
Until the Islamic Revolution of 1979, little was written on the history of the women's movement in Iran. Most of what was produced afterward remained descriptive and political, lacking adequate historical research or systematic examination of archives, documents, and official records. In one of the few works of new scholarship discussing the issue from theoretical, historical, and analytical perspectives, Amin (Univ. of Michigan) examines the Women's Awakening of 1936-41 in the context of events before and after this period and argues for the long-term effect of the Women's Awakening on subsequent debates. The book shows (1) the paradoxical nature of Reza Shah's unveiling as an extension of state power over women's bodies and a means of modernizing Iranian social relations; (2) the continuity of the last century's debate on women's status; (3) the close association of state legitimacy with the women's issue; (4) the transformation of concepts of modern Iranian woman and male guardianship; (5) the importance of the 1931 Marriage Laws in improving women's status; and (6) the positive effects of state sponsorship of women's projects for future developments. Despite a few shortcomings in translation and interpretation, the book serves as an excellent feminist historiography of Iran upon which further research must be built. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Graduate students and faculty.

A. Mahdi, Ohio Wesleyan University

Choice, April, 2003.