

**IDENTITY, ETHNICITY, AND CONFLICT IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD OF IRAN: AN EXAMINATION****Reza Talebi**Email: [rh35ezob@studserv.uni-leipzig.de](mailto:rh35ezob@studserv.uni-leipzig.de)

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**Abstract**

Identity is a conscious and fluid concept with biological, historical, mental, rational, and emotional dimensions. It encompasses both similarity and differentiation, making it a dual-faceted structure. Identity connects individuals around a common axis through shared characteristics and associations while distinguishing them from others. As an interdisciplinary concept, identity is explored in various fields, including social psychology, political science, and geography. In social psychology, identity is analyzed through social group relationships and identity formation processes. Political science focuses on the relationship between identity and nationality, while geographical studies consider the geographical components and regional boundaries of identity. Despite varying approaches, identity remains a central topic in social sciences across different societies, with alienation and differentiation being key elements of identity formation processes. In the geographical context of Iran, various ethnic groups and communities experienced a kind of “renaissance” following the Constitutional Revolution, shifting toward diverse identity orientations. Cultural, social, and economic factors played a significant role in this process. Changes in the traditional identities of ethnic groups occurred gradually at first. However, since the Nasir era and the initial emergence of modernity, as well as during the constitutional period, gradual changes in the sources of identity formation began to take shape. This period marked the beginning of new dimensions in the process of forming a unified Iranian identity. This study examines the interaction of identity and modernization processes during three historical phases: The Nasir era, the Constitutional Revolution, and the early Pahlavi period. The role of Turks in these processes has been analyzed using a library-based research method (documentary analysis) and theoretical perspectives from Jenkins, Giddens, Bourdieu, and Habermas. The findings indicate that modernization was a prevailing model in all three periods. The modernization process displayed a paradoxical trajectory in the context of Iranian-Turkish identity. While the Nasir era was characterized by unplanned and aimless reforms, the constitutional period exhibited a more systematic modernization, and the early Pahlavi period represented a more identity-erasing approach to modernization. These movements initially focused on the royal court and upper classes. However, during the Constitutional period, the modernist movement played a more influential role in transforming public identity by forming secret communities and groups, participating in political gatherings, and supporting the constitutional revolution. Despite these efforts, political institutions failed to actively shape the formation of a new Iranian identity.

**Keywords:** *Constitutional Revolution, Azerbaijan, Qajar, Qashqai, Bakhtiari, Sattar Khan, Identity, Minority, Constitution, Turk.*

**Introduction**

In the last century, following the Treaty of Westphalia and the emergence of modern nation-states, national identity—defined as the highest level of identity within a country's borders—has become

critically significant. This importance stems from the fact that modern states, in order to maintain their sovereignty, were compelled to redefine traditional relationships between people and institutions through the concepts of government and citizenship. This development made nation-building and the creation of a national identity one of the central authorities and responsibilities of modern states, leading to various impacts and consequences for both individuals and governments. With the advent of the modern state, the idea of "one state, one culture," and consequently the concept of a nation, became a foundational principle in state formation. During the expansion of the state in the nineteenth century, statesmen sought to cultivate a sense of shared national identity that would bind fragmented communities to the state and its institutions. In this period, state-builders worked systematically to unify previously separate communities and foster their loyalty to the state.

In other words, the creation of a sense of national identity brought numerous advantages to political leaders. It helped strengthen the authority of the government, eliminate tendencies toward secession and fragmentation, and mobilize support for the military and other state goals. Additionally, it fostered a sense of cohesion within society, enhanced loyalty to the state, established identity boundaries distinct from other states, and increased the legitimacy of the government. In this way, the state played a vital role not only in forming national identity but also in legitimizing itself and asserting dominance over society.

In this context, ruling elites took deliberate steps to promote a specific interpretation or narrative of national identity consistent with the broader framework and ideology of the political system. This trend was significantly delayed in developing countries, often for decades or even centuries. Consequently, the construction of national identity became not only a fundamental responsibility of modern states but also an essential aspect of their efforts to legitimize themselves and foster societal cohesion.

### **The Issue of National Identity**

In Iran, the modern issue of national identity emerged following the country's defeat by Russia. During this period, the modernization and development literature viewed state-building and modernization as crucial steps to overcome Iran's backwardness in comparison to the West and even its neighbors. However, what distinguishes Iran's process from the Western discourse of national identity is the weakness of governmental structures and the traditional nature of society, which rendered the national identity discourse an imported concept. This discourse entered Iranian society through intellectuals and individuals sent to the West for academic studies.

In other words, the formation of national identity in contemporary Iran has consistently relied on the intellectual and literary currents of the intellectual class, who sought to generate, communicate, and institutionalize this discourse at a broader societal level. Intellectuals of this period believed that Iran had to undergo various crises during its modernization process. One of the foundational crises was the transition from transnational identities to national identities. As a result, part of Iran's development planning and macro-state strategies inevitably had to focus on the issue of national identity. However, because society was unprepared for the imported national identity discourse, this discussion often remained confined to the intellectual level, limited to definitions and prescriptions, and rarely entered the realm of action, such as during the constitutional era.

Policies implemented during Reza Shah's reign aimed to establish the desired identity in society, making it the primary source of identity definitions for citizens. Media strategies, ethnicity, citizenship definitions, official historiography, and textbook compilations all served as tools or

indicators of identity policies. These fields became the primary avenues through which intellectual and instrumental elites sought to establish the desired identity in society. However, these policies often provoked reactions within society, particularly among other ethnic groups and minorities, which led to changes and occasional moderation in the original policies. At times, these adjustments aimed to address the underlying issues, though they were not always effective in resolving them.

During the Qajar era, with the advent of industrial modernity, the government sought to make significant changes, particularly in areas such as education, which had been neglected across various regions of the country. A substantial portion of the population, particularly non-Persian speakers, Turks, and residents of underprivileged areas, remained deprived of both industrial modernity and scientific, educational, and cultural advancements.

Most scholars concur that this era saw the first raising of the issue of Iranian identity, particularly during the late Qajar period and the defeats Iran suffered at the hands of Russia. These failures prompted the sending of students to the West, with the aim of acquiring new knowledge and compensating for Iran's backwardness. However, these students' initial encounters with the West and its advancements resulted in a profound identity crisis.<sup>1</sup>

On one hand, these students observed the industrial, economic, political, and cultural advancements of Western countries, while on the other hand, they compared them to the unstable state of their homeland, mired in economic poverty and despotism. This contrast prompted them to search for the causes of these disparities and explore ways to address Iran's backwardness. At the same time, nationalism in thought and action was a dominant discourse in Europe, which deeply influenced these intellectuals. These elites became the first preachers of national identity discourse on a large scale and the initial narrators of the modern nation-state.<sup>2</sup>

Responses to the new culture and civilization varied among thinkers of this era. Some accepted Western culture and took a passive stance toward new phenomena, considering the rejection of Iran's past culture and identity as the path to progress. Mirza Malekem Khan exemplifies this perspective. Similarly, intellectuals like Mirza Feth Ali Akhundzadeh and Taqizadeh viewed Iran's social development as contingent upon abandoning cultural and literary identity, language, and traditions in favor of imitating the West.

In contrast to these two views, there was another perspective that viewed the process of modernization positively, considering it a stage of progress and evolution. This perspective argued that national identity consisted of three elements: the "national and ancient," the "religious," and the "Western." European models inspired constitutional government, an attempt to establish a modern nation-state. This context viewed nationalism as an ideology that aimed to build a nation. In other words, Iranian intellectuals' familiarity with European examples of modern governance and the political ideology of nationalism, which serves as the discourse of the modern nation-state, contributed to the growth and spread of nationalism within Iran.

The Constitutional Revolution and the attempt to establish a new nation-state required significant efforts. National identity became a central component of the project of establishing a national government. Since the intellectual and ideological formulation of national identity was primarily

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Paya, "Civil Society and Islamic Identity, Which Islam, Which Society," *Kian Journal*, Year 8, December 1998, Tehran, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Alireza Zuhairi, "Iranian National Identity," *\*Journal of Political Science\**, Vol. 12, 2001, Tehran, p. 16.

the responsibility of the intellectual elite, it came to dominate the discourse. In parallel, the political arena introduced foundational reforms. With the establishment of constitutionalism, the overlap between national identity and the national government project led to a fusion of the self and the other.

From the second term of parliament until the March coup during the third term, the political system of the constitutional era faced a critical situation. The emergence of this critical state, along with the responses of governments and political elites, shaped the strategies for advancing the national government project and fundamentally transformed the national identity project.

In the second parliamentary term, the emergence of two distinct political ideologies—Edjtimaiyun (followers of socialist ideology) and Ammiyun (followers of parliamentary ideology, or democrats)—marked a turning point in the concept of Iranian nationalism. Subsequently, the project of establishing a national state underwent an intellectual transformation. The outbreak of World War I, which led to the occupation of Iran by the warring powers, also reshaped the national identity project during this period. This contributed to the process of national unity. Regardless of ethnic, linguistic, or religious affiliations, all social forces stood together to defend the land, creating a unified front.

Overall, under the influence of Western ideas and intellectual flows during the Qajar period and the constitutional era, Iranian identity entered a modern phase characterized by national identity. However, the response to new ideas positioned Iranian identity at the intersection of three discourses: Islamism, Iranian nationalism, and Westernization. Attempts by intellectuals to reconcile these three discourses led to a kind of identity crisis among Iranians.

The Constitutional Revolution had two notable effects on Iran's national identity. First, it created an identity crisis by undermining the traditional legitimacy of monarchy. Historically, both in pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, the principle of kingship was considered the unifying force of the nation, likened to a divine metaphor that provided cohesion and harmony. The traditional legitimacy of monarchy played a crucial role in fostering unity. Constitutionalism lost this legitimacy and eroded the monarchy's credibility among the people.

The second event of the constitutional era was the decline of religion from its transcendent position. The constitutional context did not explicitly deny religion, but it did diminish its previously dominant role in most instances.<sup>3</sup>

Constitutionalism, which sought to erase certain periods of Iran's history, particularly the era of Turkish rule in pre-constitutional Iran, brought about the third development: unification. While this unification aimed to eliminate fragmented identities, it also contributed to an implicit and profound identity crisis on a macro level. The historical rule of Turks in Iran, previously integrated into a millennia-long Iranian governance tradition, was now pathologically reinterpreted as a separate identity. Consequently, society faced a latent and severe identity crisis at its highest levels. In contrast to the role of religion in the Safavid and Qajar periods, religion could no longer play its central role during this period. Instead, new intellectual elements emerged, and religion had to adapt to a more individualized form. During this critical time, Iranian identity consisted of fragmented elements: religion, monarchy, and modernity—specifically Iranian nationalism, Islam, and Western modernity.

During the Safavid era, the religious nature of the government created a deep relationship between the clergy and state officials, ensuring political legitimacy. However, with the emergence of

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<sup>3</sup> Abdolkarim Soroush, *Mysticism, Intellectualism, and Religiousness* (Tehran: Serat Cultural Institute, 2000), 56

modernity during the mid-Qajar period, this legitimizing identity was challenged. The introduction of modernity and its associated values profoundly impacted both national and religious cultural identities in Iran.

The defeats Iran suffered during the Russo-Persian wars in the early 19th century compelled political and intellectual elites to acknowledge the importance of Western civilization and its economic and military advancements. They realized that Iran's traditional structures were ineffective, unproductive, and outdated. As Fereydoun insightfully observed:

"When Iranians first encountered the manifestations of Western civilization and observed Europe's advanced society, they became painfully aware of their homeland's material and social backwardness. They fell in love with Europe's industrial progress and became increasingly fascinated by the spirituality, freedom, and rule of law prevalent in Western culture."

This recognition led Iranian elites to feel the urgent need for comprehensive reforms across political, military, and social structures to strengthen their nation. Abbas Mirza was among the first to recognize this need and sought solutions.

In short, Iran's defeat by Russia and its resulting awareness of national vulnerability sparked practical and intellectual exchanges between traditional Iranian society and the modernized West. Initiatives like sending students to Europe, establishing Darülfünun (the Polytechnic Academy) by Amir Kabir, and inviting European experts and advisors aimed to harness Western knowledge and technology, particularly in military advancements.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, a group of intellectuals welcomed and praised modernity as a solution to Iran's societal issues, resulting in diverse intellectual movements. Among these, the most significant movement comprised pioneers of modernity who believed that Iran's progress hinged on embracing Western advancements. Their core beliefs emphasized human reason, the necessity of laws, individual rights, humanism, and respect for the dignity and excellence of humanity as the epitome of intellect and progress. They saw acquiring science, technology, and even aspects of Western civilization as the key to lifting Iran from stagnation and propelling it toward progress.

These thinkers' perceptions of identity often led them to confront Islamic identity. Ahundzadeh, one of the proponents of this ideology, famously declared:

"I strive to free our nation from the script of the Arabs. I hope you will find a third path to liberate our nation from the chains of Arab traditions that destroyed our homeland, once a paradise on earth. Free us from this humiliation and servitude—not in the name of prophecy or imamate, but in the name of governance and philosophy."

The intellectuals of the Constitutional Revolution rejected the divine right of kings and instead championed the inalienable rights of individuals. They advocated for liberalism, nationalism, and even socialism rather than monarchy and political conservatism. Instead of exalting earthly gods, they praised principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, the Qajar dynasty's religious legitimacy was questioned. In other words, the traditional role and function of religion during the Safavid and Qajar periods were denied during the constitutional era, and modernity's social and political consequences supplanted religion's central

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<sup>4</sup> Ramin Jahanbaghloo and Behnam Jamshid, *Civilization and Modernity* (Tehran: Markaz Publishing, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Alireza Alavitabar, "Intellectuals and Religious Intellectuals," *Kian Journal*, Year 6, Issue 34 (January and February 1996), p. 39.

role. Intellectuals of this period sought legal and judicial reforms by appealing to human subjectivity and establishing secular institutions.

The encounter between Iranian intellectuals and the West led to a confrontation between Iran's religious identity and the secular concepts of the West. With the Constitutional Revolution, the epistemological foundation of Iranian thought shifted, and new bases for biopolitical and social life were established. Consequently, concepts like "security," "nation," "homeland," and "freedom" became central to the new discourse, alongside slogans like "material progress," "government reform," "democracy," and "republic."<sup>6</sup>

The retreat of the concept of the Twelve-Imam Shiite nation and the emergence of the concept of the Iranian nation marked a shift in the source and trajectory of power. Sovereignty was transferred from God and the "shadow of God" to the Iranian nation and the National Assembly. This transformation marked the onset of a new era where politics moved away from the king's dominance and his power of punishment, torture, and execution toward a collective "national power" that enabled everyone to participate in national decisions.

In all of this, the French Revolution served as a crucial model. Referencing the French Revolution involved learning a forgotten experience, which resulted in the rediscovery of a different self at the core of Iran's historical identity: replacing the concept of the Twelve-Imam Shiite nation with the Iranian nation.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, the sovereignty usurped by ruling elites over the past century was returned to its rightful owners: the people. This new layer of identity, influenced by modernity, emphasized national identity while denying and discarding religious and Islamic identity. Where religion and Islam were mentioned, it was to emphasize the use of Western methods and facilitate public acceptance of them.<sup>8</sup>

### **Identity and nation during the Qajar Era**

The term "millet" (nation) first appeared in royal correspondence and speeches during Naser al-Din Shah's reign, but its usage was characterized by a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, these writings distinguish between tebaa (subjects) and millet, dividing the people into two groups: millet and subjects. On the other hand, these writings occasionally used the terms millet and people interchangeably.

For example, in the Reggie incident, Naser al-Din Shah, in his response to Mirza Ashtiani, differentiated between "the people" and "his subjects," stating: "In general, this action was done as before. We must ensure the people's security and resolve all issues. This suggests that the people, along with the ulema and administrators, held a position superior to that of subjects. This distinction might stem from the populace's heightened awareness and understanding, in addition to their local influence. However, in another letter to Shirazi, Naser al-Din Shah used the term millet, writing, "...With God's permission, let us fulfill the source of this nation's happiness and health."

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<sup>6</sup> Mahmoud Shafiei, "Crisis, the Conflict of Impure Legitimation in the Islamic Republic, and the Way Out," *Farhang-e Andisheh*, Vol. 2, Issue 5 (Spring 2003), p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammad Ali (Homayoun) Katozian, *The Conflict of State and Nation: Theory of the History of Politics in Iran*, trans. Alireza Tayeb (Tehran: Ney Publication, 2001), pp. 95-96

<sup>8</sup> Mohammad Reza Tajik, "Iranian Intellectuals and the Enigma of National Identity," *Journal of National Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 166.

Qajar kings continued to use the concept of millet after the Constitutional Revolution, albeit with slight modifications. Under the constitutional government, the term millet extended beyond the general concept of “people.” For instance, the first article of the election rules stated: “The electors of the nation in Iran’s provinces and territories shall consist of the following classes: princes and Qajars, scholars, nobles, merchants, landowners, and guilds.” This demonstrates that the concept of millet did not practically include other social classes not mentioned in the article. In essence, millet referred only to those with significant financial and social influence.

Despite constitutional reforms and the declaration of the rights of the nation, the Qajar ruling class resisted redefining the concept of millet. They only accepted structural reforms to the government. Despite acknowledging equal rights for the nation's citizens and presenting the government and the nation as two equal components of a national government, the Constitutional Charter failed to implement these principles in practice. Under Qajar rule, the ruling elite denied Turks rights equal to their own.

Muzaffar al-Din Shah’s speech to Qajar princes and officials before the establishment of the National Assembly underscores the limited shift in the concept of millet. The speech reveals that under the constitutional system, millet retained the same subservient relationship to the king as *tebaa*. For instance, Shah declared, “... We have openly granted this freedom and constitutionalism to our loyal nation, accepted the presidency of this honorable assembly with enormous enthusiasm, and stated that this assembly belongs to us.”

During this period, particularly under Abbas Mirza’s governance, Azerbaijan and the Turks attempted to establish an independent framework for decision-making as a nation. However, the role of Azerbaijan and even the Qajar Turkish identity in forming Iran’s national identity remained unrecognized. Iranian monarchy policies actively promoted anti-Turkish sentiments.

For example, in 1900, upon returning from his first foreign trip, Muzaffar al-Din Shah sent a telegram to the Iranian Ministry of Education while still en route from Istanbul to Iran. In this message, he emphasized the importance of teaching Turkish in Azerbaijan's schools. The Shah cited two reasons for this: first, that the people of this region had long spoken the sweet Turkish language, and second, that it was a prerequisite for strengthening friendship and relations between the Qajar and Ottoman governments. However, while this initiative was reported in Istanbul newspapers, including the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* on October 29, 1909, it did not gain traction in Iran.<sup>9</sup>

Modern national consciousness and nationalism in Iran began to emerge in the early 20th century among Persians, Armenians, Assyrians, Kurds, and Jews, gradually spreading further. However, among the Turkish intellectual and political elite in Iran, the dominant trend was not Turkish national consciousness but a Persian-centric perspective.

A significant portion of the Qajar aristocracy, intellectuals, politicians, and literary figures of that era, as well as the ideologues and intellectual leaders of the constitutional movement with Turkish roots, aligned themselves with Persian nationalism and, in some cases, even anti-Turkish

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<sup>9</sup> *Hakikat-i-Tercüman Gazetesi*. (1900, October 4). Istanbul, No. 1, p. 1.

sentiments. This alignment further marginalized the role of Turkish identity in shaping Iran's national identity.

### **The concept of nation among the intellectuals of the Qajar Period**

The Iranian intellectuals of the Qajar era, witnessing the progress of the West, sought to identify the causes of their nation's backwardness. They envisioned Iranians as a nation with a glorious past spanning thousands of years, one that must transition from servitude to becoming free citizens. They frequently referred to the greatness of ancient Iran as a model for progress and emphasized that Iranians had historically surpassed others in human rights, scientific advancements, and cultural development. They urged their people to reclaim a place of leadership in the civilized world. However, this vision primarily focused on Persians as a specific ethnic group.

This identity, which emerged during the period, included opposition to Qajar Turks and Islamic Arabs. People perceived Arabs as the destroyers of ancient civilization, and Turks as the usurpers of Iran. For example, Jalaleddin Mirza Qajar authored a bibliography of Khosravan in this vein. His work celebrated Persian people, their knowledge, and their artistry, stating, "At the dawn of time, before others became craftsmen, the Persians were scholars and artisans."

Jalaleddin Mirza also prioritized eliminating non-Persian words and expressions, using exclusively Persian vocabulary in his writings. In his book, he underscored the intellectual achievements of Persian sciences while subtly denying religious affinities with Arabs, suggesting that fasting originated in Iran rather than Arabia.

Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh, himself of Turkish origin, reminded Iranians of the historical importance of Persians rather than Turks. He sought to illuminate Persian culture and heritage, hoping it would inspire individuals to recognize their rights and identity. In a letter to Mankeji Sahib, a leader of Iranian Zoroastrians, he declared, "Although I am Turkish, my lineage is Persian. My ancestor Haji Ahmad came from Rasht and settled in Azerbaijan... I hope Iranians realize we are the children of Persians, and our homeland is Iran."

Akhundzadeh strongly criticized the adoption of the Arabic script for the Persian language. In a letter to the Iranian Prime Minister, he proposed replacing the script as a significant step toward the perfection of the Iranian nation. Influenced by nationalist movements in the Caucasus, Akhundzadeh viewed national consciousness as the key to material progress. He dedicated his life to enlightening minds and liberating the nation from ignorance, drawing inspiration from Iran's ancient grandeur. In a letter to Jalaleddin Mirza Qajar, the author of *Bibliography of Khosravan*, he praised him for avoiding Arabic words and commended his efforts to free the Iranian nation from the influence of Arab monarchy.

Another prominent intellectual of the period was Mirza Agha Khan Kermani. In his works, Kermani frequently used terms like "nation," "citizens," and "Iranians" to express Iranian ethnic identity. For him, a nation was defined as a people entitled to political rights, and he regarded despotism as corrupting the moral fabric of the nation. He drew parallels to France, advocating for individual and social rights. For him, just governance was contingent on achieving citizenship rights.

In his thirteenth sermon, Kermani wrote: "This nation needs to understand the tools of wealth, the completion of industry and crafts, the promotion of trade and commerce, and the strengthening and refinement of morality, alongside governmental and public reform."

The nation Kermani envisioned was one that, upon recognizing individual rights and eradicating superstitions, would moderate governance with inspiration from the zeal of their ancestors. His writings reveal an early articulation of nation-state dynamics, which were later foundational to the Constitutional Revolution. While praising Aryan peoples and Iranian ethnicity, he considered the

study of ancient Iranian history necessary for countering the tyranny of contemporary rulers. He described the grandeur of the Iranian nation as "Iranianism" and "Kiyanism," citing mythical figures such as Kaveh the Blacksmith and Fereydoun Niksirt as symbols of national resistance and triumph.

Mirza Hassan Talibov was another key intellectual of this era. Influenced by nationalist movements in the Caucasus, Talibov introduced the European concept of "nation." However, rather than providing a clear and comprehensive definition, his writings and ideas fostered national and individual awareness, particularly regarding liberty. To align his ideas with the traditional and religious atmosphere of the Qajar period, Talibov linked the concept of nationhood to Islamic teachings, writing: "Every person in the Iranian nation should recognize their humanity, which carries a divine spirit within."

Talibov characterized freedom as a "spiritual force" that encompasses dignity, knowledge, honor, and decency, which he stored in a collective reservoir known as the "nation." To him, freedom was a public asset belonging to the entire Iranian nation, with Qajar rulers as its primary usurpers. Although freedom was collective, it required individuals to recognize their individuality and take active steps to realize it. He emphasized education, scientific inquiry, and intellectual development as paths toward this realization. In his book *Ahmed*, Talibov discussed the legal systems of nineteen European nations, showing that constitutional governance was achievable regardless of population or territory.

### **Minorities During the Qajar Era**

According to Jan Foran, Iranian society has always been a complex structure. Abrahamian described it as a "vivid mosaic" and a peculiar city: "The ethnic composition of Iran resembled a complex mosaic. In this mosaic, every piece had a unique shape, size, and color." This complexity stemmed from the wide variety of lifestyles among peasants, nomads, and city dwellers. Religious beliefs also varied widely, including divisions between Sunnis and Shiites, Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as Twelve-Imam Shiites and other Shia sects. Additionally, linguistic diversity was evident with languages and dialects such as Persian, Turkish, Turkmen, Kurdish, Gilaki, Balochi, and Mazandarani (Tabari).<sup>10</sup>

Group conflicts often resulted from this ethnic, racial, linguistic, and ideological diversity, leading to what is known as "social tension." In Iran, however, such group diversity easily escalated into group fragmentation: local unity transformed into national divisions, and group affiliations turned into regional parochialism and political divisions. As Lambton noted, group militancy, to some extent, became a hallmark of Iranian identity even in modern times.

### **Religious Minorities**

Iranian society during the Qajar era was deeply religious. However, it also suffered from significant religious biases, which often led to tensions not only between Muslims and religious minorities but also among Muslim sects themselves. Lady Justin Schill, the wife of the British ambassador to Iran, wrote in her memoirs (1849–1853):

Despite the authoritarian regime ruling the Iranian government, religious freedoms enjoy significant respect here. Except for occasional incidents of fanaticism, there is usually no

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<sup>10</sup> Yarvand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, trans. Kazem Firoozmand et al. (Tehran: Markaz Publishing, 2007), 17.

justification for the mistreatment of Jews and Christians, or followers of other religions, based on religious principles, current laws, or government policies.”<sup>11</sup>

However, religious prejudice was so prevalent that Dr. Fourier, the personal physician to Naser al-Din Shah, observed in his writings:

“Unfortunately, in this country, whenever there is a conflict between health and religion, religion always prevails.”<sup>12</sup>

Sociologist Alain Birre defines social tension as “a resistant and emotional state, rooted in conflict or opposition between individuals or groups. This can manifest in various forms, including superstition, mutual ignorance, clashing interests, economic ideals, beliefs, public opinion, and collective responses.” In times of conflict, societies transition from a state of crisis to a state of release or eruption.<sup>13</sup>

During the Qajar period, some sectarian conflicts stemmed from religious fanaticism. As previously mentioned, Iranian society was deeply religious and prejudiced, which inhibited the integration of different faiths and sects. Religious boundaries were particularly pronounced in urban areas, as each sect inhabited distinct “neighborhoods.” For instance, Shiraz consisted of five eastern neighborhoods for Heidaris, five western neighborhoods for Nematis, and a separate suburban street for Jews.

In addition to Muslims' religious bias against minorities, certain superstitions and obsessions also contributed to the escalation of tensions. Lady Schill noted:

“Iranians are a peculiar collection of people—fanatical, tolerant, patient, and perhaps indifferent. An Ottoman Turk might hire an Armenian cook and bathe in their house, but an Iranian would never entrust their kitchen to an Armenian at any cost.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite such biases, interactions between religious minorities and the majority population were relatively positive in regions such as Azerbaijan, Yazd, and Shiraz. These areas had more contact with other nations and treated religious minorities, including Arabs, Syrians, Mandaeans, and Jews, with greater fairness than the isolated central regions of Iran.

Nevertheless, tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims persisted. The government adopted a policy of religious freedom for non-Muslim minorities, at least in official terms. In his social history, Wills noted that the Iranian government treated all non-Muslim subjects kindly. For example, the Iranian government did not harm or oppress Zoroastrians (known as Gabr), particularly those concentrated in Yazd. Furthermore, the Russian government provided protection to almost all Christians and Armenians in Iran.<sup>15</sup>

Tensions between Shiites and Sunnis in Iran trace back to the early centuries of Islam and persisted throughout history, often resulting in significant casualties. Before the Safavid dynasty established

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<sup>11</sup> Lady Shale, *Memoirs*, trans. Hossein Abu Torabian (Tehran: Navid Publishing, 1983), 152.

<sup>12</sup> Foriye, *Memoirs: Three Years in the Iranian Court*, trans. Abbas Iqbal Ashtiani (Tehran: Elm Publishing, 1973), 170.

<sup>13</sup> Allen Biro, *The Culture of Social Science*, trans. Baqer Sarukhani (Tehran: Kayhan, 1987), 385.

<sup>14</sup> Lady Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*; Translated by Hossein Abu Torabian; Tehran: Nashr-e Now, 1983.

<sup>15</sup> Morteza Ravandi, *Social History of Iran, Vol. 9: Religious Sects in Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1993), 311.

a Shiite state, many governments supported or directly instigated conflicts against Shiites. The establishment of the Safavid Shiite state reversed this trend, leading to the mass killing of Sunnis in its early years. This was one of the factors fueling wars between the Safavid Turks and the Ottoman Turks. In other words, one source of conflict between these two powers lay in their religious differences. However, both governments eventually distanced themselves from such religious conflicts over time.

Shill described the differences between Shiites and Sunnis as follows:

“It seems that there are no significant differences in principles between these two religious branches of Islam... The differences in opinion between these two faiths are minor, yet the rivalry and hostility between them are at the highest level.”<sup>16</sup>

The author of *Rostam Al-Tawarikh* discusses various examples of Shiite-Sunni differences, referencing the views of notable figures and considering the conflicts between these two groups to be futile and irrational. However, the Qajar period generally saw a decrease in the historically persistent tensions and conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis.<sup>17</sup>

In Iranian cities, not only were there religious bigotry and superstition-related conflicts, but other disputes also arose among different groups, causing unrest and clashes. Economic and material interests, ideological differences, mutual ignorance, and faith-based disputes often served as the root causes of these conflicts. Disagreements among religious scholars or between clerics and rulers, driven by divergent beliefs and interests, often led to tensions and disturbances in urban areas.

After the Constitutional Revolution, ethnic, religious, and sectarian tensions persisted. Governments and leaders exploited these issues, as documented in historical accounts from this period. For instance, after ascending to the throne, Mohammad Ali Shah used measures such as refusing to invite parliamentarians to his coronation, reinstating Belgian advisors, and appointing Amin al-Sultan. He also rekindled existing group differences in Kerman (Sheikhs vs. extremist clerics), Yazd (Muslims vs. Zoroastrians), Tehran (Iranians vs. Turks), and between the Heydari and Nemati groups in Shushtar and Shiraz, to weaken his opponents.

The Shah also unnecessarily weakened the social base of Turks and Tabriz in Azerbaijan, igniting civil and armed protests in the Turkish region.

The sects and religious groups of this era also became part of the constitutional political equations. Following the dissolution of parliament in Tehran, Sheikh al-Islam, the leader of the Sheikhiyya sect in Tabriz, immediately demanded the re-establishment of parliament. Volunteers trained in the city's neighborhoods, many of whom were associated with the Sheikhiyya sect, rallied behind two local heroes, Sattar Khan and Baqir Khan.

The districts aligned with the constitutionalists included middle-class neighborhoods such as Amir Khiz Street and Maralan. Monarchists, supported by the Shahsevan tribe and led by the local Friday prayer leader, fortified themselves in lower-class religious neighborhoods like Sorkhab and Devechi.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lady Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*; Translated by Hossein Abu Torabian; Tehran: Nashr-e Now, 1983, Pp 25.

<sup>17</sup> Morteza Ravandi, *Social History of Iran, Vol. 9: Religious Sects in Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1993), 311.

<sup>18</sup> Yarvand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, trans. Kazem Firoozmand et al. (Tehran: Markaz Publishing, 2007), 89.

However, over time, increased familiarity with new Western ideas, the rise of science and knowledge in the country, and greater public awareness of the unfortunate consequences of these ethnic and sectarian tensions gradually led to a decline in both their intensity and frequency. Though some tensions remain, they are much less severe.

### **-Armenians**

Samuel Greene Wheeler Benjamin, who served as the first U.S. ambassador to Iran during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, wrote about minorities.

The majority of Armenians participate in trade and commerce. However, unlike their counterparts in other Eastern countries, their isolation makes them less successful in business, and they rarely hold significant positions. These minorities often complain about unfair treatment, but my conclusion is that their complaints are largely unfounded. They do not suffer mistreatment in Iran.”<sup>19</sup>

The rise of the Qajar dynasty provided Armenians with significant opportunities.<sup>20</sup> Under Agha Mohammad Khan’s rule, many Armenians joined his military and rendered valuable services. Amir Kabir led the formation of an Armenian battalion in Salmas and Urmia in 1268 AH (1851 AD).<sup>21</sup>

Azerbaijan, due to its unique geographical position, possessed fertile agricultural lands. The agricultural sector’s need for industrial and manufacturing components led Armenians to craft these items skillfully. Later, with the support of certain rulers and kings, Armenians expanded into trade, accumulating substantial wealth. This financial backing enabled them to establish workshops and enhance secondary industries.

Armenians, coinciding with the onset of their economic growth and prosperity, maintained contact with European nations where industries were more advanced and mechanized. Embassies and trade connections in Western countries provided Armenians with exposure to these industries. Due to their religious ties, Westerners often favored Armenians in modern endeavors, granting them a prominent role. The Qajar dynasty’s kindness toward religious minorities further supported the growth of Armenian communities, which they used to bolster constitutionalism and arm themselves.

Armenians maintained an active presence in cultural activities throughout Iran. Their endeavors faced no restrictions, and the country’s positive political atmosphere was instrumental in enabling these efforts.

However, the Qajar political environment harbored mixed memories of Armenian politicians. Events such as violence against Turks in Azerbaijan, the assassination of Sattar Khan in Atabak Park during the Constitutional Movement, the Lausanne negotiations, and Mirza Malkom Khan’s political activities created a sense of ambiguity and mistrust.

The most notable incident during this period involved violence against the Turkish population in Azerbaijan, leaving a lasting and painful legacy in relations between Armenians and other groups.

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<sup>19</sup> S.H. Benjamin, *Benjamin's Travel Diary*, trans. Mohammad Hossein Kordbacheh (Tehran: Javidan, 1990), 269-270.

<sup>20</sup> Andranik Hovian, *Armenians in Iran* (Tehran: Hermes and International Center for Dialogue Among Civilizations, 2001), 275.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, s276.

**-Bábís and Bahá'ís**

The arrival of Britain in Iran marked a period of confrontation between tradition and modernity, driven by the weakening of the Qajar dynasty and increased foreign dominance and colonization. Iran's geopolitical and strategic location, sharing a border with India and acting as a gateway for British rivals such as Russia and France, made it a valuable military base for the British. Through comprehensive treaties like the 1809 agreement and the detailed contract of 1812, Britain solidified its presence in Iran, not only securing military dominance but also extracting significant economic concessions. British influence in Iran persisted until the end of the Qajar era, during which institutions such as Freemasonry were established, and continued into the Pahlavi regime, during which Iranians continued to suffer under colonial policies.<sup>22</sup>

During the same time, changes in Shia law made fundamentalist interpretations more consistent and accurate. This made Akhbari clerics less influential, since they were competing intellectually with Usuli jurists.<sup>23</sup> The Shaykhi school emerged as a result of these differences, claiming a direct connection to the Imam of the time, paving the way for the rise of the Bábí school. This shift displaced traditional jurisprudence with charismatic authority, providing fertile ground for the emergence of sectarian movements and exploitation by British colonialism.

Naser al-Din Shah sought to use the Bábís as a shield against the ulema at the behest of foreign powers like Britain and Russia, which aimed to counter the anti-colonial policies of the ulema by fostering sectarian strife and thereby extending their influence in Iran. Although the movement calmed after the execution of Mohammad Ali Báb, tensions persisted.<sup>24</sup>

Mohammad Ali Báb, despite publicly recanting multiple times before the ulema, consistently sought opportunities to seize power. After his death, many Bábís believed that his assassination had been ordered by Naser al-Din Shah. This led to a failed assassination attempt on the Shah, after which the Shah personally led the suppression of the Bábís. Figures such as Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn Ali Nuri) and Subh-i-Azal (Yahya Nuri) were exiled, marking the genesis of the Bahá'í faith.<sup>25</sup>

The Bahá'í leaders outside Iran focused on propagating their sect and continued to oppose Shia scholars.<sup>26</sup> Years after Abdu'l-Bahá's death, Bahá'í writings explicitly rejected the concept of jihad, urging followers to distance themselves from the ulema.<sup>27</sup>

Under British policies in Iran, figures like Mankeji Limji Houshang Hatria, a Zoroastrian of Indian descent who had served British interests since the reign of Mohammad Shah, arrived in Iran during Naser al-Din Shah's rule. Adopting Iran's archaeological system, Mankeji worked to support the Bahá'ís by distancing them from indigenous Islamic influences and converting them from Zoroastrianism.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Foran, J. (n.d.). *Fragile Resistance: The History of Social Developments in Iran*. (p. 22).

<sup>23</sup> Zahedani, S. S. (n.d.). *Baha'is in Iran*. (p. 287).

<sup>24</sup> Abrahamian, Y. (2007). *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Tehran: Markaz Publishing. (p. 23).

<sup>25</sup> Etezadzoltaneh. (n.d.). Section on Fitnah. (p. 16)

<sup>26</sup> Afrasiabi, B. (n.d.). *Comprehensive History of Baha'is*. (p. 271).

<sup>27</sup> Namdar, M. (2003). "Colonialism and Pseudo-Religious Professions." *Ayam Magazine*, 29, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Faqih Haghghani, M. (2003). "The Baha'is and the British Intelligence Service." *Ayam Magazine*, 29, 18-19.

Due to the unfavorable conditions created by the execution of Mohammad Ali Báb and the exile of many Bahá'í leaders, the Bahá'ís resorted to using "soft revolution" tactics through secret circles. Mankeji, as one of the founders of such circles in Iran, became a crucial ally for the Bahá'ís in navigating governmental opposition. The contemporary Bahá'í historian Turaj Amin, who compiled Zoroastrian documents in his book *Iranian Zoroastrian Documents*, praised Mankeji for his support of the Bahá'ís.<sup>29</sup>

Mankeji's involvement extended beyond promoting ancient traditions and the Bahá'í faith. He also played a decisive role in establishing Freemasonry circles, which later influenced the constitutional movement. Although these associations were short-lived and shrouded in secrecy due to Naser al-Din Shah's decree to dissolve them, Freemasonry's impact on Iranian society persisted.<sup>30</sup>

Freemasonry, often referred to by Iranians as "Britain's secret weapon," began during Naser al-Din Shah's reign with figures like Mankeji and Malkam Khan aligning the institution with British goals. British scholars, such as Dennis Wright, praised figures like Malkam Khan, portraying them as key drivers of Freemasonry in Iran while downplaying British efforts to establish a direct link with Iranian lodges.<sup>31</sup>

The Bahá'ís, sharing intellectual parallels with Freemasonry, adopted its cosmopolitan ideologies, anti-Islamic and pro-Christian sentiments, and notions of divine-human embodiment. These shared ideals bolstered their influence, although tensions persisted between their ambitions and Iran's traditional structures.<sup>32</sup>

During the Qajar era, Armenians played a prominent role in Iranian society. S.H. Benjamin, America's first envoy to Iran during Naser al-Din Shah's reign, described the Armenians as primarily engaged in commerce but facing challenges due to isolation, limiting their success and access to influential positions. Benjamin noted that despite frequent complaints of discrimination, Iran did not subject Armenians to mistreatment.<sup>33</sup>

The rise of Agha Mohammad Khan and the Qajar dynasty marked a new era for Armenians, as they found protection and freedom under Qajar rule. Many Armenians joined Agha Mohammad Khan's military and provided valuable services. Amir Kabir also integrated Armenians into key roles, forming an Armenian regiment in Salmas and Urmia in 1851.<sup>34</sup>

Armenians became key players in Iran's trade networks, facilitating the export of goods to Europe via Azerbaijan. Their expertise in agriculture and industrial production positioned them as pivotal contributors to the region's economic growth. With financial backing from both the Qajar rulers and Western allies, Armenians established workshops and stimulated local industries.

Culturally, Armenians enjoyed significant freedom, actively participating in Iranian society without restrictions on their activities. However, politically, their involvement often carried

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<sup>29</sup> Zibakalam, S. (2011). *Tradition and Modernity*. Tehran: Cheshmeh. (p. 271).

<sup>30</sup> Wright, D. (n.d.). *The English Among the Iranians*. (pp. 300, 308).

<sup>31</sup> Mir, H. (n.d.). *Iranian Freemasonry Organization*. (p. 207).

<sup>32</sup> Shakeri, K. (2003). "The Armenians of Iran and the Emergence of Socialism in Iran." In M. H.

<sup>33</sup> Khosropanah (Ed.), *The Role of Armenians in Iranian Social Democracy (1905-1911)*. Tehran: Shirazeh Publishing. (p. 30, footnote).

<sup>34</sup> Amourian, A. (1976). *The Epic of Yaprám*. Tehran: Javidan Publications. (p. 28).

negative connotations. Incidents like the violence against Turks in Azerbaijan, the assassination of Sattar Khan, and other anti-Turkish activities by Armenian revolutionaries created tensions.

Groups like the Dashnaks and Hunchaks, with varying ideologies, played influential roles during the constitutional movement. While the Dashnaks supported a centralized Armenian agenda, their collaboration with European allies and use of guerrilla warfare exacerbated divisions, particularly with Azerbaijan's Turks.<sup>35</sup>

Leaders like Yeprem Khan demonstrated a clear anti-Turkish bias, aligning with Democratic Party efforts to disarm Sattar Khan's forces. This weakened the constitutionalists' resistance during critical moments, such as the Russian invasion. Yeprem's final act as Tehran police chief involved pressuring Iranian parliamentarians to accept Russian ultimatums, further demonstrating the divisive role played by Armenian factions during this era.<sup>36</sup>

The historical impact of Armenians on Iran's social, political, and cultural landscape remains significant,<sup>37</sup> marked by both contributions and controversies that continue to shape perceptions of their role in the country.<sup>38</sup>

### **-Jews during the Qajar Era**

During the Qajar period, between the years 1264-1324 AH (1848-1906 CE), the social and economic conditions of Jews in Iran underwent significant changes and improvements compared to earlier periods. Despite contradictory reports, the Iranian government and local authorities were under dual pressure: on one side were European powers and international Jewish organizations advocating for reform, while on the other were fanatical and influential religious groups that resisted change. This created an environment of caution and restraint on the part of the government, as it sought to avoid offending either side. Consequently, progress in this area was often slow and challenging.

European powers regularly highlighted the plight of Iranian Jews in their press and publications, advocating for improvements in their situation. During Nasser al-Din Shah's first trip to Europe in 1873, Jewish organizations in cities like Paris, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, and Istanbul brought attention to the dire conditions faced by Iranian Jews. In Paris, the Shah met with members of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Global Jewish Alliance) on July 12, 1873, at a hotel. The president of the organization, Adolphe Crémieux, expressed dissatisfaction with the treatment of Jews in Iran and sought improvements in their cultural, social, and educational conditions.<sup>39</sup>

Following extensive discussions, often facilitated by figures like Mirza Malek Khan, Nasser al-Din Shah tasked Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar with examining the situation and implementing reforms to improve the living conditions of Jews. The Shah also issued an order for the

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<sup>35</sup> Afshar, I. (1980). *New Findings on Constitutionalism and the Role of Taghizadeh*. Tehran: Javidan Publications. (p. 238).

<sup>36</sup> Chalangarian, A. (1910-1911). "Iran after the Revolution." *Neu Ziet*, 1, 186-192.

<sup>37</sup> Afary, J. (n.d.). *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*. (p. 246).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 192.

<sup>39</sup> Elias J. Bickerman and Walter J. Fischel. (2007). "Persia" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, Vol. 15. Detroit: Keter Publishing House and Thomson Gale, pp. 782-92.

establishment of Alliance schools. Despite initial resistance from religious groups, the Alliance eventually established committees in Tehran and Shiraz.<sup>40</sup>

Through collaboration with European embassies, the Alliance Israélite Universelle exerted significant pressure on the Iranian government to reform the social and educational status of Jews. Nasser al-Din Shah issued a decree in 1880 to improve the living conditions of Jews, urging state administrators to comply. The establishment of Alliance schools transformed the educational landscape for Jews across various regions of Iran. These schools became pivotal centers for disseminating new knowledge and challenging traditional educational norms.

During Muzaffar al-Din Shah's reign, the victory of the Constitutional Movement and the expansion of Alliance schools significantly enhanced the educational opportunities available to Jews, marking a stark improvement over earlier conditions. By this period, Jewish students had access to modern education and were gradually integrating into broader Iranian society.<sup>41</sup>

In 1862, Sir Moses Montefiore, a prominent British Jew, wrote to Nasser al-Din Shah, praising Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid for creating favorable conditions for Jews in the Ottoman Empire and urging the Shah to follow suit. Following Nasser al-Din Shah's return from Europe, the Jewish Alliance and foreign embassies maintained their advocacy, leading to the Shah's 1880 decree supporting Jewish welfare.<sup>42</sup>

By the second decade of Muzaffar al-Din Shah's rule, constitutionalists pledged to respect the civil rights of Jews following the establishment of the Iranian constitution. Jewish communities also organized themselves, forming the Jewish Association to advocate for their rights. During the revolution, Jamaledin Vaez delivered a landmark speech at the Hadash Synagogue in Tehran's Jewish quarter, emphasizing that Jews would benefit from the freedoms brought by the revolution.<sup>43</sup>

Jewish communities actively participated in the socio-political developments of the time. For instance, in Isfahan, they held mourning ceremonies for Azerbaijani martyrs and joined constitutional celebrations with Torah scrolls in hand. These events underscored their active engagement in Iran's broader sociopolitical narrative.<sup>44</sup>

The period between 1264 and 1324 AH (1948 CE and 1906 CE) marked a transformation for Iranian Jews, as they leveraged support from international Jewish organizations and European powers to achieve significant social and economic advancements. The establishment of Alliance schools, combined with advocacy by international organizations,<sup>45</sup> forged closer ties between Iranian Jews and the global Jewish community. These changes ushered in a period of social

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<sup>40</sup> Naser al-Din Shah. (1998). *Memoirs of Naser al-Din Shah's First Journey to Farangistan*, compiled by Fatemeh Ghaziha, Tehran: Iranian Documentary Research Institute National Archives, 1999, p. 224.

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Center for Diplomacy Documentation and History, Carton 10, File 18, 1279 AH:1.

<sup>42</sup> Habib Levy. (1961). *Jewish History of Iran*, Vol. 2. Tehran: Judah Brokheim Bookstore, p. 550.

<sup>43</sup> Morteza Ravandi. (2003). *Social History of Iran*, Vol. 9, Tehran: Negah, p. 544.

<sup>44</sup> Habib Levy. (1961). *Jewish History of Iran*, Vol. 3. Tehran: Judah Brokheim Bookstore, p. 810.

<sup>45</sup> Kasravi, A. (2004). *History of the Constitution of Iran* (20th ed.). Tehran: Amirkabir. p. 388.

evolution, as Jews increasingly accessed modern education, professional opportunities, and improved living conditions.<sup>46</sup>

The Alliance schools played a pivotal role in these developments, offering modern curricula, teaching French, and adopting innovative educational methods. While the progress was gradual, the foundations laid during this period set the stage for substantial improvements in the lives of Iranian Jews.

In summary, the Qajar era marked the beginning of a new chapter for Iranian Jews, characterized by gradual but significant improvements in their social, economic, and educational conditions. These advancements, driven by a combination of internal advocacy and external support, not only improved their status within Iranian society but also established lasting connections with the global Jewish community.

### **Kurds**

During the Constitutional Revolution, various regions of Iran's political and human geography experienced different impacts. The current political and social status of Iranian Kurdistan province lacks even the foundational constitutional achievements, such as the establishment of state and provincial associations. Of course, the social, economic, and political conditions of Kurdistan province played a role in keeping it distant from the broad scope of the Constitutional Revolution. Being on the Ottoman borders and lacking a transition from feudalism to bourgeoisie, Kurdistan had less interaction compared to regions such as Khorasan, Azerbaijan, Mazandaran, and Fars.

The Constitutional Revolution and its political ramifications brought about a multitude of challenges for Iran's Kurdish regions. One of the most significant outcomes was the emergence of anti-constitutional movements among the Kurds, creating unrest and insecurity in western Iran. In Kurdish areas, considered rural and nomadic communities, the gains of the Constitutional Revolution were much weaker. The election law divided voters and elected representatives into six groups: princes and members of the Qajar tribes, clergy and scholars, nobles and aristocrats, landowners and gentry, merchants, and guilds.<sup>47</sup> However, the election law did not recognize nomadic groups separately, instead considering them as part of the provinces.<sup>48</sup>

The dissatisfaction among tribal leaders, particularly Kurdish tribal and nomadic leaders, stemmed from the constitutional regime's lack of attention to their political presence and participation. To prevent a deep socio-political crisis, constitutional regime leaders enacted the "Provincial and District Associations Law." They came to the realization that they needed to embrace both ethnic and political pluralism. Unfortunately, the failure to implement this law properly in Kurdish regions not only led to widespread hostility toward the constitutional regime but also exacerbated the political crisis in Kurdistan province.<sup>49</sup>

Some believe that the reduction of the central government's authority due to the establishment of the constitutional regime created a vacuum that intensified the crisis in Kurdish areas. Hamid Ahmadi attributes Kurdish opposition to the constitution partly to the differences between Kurds

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<sup>46</sup> Dolatabadi, Y. (1992). *Hayat Yahya* (Vol. 4). Tehran: Attar. p. 135.

<sup>47</sup> Janet Afari, *The Constitutional Revolution of Iran*, translated by Reza Rezaei, Tehran: Biston Publishing, 2000, p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> *A Collection of Articles on Tribes and Nomads*, Tehran: Agah Publishing, 1983, p. 232.

<sup>49</sup> Mostafa Rahimi, *Iran's Constitution and Principles of Democracy*, Tehran: Amirkabir, 1978, p. 177.

and Turks. Unlike the Turks, the Kurds lacked a history of governance or urbanization, which significantly influenced their opposition to the constitution and the dominance of Qajar Turks.<sup>50</sup>

In 1881, the defeat of Sheikh Ubeydullah, the killing of rebel leaders, and the deployment of government forces to rebellious areas brought a decade of political calm to northern Kurdish regions. However, in 1892, the Shikaki Kurds, led by Muhammad Agha Shikaki, initiated a movement against the central government. The history of Kurdish opposition to the Qajar government dates back to the killing of Ismail Agha Shikaki in 1819.<sup>51</sup>

Between 1850 and 1857, Ali Khan Shikaki, the son of Ismail Agha, led Kurdish protests against the central government. During Sheikh Ubeydullah's Kurdish uprising, Ali Khan adopted a cautious approach, sending one of his sons to the government army and another to Sheikh Ubeydullah's forces. However, the Ottoman forces captured Ali Khan in 1883, turned him over to the Iranian government, and he died in prison the same year.<sup>52</sup>

In 1892, the Kurdish uprising led by Muhammad Agha spread throughout Azerbaijan, especially in Hoy and Salmas, but was eventually suppressed by government forces. Muhammad Agha's son, Jafar Agha Shikaki, later continued the rebellion. Ultimately, in 1905, Muhammad Ali Mirza's deputy in Azerbaijan, Husainqali Khan Nizam al-Saltanah Mafi, eliminated Jafar Agha, paving the way for the rebellion of Ismail Agha Shikaki.

The continuous crises in the Kurdish regions during this period illustrate the complex socio-political dynamics between the Kurdish communities and the central government. These tensions often hindered stability and progress in the region.

Between 1850 and 1857 (1267–1274 AH)<sup>53</sup>, Ali Khan Shikak<sup>54</sup>, the son of Ismail Agha<sup>55</sup>, led Kurdish protests against the central government.<sup>56</sup> During the Kurdish uprising under Sheikh Ubeydullah, Ali Khan Shikak<sup>57</sup> maintained a conservative stance. He sent one of his sons, Muhammad Agha<sup>58</sup>, to the government forces while the other, Qasim Agha, joined Sheikh

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<sup>50</sup> Abdullah Nahid, *My Memoirs*, edited by Ahmad Ghazi, Tehran: Bija, Shabnam Printing House, 1983, p. 26.

<sup>51</sup> Hamid Ahmadi, *Ethnicity and Ethnicity in Iran*, Tehran: Ney Publishing, 1999, p. 88.

<sup>52</sup> Mirza Rashid Adib al-Shoa'ra, *History of Afshar*, edited by Mahmud Ramian and Parviz Shahriari, Tabriz: Central Council Publications for the 2500 Years of National Celebration, 1967, pp. 366-368.

<sup>53</sup> Excerpts from *Political Documents of Iran and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 2, Tehran: Bureau of Political and International Studies, 1991, p. 571.

<sup>54</sup> Mirza Rashid Adib al-Shoa'ra, *History of Afshar*, p. 478.

<sup>55</sup> Mirza Rashid Adib al-Shoa'ra, *History of Afshar*, p. 480

<sup>56</sup> Hussein Ibn Abdullah Sarabi, *The Travelogue of Farrokh Khan Amin al-Dawla*, edited by Karim Esfahanyan and Qudratullah Roshani, Tehran: Asatir Publishing, 1994, pp. 110-111.

<sup>57</sup> Karim Esfahanian, *Collection of Documents of Farrokh Khan Amineh Doleh*, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1975, Part 4, pp. 312 and 352.

<sup>58</sup> Mohammad Rahim Nusrat Makuyi (Nusrat al-Mulk), *History of the Azerbaijan Revolution and the Maku Khanate*, Qom: Ilmiye Publishing, 1994, p. 19.

Ubeydullah's forces.<sup>59</sup> However, government forces attacked Ali Khan in 1882 (1299 AH). He fled to the Ottoman Empire after the fall of Chehrig Castle, but the Ottomans extradited him to Iran in 1883 (1300 AH), where he died in prison the same year.<sup>60</sup>

In 1892 (1309 AH), Muhammad Agha, the son of Ali Khan, led the Shikak Kurdish uprising, which spread across Azerbaijan, especially to Khoy and Salmas.<sup>61</sup> However, government forces eventually suppressed the uprising, forcing Muhammad Agha to flee to the Ottoman Empire. Jafar Agha Shikak, Muhammad Agha's son, led the Kurdish insurgency until Hussein Quli Khan Nizam al-Saltanah Mafi<sup>62</sup>, Muhammad Ali Mirza's deputy in Azerbaijan, killed him in 1905 (1323 AH).<sup>63</sup> This marked the emergence of Ismail Agha Shikak's rebellion.

During this period, the Kurdish raids around Mahabad (Souqbulagh) and Miandoab (Qoshachay) and their victory over government forces provided an opportunity for Azerbaijan's constitutional opponents, including figures like Seyyed Hashem Deveci in Tabriz.<sup>64</sup>

In 1907 (1325 AH), during the Kurdish invasion, constitutionalists in Tehran were simultaneously dealing with events in Kurdistan and the Tophaneh Square incident. Unknowingly, the Kurds' actions contributed to the weakening of constitutionalism. The Souqbulagh crisis, occurring in the early days of the constitutional regime, demonstrated that the Kurds maintained their historical approach to relations with the central government, regardless of the broader revolutionary context.<sup>65</sup>

The political-military activities of northern Kurds during the constitutional revolution highlight their conflicting position between constitutionalists and autocrats.<sup>66</sup> According to M. Kardukh, "Some Kurdish commanders supported the old regime due to prejudice and opportunism rooted in the overall underdevelopment of Kurdish society."<sup>67</sup> Tribal leaders, religious figures, and sheikhs dictated most political orientations during this period, demonstrating a lack of adaptability to the changing times. Only a few recognized the necessity of overthrowing the Shah's reactionary regime to achieve their ideals.

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<sup>59</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad-ol-Saltaneh, *Ma'asir ve-l-A'sar*, edited by Iraj Afshar, Tehran: Asatir Publishing, 1984, p. 80.

<sup>60</sup> Mohammad Rahim Nusrat Makuyi, *History of the Azerbaijan Revolution and the Maku Khanate*, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Mohammad Rahim Nusrat Makuyi, *History of the Azerbaijan Revolution and the Maku Khanate*, p. 30.

<sup>62</sup> Mehdi Ağası, *History of Khoy*, Tabriz: Iran History and Culture Institute Publications, 1971, p. 288.

<sup>63</sup> Mansoureh Etehadieh and others, *Memoirs of the Mafi Nizamat al-Saltanah*, Tehran: Iran History Publishing, 1983, Chapter 3, pp. 737-738

<sup>64</sup> Mirza Ebrahim Khan Kalantari Baghmishehi, *Memoirs of Musharraf al-Dawla*, edited by Yahya Zaka, Tehran: Fekr-e-Rooz, 1998, p. 119.

<sup>65</sup> For the events in Tophane Square, see: Mehdi Malekzadeh, *History of Iranian Constitution*, Tehran: Scientific Publications, 1984, pp. 563-580.

<sup>66</sup> See also: Ahmad Kasravi, *Eighteen Years of Azerbaijan's History*, pp. 499-500.

<sup>67</sup> M. Kardouk, *Kurdish National Movements from Past to Present*, Vol. 2, Stockholm: Varesh Publishing, 1993, p. 77

In 1908 (1326 AH), the resolution of the Souqbulagh crisis shifted the center of rebellion from the Mokri Kurdish region to the Shikak and Jalali Kurdish areas. By the first quarter of 1908 (1326 AH), Shikak Kurds looted villages around Salmas, killing more than 2,000 people. The scale of these attacks led the local population to believe that the Shah had incited the Kurds to suppress the constitutionalists in the region.<sup>68</sup>

Kurdish raids spread across the region as they shelled the parliament. Between mid-April and late May, Kurdish raids plundered villages around Souqbulagh, Urmia, and Khoy. When the battles in Tabriz began,<sup>69</sup> Kurdish raids expanded to villages such as Mahavan and Sahlan in the vicinity of Tabriz. The Mujahideen's resistance defeated the Kurds in their early Ramadan attack on Tabriz, forcing them to retreat. Muhammad Ali Shah reportedly welcomed these Kurdish attacks, which severely weakened the constitutionalists in Azerbaijan.<sup>70</sup>

Fear of Kurdish raids and the weakness of the central government prompted many residents of Urmia, including Assyrians and some Turkish villages, to seek protection under the Ottoman Empire.<sup>71</sup> Despite the establishment of the constitution, Kurdish attacks did not diminish in intensity; instead, they expanded in scope. The news of the extensive Kurdish occupation of Miandoab alarmed officials in Tehran, prompting them to send a telegram to the Tabriz<sup>72</sup> Provincial Association, pleading for the Mujahideen and prominent Azerbaijani leaders to confront the Kurds.<sup>73</sup>

The disagreements among Kurds further exacerbated the crisis in the region.<sup>74</sup> While many Kurdish tribal leaders sought to perpetuate the chaos, urban aristocrats supported establishing security, implementing constitutional gains, and advancing political development. Ali Ghazi of Souqbulagh expressed this concern in a letter to Minister of Interior Farmanfarma, dated July 27, 1910 (30 Sha'ban 1328 AH). Remarkably, one of the demands of Soqbulagh's aristocracy was to expand democratic institutions in the region.<sup>75</sup>

Ali Ghazi's cousin, Mirza Abolhassan Seif al-Qozat, expressed similar frustrations in a letter to the Interior Minister on July 29, 1910 (2 Sha'ban 1328 AH), stating:

"Mr. Nasir al-Saltanah came to Savojbolagh on behalf of the Azerbaijan State Association to establish an association. A majority vote elected me as its president. Mr. Nasir al-Saltanah, with the hope of fulfilling his promises, has been serving the nation and country for nearly nine months.

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<sup>68</sup>Yousef Magith Al-Saltaneh, *Letters of Yousef Magith Al-Saltaneh*, edited by Masoumeh Mafi, Tehran: Iran History Publishing, 1983, p. 220.

<sup>69</sup> Mirza Ibrahim Khan Kalantari Baghmishehi, *Memoirs*, p. 243.

<sup>70</sup> Mansoureh Ittihadieh and Sirus Saadvandian (eds.), *A Letter from Haj Mohammad Taghi Jorabchi: Tabriz and Rasht Events, 1908-1911*, Tehran: Iran History Publishing, 1984, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> Ahmad Bashiri, *The Blue Book*, Vol. 1, Tehran: New Publishing, 1984, p. 203.

<sup>72</sup> Janet Afari, *The Constitutional Revolution of Iran*, translated by Reza Rezaei, Tehran: Biston Publishing, 2000, p. 92.

<sup>73</sup> *Collection of Articles on Tribes and Nomads*, Tehran: Agah Publishing, 1983, p. 232.

<sup>74</sup> Mohammad Amin Rasoulzadeh, *Reports on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, translated by Rahim Raisnia, Tehran: Shirazeh Publishing, 1998, p. 173.

<sup>75</sup> Morteza Ravandi, *Revising the Iranian Constitution*, Tehran: Amirkabir Publishing, 1978, p. 103.

However, these unpaid duties and services prevent us from intervening in provincial affairs, thereby wasting our time day and night.<sup>76</sup>

Instead of seeking assistance from the Ministry of Interior, constitutionalists in Saqqez entered the political arena to pursue their ideals. Haji Ahmad Malik al-Tajir Saqqez established the Saqqez branch of the Iranian Democratic Party. As the leader of constitutional democrats in Saqqez, he opposed the ruler of Saqqez, Seyf al-Din Khan, but their conflict ended with Haji Ahmad's assassination by Seyf al-Din Khan's agents.<sup>77</sup>

However, the Election Law of the second term of the National Assembly marked a significant milestone by bringing Kurdish tribes to the attention of the constitutional regime. Article 17, Section 5 of the Election Law stipulated that "Large tribes, at the discretion of the Election Law, must send a representative directly to the National Assembly." "Other unnamed tribes must vote in their electoral districts."<sup>78</sup>

Thus, a total of five direct representatives were allowed to be elected from the Bahtiyari, Kaşkai, Şahseven, Türkmen, and Hamse tribes, and all Kurdish tribes had to go through one Soğukbulak Gerus and Sakkız electoral district, three from Sinandej, and four from Kirmanşah.<sup>79</sup>

Kurdish officials' indifference towards constitutionalists and the central government's lack of support for them not only encouraged them politically, but also hindered the spread of the idea of constitutionalism among the Kurdish masses. As the Northern Kurds put it, they reverted to their old methods of causing chaos in the region. According to the legendary General Muhammad Vali Khan Tonekaboni, by the end of H. 1328, the entire northern Kurdish region had fallen under Ottoman influence.<sup>80</sup>

Until the beginning of World War I, the northern Kurdish regions experienced a deep crisis because the Russian and Ottoman governments tried to mobilize power from the Kurdish tribes. In other words, the competition between the Ottoman Empire and Russia in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan province to win the support of the Kurds divided the Kurdish society; some Kurdish tribes aligned with the Ottomans, while others turned to Russia. [4]At the same time, the aristocracy of the city of Soğukbolak was expecting the help and assistance of the central government in Tehran to save the Kurdish tribes and nomads in the region from aggression and to ensure security in the area.<sup>81</sup>

## **-Sanandaj**

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<sup>76</sup> Mansoureh Etehadiyeh and others, *Ibid.*, p. 702.

<sup>77</sup> First Legislative Period Negotiations, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1992, p. 137.

<sup>78</sup> Seyed Abdolhamid Hairat Sajjadi, *Golzar Sha'aran Kurdistan*, Tehran: Varamin Press, 1965, pp. 256-257.

<sup>79</sup> Blue Book, Vol. 6, pp. 1435-1437.

<sup>80</sup> Mohammad Vali Khan Tonekaboni, *Notes of Mohammad Wali Khan Tonekaboni Sepahsalar Azam*, edited by Dr. Allahyar Khalatbari and Fazlullah Iraj Kojouri, Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University Press, 1999, p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> See also: Nasser Daftarravi, *Memoirs and Documents of Nasser Daftarravi: The Constitutional Revolution, Forest Movement, and Khalkhal Period of Instability*, edited by Iraj Afshar and Baghdad Razaghi, Tehran: Ferdowsi Publishing, 1983, p. 233.

The indifference of the Kurds towards the central government during the Revolution is one of the fundamental characteristics of the central Kurds. The silence of local sources and even historians like Sheikh Muhammad Marduk regarding the performance and views of the Sanandaji Kurds in the constitutional movement is often a fascinating phenomenon compared to the northern Kurdish aristocracy, which opposed it.

There is an intriguing aspect to the propagation and dissemination of constitutionalist ideas in Sinandej. About nine months after the Constitutional Revolution, Mirza Ismail Sige Tül-Mülk, the constitutionalist ruler of Sinandej, introduced the people to the concept of the constitution.<sup>82</sup>

Sige Tül-Mülk, through the Friday prayer of the Imam of Sinandej, Sheikh Mohammad Mardukh Kurdistani, continued efforts to spread constitutionalist ideas in Sinandej by establishing democratic institutions and constitutionalist associations, including the Honesty (Sadakat) Association.<sup>1</sup>

Merchants and traders established the Workers' Council after the Honesty Association expanded. Naturally, the government's assistance led to the establishment of several other associations under various names such as truth, brotherhood, and competence in the Sinandej neighborhoods.<sup>83</sup>

According to Marduk, the growth of associations in Sinandej is because of constitutionalism. However, this growth seems to have come from the way Kurdish society works. For example, the Dürüstlük Association was only for upper-class people; other social classes and classes did not have the right to participate in any way, so each group formed its own association. The Kurdish aristocracy living in Sinandej was able to dominate the other associations and prevent their radicalization. Marduk also makes an indirect reference to this point in his writing.

The Honesty Association was also responsible for managing the other associations.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, the events surrounding associations in Sinandej present a promising opportunity to address the issue through the principles of the constitutional regime. The Kurds could have exercised their legitimate rights within the framework of the constitutional regime, using the principles of state and provincial associations, and they could have bridged the gap between themselves and the central government. However, the "so-called open" system referred to this internal societal issue, preventing the emergence of a vanguard element. Thus, the Kurdish political-military aristocracy continued to dominate the masses under the pretext of defending the constitution and freedom, acting opportunistically. They prevented the spread of the idea of true constitutionalism and caused the lower classes of Kurdish society to misunderstand the concept. Therefore, the Kurdish agenda never included the need to defend the constitution; Zafer al-Saltane's rise to power coincided with the removal of the constitutionalist tool from Sanandaj.

So far, Marduk, who has introduced himself as the leader of the Sinandej libertarians in his book, cleverly attributes this honor to others. He writes: "The Shah appointed Zafar al-Saltane to discipline the freedom fighters in Kurdistan." Following the bombing incident that terrified the Integrity Association, the Freedom Fighters' leaders, Hajj Fath al-Mulk and Hajj Arfa al-Mulk, withdrew from the parliament, leading to the natural closure of other associations."<sup>85</sup>

With the re-establishment of the constitutional regime and the beginning of the second term of the National Assembly, the aristocracy living in Sinandej entered the political arena with opportunism

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<sup>82</sup> Mohammad Mardukh Kurdistani, *Tarikh Marduk*, Tehran: Karang Publishing, 2000, p. 283.

<sup>83</sup> Mohammad Mardukh, p. 242-243.

<sup>84</sup> Mohammad Mardukh, p. 245.

<sup>85</sup> Mohammad Mardukh, p. 249.

and raised the cry of constitutionalism. Meanwhile, Marduk took the lead from his other rivals. During the second term of H. 1327, <sup>86</sup>coinciding with the commencement of the National Assembly's second term, he established a committee known as the "Progress Committee," which boasted approximately two thousand members. Marduk claims that the existence of a "Progress Committee"<sup>87</sup> in the political arena has led to the region's development. He believes that the Progress Council's <sup>88</sup>pressure on Hajj Mirza Abdullah Khan Amir Nizam, the then ruler of Sanandaj, led to the establishment of the first legal judiciary in the Kurdistan province in 1328 AH. In the year 1328 AH, the political situation in Sanandaj was somewhat calm and relatively secure, but in the year 1329 AH, a major crisis swept through the entire region. Revolts broke out in Gerus<sup>89</sup> and Marivan, and in the areas surrounding Sinandej, the Gulbai tribe attacked all the villages, causing most of the villagers to flee from their homes.<sup>90</sup>

The continuity and scope of the Golbaghi <sup>91</sup>uprising were such that the central government had to send Kazak forces to suppress the movement. Despite the suppression of the Gülbaği uprising, calm did not return to the region;<sup>92</sup> Salar al-Devle, who attempted to incite a general uprising against the central government in the western part of the country, came to Sinandaj after failing among the northern Kurds and easily occupied the city in the month of Rajab in the year 1329 Hijri due to the turmoil in the city.<sup>93</sup> With Salar al-Devle's arrival in Sinandaj, the founder of the Progress Council Constitutionalists Association collaborated with the dictator Salar al-Devle to overthrow the constitutional regime.<sup>94</sup> Even when Salar al-Dawla was considered politically bankrupt, the aristocrats of Sanandaj welcomed him. This inability of the aristocracy to grasp the broader implications of the situation contributed significantly to the intensity of the political crisis in central Kurdish regions. Abd al-Hosseini Khan Mirza Sardar Mohey, a prominent figure in the constitutionalist forces and Tehran's conquerors, assumed the governorship of Sanandaj in 1914 CE (1332 AH). His oppressive policies and inappropriate actions delivered a final blow to the image of constitutionalism in the region. Eventually, widespread opposition from the people of Sanandaj led to Sardar Mohey's removal from office. However, the onset of World War I prolonged the political crisis in the region. While central Kurdish areas experienced greater political calm during the constitutional period compared to northern Kurdish regions, the presence of a conservative Kurdish aristocracy hindered the opportunity for progressive rulers like Segge Tol-Molk to thrive. This, in turn, obstructed the spread of constitutionalist ideas among the Kurdish population.

### **-Kermanshah**

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<sup>86</sup> Mirza Sadık Khan Müstaşar El-Devle, *Memoirs and Documents of Müstaşar El-Devle*, Second Collection, p.333

<sup>87</sup> Mansooreh Etehadiyeh and Sirus Saadvandian, ed., Volume 2, p.815

<sup>88</sup> Mirza Sadegh Khan Mustasharadollah, *Historical Notes and Documents*, Iraj Afshar, Tehran, Ferdowsi Publication, 1982, First Collection, pp.220-2219

<sup>89</sup> Mohammad Mardukkh, p.260.

<sup>90</sup> Mohammad Mardukkh, p.247.

<sup>91</sup> Blue Book, Op. Cit., Vol. 5, p. 1129

<sup>92</sup> Heyet-i-Terakki

<sup>93</sup> Mirza Sadegh Khan Müstaşar El-Devle, *Memoirs and Documents of Müstaşar El-Devle*, Second Collection, p.333

<sup>94</sup> Mansooreh Etehadiyeh and Sirus Saadvandian, ed., Volume 2, p.815

The spread of urbanization in Kermanshah directed the southern Kurdish society toward a more monolithic stage, moving away from a tribal structure. The idea of urbanization was so dominant that it even influenced the powerful tribes and nomadic groups of Kermanshah to settle down. A brief examination of the political situation of southern Kurds during the Qajar era, in comparison with the large protest movements of northern Kurds, shows that the region experienced relative political calm.

The presence of Kurdish tribal leaders in Kermanshah, their cooperation with the central government, and internal conflicts caused by power vacuums generally hindered the formation of large-scale movements based on Kurdish tribal coalitions, thereby disrupting regional peace and creating a political crisis. In 1891 (AH 1309)<sup>95</sup>, Dawood Khan Kelhor deposed the Hacizadegan Kelhor family from power, leading to numerous uprisings. The new aristocracy that came to power in Kelhor revived tribal thinking, hindering the region's political, social, and economic development. This reignited contradictions between tribal and urban lifestyles. While Kurdish tribes in the region nostalgically looked to the past with reactionary stances to gain political power, urban Kurds in Kermanshah joined freedom movements across Iran to overthrow the authoritarian Qajar regime.<sup>96</sup>

Gayret notes that the anti-Eyn al-Dowleh movement and the underground publication of the "Shahab Saqib" during the issuance of the constitutional decree had significant impacts on political awareness and enlightenment. Therefore, on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, unlike Sanandaj and Souqbulagh, the freedom fighters in Kermanshah adopted a relatively coordinated and organized stance against tyranny and oppression. Notably, sectarian factors played a significant role in this alignment.<sup>97</sup>

With the establishment of the Constitution in Kermanshah, not only were there pro-constitutional movements supported by the masses, but there were also radical terror movements targeting tribal leaders. However, the deep divisions and conflicts among the city aristocracy, manifested as disputes between constitutionalists and authoritarian factions, hindered the continuation of these radical movements.

On the other hand, the attacks of Kurdish tribes, particularly the Kelhor Kurds, on Kermanshah seriously endangered the city's pro-constitutional stance.<sup>98</sup> The Kelhor Kurds, considered the greatest enemies of the constitutionalists, had solidified their political and military positions in the region. Their power was so substantial that, a day before the shelling of Parliament, they sent 200 cavalry to Tehran to assist the Shah's forces.<sup>99</sup>

Following the shelling of Parliament, reactionary forces in Kermanshah took control of the situation. Simultaneously, the Kelhor Kurdish attacks escalated, exacerbating the regional crisis. The severity of the situation even alarmed British political agents stationed in the area. Sir George Barkley, the British ambassador to Iran, wrote to British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey on December 2, 1908:

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<sup>95</sup> Ali Akbar Khan Vakayinigar, *Merat al-Zafer*, Manuscript, Iran National Assembly Library, No. 3427, p. 398.

<sup>96</sup> Seyyed Abdolkarim Gayret, *Collected Works of Gayret from Kermanshah: Introduction and Borders of Kermanshah History*, Seyyed Saeed Ghairat, Tehran, Ferdowsi Publishing, 1959 (AH 1338), p. 57.

<sup>97</sup> Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh, pp. 44–45.

<sup>98</sup> See: *The Blue Book*, Vol. 1, p. 221, and *First Parliamentary Session*, p. 569.

<sup>99</sup> Ali Khan Zahir al-Dawlah, *Memoirs and Documents of Zahir al-Dawlah*, Iraj Afshar, Tehran, Jibi Publishing, 1972, p. 230.

*“Dawood Khan considers himself above local governance. He fears no one. As a result, all roads are in the hands of Dawood Khan’s tribe. The British consul fears that Dawood Khan’s punishment will make these provinces unsafe for Europeans, thereby impacting British trade.”<sup>100</sup>*

Although the conquest of Tehran strengthened Kermanshah’s constitutionalists and led to the establishment of a local association (Anjoman), Kelhor Kurdish attacks did not cease. They took advantage of differences among the city’s aristocracy in Ramadan 1909 (AH 1327) to conquer Kermanshah. The city aristocracy entrusted Dawood Khan with the responsibility for external security, as he mediated between factions.

It appears that granting such privileges to the city aristocracy led to the establishment of new relationships with the Kelhor Kurds. Consequently, Dawood Khan sought to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship between tribal and urban aristocracies, advising tribal leaders:

*“Do not pay taxes, do not plunder, but refrain from attacking pilgrims and merchants’ goods.”<sup>101</sup>*

As seen, with the reestablishment of the constitutional regime and the power vacuum created by the conflict between constitutionalists and authoritarian forces, tribal attacks, particularly by the Kelhor Kurds, escalated significantly. The existing political and economic turmoil and insecurity not only hindered the spread of constitutionalism but also reinforced tribal thinking in southern Kurdish regions. Meanwhile, the limited intellectual vision of the aristocracy and the lack of trans-tribal interests that encompassed all southern Kurds prevented the formation of a coalition under unified leadership.

Taking advantage of this tribal conflict, Salar al-Dowleh easily assumed leadership of the southern Kurds, leading to the southern Kurdish uprising from 1907 to 1912 (AH 1325–1330). This uprising, under the leadership of a Qajar prince, brought nothing but destruction, famine, looting, a lack of political, social, and economic development, and the failure of constitutional reforms. Moreover, the intensity of attacks and the widespread massacres and looting by Kurdish tribes exacerbated friction and hostility between urban and tribal Kurds.<sup>102</sup> The poetry of Kermanshah’s people clearly reflected their dissatisfaction with Kurdish tribes, especially the Kelhor Kurds.

While the entire central and southern Kurdish region, from Sanandaj to Kermanshah, was under the dominance of southern Kurdish tribes, murder and plunder remained the primary agenda. Despite this violence, on the eve of the opening of the Third National Assembly, the southern Kurds, particularly the people of Kermanshah, hoped to benefit from constitutional reforms, unlike other Kurdish groups. However, the outbreak of World War I thwarted their aspirations for establishing a constitutional system.<sup>103</sup>

## **Turks and Azerbaijanis**

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<sup>100</sup> The Blue Book, Vol. 2, pp. 384-385.

<sup>101</sup> Amanullah Ardalan, *Memoirs of Hajj Ezzulmolk Ardalan*, Tehran, Namak Publishing, 1993, pp. 85-86.

<sup>102</sup> Mirza Abolghasem Kahalzadeh, *Opinions and Stances*, Morteza Kamran, Tehran, Alborz Publishing, 1991, p. 138.

<sup>103</sup> Mirza Abolghasem Kahalzade, p. 139

Since the time of Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, international businessmen, foreign merchants, and intellectual elites were among those traveling abroad to acquire new sciences and technologies. The ruling classes either came from or supported the leaders and prominent members of this intellectual movement. Early actions by these figures, showcasing the Enlightenment's influence on Iran's traditional and eastern society, included the establishment of a printing press in Tabriz, the formation of the first modern Iranian army, and the publication of Turkish newspapers in Istanbul.<sup>104</sup>

In the Qajar political system, following the king (Tehran court) and the crown prince (Tabriz royal court), the princes held enormous importance. They played a significant role in determining the type of governance, the use of power, and the management of the country's political and economic affairs. The political significance of the princes stemmed from the Qajar dynasty's efforts during its 130-year rule to select provincial and district governors exclusively from those of "royal (Turkish) blood." To maintain their dominance, the princes established an extensive and enduring bureaucracy across the country. The expansion of this bureaucracy elevated their role in state decisions, fostering the rise of numerous intellectuals among them.<sup>105</sup>

From the outset, particularly during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, some princes and their allies expressed critical and enlightening ideas. Recognized as the most reformist Qajar king, Naser al-Din Shah had "a better political understanding" compared to other Qajar rulers.<sup>106</sup> The intellectuals of the ruling class included moderate constitutionalist leaders and, to some extent, liberals. Reformist thought emerged not only through the influence of the West but also through reliance on institutions that empowered the clergy. Another factor contributing to the weakening of the Qajar dynasty was the defeat of reformers within the government.<sup>107</sup>

There are two views regarding Muzaffar al-Din Shah's character and his role in the Constitutional Revolution. Some view him as a religious and benevolent individual,<sup>108</sup> contrasting with Mohammad Ali Mirza's dictatorial nature. According to this perspective, "Muzaffar al-Din Shah was calm, moderate, and had a steadfast personality, which facilitated the timely progress of the constitution." Others depict him as a weak-minded and sickly figure who neglected state affairs, leaving everything to his self-serving advisors.<sup>109</sup> Even if he had the will, he lacked the authority to govern. However, his perceived leniency stemmed from his compassionate nature. Shah was considered a ruler who cared for his people, and he was the first to decree the official teaching of the Turkish language. Yet, three weeks after protesters staged a sit-in at the British embassy, Muzaffar al-Din Shah appointed Mushir al-Dawlah as prime minister, an eminent constitutionalist, and signed the proclamation establishing the National Assembly. He passed away five days later.

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<sup>104</sup> Gholamreza Khajeh Sarvi, *Political Competition and Political Stability in the Islamic Republic*, Tehran: Islamic Revolution Documentation Center, 2002, p. 156.

<sup>105</sup> Alireza Azghandi, *The Inefficiency of Iran's Political Elites Between Two Revolutions*, Tehran: Qoms Publishing, 2nd edition, 2000, p. 87.

<sup>106</sup> Alireza Azghandi, p. 83.

<sup>107</sup> Sadik Zibakalam, *Tradition and Modernity: Analyzing the Causes Behind the Failure of Reforms and Political Modernization in Qajar Iran*, Tehran: Rozaneh Publishing, 1999, p. 231

<sup>108</sup> Zibakalam, p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> Barzegar, İbrahim. Muzaffar al-Din Shah'ın Politik Psikolojisi. *Politik-ekonomik Bilgiler*, 18th year, issues 11 and 12, August and September 2004, pp. 84-95.

Therefore, although the revolution had come to an end, the fight for constitutionalism had just commenced.<sup>110</sup>

Thirty constitutionalist ethnic, religious, trade, and political associations formed the "Azerbaijan Association," an example of an ethnic-regional organization. This association, the most active and largest of its kind with 3,000 members, was established by merchants from Tabriz and a young electrical engineer named Haydar Khan Amoğlu.<sup>111</sup>

Members of the Azerbaijan Association and the Democratic Party, Turkish-majority organizations centered in Baku and Tabriz, played significant roles in subsequent constitutional events.<sup>112</sup> The Constitutional Revolution and the formation of the first parliament marked the beginning of various political divisions, with Tabriz emerging as the base for several prominent parties and organizations. Historical destiny and societal demands required Tabriz to continue playing a crucial and decisive role in the victory of constitutionalism.<sup>113</sup>

After Mohammad Ali Shah refused to sign the constitution, he faced public protests in various cities. In Tabriz, approximately 20,000 people pledged to continue their strike and even threatened that, "If the constitution is not immediately approved, Azerbaijan will separate from Iran."<sup>114</sup> Tabriz signed some telegrams under the menacing title of the "Nation of Azerbaijan." In Tehran, various associations and clubs formed a central organization, launched general strikes in bazaars and government offices, and mobilized 3,000 armed volunteers—primarily from the Azerbaijan Association—to defend the parliament.

Possibly affiliated with Haydar Khan's Social Democratic group, a Tabriz-based banker assassinated the Shah's dictatorial prime minister, Amin al-Sultan, and immediately committed suicide in front of the parliament.<sup>115</sup>

Fearing the assassination of Emin el-Sultan and the mass protests, the Shah could not rely on a disbanded, impoverished military force.<sup>116</sup> The parliament had approved the constitutional amendment, which the Shah signed. Many foreign observers and scholars consider the pressure from the Russian and British governments—who, at least at that time, still agreed with the constitutionalists—to be one of the main reasons for Mohammad Shah's deposition. Although the number of liberals was small, they were more prominent and significant because, according to Edward Brown, they were determined to reach a codified constitution and had a better

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<sup>110</sup> Yervand Abrahamian, *İran İki Devrim Arasında*, trans. Ahmad Gol Mohammadi and Mohammad Ibrahim Fattahi, 2nd ed., Tehran: Ney Publications, 1997, p. 109.

<sup>111</sup> Zibakelam, p. 10.

<sup>112</sup> Abrahamian, p. 111.

<sup>113</sup> Emad al-Din Baghi, *Çağdaş İran Tarihine Giriş and İran Devrimi*, Tehran: Publisher, 1991, p. 144.

<sup>114</sup> Sayed Hassan Amin, *İran'da Cumhuriyetçilik Tarihi*, Politik-ekonomik Bilgiler, 16th year, issues 3 and 4, December 2001, pp. 86-95.

<sup>115</sup> Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, *Seyed Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh'in Anıları*, in: Ali Janzadeh, *Meşrutiyetten 19 Ağustos 1958 Darbesine İranlı Erkeklerin Siyasi Anıları*, Tehran: Janzadeh, p. 68.

<sup>116</sup> Abrahamian, p. 116.

understanding of Western constitutions.<sup>117</sup> The liberals, even the secular ones, who insisted on large-scale revolutionary reforms, were willing to work with moderate representatives to achieve the main goals of the constitution. This collaboration continued during the early years of the constitution and even after the fall of the powerful tyranny. However, after Mohammad Ali Shah's deposition, particularly during the Bahtiyari and anti-Turkish cabinet periods, both sides engaged in assassinations of opposition figures.<sup>118</sup> At that time, Seyyed Abdullah Behbahani, a supporter of the moderates, was killed by a man assigned to his gang by Ayatollah Seyyed Abdullah Behbahani Haydar Emoğlu.

When Mohammad Ali Shah's military power opposed some parliamentary decisions, Azerbaijan once again took a prominent role in defending the Constitution. The guild community organized a general strike in support of the constitution, and over 100,000 people, including around 7,000 armed volunteers from the Azerbaijan Association and the Graduates Association, prepared to defend the National Assembly.<sup>119</sup> The King swiftly withdrew, but in order to accomplish his objectives, he turned to his traditional strategy of pursuing his enemies. One example of this was dividing the Sheikhism and Shariati sects in Tabriz, with the primary goal of weakening both Sattar Khan and Bakir Khan. Rahim Khan, the leader of the Shahsevan tribes in Azerbaijan, declared his loyalty to Mohammad Ali Shah. Hac Ilkhani Bakhtiari, the tribal head of Bakhtiari, and Amir Mofakhm, the husband of one of the Qajar princesses, also declared loyalty and entered the capital with their armed men. This marked the beginning of a civil war, with no one knowing what would happen next.<sup>120</sup> Now in possession of military power, the Shah gained more victories, bolstered by positive signals from the British and Russians. After the outbreak of World War I, and particularly after the 1907 treaty that divided Iran into British and Russian spheres of influence, the two colonial powers, now united, entered into a competitive war, which turned against Iran. The British, now like the Russians, preferred a stable but inefficient government like the Qajar dynasty over a modern, democratic but unstable one like the post-Constitution cabinets. The Shah's power became evident after the bombardment of parliament by the Cossack Brigade in June 1908. The Armenian Yeprem Khan martyred many Turkish constitutionalists, including Sattar Khan. Armenian Yeprem Khan killed Seyyed Haji Ibrahim Agha, the Liberal representative of Tabriz, as he attempted to escape. Yahya Mirza Iskander succumbed to torture, while Seyyed Jamal Vaez faced exile and suspicious death in Hamadan. What happened to the Turks was the collapse of the Qajar dynasty and the takeover and isolation of Azerbaijan's power by anti-constitutional forces from other regions.<sup>121</sup>

The monarchists and Mohammad Ali Shah's supporters seized Tehran, but Tehran was not the entirety of Iran. In the past, such a conquest would have been decisive, but this time, it turned out

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<sup>117</sup> Peter Avery, *The Modern History of Iran from the Establishment of the Qajar Dynasty to the Extinction of its Line*, trans. Mohammad Rafiei Mehrabadi, vol. 1, 5th ed., Tehran: Atai Publishing Institute, 1979, p. 239.

<sup>118</sup> Abrahamian, p. 112.

<sup>119</sup> Edward Brown, *The Constitutional Revolution of Iran*, trans. Mehri Qazvini, Tehran: Kavir, 2000, p. 169.

<sup>120</sup> Abrahamian, p. 122.

<sup>121</sup> Nikki R. Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution*, New York University Press, 1995, p. 78.

that capturing the capital was not as important. Three of the leading mujtahids from Najaf and Karbala immediately supported the Constitution and openly condemned the Shah. Armed volunteers defended the revolution, first in Tabriz, then in Isfahan, Rasht, and eventually in Tehran and other cities. Although events in the provinces previously determined the course of developments, now, especially in Azerbaijan, the provinces shape the direction of events in the capital. Similar to past developments in Iran, the most intense conflicts occurred in Tabriz. In Azerbaijan, the establishment of the Azerbaijani Provisional Government of the Provincial Union led to the formation of alliances between Shiite ethnic groups and other groups, including leftist movements from Baku. The Baku Social Democrats sent 100 armed Caucasian volunteers to Tabriz to stand by the local heroes Sattar Khan and Bağır Khan.<sup>122</sup>

"Tabriz withstood the tyrannical forces for nine months. The city endured a nine-month siege to protect the principles and goals of the constitution. Tabriz's actions led to the collapse of Russia's hopes of establishing an authoritarian government under Russian influence."<sup>123</sup>

When the monarchists dispersed and the Shah sought refuge at the Russian embassy, the civil war temporarily (for about a year) ended. A few months later, in November 1909, with widespread enthusiasm, the second term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly began and immediately vote of confidence to the government of Sardar Asad Bakhtiari and Sepahdar Tonekaboni.<sup>124</sup> The middle of 1910 dashed the great expectations of a democratic constitutional government, as supporters of two rival parliamentary groups took to the streets in Tehran. A year later, the provinces were at war, and as a result, the country's economic situation worsened. Azerbaijan was unfit for this government and a constitutional betrayal. By the end of 1911, Russian and British forces began occupying the northern and southern parts of the country, and German agents were involved in arms smuggling and infiltration among the tribal leaders. Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces established autonomous governments ten years later, in 1920. Tribal leaders replaced the central government in various provinces and regions, ruling as they pleased, while the north and south of the country were under Russian and British control.<sup>125</sup>

The Bahtiyari cabinet, led by Samsam el-Saltaneh and Serdar Es'ad, marked the climax of ethnic divisions and group-ethnic wars, and it also signaled the end of the constitutional path. This cabinet built its foundation against the dominance of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

### **-The Reasons for Tabriz's Importance at the Beginning and During the Implementation of the Revolution**

The Qajar heir apparent's sentencing to Azerbaijan as a child, where he served as the governor of Iran's most important province, gave Tabriz its significance. As the de facto second capital of Iran, Tabriz became a center for the Qajar heir's administrative activities, where he established a broad and influential administrative bureaucracy. The Dar el-Saltana in Tabriz played a major role in shaping the country's political, military, socio-cultural, and economic issues. The Qajar heir's governance of Azerbaijan, a rich and important province, allowed him to learn the political and economic management of the country. In reality, Tabriz was considered the second capital of Iran,

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<sup>122</sup> Brown, p. 236.

<sup>123</sup> Afari, p. 256.

<sup>124</sup> Abrahamian, p. 127.

<sup>125</sup> Hüseyini, p. 178.

and many of the country's decisions depended on the opinions of the political and military figures based there.<sup>126</sup>

The most important role of the Azerbaijan province was to suppress opponents to the throne and the monarchy, thus saving the country from civil war and fragmentation. The royal court's administration, similar to the court in Tehran, relied on secretaries and ministers, with a large bureaucracy organizing the country's affairs in traditional ways. The Azerbaijan region, with Tabriz as its center, had been increasingly involved in the goals and tools of democracy since the beginning of the constitutional movement. Azerbaijan acted as a gateway between Iran and the West, making it of significant political, commercial, and economic importance. The cultural and ethnic connections in the region kept ties with the Ottoman Turks, North Azerbaijan, Europe, and Russia current. The powerful Ottoman Empire, whose borders extended to the heart of Europe, was an example of the blending of Islamic traditions with Western modernism.<sup>127</sup>

Politically, Azerbaijan's borders exported Enlightenment ideas, particularly following the French Revolution, into Iran. Meanwhile, the Russians, starting in the early 20th century, supported justice-oriented and socialist ideas as an alternative to European colonial modernism. The northern half of Azerbaijan became part of the Azerbaijan Republic, later the Soviet Union, and the Azerbaijani Turks in the Caucasus, who shared the same religion and language, played a significant role in spreading enlightening ideas among the Muslims of Iran and the region.

The mutual influence between the reformers of Tabriz and the Ottoman reformers and intellectuals began during the Tanzimat period (1878-1878) and continued with the formalization of the first Ottoman constitution by Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1876. The second period of reforms, starting in the last decade of the 19th century, intensified with the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Both governments started with plans for modernization. These reforms were a response to Russian and Western military conquests and expansion, reaching as far back as the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Military and modern schools, a modern bureaucracy, written press, and newspapers were among the early successes of the reform movement. Graduates from modern schools, particularly intellectuals of Azerbaijani descent, took leadership roles in the second period of reforms, the national awakening, and the constitutional movement.<sup>128</sup>

The written press and newspapers grew, serving as open forums for the exchange of ideas between intellectuals and the middle class. Istanbul, Cairo, and Tbilisi published Turkish-Persian newspapers, and later, European cities gained more freedom to criticize the government and defy censorship laws. The use of the telegraph played an equally significant role, connecting revolutionaries across different cities and facilitating communication between the Iranian and Ottoman governments. Western philosophy directly influenced Iranian and Ottoman thinkers and bureaucrats through their studies and residences in Europe, as well as their membership in Masonic lodges formed in the latter half of the 19th century.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Alireza Azghandi, *The Inefficiency of Iran's Political Elites Between Two Revolutions*, Tehran: Gomes Publishing, 2nd ed., 2000, p. 87.

<sup>127</sup> Seyed Ali Alavi, *The Life of Seyed Hassan Taghizadeh*, Tehran: Political Studies and Research Institute, 2000, p. 21

<sup>128</sup> Bagher Momeni, *Iran on the Eve of the Constitutional Revolution*, Bija: Çağdaş Ses, 6th ed., 1974, p. 12.

<sup>129</sup> Afari, p. 257.

Local intellectual movements, such as Islamic modernism and the Soviet Social Democratic movement, not only influenced these ideas but also contributed to them. During this period, diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relationships beyond Tabriz, including Istanbul and the Caucasus, played a constructive role. Azerbaijan's region was important as an economic trade center, connecting Iran and Central Asia to European and Russian markets, with some Indian goods also passing through the area.<sup>130</sup>

Tabriz was the residence of the Qajar heir and was located on the border between Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia. Due to its geographical position, it became a center for modernization and international trade. Abbas Mirza, the governor of Azerbaijan and Qajar prince (d. 1833), established a modern army of 6,000 soldiers based on Sultan Selim III's *Nizām-ı Cedîd* (New Order). He also founded a cannon factory and a tannery by importing cast iron from the Ottoman Empire. Abbas Mirza hired Western (French) advisors and established a translation office, which served as Iran's first delegation in Paris and London. In 1816, he established a printing press and sent the first group of Iranian students to Europe to study military science, engineering, language, and medicine.

With the establishment of trade, modern reforms, trade unions, and the presence of European and Russian diplomats, Tabriz became the largest and most modern city in nineteenth-century Iran with a global culture, housing a population of 300,000. By the late 19th century, the search for oil in Baku and its resulting economic prosperity attracted many Iranian Turkish workers. Industry giants, including Taġiyev, invested in the city's renewal, turning Baku into the "pearl of the Caspian." Russian and European bureaucrats were influential in the oil industry, and large Russian, European, and Iranian Azerbaijani communities settled in Baku. By 1897, the Russian population in the region had grown to 73,920, with 60,405 residing in the Caucasus (23,968 in Baku and 8,142 in Tbilisi). A significant portion of this population consisted of simple workers who lived in unfavorable conditions.

In 1904, the Iranian Social Democratic Party was founded in Baku by the Iranian Turkish Migrants Society. The party, influenced by the Russian Social-Democratic movement and Marxism, was in contact with Tabriz's *Merkez-i Geybi* (the Secret Center). During the Russian army's pressure and the siege of Tabriz in 1908, the party provided military assistance to revolutionaries like Sattar Khan. The Iranian Social Democratic Party advocated for workers' rights and called on them to organize, strike, and demand an eight-hour workday. The party also played an active role in defending women's rights, land distribution among peasants, income tax, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right to assembly and religious defense.

Thus, modernization, alongside Russian and Ottoman political parties, paved the way for Iran's reform movement. Tabriz, Baku, and Istanbul became centers of cultural and political relations. The establishment of embassies and consulates in Ottoman, European, and Russian ports and capitals expanded political and intellectual ties. In most cases, merchants acted as consuls or translators, with the primary goal of protecting traders' interests.

The influence of Azerbaijani Turks and Tabriz played a crucial role in bringing the constitutional movement to fruition. According to some accounts, the overthrow of the Qajar-Turkish dynasty was not beneficial to the Turks. Had this movement turned into reform instead of revolution, the Turks in Iran would not have lost their power.

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<sup>130</sup> Afari, p. 258.

### **Social and economic layers in Gilan during the Qajar Period**

Socially and economically, the Iranian society during the Qajar period had several pre-modern layers that played a dominant role in the political and social processes. These layers included princes, clergymen, landowners, tribal and nomadic chiefs, and an emerging, moderately educated class. These groups, which represented a significant portion of Iranian society, played a large role in political developments.<sup>131</sup>

In Gilan, the social layers during the Qajar period included: 1) rulers and state officials, 2) clergymen, 3) landowners, 4) urban merchants and guilds, and 5) farmers and workers, who made up the majority of the Gilan population. The power and influence of the central government in Gilan increased during the Qajar period. First-class princes or important palace members often selected government officials.<sup>132</sup> Their power was almost limitless, and they considered themselves only accountable to the king. One reason for the hostility and protest of the Gilan people against the Qajar government was their dissatisfaction with the frequent changes in leadership and the arrival of foreign figures, particularly the new monarch. Since the last decades of the 13th century (Shamsi), the continuous changes in the rulers of Gilan harmed the region's political stability.<sup>133</sup>

Mirza Zaki Zia-ol-Molk appointed himself governor of Gilan in 1294 AH, but he failed to gain significant influence or power. He did, however, gain considerable support among the workers, and rebellions broke out in Lahijan and Talesh. General Governor Abdullah Khan Wali assumed the governorship of Gilan in 1296 AH, but his imposition of high taxes led to further discontent. Mansur Mirza Shooa Al-Saltanah, the son of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, became the governor of Gilan in 1314 AH. Taxes heavily burdened the people under his rule. As a result, between 1294 and 1327 AH, Gilan's governors changed more than twenty times, which not only limited the opportunity to implement government policies but also heightened regional political and economic tensions, leading to a lack of political stability in Gilan.<sup>134</sup>

These rulers often formed effective groups to manage Gilan's affairs, but with each change in leadership, the privileged group at the top of the pyramid lost its advantages. As a result, the people of Gilan repeatedly protested against new rulers in an effort to regain their freedom and previous privileges.<sup>135</sup> This created a cycle of dissatisfaction and sometimes even conflict between social layers. In Gilan, the interests of one group frequently clashed with those of another, establishing

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<sup>131</sup> Alireza Mollai Tavani, "Explaining the Socio-Economic Roots of the Constitutional Revolution," *Journal of Social History Research*, Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Vol. 2, Issue 2, Fall-Winter, 1992, pp. 1-8.

<sup>132</sup> Fakhteh Jobneh, Ghorban, "Political, Social, and Economic Conditions of Gilan on the Verge of Constitutionalism," *Gilanameh Magazine*, P. Jaktaji, Vol. 3, Rasht, Ta'ati, 1992, p. 25.

<sup>133</sup> Nasrollah Pourmohammadi Amlashi, "A Sociological Approach to Rural Movements in Gilan During the Constitutional Period," *Journal of History and Research*, Mahallat University, Vol. 2, Issue 7, Humanities Portal, 2007, pp. 1-4.

<sup>134</sup> H.L. Robino, *The Dar-ul-Marz Provinces of Iran: Gilan*, translated by Jafar Khamamizadeh, 4th ed., Rasht: Ta'ati, 1995, p. 558.

<sup>135</sup> Freydoun Adamiyeh, *Ideology of the Iranian Constitutional Movement*, Vol. 1, Tehran: Payam, 1977, p. 471.

the threshold for constitutionalism. This urban constitutional movement significantly influenced the future of the region.<sup>136</sup>

The social and economic dissatisfaction in Gilan directly contributed to the formation of urban political unions in the region.<sup>137</sup> The Ebülfez or Abbasi Society was actually a branch of the Reşt Mujahid faction, with over five hundred members. Most of the members were craftsmen, businessmen, tradesmen, preachers, and peasants. The purpose of this society was to protect the interests of the people against government oppression, improve the state of the city, and make the necessities of life more affordable. Therefore, economic goals largely guided their actions.

Another prominent society in Gilan was the Enzeli Mujahideen Society, which emerged from the Socialist (İctimaiyun-Amiyun) branch and played an important role in the uprising. The Enzeli fishermen were particularly opposed to Lianazov's license, and the economic pressures on the fishermen were a significant source of discontent. By the time the constitutional movement began, the economic problems had a major impact on the city's guilds. In the Enzeli port, the fishermen's guilds and workers were among the most dissatisfied groups in Gilan. As the large Russian fishing fleet in the region grew, Gilan's fishermen found their activities increasingly restricted and became mere laborers for the Northern Fishing Company. This led to widespread protests, with over 3,000 fishermen protesting in Enzeli.<sup>138</sup>

Ahmad Kesrevi, in his history of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, writes: "In contrast to other cities, Reşt, Enzeli, and Qazvin were close to Tabriz (in terms of loyalty to constitutionalism). In the beginning, there was chaos in Reşt, but in future events (related to constitutionalism), Gilan was always a friend of Azerbaijan."<sup>139</sup>

The Iranian constitutional movement began with motivating factors such as the closure of Tehran by Seyyed Hashim Gendi and some of Tehran's merchants under the authoritarian ruler Ala el-Devle, and the story of the Belgian customs officer Monsieur Noz in Tehran. The protests in Tehran, as well as sit-ins at the Hazrat Abd al-Azim shrine and Qom, forced the ailing Muzaffar al-Din Shah to issue a decree for the formation of the Dar el-Shura and the first phase of constitutional work. However, the situation changed with the rule of Mohammad Ali Mirza, who, influenced by his Russian teacher Shapshal, did not align with the constitutionalists' stance. Mohammad Ali Shah, seeking to control the situation, called for Atabak (Emin el-Sultan) from Europe to come to Tehran. Enzeli residents blocked Atabak's route and refused to let him disembark until a telegram arrived from the parliament. Protests began with Atabak's arrival in Tehran, and it set the stage for conflict between the Shah, the parliament, and the constitutionalists. In Gilan, the people of Reşt, Lahijan, Enzeli, and Lengerud closed their markets in protest. A group of workers from Fooman, Kasma, and Esalem came to Reşt to join the constitutionalists. The long-awaited collaboration between Sattar Khan and members of the Caucasian Social Democrat Party, along with Mirza Kerim Khan Reşti, Mu'izz el-Sultan, Emid el-Sultan, and Mirza Hüseyin Khan Kesma'i, led to a major shift in Reşt, and the tyrant governor, Ağabalahan Serdar Efkhani, was

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<sup>136</sup> Afari, p. 211.

<sup>137</sup> Bashiri, Ahmad, *The Orange Book*, translated by Hossein Ghasemian, Vol. 1, Tehran: Parvaz Publishing, 1987, p. 53.

<sup>138</sup> Adamiyet, p. 471.

<sup>139</sup> Ahmet Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, Negah Publications, Tehran, 1998, p. 264.

killed in a plan by Mirza Kerim Khan Reṣṭi. A battle broke out, and Reṣṭ fell into the hands of the constitutionalists, becoming the first city to break free from the Shah's command.<sup>140</sup>

When Mohammad Veli Khan Khalatberi (Sepehdar Tonekaboni) joined the constitutionalists and abandoned the tyrants, they achieved another major victory. Following Gilan's liberation from the Shah's forces, the Gilan constitutionalists invited Sepehdar to Reṣṭ, where he assumed control of the local government. As the Gilan Mujahideen prepared for the conquest of Qazvin and aimed for the capital, the Bahtiyari Mujahideen, who had taken Isfahan, joined them, and both forces advanced toward Tehran. The conquest of Tehran led to Mohammad Ali Shah's deposition and the ascent of his son, Ahmad Shah.

### **The Lora Tribe and the Constitutional Revolution**

Shortly before the signing of the Constitutional Decree, significant changes were occurring within the Bakhtiari tribe. The Bakhtiari, a branch of the Lor people, resided in large parts of southwestern Iran, mainly in the high mountains and foothills of the Central Zagros and in the plains of Khuzestan and Isfahan near the Persian border. The tribe, which included two main branches—Chaharlang and Haftalang—never achieved full unity until the time of Hossein Gholikhan. Nasir al-Din Shah governed the Bakhtiari tribe after he received the title of Ilkhan (tribal chief).<sup>141</sup> Zülüs-Sultan, the son of Nasir al-Din Shah, murdered Hossein Gholikhan in Isfahan in 1299 AH, prompting the other brothers of the Bakhtiari tribe, Imam Gholikhan Haji Ilkhani and Reza Gholikhan, to declare Elbeghi (the leadership) for themselves. During the period of small dictatorship (Istibdad-i-Saghir), there was chaos and intense competition between these three powerful factions in Bakhtiari. In 1895, the Ilkhani and Haji Ilkhani families formed an alliance that deprived the Elbeghi family of power and removed them from Bakhtiari leadership.<sup>142</sup> This action led to more discontent and uncertainty for the Elbeghi tribe, but there were also significant differences between the Ilkhani and Haji Ilkhani factions regarding the strength of the Bakhtiari tribe. Additionally, the two groups held conflicting views on national issues, particularly the debate between tyranny and constitutionalism. Haji Ilkhani's faction, especially his two brothers Lutf Ali Khan Amir Mofahham and Nasir Khan Serdar Ceng, backed Mohammad Ali Shah and his rule. When Mohammad Ali Shah dissolved the parliament and the constitutionalists, especially the people of Tabriz, began their uprisings, Amir Mofahham sought help from the Bakhtiari cavalry to support the Shah.<sup>143</sup>

The sons of the slain Ilkhani, particularly those who had long endured imprisonment, such as Haji Ali el-Gholikhan Serdar Es'ad, stood in support of constitutionalism and worked to overthrow Mohammad Ali Shah. Serdar Es'ad, having been in France and exposed to progressive ideas, became a strong supporter of a constitutional system during the bombing of the parliament and the onset of the small dictatorship. His home near Paris became a meeting place for Iranian constitutionalist intellectuals. He repeatedly encouraged his brothers to fight against tyranny and

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<sup>140</sup> Louis Rabino, *Hyacinth, The Gilan Constitutional Movement*, translated by Roshan Mohammed Hzn, Taati Publications, Rasht, 1972, p. 10.

<sup>141</sup> Ghaffar Pourbakhtiar, *Bakhtiarnameh*, Anzan Publications, Tehran, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> Jun Ruff Garthwit, *The Socio-Political History of the Bakhtiari*, translated by Mehrab Amiri, Sahand Publications, Tehran, 1994, p. 283.

<sup>143</sup> Macbean Ross, Elizabeth Ness, *come with Me to the Bakhtiari Land*, translated by Mehrab Amiri, Anzan Publications, Tehran, 1994, p. 228.

support the constitution, even sending his younger brother, Yusuf Khan Emir Mujahid, to convince the tribal leaders in Iran to join the cause.<sup>144</sup>

Serdar Es'ad's letters and correspondence from Europe undoubtedly helped solidify the Ilkhani tribe's commitment to constitutionalism and the conquest of Isfahan. As in Tabriz, Reşt, and other cities, when the news of the bombing of the parliament and the suppression of the constitutionalists reached Isfahan, the people became excited and decided to defend the constitution.<sup>145</sup>

The signing of the oil contract between the Bakhtiari Khans and the British, without the intervention or presence of the Iranian government, remained a dark spot in the southern constitutional movement. According to the laws of any country, including the Qajar dynasty, citizens cannot allow foreign countries to exploit their national resources. Unfortunately, the Bakhtiari Khans violated the country's laws and the rule of law by negotiating directly with the British government and signing an exploitative oil contract that allowed the British to pay them 3% of the oil revenue. The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly protested against the British government after reaching this agreement without the presence or intervention of the central Qajar government. Serdar Es'ad, eager to please the British, took extreme measures to protect the interests of the Qavam dynasty. With his support for the Qavams, he went so far as to threaten the government with retaliation. "The Minister of Foreign Affairs believes the report about the lives of Kavam al-Mulk and Nusrati al-Devle being in danger is true, and such an event is certain to force Bakhtiari to take retaliatory action."

After the beginning of the small dictatorship, Mohammad Ali Shah removed the moderate Ala'ul-Mulk from Isfahan and handed the city's government to Iqbal al-Devle, appointing Mu'addel al-Mulk-i-Shirazi as his assistant. These two worked to suppress the constitutionalist movement in Isfahan. In response to their repressive actions, Haji Nurullah Necefi and other constitutionalists in Isfahan saw the only solution as seeking help from the Bakhtiari tribe against Iqbal al-Devle's oppression. Therefore, with the approval of their society, Dr. Masih Khan and his brothers Dr. Issa Khan and Dr. Noorullah Khan went to the Bakhtiari to rally support for the people of Isfahan.<sup>146</sup>

Eventually, Ibrahim Khan Zardasht, the eldest son of Ilkhani, and Necefgoli Khan Samsam el-Seltane met at the "Dezak" castle, thanks to the skill and diplomacy of Haji Nurullah Necefi. In December 1326 AH, the Bakhtiari cavalry, led by Zergam el-Saltane and his son Abulghasem Khan Zergham, entered Isfahan and defeated Iqbal al-Devle, with the help of the Isfahani constitutionalists, capturing the city. A few days after the capture of Isfahan, Samsam el-Saltane entered the city with another army, and Zergam el-Saltane, who respected him, handed over the city's administration to him. With the capture of Isfahan by the Bakhtiari, it became the base for both the Bakhtiari and the Isfahani constitutionalists, reigniting hope for the revival of the constitution and boosting their confidence.

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<sup>144</sup> Mehdi Malekzadeh, *History of the Constitutional Revolution*, Vol. 6, Scientific Publications, Tehran, 1992, p. 108.

<sup>145</sup> Ahmad Bashiri, *The Blue Book*, Vol. 1, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publications, Tehran, 1990, p. 15.

<sup>146</sup> *The Role of the Bakhtiari Tribe and the Scholars of Isfahan in the Fall of Mohammad Ali Shah and the Rebirth of the Constitutional Movement*, Foroozeh Magazine, Tehran, Issue 3, Summer 2009, p. 3.

This victory dealt a heavy blow to Mohammad Ali Shah, who soon called upon Amir Mofahham to suppress the Bakhtiari and Isfahani constitutionalists. Amir Mofahham, with the government forces, moved toward Isfahan, reaching Kashan. After the fall of Isfahan to the Bakhtiari, Serdar Es'ad immediately left Europe for India, then to Muhammera. Among the Bakhtiari leaders, Serdar Es'ad's progressive stance was of paramount importance. After reaching Muhammera, he forged an alliance with Sheikh Haz'al, the leader of the Arabs and a neighboring leader of the Bakhtiari tribe in southern Iran. He also signed another agreement with the neighboring Qashqai-Turk tribe and informed them of his intent to support the constitution.

The Bakhtiari dynasty, along with the Arabs and Qashqai, signed a unity and friendship treaty, which provided peace behind the front lines. From there, Serdar Es'ad rushed to the Bakhtiari to gather soldiers. On the 15th of Rabi' al-Thani, 1327 AH, four months after the fall of Isfahan, he was warmly welcomed by the people of Isfahan, and with an army made up of Bakhtiari youth, he entered the city. Soon after, he began assembling an army to march on Tehran. Serdar Es'ad spent about a month in Isfahan, and on the 27th of Jamadi al-Awal, 1327 AH, he took the lead of the movement and set off to conquer Tehran with his army.

Finally, Serdar Es'ad and the constitutionalist forces, led by Sepahdar Tonekaboni, defeated Mohammad Ali Shah's army and, after a three-day battle, occupied Tehran. The Bakhtiari gained unique power and influence both in Tehran and other cities, controlling the prime minister's office and the Ministry of the Interior.

Following the fall of tyranny, the first government unanimously appointed Serdar Esad as the Minister of the Interior. However, the first major issue arose when the Turks in Zanzan revolted. Molla Qurban Ali, an influential and authoritarian figure from Zanzan, rebelled against the constitutional government, making Zanzan and its suburbs the center of his occupation. He imprisoned constitutionalists and took over the local administration. In response, Sepehदार dispatched Serdar Esad, Armenian Yeprem Khan, and Cafer Koli Khan Amir Bahadur, along with some Bakhtiari and Mujahid cavalry from Tehran, to engage Molla Qurban Ali in battle. Molla Qurban Ali faced defeat and fled after a violent conflict.

Following this, the Shahseven rebels in Ardabil rose up. To prevent their occupation, the central government instructed Settar Khan to disarm them and calm the city. However, Settar Khan, despite having some Mujahideen with him, was unable to confront them effectively. To prevent a potential uprising that could spread to Tabriz, Sepehदार sent Cafer Gulu Amir Bahadur and Taşnak Yeprem Khan to suppress the Shahseven in Ardabil. With the help of the Bakhtiari cavalry, Armenian Mujahideen, and the forces gathered by Bagir Khan, they moved toward Ardabil. After a series of fierce battles, the government forces finally triumphed, and the defeated Shahseven rebels fled to the North Azerbaijani Mountains.<sup>147</sup>

Serdar Esad formed a cabinet and appointed Aligoli Khan, a leader of the Bakhtiari, as the Minister of War on the 18th of Rabi al-Thani, 1328 AH. Following Sepehदार Tonekaboni's resignation, Mostofi al-Memalik became the prime minister, and Sepehदार's first term in power ended a year later with the capture of Tehran on the 27th of Jamadi al-Tani, 1327 AH.

After the fall of Mostofi al-Memalik's cabinet, Sepehदार Tonekaboni formed a second government. However, Serdar Esad was unhappy with Sepehदार's reelection and requested a three-month leave from the parliament to travel to Europe. During this period, Mohammad Ali Shah, who had been in Odessa for nearly two years, decided to return to Iran. At that time, Haji Aligoli Khan, living in Paris, was the first to inform the Iranian government of Mohammad Ali Shah's

<sup>147</sup> Ebrahim Safayi, *Meşrute Lideleri*, Vol. 1, Cavidan Publications, Tehran, 1984, p. 26.

intentions. He telegraphed Samsam el-Saltaneh, the head of the Bakhtiari dynasty, advising him to stand firm for the constitution and the freedom of the Iranian nation, without retreating from any sacrifice. Garthwit asserts that Serdar Esad served as the Khans' spokesperson, granting approval for all actions. Serdar Esad's actions were a significant service to the British, so much so that he convinced the British government to award him a medal and badge for his services.<sup>148</sup>

### **Bakhtiari Tribe's Demand for an Independent Government in Southern Iran**

In May 1920, approximately 2,000 Soviet soldiers entered the Anzali port. General Champin, commander of the British forces stationed in northern Iran, met with the Russian commander and agreed to withdraw British forces from Rasht. Consequently, the British forces withdrew from Rasht and relocated to Menjil. In June, Russian forces occupied Rasht, and the following day, Mirza Küçük Khan Cengeli declared the establishment of the Gilan Socialist Republic. British forces in the north, mainly consisting of 6,000 British and Indian soldiers stationed in Menjil and smaller units in Zanjan and Qazvin, clashed with Mirza Küçük Khan's rebels in Menjil. However, the occupation of the Menjil Pass was short-lived, as General Champin, fearing the rebel forces, withdrew his troops to Kazvin.<sup>149</sup>

Despite the British refusal to engage with the rebels, Iranian government forces, led by the Cossacks, advanced toward Gilan and regained Menjil. Two weeks later, after a brief conflict, the Cossacks captured Rasht and, following ten days of clashes, attacked the Enzeli port, forcing Russian commander Staroselsky to abandon the area.

British Deputy Ambassador Norman was aware that the movements in Gilan and Azerbaijan were uprisings against British-backed landowners. Meanwhile, Vosug el-Dewle resigned during the 1919 agreement, and Muşir el-Devle became Iran's Prime Minister. One of the conditions for him to accept responsibility was the suspension of the 1919 British agreement. The delay in its approval led to the dissolution of Parliament. Vosug el-Dewle's government held elections in some provinces, but the parliament failed to achieve a majority, leading to its dissolution.

The British Deputy Ambassador, Norman, believed that if the rebels moved further south, it would be better for him to leave Tehran. Others in the British Foreign Office, however, planned to use the Bakhtiari tribes to control central Iran and protect British forces in key regions, including the western and southwestern oil zones. In line with this plan, the Bakhtiari requested that the British cede control of much of Iran to them and make a Qajar prince their puppet ruler. They also insisted on receiving all oil royalties directly.

However, the British government was unable to accept these terms and had another plan in mind, which was to send General Ironside to replace General Chapman, who was seeking a new way to establish a strong government in Iran. Eventually, this led to the rise of Reza Khan and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty.

### **The Kashkay Tribe and Their Role**

“We must never trust these cursed Kashkays; they troubled us in both World Wars.”

Winston Churchill's statement reveals the extent of British contempt towards the Kashkay Turks. The increasing power of the Kashkays in the Fars province raised concerns for Nasir al-Din Shah

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<sup>148</sup> Esfandiar Ahanjideh, *The Bakhtiari Tribe and the Constitutional Movement*, Ahanjideh Publications, Tehran, 2016, p. 270.

<sup>149</sup> Ahmad Kasravi, *The Eighteen-Year History of Azerbaijan*, Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1999, p. 2.

of the Qajar dynasty.<sup>150</sup> In response, the Qajar king attempted to form an alliance with other tribes to balance the power and neutralize the Kashkays. This alliance quickly formed and was known as the “Hamse” tribe, which consisted of five tribes in the eastern part of Fars province. Gevam-ol-Molk of Shiraz led the Hamse tribe. From this period onward, the Hamse tribe acted as a significant deterrent to the Qajar rule in Iran, entering into political conflicts and launching a corrosive war against rivals with the support of the central government.<sup>151</sup>

At the onset of the Constitutional Revolution, the leader of the Kashkay tribe was Solet el-Devle, one of the most powerful and intelligent leaders of the time. During this period, the tribe had a population of about thirty thousand families, and their migration routes stretched across vast areas of Iran. They controlled the important route from Shiraz to Bushehr, where they stationed their military members. The port city of Bushehr, being the most valuable port in the Persian Gulf, was of enormous importance to both Iran and the British. Control over this route became a point of conflict between the Kashkays and the government. The British made significant efforts to ensure the security of this route.

As the Constitutional Revolution approached, the struggle to control the Shiraz-Bushehr route continued. Due to political conflicts, Ismail Khan Solet el-Devle, the leader of the Kashkays, supported the constitutionalists. The Kashkay tribe’s support for the constitutionalists in the Fars province created a fresh wave of movement in the region, influencing developments at the time. Solet el-Devle formed close relationships with constitutionalist scholars, including his friendship and loyalty to Ayatollah Lari, which began in the early years of the movement and continued until the end of World War I.

The Kashkay Turks recognized Solet el-Devle as the undisputed ruler of their geographical territory, which included the western and southwestern parts of Iran and cities like Kazerun, Borazjan, Firuzabad, Kevar, and Fereşbend. The Kashkays' active participation in the constitutional movement created difficult circumstances for both the Qajar government and the British.

#### **-Relations with the British and Role in World War I**

The close relationship between Gevam and the British, marked by oppression, corruption, and injustice, led to an anti-British sentiment among the Kashkays, which resulted in several serious conflicts with British forces. The animosity between the Kashkays and the British persisted during World War I and World War II, as the Kashkays sided with Germany against the British.

During the 1858-1859 Anglo-Iranian War, the tribe’s forces, including the Kashkay fighters and Ahmed Khan Tengestani’s men, lined up against the British invaders in Bushehr. However, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 allowed British goods to flood into the region, doubling British influence over Iranian territories. Between the 1870s and 1910s, the British paid more attention to securing the route from Bushehr to Shiraz and Isfahan.

#### **-The Constitutional Movement and the Kashkays**

In the autumn of 1905, the ulama and prominent figures of Fars province alerted the Shah to the tyranny of the ruling government and began a movement against it. The leaders of the Shiraz opposition, Mirza Ibrahim Sherif Shirazi, and the militant leader of Larestan, Seyed Abdolhossein Lari, traveled to Shiraz to support the movement.

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<sup>150</sup> Roosevelt, Kermit Jr., *Coup within a Coup*, translated by Askari Mohsen, Sales Publications, Tehran, 2000, p. 6.

<sup>151</sup> P. Oberling, *British Tribal Policy in Southern Persia*, 1970, p. 86.

In October 1907, Seyed Abdolhossein Lari, with the support of the Qashqai Navy, went to Shiraz to oppose the Ghavam dynasty. Mohammad Riza Khan Ghavam al-Mulk met his demise in March 1908. From the spring of 1908 until June 23rd, constitutional activities in Shiraz intensified. The process of establishing Larestan's rules continued until the spring of 1915. After these events, Mühbir el-Saltaneh sent Habibullah Khan to Larestan to calm the region and collect taxes.<sup>152</sup>

The struggle continued until World War I, with the Kashkays and leaders like Reis Ali Delvari continuing to fight against colonial powers. Despite their significant involvement in the Constitutional Movement, the Kashkays, like their Azerbaijani counterparts, never held any high-ranking positions within the new state and were later exiled to northern Iran.<sup>153</sup>

The Kashkays played a pivotal role in Iran's history, particularly during the Constitutional Revolution and in opposing foreign influence, especially British colonialism. Their alliances and conflicts with both the Qajar government and the British made them key players in shaping Iran's political landscape. Despite their active participation in the Constitutional Movement, the new political order often sidelined them and forced them into exile, highlighting the complex and turbulent nature of Iran's early 20th-century history.

### **Conclusion**

The Constitutional Revolution was a reaction to the existing system, while the ongoing Constitutional Movement served as a preventive measure to break the state and nation's dependency. Azerbaijan and Turkish-origin figures initiated the process, which aimed to align social freedom and justice by freeing the state from its patrimonial mindset and rectifying the misguided decentralization that had long afflicted the state's structure. Figures such as Sattar Khan, Haj Ali Davafforosh, and Siqat al-Islam believed that constitutionalism, without an appropriate distribution of power, would only lead to authoritarianism. They argued that without reforming the corrupt political and economic system and without reconciling tradition with modernity, constitutionalism would not achieve its goals. In their view, foreign governments would not be able to undermine the people's will.

Internal colonialism, which fueled the lack of centralization during the Qajar period, had made provinces economically autonomous, but the absence of oversight and weak political structures allowed regional colonization to take hold. The Azerbaijan Provincial Union, perhaps, was an example of a sense of responsibility to strengthen central authority as a symbol against republicans who sought an alternative to the current system by targeting the country. Republicans sought nothing more than the removal of Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Bakhtiari, and Arab tribes from the central power structure. Rather than weakening the monarchy and conditioning it, they aimed to create a formal unity in the direction of linguistic and intellectual cohesion, bringing a totalitarian figure under the flags of seven states instead of uniting them under a single entity.

The transformation of the revolution into an unfinished constitution and the isolation of the constitutional ideal was driven by their aim to eliminate Azerbaijan's power distribution process as a key element of the country's stability before the Azerbaijani State Assembly. In certain regions, this Anjoman Shah approach pushed the King to the brink of danger, underscoring Azerbaijan's power. This fear of such an approach later became evident in the actions of Yapram Khan, Mirza Malek Khan, and Sardar Esad. Sattar Khan and the Tebriz Provincial Assembly,

<sup>152</sup> Kaveh Bayat, *The Fars Nomadic Uprising*, Gümüş Publications, Tehran, 1986, p. 15.

<sup>153</sup> Mirza Hüseyin Fasayi Hüseyini, *The History of Naseri Farsname*, Sanayi Publications, Tehran, 1962, p. 387.

alongside their efforts to protect horizontal relationships between government and civil society, worked towards ensuring complete separation (protection) by uniting various schools of thought, including the independence of clergy, social freedoms, and the moderation between tradition and modernity. They sought to redefine Iranian identity by uniting religious and regional identities, based on a national identity defined by fair distribution and resistance to colonial powers. They made efforts to prevent a constitutional transformation in the Iranian intellectual space of Iranshahr. Perhaps the realization of such ideals in the long term could have prevented the radicalization of the country (including events like the assassination of Atabak, Nasir al-Din Shah, and Haidar Khan Em Oğlu), the marginalization of Arabs, conflicts between the Bahtiyaris and the Kashkays, the incitement of Kurds against Turks, and the rise of xenophobic tendencies in Sistan and Baluchestan. It might have even expedited the alignment of foreign powers, like England and Russia, in the face of a divided Qajar state. Unfortunately, the outcome was tragic, as Atabak was assassinated within the park.

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