

*Touraj Atabaki and Nasser Mohajer*

## **Obituary**

### **In Memoriam Homa Nategh (1934-2016)**

Homa Nategh, an eminent historian of the Qajar period and Constitutional Revolution passed away on 1 January 2016 in the village of Arrou south of Paris. With her passing Iranian studies has lost a renowned pioneer of modern Iranian political and social history.

Nategh was born in the town of Urmia in Western Azerbaijan, Iran, in 1934, to a remarkably cultivated family. She attended primary school and high school in Tehran.

In 1957 Nategh left Tehran for Paris to study literature at the Sorbonne, but soon took up the discipline of history. She finished her PhD in 1967 under the supervision of Marcel Colombe on *Seyyed Djamal-ed-Din Assad Abadi dit Afghani (Ses sejour, son action et son influence en Perse)*. The young scholar dedicated her thesis to her grandfather Mirza Javad Nategh “who was an advocate of the Constitutional Movement, and to all those who fought for Iran’s democracy and progress”. Two years after its completion, the thesis was published in 1969 by the *French National Centre for Scientific Research* with a foreword by Maxime Rodinson, the well-known scholar of Islam and the Middle East.

In 1968 Nategh returned to Iran and joined the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tehran, where she began to teach history. Her first articles were published in contemporary literary journals. A number of these were later collected and published in a book entitled *Az mast keb bar mast* (We reap what we sow). In 1976 Nategh collected and wrote an introduction for a new edition of the famous newspaper *Qanun* which was originally published in London in the 1980s by the modernist intellectual Malkam Khan. Her other work, a product of her first decade of teaching and research inside Iran, covered the social history of the Qajar period and was published in 1979.

Also noteworthy are Nategh’s translation into Persian of Albert Memmi’s *The Coloniser and the Colonised* (1970) and Sir Hartford Jones Brydges’ *The Last Days of Lotf Ali Khan Zand* in collaboration with John Gurney of Oxford University (1973). During this period Nategh’s decisive encounter with the British educated historian, Fereyduun Adamiyat took place. It was an acquaintance that would result in both longstanding friendship and intellectual collaboration lasting through to 1982. The volume that resulted from this scholarly partnership was the important *Afkar-e ejtema’i, siyasi va eqtesadi dar asnad-e montasher-nashodeh-ye doran-e Qajar* (Social,

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political and economic thought in the unpublished documents of the Qajar period, 1977).

Nategh's social and political activism began when she was a student in Paris. She was one of the first women to join the Confederation of Iranian Students. Moreover, we know of her activities in the Iranian Writers Association at the beginnings of the revolution of 1979, and later her association with the People's Fada'i Guerrillas of Iran, as well as her important role in the establishment of the National Union of Iranian Women. With the Fada'i split, following revolution, she continued her association with the "minority" faction of that organisation which adopted an uncompromising stand against the newly-established Islamic Republic. During the "Cultural Revolution" that followed Nategh was deprived of her teaching position and was subsequently purged and persecuted for her political views. This was followed by her voluntary exile to France, where her political activism gradually faded.

In exile, she continued her profession by joining the Sorbonne nouvelle. During her teaching and later retirement, she published a number of seminal works including *Karnameh va zamaneh-e Mirza Reza Kermani* (The Life and Times of Mirza Reza Kermani, 1984), *Bazarganan dar dad o setad ba Bank-e Shahi va Rezhi Tanbaku* (The merchants in trade with the Imperial Bank of Persia and Tobacco Régie, 1992), *Karnameh-e farhangi-ye farangi dar Iran* (The Cultural record of European Influence in Iran, 1996), as well as two books on the great medieval poet Hafiz. Her final work was *Rohaniyat-e Shi'eh-ye Iran, az parakandegi ta qodrat, 1828-1909* (The Iranian Shi'ite clergy: from dispersion to power, 1828-1909). Although completed, the latter would remain unpublished.