers an indispensable resource to scholars working within the fields of Iranian and Babi–Baha'i studies.

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*The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China.* By LIU AN, KING OF HUAINAN. Translated and edited by JOHN S. MAJOR, SARAH A. QUEEN, ANDREW SETH MEYER, and HAROLD D. ROTH. Translations from the Asian Classics. New York: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010. Pp. xi + 986. \$75.

The publication of this second-century B.C.E. compendium of Daoist thought, for the first time complete in English, is a noteworthy event for the Sinological community and for the larger readership interested in China's long and complex history. The extant *Huainanzi* is a comprehensive philosophical project organized around Daoist concepts and encompassing such topics as cosmology, philosophy, history, political theory and authority, philology, and bibliography.

There are three reasons for the *Huainanzi*'s importance: its rich and varied content, its relevance to the early Han Dynasty and the dynasty's later course, and the influence of the Han as a whole on future dynasties and indeed in our own time. The study of the Han in the US has been gradually coming into its own, having been overshadowed by a sinological tradition that favored Song neo-Confucianism and its embrace of the pre-Han Confucians. This new edition of the *Huainanzi* contributes to rectifying the imbalance.

Working on the *Huainanzi* over the course of a decade and a half, a team of four American sinologists, John Major, Andrew Meyer, Sarah Queen, and Harold Roth, multi-tasking as translators, editors, and scholars, have produced an excellent and richly annotated translation. Major and Roth had already published important studies of the *Huainanzi*, the former on cosmology and the latter on textual history, and Queen has published on the *Huainanzi*'s contemporary rival, the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露. This publication consummates their significant earlier work.

This edition has a thoughtful introduction, elaborate appendices of key terms, an extensive bibliography, a detailed index, ample accounts of the *Huainanzi*'s textual history, and a useful survey of scholarly debates about the nature and value of the work. In addition, the translation contains a valuable lexicon. A large number of unusual technical terms and rare nouns in a wide range of fields—astronomy, cosmology, botany, biology, medicine, and so forth—have been painstakingly researched. Some of the arcane English equivalents will send readers to their dictionaries.

The *Huainanzi* synthesizes and elaborates many strands of pre-Han and early Han thought; it also contains important historical and cosmological material. The dominant paradigms are Daoist. The whole, in twenty-one chapters, was completed and presented to Emperor Wu in 139 B.C.E., two years after his enthronement. During the preceding reigns of emperors Wen and Jing (179–140 B.C.E.) the new dynasty succeeded in overcoming the trauma of the Warring States period and of the great civil war between Liu Bang (representing statecraft and large-scale organization) and Xiang Yu (representing restoration of the feudal kingdoms). Liu Bang's victory did not however fully decide the issue and was rather the beginning of a complex struggle between the "neofeudal" or centrifugal forces (what Americans might think of as "states' rights") and the centralizing force of a unifying militarizing state (federal authority). That conflict is the immediate context of the *Huainanzi*.