



From the Shahs to Los Angeles: Three Generations of Iranian Jewish Women between Religion and Culture

By Saba Soomekh

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A fascinating look at the lives, culture, and religious and ritual observance of three generations of Iranian Jewish women in the United States.

Saba Soomekh offers a fascinating portrait of three generations of women in an ethnically distinctive and little-known American Jewish community, Jews of Iranian origin living in Los Angeles. Most of Iran's Jewish community immigrated to the United States and settled in Los Angeles in the wake of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the government-sponsored discrimination that followed. Based on interviews with women raised during the constitutional monarchy of the earlier part of the twentieth century, those raised during the modernizing Pahlavi regime of mid-century, and those who have grown up in Los Angeles, the book presents an ethnographic portrait of what life was and is like for Iranian Jewish women. Featuring the voices of all generations, the book concentrates on religiosity and ritual observance, the relationship between men and women, and women's self-concept as Iranian Jewish women. Mother-daughter relationships, double standards for sons and daughters, marriage customs, the appeal of American forms of Jewish practices, social customs and pressures, and the alternate attraction to and critique of materialism and attention to outward appearance are discussed by the author and through the voices of her informants.

“As many as 40,000 Iranian Jews live in the Los Angeles area ... Saba Soomekh, an Iranian-born member of this community, has written an informative profile of the three generations of women in this community ... As an insider, Soomekh has a unique perspective on these three generations on the basis of her own experience, her background research, and interviews with members of each generation.” — Jewish Book Council

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Saba Soomekh is Assistant Director of the Jewish Studies Program at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California.

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