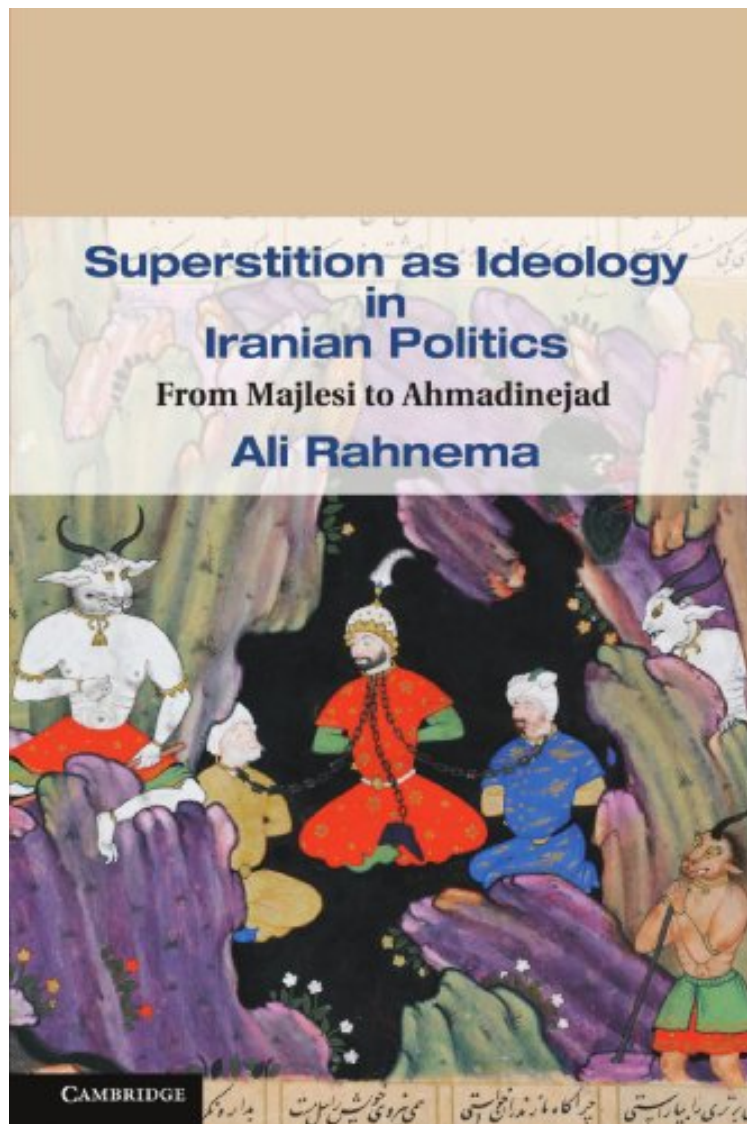


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## Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics: From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad (Cambridge Middle East Studies)

*Ali Rahnema*

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**Ali Rahnema : Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics: From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad (Cambridge Middle East Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics: From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad (Cambridge Middle East Studies):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An education By ScA very rich and detailed book. As an American, I

was struck by the extent to which Iran's clerics espouse a range of political opinions, not the one-note "loony mullahs" the media here likes to portray. The author takes this as a given, and it's not his main point at all, but the extent to which Iranian politics is dynamic and contested, even from inside the power structure, was a revelation to me. I should say that the book is difficult to follow at times for someone unfamiliar with Iran, particularly that it spans several centuries of intellectual and political thought. But I persisted and I'm glad I did, and I am now looking for more good reads on this fascinating country.

A superstitious reading of the world based on religion may be harmless at a private level, yet employed as a political tool it can have more sinister implications. As this fascinating book by Ali Rahnama, a distinguished Iranian intellectual, relates, superstition and mystical beliefs have endured and influenced ideology and political strategy in Iran from the founding of the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century to the present day. The endurance of these beliefs has its roots in a particular brand of popular Shiism, which was compiled and systematized by the eminent cleric Mohammad Baqer Majlesi in the seventeenth century. Majlesi, who is considered by some to be the father of Iranian Shiism, encouraged believers to accept fantastical notions as part of their faith and to venerate their leaders as superhuman. As Rahnama demonstrates through a close reading of the Persian sources and with examples from contemporary Iranian politics, it is this supposed connectedness to the hidden world that has allowed leaders such as Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mahmud Ahmadinejad to present themselves and their entourage as representatives of the divine, and their rivals as the embodiment of evil.

'An important book.' The Times Literary Supplement  
About the Author Ali Rahnama is Professor of Economics and Director of the Master of Arts program in Middle East and Islamic Studies at The American University of Paris. His many publications include *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (1998, 2000), *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (1994, 2006), *Islamic Economic Systems* (with Farhad Nomani, 1994) and *The Secular Miracle: Religion, Politics, and Economic Policy in Iran* (with Farhad Nomani, 1990).