

# Book Reviews

DONALD MALCOLM REID, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Cambridge Middle East Library, 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Pp. xviii + 296. \$30.

There is no doubt that the topics of education and modernity are intricately connected. Education is a critical link in the building, maintenance, and support of a hegemonic ruling elite, regardless of its political or religious orientation. Donald Malcolm Reid's *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt* exemplifies these relationships by studying four themes implicit in the university's development: (1) Western imperialism (and competing imperialisms) versus various nationalisms (2) "university autonomy versus state control" (3) "elitism versus egalitarianism" (4) secularism versus religiosity (p. 3).

Reid demonstrates that the social, political, and cultural history of Egypt in the twentieth century can be examined through the lens of higher education. He traces the history of Cairo University from a collection of higher institutes and the dreams of early twentieth century nationalists to a reality that evolved with changing times. The book is divided into four parts: The Private University, 1908-1919; The University and the Liberal Ideal, 1919-1950; In Nasser's Shadow, 1950-1967; and The University Since Nasser. Reid utilizes an impressive array of sources including the Cairo University archives, Britain's Foreign Office records, Egyptian and Western studies on the relationships between the university and society, autobiographies/memoirs, interviews, and novels. The author makes ample use of tables, charts, and illustrations to facilitate the reader's understanding of how the university operates.

The first two parts of Reid's work are clearly the strongest, and not surprisingly these are the chapters most firmly rooted in primary source research. The first section briefly examines the history of higher education in Egypt, key figures in the battle for and against the institution, how it operated in its early years, and who attended it. We learn that the university, rather than being the brainchild of a single individual, bore the marks and concerns of a group of men including Jurji Zaydan, Mustafa Kamil, Muhammad Abduh, and Saad Zaghlul, as well as Prince (later King) Fuad, Lord Cromer, Douglas Dunlop, and Eldon Gorst.

Reid points out that the timing of the opening of the Egyptian University (as it was then called) was significant in that it happened in the wake of the Dinshawai incident and Cromer's departure from Egypt. From its earliest beginnings the new institution was pulled in various directions, from Europeans who sought to dominate the faculty and curriculum, to nationalists who founded a secular school, yet one which would not tolerate the teaching of Islamic history by a non-Muslim.

In the final chapter of the first section Reid addresses issues related to the nuts and bolts operation of the new school. While the author acknowledges that fees at the school were initially "modest" at £E1.20/year and characterizes a tuition increase to £E6/year as steep, he does not situate these figures either in the buying power of the era or with

respect to other institutions of higher learning during the same time period. In this chapter Reid paints a picture of the student body, which included a surprising number of westerners (twenty percent), as well as women, some of whom attended classes alongside men and others who participated in the short-lived women's section (1909-1912) (pp. 51-56). Reid's discussion of the latter is clearly evident of the tremendous growth in women's history in the time since his book was published in 1990. Although Reid worked with a number of western sources and archival records, he failed to examine the topic from the perspective of Egyptian scholars such as Zeinab Farid, Ijlal Khalifa, and Latifa Salim, who published in the 1970s and 1980s.

In part two, Reid examines the educational battles that took place as Egypt struggled to attain and define its independence. Egyptian academics sought a niche in a profession dominated by feuding Europeans. King Fuad, the former rector of the university, added a wild card element by utilizing the university as an instrument against the British by promoting French, Italian, and Belgian scholars. These quarrels continued in debates over language of instruction, and they rarely took the students' interests to heart (p. 96). Furthermore, the presumption of a trilingual curriculum meant that students were forced into methods such as rote memorization in order to succeed, the very methods that European scholars criticized as being Islamic or oriental in origin.

In chapter six of this section, Reid returns to the general question of elitism and the specific question of coeducation, and again these discussions generally reflect the historiography that was available prior to 1990, but do not represent the diversity of secondary sources that shed light upon these issues today. With respect to class issues, Reid argues that the existence of tuition (modest or otherwise) and the two-track educational system served as a barrier to universal access, along with other "informal" impediments, such as budgetary allotments, lack of night school, and geographical determinants. Subsequently he discusses the founding of other schools to address some of the shortcomings.

In chapter seven, Reid examines the relationship between the university and politics in period between 1930 and 1950. In particular he discusses the case of Taha Husayn to demonstrate the limits of university autonomy. The methodology that Husayn employed in *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* and his thesis on Abu al-Ala al-Maari provided ammunition for his opponents in government. Nevertheless, his purge was only temporary: changed political conditions, including the death of Fuad and new elections allowed him to return as dean of arts. Reid points to student demonstrations as playing a role in this process, however his arguments about their specific role are not that clear.

Reid moves on to analyze the issue of religion in the last chapter in this section, highlighting its role in the secular university and the role of Western influences in al-Azhar. The latter was forced to adopt "an administrative hierarchy, faculty councils, written examinations, differentiation of students by age and grade level, desks and chairs, regular classrooms, a

wider range of subjects, and specialized degrees.” (p. 141) Reid also addresses the issue of Egypt’s Coptic population, which was overrepresented in the student population, underrepresented in the faculty, and underrepresented in the Ministry of Education (relative to their presence in other ministries). Nevertheless, the most interesting discussion in this chapter centered upon the case of Khalaf Allah, whose dissertation on Quranic narrative was not accepted. His case created a controversy that would eerily be replayed in the case of Nasr Abu Zaid nearly five decades later.

Parts three and four, covering the years from the early 1950s through the late 1980s, are not nearly as engaging or solid as the first two sections, which form two-thirds of the book. It is not clear whether this shortcoming is related to access to primary sources or whether the author’s intent was merely to focus on the formative period. There are no more references to the university archives, and in fact there are almost no primary sources, aside from a few interviews, listed in these sections. Most of the citations come from secondary sources in English and Arabic. The earlier sections, particularly section one, were much better with respect to the discourse taking place in the press. There are only sporadic references to the press in the latter two sections.

Reid situates the Nasserist university purge in the overall context of Nasser’s consolidation of power. The purge afflicted academics ranging from full professors to graduate teaching assistants, whose political orientation ran the spectrum from Islamist to Wafdist to Marxist. Reid waits another two chapters before informing the reader of Nasser’s intentions with the university: train technicians and engineers to carry out his program of modernization and to propagate his Arab nationalist and socialist doctrines (p. 189). Although the author weaves significant political events into his narrative, the reader has little sense of development or change. Nasser wants to use the university to achieve his policy goals, and it is clear that these goals evolve. Nevertheless, Reid offers little explanation for these changes, nor does he make clear how Nasser was any different from Wafdist politicians or the monarchy.

Similarly, in the section on the post-Nasser years, the reader gets the sense of a number of significant issues, including the impact of *infitah*, the brain drain, the American aid/adviser influx, the “massification” of education, and Islamist trends, but there is no framework through which one can analyze these issues. Indeed the promise of the title is one that is not kept. In other words, what makes Egypt “modern,” and what role does the university play in this process? Reid has marshaled an incredible amount of information on various subjects, such as student opinion, elite control, foreign influence, tensions between secularism and religiosity, but there is no theoretical or methodological engine pulling this impressive cargo.

**Mona L. Russell**

SELÇUK AKSIN SOMEL, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001). Pp. xviii + 414. \$120.

In this thoroughly researched study of public education in the late Ottoman Empire, Selçuk Aksin Somel makes a major contribution to our understanding of the role of education in the modernizing project of the Ottoman Empire. The book also contributes to the growing literature on state-sponsored reform of the Ottoman Empire that seeks to go beyond the clichés of decline and the inevitability of collapse.

The book consists of seven chapters and sixteen appendices. Somel describes the legal and administrative background to the creation of a network modern public educational institutions, with particular attention paid to developments in the provinces. He also discusses the financial constraints involved in the growth of new educational institutions, curricular reform, and the use of education to integrate ethnic and religious minorities into the imperial mainstream. In the final chapter, Somel uses a large number of memoirs to evoke the students' experience of these schools. The appendices, covering almost 100 pages, reproduce texts of key laws and regulations, and produce statistical evidence. The source base for the study is rich: Somel has made extensive use of Ottoman archives as well as of contemporary published sources (most notably Ottoman provincial and ministerial yearbooks and school textbooks).

The aim of elementary education in the Ottoman Empire before the Tanzimat, the transmission of religious knowledge, was seen as integrally connected to religion, and this basic understanding was not initially challenged by the Tanzimat. Indeed, the original proclamation of the Tanzimat had nothing to say about education. Until the proclamation of a Regulation on Public Education in 1869, educational reform emphasized middle (*rüşdiye*) and higher education, with elementary education being left to existing Qur'an (*sihyan*) schools. It was only in the 1870s that the Qur'an schools began to be gradually displaced by state-run elementary (*ibtidâî*) schools, under the supervision of the ministry of public education and teaching according to the new method (*usûl-i cedid*). Policy makers continued to see education primarily as a means of creating a loyal populace through the inculcation of religious and moral values. On the one hand, they attached a great many hopes to education. Public educational institutions continued to have substantial continuities with the old Qur'an schools in terms of personnel, content, and style. Also, Somel notes that schools were often located in places where the local Muslim population was perceived to be under threat, rather than in cities, which were already major cultural centers. At the same time, financial difficulties and shortages of qualified teachers meant that the homogenization and institutionalization of public education remained a distant dream. The distribution of state-run schools (not to mention their quality) varied greatly across the length and breadth of the empire.

Other dilemmas persisted, too. Bureaucrats could not decide whether education should have the practical goals of developing trade and industry to lessen the empire's economic dependence or whether it should be aimed solely at producing competent civil servants. Education was also invested with the hopes of bringing marginal populations (ethnic and relig-

ious minorities) closer to the center, but the very act of centralization, implying the use of Turkish, exacerbated, according to Somel, existing tensions and created new ones.

Somel provides detailed description of the schools themselves, and of the institutionalization of public education in the provinces. A chapter surveys the mutual impact of educational policies on nationalist movements in a variety of Ottoman contexts. Somel's overall assessment of the Ottoman record is negative. The state failed to produce a coherent synthesis of Islam and modernity. The lack of financial resources was partly to blame, but Somel also argues that Ottoman thinking about education was often contradictory or counterproductive. In this, he differs from Selim Deringil, who sees Ottoman policies being broadly similar to, if less successful than, those adopted by other contemporary states.

While this is a very solid work, a couple of minor criticisms may nevertheless be made. First, Somel takes "Islam" largely to be a given. It dominated Ottoman education before the Tanzimat, and it continued to be present in the curriculum after that. It would have been quite illuminating to ask, in a sustained manner, whether the state's appropriation of Islam changed it in any way. One could argue that it was the state's own practices that led to the separation between Islam and worldly knowledge and that it would have been useful to pay greater attention to the process whereby this separation came about. Surprisingly, there is absolutely nothing here about policies or thinking about the *medreses*. One also wishes that Somel had provided a little more information on the *usûl-i cedid* and whether it had any connections with the pedagogical movement of the same name among the Muslims of the Russian Empire (a solitary bibliographical footnote is all we get).

Second, while Somel is absolutely right to speak of discipline as a major goal of Ottoman public education, he surprisingly connects it largely to the past, as a pre- or antimodern phenomenon, rather than as the very essence of modernity. In hoping that the use of institutionalized public education would bring the populace under a form of discipline that would produce desirable political consequences, were the Ottomans any different than their nineteenth-century counterparts?

A final criticism is to be directed at the publisher. The book would have benefited greatly from a copy editor who would have corrected the infelicities of style that inevitably creep in when one writes in a second or a third language. Readers paying \$120 apiece should at least get smooth prose in return. These are, however, minor criticisms. This multifaceted study will remain the basic work on the subject for some time to come.

Adeeb Khalid

BENJAMIN C. FORTNA, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Pp. xvii + 280. \$72.

The legacy of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) remains a topic of controversy up to this day. One issue that has escaped controversy, however, is the sultan's role in education. Indeed, in the midst of all the troubles at the close of the nineteenth century—severe financial woes, western economic and geopolitical encroachments, internal nationalist rebellions—the Ottoman state devoted an unprecedented amount of resources and energy to modern education. Many have seen this not as a surprising development, but a natural continuation of the westernizing reforms of the Tanzimat (1839-1876) and a culmination of that earlier modernizing drive.

In his lively account of the educational project of the Ottoman state, Fortna refuses to take for granted the state's level of devotion to modern education and points to the surprising degree of investment, both financial and emotional. Furthermore, in place of an uninspired evolutionary narrative, Fortna highlights the discontinuities that differentiated the Hamidian from the Tanzimat era, and which prove to be essential for understanding the period. While continuities also receive their full share, these are analyzed from a new interpretive angle by being placed in the context of state and nation-building approaches to education, which prove to shed new light on the Tanzimat era itself. Along the way, he challenges our comfortable assumption that the modern Ottoman educational establishment was created at the expense of, and in explicit opposition to, religious institutions or religious morality. Similarly challenged is the assumption that modern education inculcated cultural schizophrenia and engrained in the minds of the impressionable youth radical dichotomies between East and West.

Students of Ottoman history will take delight in the careful demarcation of eras and the capture of intricacies of the period through use of archival and unconventional primary evidence such as textbooks, maps, and photographs. In addition, the fundamental theoretical question that underpins it makes the book attractive to specialists and nonspecialists alike: how are Western institutions indigenized in non-Western settings, and which factors influence their final shape in new contexts? Put another way, how did the Ottomans localize Western educational institutions that were spreading all across the globe? Were they passive recipients of these institutions, or did they seek them out and modify them for their own ends? The response, argues Fortna with keen historical insight, depended on internal circumstances of each era; during the Tanzimat the Ottomans tilted more toward passive adoption, but in response to the changed historical circumstances of the Hamidian period, the state aggressively sought them out and in the process devised a genuine process of adaptation.

The educational drive was fueled partly by the need to create a modern sense of citizenship and inculcate loyalty to the empire. The state devoted enormous energy to building *idadi* preparatory or secondary level schools to close the gap left by the Tanzimat-favored *rüşdiye* advanced primary level schools. The French centralized model adopted, attempted, and partially succeeded, to bring together Ottoman subjects under one roof and transform them into citizens by clothing

them in the same uniforms, housing them in similar buildings, and teaching the same books and the same curriculum. It also helped to transform the habits of everyday life by the daily use of raised desk and bed, fork and knife, a single black board in the classroom, and the map of the nation-state on its walls. Yet, the picture presented here is far from the sinister gaze of the modern state fixed upon its subjects or a Lancaster-type model school. In fact, Fortna questions the homogenizing and top-down control claims of the French state in its own turf; by marshalling evidence from the Ottoman context he shows that centralized education, despite its many successes, was certainly an unfinished project, and although it afforded a glimpse at the centralizing gaze of the modern state, there was a great degree of variation and deviation from the uniform and centralized state ideal.

The chapter devoted to maps is particularly interesting in that it reveals the nation-building intentions of a centralizing state, but it also shows that state intentions are not always read exactly as they were intended. When the Ottomans initially equipped their schools with maps, they did so by following the European practice of representing the world on separate, isolated continents, a practice that served Europe well by creating a sense of continent-wide unity, but when mechanically copied and applied to the Ottoman context, as it was for some time, it dismembered the Ottoman domains into various continents. This cartographic practice was changed in favor of one that depicted the Empire as one contiguous whole with territories spanning Europe, Asia, and Africa and by doing so served the same end that maps had served for nationalism in Europe—it gave it coherence, with definite borders, images that could be easily grasped and engraved in the minds of the youth. Yet, as a graduate of these schools recounted, this practice additionally revealed the Empire's shrunken borders, which enraged the patriots. Although the maps made it easier to imagine the nation, for some it had the additional effect of undermining their loyalty toward its administrators and the sovereign.

Although the above developments took place under the Hamidian regime, one could conceive of them in continuity with Tanzimat and part of the same attempt to keep up with the modern age. Yet, several issues mark off this era from the previous one. Schools under the Tanzimat were originally intended to target and transform all Ottoman subjects into citizens—Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike—but in this period they progressively came to be known as Muslim schools and intended for this group alone. Second, the drive behind them increased tremendously, a matter that was not simply an extension of learning from Europe of the earlier era, but a reaction to new forces internally. The sense of being besieged no longer came from outside the Empire's borders, but additional forces worked from inside to undermine the cultural-ideological legitimation claims of the state. These challenges came principally from three sources, the most obvious one of which was missionary activities and their well-financed schools. Second came neighboring propagandists active in bordering regions, such as Greece, Bulgaria, and Iran. Although not as critical, they added to the agony of the central state by acting as a reminder that no single border was immune or safe. Last came the Ottoman minority or millet schools, schools that were initially not held with the same sense of suspicion, and even held up as a source for emula-

tion, but which gradually came to be considered a threat as well. Particularly worrisome was the superior education these schools provided not only to members of non-Muslim communities, but to many Muslim children as well. The center was continuously alerted to the harmful effect of these schools from the worried officials in its vast territories. If China and Japan also felt besieged by missionary activities, argues Fortna, they did not have to contend with the meddling of their neighboring states to the same extent and did not face the multiethnic challenge that confronted the Ottomans.

The push toward education in the Hamidian era was thus born out of this competitive environment. This was no longer a traditional military confrontation, but a cultural, ideological warfare and a scramble for the “hearts and minds of the young generation.” In response to competition, the state schools distinguished and differentiated their product from that of their competitors by emphasizing Islamic teaching and Islamic moral elements of their curriculum, and targeting instruction toward their most loyal audience, that is the children of the Muslim population. In this campaign, rather than turning away from the religious establishment and the teachers of old style schools, the state sought their help. In the absence of sufficient schools, it organized traveling ulama for remote regions as a first step to prepare the ground for schools that were to follow. Furthermore, in the absence of sufficiently trained personnel, it recruited ulama as teachers. Finally, given the emphasis on Islam in this battle, it systematically sought the help of religious establishment in reorganizing the curriculum. This was neither a temporary plan, nor the result of the inertia of previous centuries, and in fact it was a deviation from the inertia of the Tanzimat. The state thus fought back by creating a new hybrid that in form, style, appearance, and technique was western, but incorporated, although in a much different way than the old-style schools, teaching of religion and the emphasis on Islamic morality. In this battle, it was joined by clerics and religious establishment to stave off the threat of competing schools and their legitimacy challenge to the state.

From this Fortna concludes that the traditional divisions between secularism and religion is an artificial one and should be rethought. Certainly the Hamidian state could pursue the double aim of Westernization and Islamization with the help of the same institution. Yet, this different path to modernity was closed off and erased from memory with the rise of the Young Turks and the later Republic. Here, Fortna argues that the Hamidian state, through its educational project, was very much involved in constructing an alternative path to modernity, a lively endeavor the demise of which was not necessarily predetermined with the advent of Westernism. By doing so he invites us to adopt a critical attitude toward our received conceptual categories, tainted by the politics of the later periods, and in place of approaching the late Ottoman history as a struggle between modernity and tradition, secularism and religion, and Westernism and indigenous traditions, approach it instead as an open-ended field of possibilities with room for alternative paths to modernity. In this picture, the late Ottoman period becomes, for the most part, a time of synthesis rather than pure and simple cultural crusade of one kind or another.

MONICA M. RINGER, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2001). Pp. 310 (bibliography and index included). \$24.95.

Although different elements concerning educational reform in Qajar Iran have been analyzed in the past (*Dar al-Fonun*, individual reformers, etc.) so far there has not been a book that covered and interrelated all these elements during the entire nineteenth century period placing the movement towards educational reform in its social and historical context. David Menashri provided a short introductory chapter on educational reform during the nineteenth century to his *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, but it was basically a springboard to allow him to make his arguments for the period after 1910. In her book, a rewrite of her doctoral thesis, Monica Ringer has taken up the challenge to turn the diverse existing relevant elements into a solid analysis of what drove "modernization" in Qajar Iran as exemplified by education.

She first addresses the question of how useful terms such as modernization and westernization are in the context of her subject? She rightly makes the point that rather than an antithesis between reformers and reactionaries there was a modernization dilemma. That is, the real issue was not whether to have change or not, but rather how to modernize without losing your cultural identity. The focus of her analysis is therefore on the nature and development of the debate rather than the success or failure of any one point of view.

After this introductory chapter, the remaining six other chapters nicely show the stages through which societal change takes place. In the first stage, the means of the stronger civilization are imported and tried. This experience is discussed against the background

of 'Abbas Mirza's (d. 1833) attempt to create a modern army based on the European model. This resulted in the import of modern arms, attempts to manufacture these in Iran, the sending of Persian students abroad to learn relevant crafts, and the use of European military trainers. The result was negative because both the number of people driving modernization and its scope were small, and, more importantly, the context in which these new skills had to be used remained unchanged, and consequently, they were neither absorbed nor properly used by Persian society. In the third chapter, Ringer, discusses the evaluation of the failure of reform as formulated by two former students that had been sent to study abroad in Europe and who advanced proposals to resolve the problem of educational reform.

When it became clear that the reforms had not worked, the second phase, which clearly benefited from the experience during the first phase, began. The evaluation had taught the reform-minded people in Iran that the state should take responsibility for educational reform and train elite government cadres to prepare them to lead Iran into the "new world." This led to the creation of the *Dar al-Fonun*, a government-sponsored school to train children of the elite. Although European teachers were recruited and a varied, mainly science-based curriculum was introduced, the school was unable to achieve its potential. Lack of consistent royal commitment and opposition by interested parties resulted in a half-hearted attempt to introduce European-style learning into Iran. This attempt was complemented by the sending of students

abroad to be trained in various subjects. The opposition not only denounced educational reform because of perceived encroachment of turf, but also because of cultural concerns, finding the adoption of European ways and manners offensive. In chapter four Ringer describes how European-style learning was nevertheless able to effectively penetrate Iranian society via a back door. The introduction of missionary schools, later followed by those sponsored by the *Alliance Israélite* and the *Alliance Française*, proved to be successful and constituted a challenge to both reformers and reactionaries. Despite opposition to these schools and their occasional closing, they continued to expand.

The third phase of modernization describes how the 'new' school movement (chapter five) took hold in Iran. The reformers realized that without educational reform their reforms would come to naught. The impetus for educational reform did not come from the government, but from concerned individuals and groups. They established more than twenty modern schools between 1870-1906, which, because of their teaching methods, curriculum and growing popularity, were felt to be a challenge to the religious establishment's hold on education. Chapter six analyzes the creation and activities of the *Anjoman-e Ma'aref*, Iran's first education non-governmental organization, as well as the discussion and rivalry within that group concerning the question how to advance educational reform. Although the group lost its autonomy and then was taken over by the government, its thinking determined the government's educational agenda. The main problem, however, remained the lack of consistent government commitment to reform in general, and to that of education in particular.

In the last chapter Ringer analyzes the nature of the debate in Persian society at large, that she has called aptly the battle for Iran. Education had become a major part of the reform agenda. The publication of newspapers, translation of European texts, and most importantly, the writing of home-grown essays complemented the attempts at political reform whither Iran and its educational system had to go and why. The olama felt embattled; not only was there encroachment of their education turf, but also their opposition to reform was also viewed as sterile and ineffective to the problems that Iran as an embattled nation had to come to grips with. Most effective were those reformers who proposed an "indigenous solution." They argued for adaptation of European ideas to Iranian culture to guarantee not only cultural integrity, but also to provide an effective defense against the European threat. In doing so they disarmed the critics who accused other reformers of Westernization and anti-Islamic behavior. At the same time, they unconsciously advanced an incipient form of nationalism rather than Islam as the delivery mechanism for their ideas. The most extreme of these proponents even adopted an anti-olama position, because of the latter's unwillingness and inability to come to grips with the new reality. Also, because the discussion was about ideas, culture and education, matters that until then had been claimed by the olama as their *chasse gardée*, the reformers unwittingly challenged the olama's leadership. The latter were also accused of lack of leadership and of having become irrelevant because of their "just say no" attitude.

In her concluding chapter, Ringer summarizes her arguments and nicely captures the main elements of what consti-

tuted the debate in Iran and what were the main stumbling blocks, both the general ones and those particular to individual groups, such as the olama. As to the latter she rightly observes that their position had more nuance and was more complex than just being against reform. Other secular groups also shared some of their sentiments. The reformers were only able to challenge the olama's position, even neutralizing them for some time, but they were unable to replace them or to allot them a different role in society. This was due to the fact that they were not able (or unwilling) to reform the nature of Persian society and its power structure. The fruits of the victory of the battle for education reform were only enjoyed under the Pahlavi regime (1925-79). Nobody, not even the ulama, questions the validity of the European teaching methods and the modern science-based curriculum anymore. In fact, rather than under the Pahlavis, it is, ironically, under the Islamic Republic of Iran that an almost universal literacy rate has been achieved using these modern methods. However, the final stage of change, the free search for and debate of knowledge, leading to valuing tested experience rather than interpreting learnt knowledge, is still to be achieved, and that will be Iran's challenge for the twenty-first century.

This book is not just of interest to those interested in the history of Iran or of education, but to all those interested in the process of change and modernization in the developing world this book is a must.

**Willem Floor**