The bazaar is a central institution in Middle Eastern countries, including Iran. As an economic institution, often occupying a continuous physical space and having its own relatively autonomous internal structure, the bazaar has always played a major role in the political and economic life of society. But it is also a major political force to be reckoned with. In the political landscape of the Middle East, powerful kings and politicians ignored it at their own peril. In all political movements of the past century in Iran, one finds the bazaar as an active player along with other political forces. While there is general agreement among scholars that the bazaar has been a historically important role in Iranian politics and society, no serious field study has been undertaken of this socio-economic community. That makes this book a welcome addition to the field, the first fieldwork-based research on the Iranian bazaar published in English and a work informed by new economic sociology theories.

In Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace, Arang Keshavarzian treats the bazaar as a microcosm of the state-society relationship in both the Pahlavi monarchy and the Islamic Republic. Using interviews, participant observation, documents, and secondary data, Keshavarzian conducts field research in the Tehran bazaar and demonstrates that much has changed in it. Old assumptions about the bazaar, and even some facts from previous studies, no longer hold up. Bazaaris act quite differently now than they once did. Mosque participation patterns have changed, widely used promissory notes of the past are replaced by cash and checks, and the relationship between the clerics and the bazaaris have changed dramatically, resulting in a new form of alienation in the bazaar.

Keshavarzian goes beyond the typical treatment in political literature of the bazaar as a traditional ally of religious forces, treating the bazaar as an independent entity with its own governance structure and internal politico-economic dynamics. Questioning the adequacy of both utilitarian and moral economy theories of economic interaction for understanding the bazaar, and drawing on new economic sociology’s embedded network approach, he defines the bazaar as a bounded space embracing a vast network of socially embedded relationships that facilitate the exchange of information, goods, and credit. These relationships are nested in family, religion, and ethnicity.

In seven chapters, Keshavarzian examines the potency of the bazaar for political action and the factors influencing such behavior. Both in terms of substance and methodology, this study goes beyond previous research on the bazaar. Methodologically, Keshavarzian attempts to understand the bazaar firsthand from within rather than only through statistics, memoirs, newspaper articles, and government proclamations. Approaching his subject both synchronically and diachronically, he selects 1963-2000 as the time frame for his study, for it was during this period that Mohammad Reza Shah’s transformative program began to shape up as oil prices increased and his regime experienced political stability.

Chapter 1 discusses the puzzle of the Tehran bazaar in the pre- and postrevolutionary period, situates the bazaar in the state-society nexus, relates the subject to the author’s theoretical model, and elaborates on the impact of the transformative nature and programs of the state on the bazaar. Chapter 2 conceptualizes the bazaar, reviews the literature on this institution, and elaborates on different conceptions of the bazaar as a class, an informal economy, a traditional market, and a form of culture. The author introduces his own approach to the bazaar as an embedded network with its own form of governance structure. Chapter 3 discusses the dynamics of governance structure and social relationships in the bazaar by elaborating on the nature of the bazaar’s hierarchy, networks, solidarity, and crosscutting and multiplex relationships. Chapter 4 explains changes in these structures and relationships in light of the high modernism of the Pahlavi state and the populism of the Islamic Republic. Chapter 5 ascribes these networks and relationships to the transformative nature of the two states. Chapter 6 discusses the political mobilization in the bazaar and the relationships between the bazaar and the clerics. Chapter 7 offers a summary and conclusion.

According to Keshavarzian, the bazaar should not be treated as a static and monolithic entity with fixed attributes. Various interactive modes, institutional settings, and sectoral qualities of exchanged commodities have serious implications in terms of the nature of relationships, networks, and politico-economic outcomes. Keshavarzian demonstrates this differentiation by closely examining the various handwoven carpet, tea, china, and glassware sectors of the bazaar and shows the differences in the sociopolitical outcomes of active versus passive networks and standardized versus nonstandardized commodities. His microanalysis of the changes in these sectors reveals the differentiated nature of the interactions among the state, commodity-specific markets, norms and transactions, and the governance structure.
Keshavarzian rejects the prevailing view that the fluctuation in the degree and frequency of political mobilization can be explained by the religiosity of the bazaaris and their presumably strong relationships with the clerical establishment. The bazaar's high capacity for political mobilization during the Pahlavi monarchy has often been attributed to its ideological inclinations, economic interests, and/or coalition with clerics. For Keshavarzian, this high political potency can be better explained by studying the bazaar's form of governance and its institutional relationship with the transformative programs of the Pahlavi state. Both the Pahlavi monarchy and the Islamic Republic have had their own grand developmental agenda or transformative programs. These agendas denoted the bazaar differently and developed their own strategies for incorporating various socio-politico-economic forces. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi wished and assumed that the bazaar would go away in the course of modernization. The shah's "high modernism," aiming at the development of modern economic institutions, did not leave much room for the bazaar. His exclusionary modernization left the bazaar to its own devices, and the bazaar's physical space and inner network remained intact and immune to state interventions. Although its members were harassed or intimidated when they did not adhere to government policies and laws, the bazaar was practically left alone in maintaining its own identity and autonomy—an opportunity that provided the bazaar with adequate space to mobilize its resources to its own advantage and maintain its old alliances with other sociopolitical forces.

Conversely, the Islamic Republic came to power with the help of the bazaar and has characterized the bazaar as an important revolutionary institution to be preserved and protected. Yet, by replacing the old interlocking networks of importers, wholesaler, brokers, and brokers with a new form of fragmented cliental relations closely tied to the state, the Islamic Republic has practically taken away the bazaar's autonomy and its ability to mobilize its resources. In the postrevolutionary period, the bazaar has lost its political leverage and become a politically marginal force. During the Pahlavi period, the nature of governance in the Tehran bazaar was cooperative—an intermediate feature between communal and coercive hierarchy. However, in the Islamic Republic the governance has changed to a coercive hierarchy. Populist macroeconomic and nationalist trade policies by the revolutionary government incorporated the bazaar through co-optation and alienation. These changes in the bazaar's institutional setting and network structure have effectively weakened its capacity for political mobilization. To understand the solidarity, cohesion, continuity, and mobilization in the bazaar, one cannot ignore its governance structure.

Bazaar and State in Iran makes an important contribution to the literature in the economic sociology of Middle Eastern societies. It is a rare study on the impact of state policies on the bazaar and how such an impact manifests itself in the political configuration of the societal structure. Choosing the bazaar as a microcosm of the state-society relationship, Keshavarzian focuses on the impact of state policies on the same constituency in both pre- and postrevolutionary regimes and reveals the continuities and discontinuities in state-society relationships. His scholarship has serious implications for both academics and political activists because it debunks the view that the bazaar is traditionalist, conservative, and not in favor of modern social organizations and thus better left to itself by modern political forces.

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New Media and the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere, 2nd ed.
Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003 213 pp., $19.95 (paper)

This edited volume is the result of a series of international meetings on civil society and "new media" in the Muslim world that took place in the second half of the iggos. Most contributors, including the editors, are anthropologists based in the United States. Although the volume's aims are never spelled out (an issue addressed later in this review), one can surmise from the book's title and introductory chapter that the main aim is to explore the relation between the proliferation of new media and the seeming emergence of a public sphere in the Muslim world. More broadly put, contributors are asking to what extent such media are helping to transform the civic and public lives of Muslims around the globe.

The book is a fascinating exploration that will engage—and sometimes surprise—readers with its varied case studies drawing from an in-depth knowledge of the languages and societies covered. Chapter contributors discuss in rich empirical detail media developments in the Middle East (various media); Lebanon (TV, Internet); Egypt (cartoons, pulp fiction); Turkey (TV); Bangladesh (religious...