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In Iran--as in the rest of the world--conventional history saw the past mainly through the eyes of those at the top of society--through the perceptive of courtiers, landlords, tribal chiefs, religious notables, government officials, and, of course, royal chroniclers. Dr. Hamid Ahmadi belongs to a new generation writing history from below. In his massive oral history project in Berlin out of which have come a series of published memoirs, including Khaterat-e Bozorg Alavi, Maham dar in Khaneh Haqi Darim, and the latest one entitled Gozar Az Tofan: Khaterat-e Morteza Zarbakht, Dr. Ahmadi has preserved for posterity the ideas, sentiments, experiences, lives, and what the French Annales School calls the mentalities of those not belonging to the elite--some of whom actually came from the lower middle class and even the working class. It is through endeavours such as that of Dr. Ahmadi that we will be able to construct a history of modern Iran from below. Without such painstaking endeavours we would inadvertently perpetuate the conventional tradition of writing of history from above--seeing the past through the eyes of either past or present rulers. As a historian of modern Iranian politics I am eternally grateful to Dr. Hamid Ahmadi for his research.

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