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« Hallmarks of Humanism : Hygiene and Love of Homeland in Qajar Iran ». *American historical Review*, 105, (2000), pp. 1171-1203.

Rudi Matthee



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« Hallmarks of Humanism : Hygiene and Love of Homeland in Qajar Iran ». *American historical Review*, 105, (2000), pp. 1171-1203.

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- 1 The leaders of late Qajar Iran, this sprawling, rather undisciplined article contends, embraced humanism and patriotic thinking in their quest for modernity. Humanism encompassed and served as a rallying cry for a host of themes and exhortations, ranging from hygiene and scientific learning to physical fitness, order and progress. Indeed, nationalism itself, *ḥobb-e vaṭān*, became inbricated in humanism, not simply as a territorial entity and an ideal but rather as a source of civilization and enlightenment. In her enthusiasm for the presumed novelty of the Qajar discourse, the author tends to overlook historical patterns of continuity. An example is the secular art of Qajar times, which is cited in support of a new humanism and presented as a new phenomenon in disregard of a secular tradition in Persian art that long precedes the Qajars. The real problem with the argument is that the author neither defines the operative term, humanism, *insāniyyat*, nor explores its antecedents. By making vague references to the Buyid period as exemplifying humanistic tendencies, and in mentioning the fact that Qajar humanism did not celebrate individualism, she creates the impression that the celebration of humanism was home-grown and did not owe anything to the transmission of Western, mostly French, social thought to the Middle East and its absorption by Qajar intellectuals.

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Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qâjârs

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