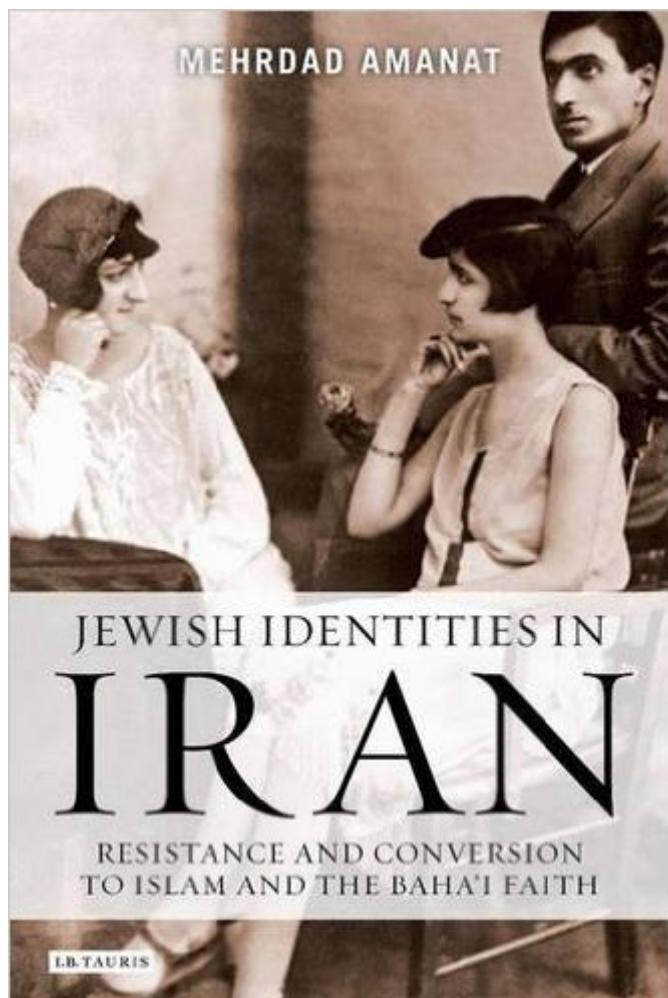


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Jewish Identities In Iran: Resistance And Conversion To Islam And The Baha'i Faith



Synopsis

For minority faith groups living in nineteenth-century Iran, religious conversion to Islam - both voluntary and forced - was the primary means of social integration and assimilation. However, why was it that some Persian Jews instead embraced the emergent Baha'i Faith, which was subject to harsher persecution than Judaism? Mehrdad Amanat explores the conversion experiences of Jewish families during this time, and examines the fluid, multiple religious identities that many converts adopted. The religious fluidity exemplified in the widespread voluntary conversion of Iranian Jews to Baha'ism presents an alternative to the rejectionist view of religion that regards millennia of religious experience as inherently coercive, oppressive, rigidly dogmatic and a consistently divisive social force.

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The emergence of the Baha'i faith and the appeal it had on Iranian Jews remained somewhat obscure in academic scholarship. In depth research of the various Jewish communities in Iran and their reaction to modernity has yet to be addressed. Amanat takes head on these two challenges and goes on a journey to investigate the trajectories that took prominence in shaping Jewish Iranian identities.

As a Baha'i of Jewish Heritage and upbringing, I found this book an absolute treasure! It is remarkable for the depth of its research and the insights gleaned from not only rare written documents but from preserved oral histories and fascinating anecdotes and observations. If you are

Jewish, Baha'i, Iranian, Muslim or curious about the interplay of monotheistic faiths in Iran, I cannot praise this book highly enough.

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