

### Excerpts from Reviews for *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*

Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*. Rutgers University Press, 1989, 348 pp., USD 24.00, ISBN 0-183-51423-6 (pbk).

*Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, cited in the American Historical Association's 1995 *Guide to Historical Literature* as one of the finest books on Iran and an "important revisionist" work.

In 1989, sociologist Misagh Parsa published one of the best books to date on the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Using detailed source material, that book organized its analysis around two structural arguments: first, that the Pahlavi state's high level of intervention in the economy attracted all grievances toward the state; and second, that economic polarization and crisis, along with a lack of social differentiation, allowed the "consolidation" of a widespread oppositional coalition. (Charles Kurzman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 35, Numbers 1-2, 2003)

Drawing on a wealth of primary sources, particularly the official and opposition press, government census and other statistical data, and a few personal interviews plus the Iranian Oral History Collection at Harvard, Parsa provides a brilliant illustration of the strengths of resource mobilization analysis. . . . Parsa has made a major contribution to the literature on the revolution, both for advancing a more sophisticated theory of social change than have others, and for providing a fascinating blow-by-blow account of events (John Foran, University of California, Santa Barbara, *International Journal of the Middle East*, November 1991, 23(4):669-670).

He... demolishes the idea that the bazaar classes were necessarily wedded to the clergy. . . . This book is a major theoretical contribution to our understanding of the Iranian Revolution and of revolutions in general (Juan Cole, University of Michigan, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, January 1992, 34(1):193).

Parsa (sociology, Dartmouth) has written what appears to be the most ambitious and far-reaching analysis of what happened in Iran. . . . Because traditional theories of revolution usually leave an unaccounted-for string or two when it comes to the Iranian revolution, Parsa's structural approach fares far better, as it was designed to include the anomalies that comprise Iran today (David P. Snider, *Library Journal* November 1, 1989:103).

An excellent analysis of the Iranian revolution ...of interest not only to Middle East specialists, but also to general scholars of revolution (Ervand Abrahamian, CUNY, 1989).

...the descriptive part of Parsa's book offers great insights. Parsa is more successful than any other author in distinguishing the diverse elements in the opposition to the Shah, and demonstrating how their cohesion in 1979-1979 differed from conditions in 1953. . . . he is correct to point to the specific options available to the actors, rather than their cultural beliefs as the key to understanding the revolution of 1979 (Jack A. Goldstone, University of California, Davis, *Social Forces*, June 1991, 69(4):1261).

The reader will find this study impressive and illuminating in its theoretical framework, clarity of arguments, new information, and source materials. . . . Parsa's book is an excellent addition to the literature on the Iranian revolution. It offers insight and lucidity of presentation and succeeds in answering many unexplored questions about the stages and processes of the most important event in contemporary Iranian history (Mohammad H. Faghfoory, *The Middle East Journal*, Summer 1990, 44(3):501-502).

His text provides a sharp analysis of the social factors involved and does an outstanding job of integrating primary sources and scholarship. Parsa's analysis, his understanding of the significant social issues, and his indispensable method of study produces an account that is straightforward, accurate, interesting, and balanced in comparison to existing treatments of the Iranian revolution (Mostafa Vaziri, Visiting Scholar, University of California, Berkeley, *Middle East Report* March-April 1991).

... the author has to be commended for his theoretically sophisticated analysis and richly detailed account of popular collective actions in contemporary Iran (Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Syracuse University, *Iranian Studies*, 1992, 23(1-4):114).

The most fruitful studies are usually those that attend closely to the specific exigencies of the event, yet engage the subject analytically and theoretically enough to interest students of other revolutionary movements. On both counts, Misagh Parsa's *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature on the Iranian Revolution of 1979. . . . Parsa's most important contribution is the strong case he makes for the primary significance of the bazaaris in the making of the revolution (Hamid Dabashi, New York University, *Contemporary Sociology*, March 1991, 20(2):211).

The analysis is often convincing, always rigorous, and well documented (Bertrand Badie, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, *American Journal of Sociology*, January 1991, 1054).

This carefully researched study gives the reader an objective view of the role that each faction played in bringing about the revolution (N. Rassekh, Lewis and Clark College, *Choice* May 1990).