**PAPER TITLE:** Identity Politics vs. Identity Politics: Baha’i Schooling in Pahlavi Era, 1928-1934  

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### ABSTRACT

Baha’i community of Iran has experienced a tremendous period under Reza Shah from 1928-1934. Along with nationalization and centralization processes resulting in suppression of centrifugal forces, establishment of a centralized regime, public schooling system for all Iranians and so on, non-official schools as a whole and Baha’i religious schools particularly have been under the Shah’s suspicious of espionage, being foreign countries’ agencies and self-rule. The Shah’s perception of the word “Iranian” contrasted to what has been conceived by the Baha’i community. For the former, this word meant assimilation of all autonomous forces in a unified centralized territory and also destruction of other groups; either ethnicities or religious communities, to Iranian individuals. But for the latter, being Iranian had religious connotations. The importance of religious education for Baha’i parents and refusal to accept government’s regulations to close the schools in the Baha’i Holy Day, were the two important factors involving Baha’i community in a set of negotiation with Pahlavi officials. Religious affiliation was prior to any element in determining identity, and therefore these two interpretations of “Iranian” as a source of identity, triggered off sets of limitations on Baha’is. The closure of the schools should be conceived as an initial step in prohibiting the Baha’i community from establishing national and local Baha’i circles, preventing them from publishing magazine, newspaper and book, as well as religious propaganda, and finally closing “Haziratul qods”, the religious and administrative Baha’i building.

**Key words:** Baha’ism, Baha’i schools, identity, identity politics, nationalization, centralization.