

Research Forum**INTRODUCTION**

Val Moghadam

In this section, three research notes address gender, political economy, and the history of cultural developments. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, associate professor of history at Illinois State University, pens an essay that summarizes his forthcoming book, *Women of the West Imagined: Persian Occidentalism and Euro-eroticism*. In a highly provocative work based on an extensive reading of original sources, Dr. Tavakoli returns the orientalist gaze and focuses the spotlight on perceptions of European women by Iranian (or Persianate) travelers. He shows how contested visions of women, competing narratives of Iranian history, and diverse discourses about the nation symbolized the competing political and cultural agendas of secularists (modernity) and Islamists (counter-modernity).

The contributions by Massoud Karshenas and by Val Moghadam examine contemporary political economy issues, namely the gender implications of structural adjustment in the Middle East (Karshenas) and the implications of globalization for Iranian women (Moghadam). In his research note, Dr. Karshenas, reader in economics at the University of London, argues that structural change and regional competitiveness is not possible without significant increases in female labor-force participation, and that patriarchal households need to make adjustments in labor-force participation due to the deterioration of male wages. Dr. Moghadam, director of women's studies and associate professor of sociology at Illinois State University, ponders the marginalization of Iran and Iranian working women from global process of economic development, and describes some specific aspects of the Iranian labor market for women. She suggests that economic liberalization could benefit women by increasing employment opportunities and by forcing necessary legal changes.