

Quran itself, and defines the mosque as principally a shrine for the presumably large and lavish codex or codices (cf. F. Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads* (2014) 140–42) surely displayed within it, while through its minarets and muezzins it functioned as a giant transmitter of God's Word each and every day across the city and out into the whole world.

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ANDREW J. NEWMAN (ed.):

Iranian/Persianate Subaltern in the Safavid Period: Their Role and Depiction. Recovering Lost Voices.

Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2022. xxiv. 243 pp. £85. ISBN 978 3 95994 152 5.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000125

After an introduction by Andrew Newman, in which the origin and use of the term “subaltern” is discussed, in chapter 1 Jaimee Comstock-Skipp is at pains to show that a number of single-page paintings of kneeling captive warriors were not Turcoman prisoners as art historians have submitted, but were Shibanid Uzbeks. The fact that the “Uzbek” army included many Turcoman as well as Chaghatay, Qazaq and Qirghiz troops is not considered. Because in Safavid painting tradition written texts accompanied images of captives the author argues that these single paintings, not having such texts, indicate the subject's subaltern status.

In chapter 2 Alberto Tiburcio argues that after the Afghan occupation of Iran in 1722, the Jewish community of Kashan was able to negotiate its separate religious status. Because negotiation between religious and socio-economic groups was the norm in Iranian society, the analysis would have been of greater interest if the author had compared the Jewish case with similar earlier events and with other similar groups (Christians, Zoroastrians). The Dergesons (p. 69) are Dargazinis

In an interesting analysis (ch. 3) Selim Güngörürler shows how the Anatolian Qizilbash were no longer a mobilizing factor in the Ottoman–Safavid strife for power, after Iran, which had become Shi'itized (unbeknown to the Anatolian Qizilbash), had concluded peace with the Ottomans in 1639.

In chapter 4 Barry Wood discusses the “Anonymous histories of Shah Esma'īl”. Whether the ethnic and religious stereotypes used in these texts are typical of the lower classes is debatable. It is quite likely that these texts were written by members of the elite as Safavid political propaganda rather than representing “the imagination of those outside the sphere of the powerful”. After all, the detailed knowledge of the events related in these texts implies that the authors were not only literate, but had access to the official chronicles. Moreover, because paper and copying were expensive, an underclass storyteller would not have been able to produce such texts.

In chapter 5 Babak Rahimi concludes that because sources on Muharram processions are almost exclusively European (the author forgot to list those written by the Portuguese in Hormuz in the 1550s) this limits the understanding of the inner experience by its participants. Therefore, using textual and visual material sources, especially Hoseyn Kashefi's (d. 1504) *Rowzat al-Shohada*, may provide a better opportunity to do so. Although Rahimi makes a valid point, his suggestion falls short of a being a viable alternative. As >99 per cent of the population had never

read that text how could it better serve that purpose? Alternative sources include the Abu Moslemnameh genre and the Siyavash legend.

Valérie Gonzales in chapter 6 argues that subalterns in Persianate paintings never lost their voice (p. 149). She analyses the difference in representation of “royalty” and “subalternity”, in particular the conception of human order and status.

In chapter 7 Ines Asceric-Todd shows that after several Qizilbash revolts, the Ottomans were very nervous about the rising popularity of Sheikh Hasan Bali, the leader of the Hamzevi order. This popular movement was perceived as a Shi'a-tainted threat, even though no evidence of heresy was given in surviving anti-Hamzevi treatises, which are discussed. To impose Sunni orthodoxy and suppress the perceived threat, Sheikh Hasan Bali was executed in 1573.

In chapter 8 Hirotake Haneda discusses the 40-year career of a Georgian courtier and shows how he negotiated and used the tensions of court and Georgian local politics to advance his position.

According to Newman's introduction, the term subaltern refers to “subordinate groups”, generally the under-classes or all non-elites (p. vii). This definition is so general that it is meaningless. In any society, everybody can be or is a subaltern, depending on the time, place, and event, while among both the upper- and the under-classes some were “more equal than others”. The definition also implies that the Safavid elite was monolithic and unchanging, which it was not, and that the readers know a subaltern group when they see one. Consequently and ironically, the uselessness of the subaltern concept is borne out by this book. For example, the Turcoman prisoners are all members of the elite; one is even a prince, while the Caucasians at the Safavid Court, one of the pillars on which the Safavid regime rested, should not be mistaken “as merely subalterns”, according to Haneda (p. 225). The Anatolian Qizilbash were not subalterns either, because Güngörürler states that they were the main force that established the Safavid kingdom! True, in the seventeenth century they became irrelevant to both sides, but in what way their subaltern role changed is not discussed. Wood makes a good case that the anonymous Shah Esmā'il histories were used for storytelling. However, this begs the question how can users of these texts be identified as under-class in a society with a literacy rate of <5 per cent. Rahimi suggests that only “subalterns” participated in Muharram processions, but reality shows otherwise, for example, Pedros Bedik wrote: “During that festival, all Persians, men, women, children, nobles and commoners do their best to show the unspeakable sorrow of their soul by extraordinary cries and gestures”. According to Gonzales, subalterns are “courtiers, army officers, administrators”, and servants and artists, “the commoners” (p. 149), and if we add peasants almost the entire population is included under this label.

What these studies ignore is that the Safavid political system was operated by patronage, which involved a system of contractual and personal loyalties based upon the bargaining power of the various actors or groups. By belonging to a group one could acquire some measure of political status and protection as well as economic advantages (see ch. 3). Therefore, it would be better to drop the subaltern approach and just focus one's analysis on the role of each group, from below or not, within its socio-economic context.

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