

# IRAN

HISTORIOGRAPHY  
AND POLITICAL  
CULTURE

IN THE 20TH CENTURY

EDITED BY TOURAJ ATABAKI



I.B. TAURIS

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# Iran in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

## Historiography and Political Culture

Edited by Touraj Atabaki



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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	ix
<i>Note on Transliteration</i>	xiii
1 Historiography of Twentieth Century Iran: Memory, Amnesia and Invention <i>Touraj Atabaki</i>	1
2 Historiography and Crafting Iranian National Identity <i>Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi</i>	5
3 Memory and Amnesia in the Historiography of the Constitutional Revolution <i>Abbas Amanat</i>	23
4 Disintegrating the ‘Discourse of Disintegration’: Some Reflections on the Historiography of the Late Qajar Period and Iranian <i>Cultural Memory</i> <i>Oliver Bast</i>	55
5 Agency and Subjectivity in Iranian National Historiography <i>Touraj Atabaki</i>	69
6 The Nation’s Poet: Ferdowsi and the Iranian National Imagination <i>Afshin Marashi</i>	93
7 The Pahlavi School of Historiography on the Pahlavi Era <i>Kaveh Bayat</i>	113
8 Architectural Historiography 1921–42 <i>Kamran Safamanesh</i>	121
9 The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography <i>Houchang E. Chehabi</i>	155

## CONTENTS

<b>10</b>	Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Historiography of Modern Iran	177
	<i>Mana Kia, Afsaneh Najmabadi, and Sima Shakhsari</i>	
<b>11</b>	Marxism, Historiography and Historical Consciousness in Modern Iran: A Preliminary Study	199
	<i>Afshin Matin-asgari</i>	
<b>12</b>	Islamist Historiography in Post-Revolutionary Iran	233
	<i>Kamran Scot Aghaie</i>	
	<i>Notes</i>	265
	<i>Index</i>	323

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# Note on Transliteration

Transliteration is always a thorny problem when one is dealing with an edited volume. Through the book, all Persian words and names have been transliterated according to a simplified system that avoids diacritical marks. However, some contributors insisted to adopt different transliteration system. Therefore, a certain degree of variation and inconsistency has been allowed. The only alternative would have been to attempt to fit all contributors into a Procrustean of uniformity; an effort that I felt was bound to be futile in view of perspectives involved in this volume.



# Historiography of Twentieth Century Iran: Memory, Amnesia and Invention

*Touraj Atabaki*

**T**wentieth century historiography on nation-state correlation to a large extent has been shaped by politically contentious projects. Writing the national history of the people who matured from a passive existence (*Passiver Volkheit*) to a people bound through a modern state with consistent and internationally recognized borders relied decisively on remembered, invented and recorded past which is sturdily and increasingly refashioned by present politics. The quest for roots and for historical background not only becomes essential for the people living in certain territory and for being identified as a territorial nation to claim territorial continuity, but it also often leads them to statehood.

In modern state building, however, it is not only the present politics that reconstruct the past, but it is also the historiography's task to provide recognition to a regime and legitimize its authority by refashioning the political culture through construction of the selected recollection of a certain past. Linking to real or imagined past, appending to genuine or fake ancestries or even fabricating documents are not exceptional in the politics of transferring from a territorial identity or a territorial state to a national identity and nation-state. These are all legitimized in the historiography's agenda in order to shape a significant and unbroken link with the nation's seminal past that could fill the gap between its origin and its actuality.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the practice of such a quest often ends up with a high degree of disorientation and intellectual confusion. This persistently raises the questions



of who is looking for whose roots and writing whose past? Whose memory is it and what are their memories?<sup>2</sup> Do the class, gender, ethnic or religious affiliations really matter in recording the nation's past? If history, as E.H. Carr argues, is 'a dialogue between the past and the present', then to what extent did the present political culture lead the historians to certain presentation of the past that meets the very political needs of today? Could one talk about history or histories of a nation? Elite history or subaltern history? Gendered history or non-gendered history? Titular history or histories of minorities? These are among numerous questions confronting the historiography that in one way or another intends to refashion the political culture and construct the new identity or identities for the emerging nation-states.

However, we should not delude ourselves that our judgment of the past is not immutable. While the historians are often reluctant to write about the contemporaries; their narration and analysis of the past, their opted agencies and subjectivities in recording of the past are shaped by today's needs and deeds. It is the present that crafts the recording of the past; a certain past, which through our today's prism reaches the present, a selected past. This may be more evident in all-inclusive projects such as writing national history of a nation where each social and political group of the present has its own reading and recording of the past. Accordingly, the reputation of great historical episodes such as a revolution, *coup d'état* or any change of the rule fluctuate in diverse assessments. The historiography of the twentieth-century Iran is among the many verdicts of this assertion.

In the course of her history, Iran has experienced many eventful epochs. The twentieth century was far from exceptional in this respect: the ravages of three major wars (1914–18, 1941–5 and 1980–8) resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of people; three coups (1908, 1921 and 1953) transforming power relations within the political and military elite and two revolutions (1905–9 and 1978–82) leading to radical changes in socio-political arrangements.

Similar to the European historiography, such drastic changes in Iran were manifested, more than anywhere else, in the new perceptions of historiography. Up to the twentieth century, the historiography of Iran was, evidently, dominated by political, dynastical and genealogical elements as well as by narratives of the lives of the elite. However, around the turn of the twentieth century, and especially in the post-Constitutional Revolution (1905–9) period, Iran witnessed the birth of a new political culture which aimed to form a modern

state; thus paving the way gradually for the establishment of a new school of Iranian historiography.

Historical research into Iran's spectacular social upheavals in the twentieth-century has developed very erratically. Basically, one can distinguish three areas of historical research. The first area depicts the macro-political picture, i.e., foreign relations, military, diplomatic representations and patterns of belief system. This top-down approach has played a significant role for at least a hundred years, leading to interesting research on the institutional aspects of the Constitutional Revolution. The second area consists of a number of research contributions to economic, urban and demographic history that showed growth during the second half of the twentieth century. The third area is that of the social history of Iran. Although the latter is the least developed trend in Iran, the worldwide prevalence in sociological theories led to the recognition of the Iranian social history by some academics.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, a significant trend in the Iranian historiography, focusing mainly on the events of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, developed among the Iranian and non-Iranian historians, during which time the British, French and Iranian diplomatic archives were utilized by historians. Following the Islamic Revolution of 1978–82, which caused a momentous rupture with the political past, there has been a growing interest in reading the country's past, both the immediate and distant. The availability of new archival materials, on the Qajar and the Pahlavi periods, has encouraged this emerging desire. Moreover, many scholars have extensively dealt with the historical interpretations of the roots and causes of the Islamic Revolution while inspired, in many cases, by theories drawn from sociology and politics. Outside Iran, particularly in Britain and the United States, a small community of scholars emerged, especially after the Second World War, which made important contributions to the Iranian historiography. Nonetheless, they showed distinct preferences for certain aspects and issues. In the Soviet Union, there have always been historians interested in Iran but their publications were constrained by the Procrustean framework of Marxism-Leninism.

A careful study of the Iranian historiography in the last 150 years, especially during the course of the twentieth century, reveals the integrative endeavor by both native and non-native historians to craft the Iranians' new identity by observing selected memories and recollections in recording the past. The amnesia and recovery of selected past was accomplished by powerful ideological motivations,

both in the era of monarchy as well as during the rule of the Islamic Republic, in order to furnish a new form of self-awareness. Such awareness was essential for the political establishment, both in the case of the ancien régime and the newly established Islamic political system in Iran, to disassociate themselves from the certain past, to which they assume not to adhere. It was equally important for both of the establishments to craft a new apocalyptic culture in the determinist form of the prediction and ultimately controlling the future. In such historiography, history was seemingly reconstructed in an attempt to build a new vision of the past, securing the aspirations for the future.

The collection of the essays in this volume is the outcome of a conference that I organized at the University of Oxford on the Historiography and Political Culture in Twentieth Century Iran. In my preliminary call, while I urged each contributor to opt for a certain sphere in the Iranian modern historiography, I emphasized that our common denominator would be to examine the way the present has refashioned our reading of the past. At the same time, I highlighted the need to investigate how the Iranian historiography interacted with the political culture of the country in the twentieth century. The conference made a significant contribution to the reading of modern Iranian historiography, such as Islamist, fatherland-nationalist, conspiratorial, Marxist, peripheral and gendering. It prepared the ground for future projects on the role of historiography in shaping the country's political culture.

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# Historiography and Crafting Iranian National Identity<sup>1</sup>

*Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi*

The crafting of a modern Iranian identity was linked to the configuration of history and restyling of language. The nationalist ‘emplotment’<sup>2</sup> of Iran’s ancient history as a tragedy was based on the comprehension of the Muslim conquest as a force engendering ‘the reverse progress of Iran’ (*taraqqi-i ma’kus-i Iran*).<sup>3</sup> Linking the end of the ‘enlightened’ pre-Islamic times to origins identified with Iran through Mahabad or Kayumars, a new memory, identity, and political reality were fashioned. By inducing the desire and the will to recover ‘lost glories’ of the past, the nationalist struggle for a new social order became intrinsically connected to the politics of cultural memory and its de-Arabizing projects of history and language. Juxtaposing Iran and Islam, these projects prompted the emergence of a schizochronic view of history and the formation of schizophrenic social subjects who were conscious of their belonging to two diverse and often antagonistic times and cultural heritages.<sup>4</sup> During Iran’s Constitutional Revolution of 1905–9, these autonomous ‘Iranian’ identities prefigured into the line up of political forces to antagonistic ‘Constitutionalist’ (*Mashrutahkhwah*) and ‘Shari’atist’ (*Mashru’abkhwah*) camps. The shift in the 1970s from a regime glorifying Iran’s ancient civilization to a revolutionary regime extolling Islamic heritage is only the most recent example of the creative possibilities and insoluble dilemmas engendered by the contested memories of pre-Islamic Iran.

Informed by *dasatiri* texts and inspired by the *Shahnamah* of Firdawsi, modern historical writings harnessed the Iranian homeland (*vatan*) to an immemorial past beginning with Mahabad and Kayumars and pointing toward a future unison with Europe. Iran’s pre-Islamic past was celebrated as a glorious and

industrious age, and its integration into the Arab-Islamic world was shunned as a cause of its 'reverse progress' (*tarraqi-i ma'kus*). To catch up with the 'civilized world', the architects of Iranian nationalism sought to 'reawaken' the nation to self-consciousness by reactivating and inventing memories of the country's pre-Islamic past. The simplification and purification of Persian were corollaries of this project of national reawakening. Like the glorification of the pre-Islamic past, these language-based movements helped to dissociate Iran from Islam and to craft a distinct national identity and sodality.

In an increasing number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian historical texts, 'Iran' was constituted as the shifter and organizer of chains of narration and emplotment. For instance, *Rustam al-tavarikh*, completed in 1800, referred to Karim Khan Zand (d. 1779) as 'the architect of the ruined Iran' (*mi'mar-i Iran-i viran*) and 'the kind father of all residents of Iran' (*pidar-i mihraban-i hamah-i ahl-i Iran*). Among other compound constructions with Iran that were politically significant, Rustam al-Hukama, the author of this text, used *Iranmadar* (Iran-protector), *dawlat-i Iran* (government of Iran), *farmanrava'i-i Iran* (governing of Iran), *ahl-i Iran* (the people/residents of Iran), and territorial couplets such as *kishvar-i Iran*, *mamalik-i Iran*, *qalamraw-i Iran*, and *bilad-i Iran*.<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Hassan Khan I'timad al-Saltanah, like many other nineteenth-century historians, set himself the task of writing a geographical and historical 'biography of Iran' (*sharh hal-i Iran*).<sup>6</sup> The narratological centrality of the entity 'Iran' signified the emergence of a new conception of historical time that differed from the prevalent cyclical arrangement found in chronicles. While Iran had been previously conceived of as the center of the universe in the pre-modern Persian geographic imagination,<sup>7</sup> pre-nineteenth-century chronicles rarely temporized Iran. Rather, they were primarily concerned with chronicling the cycles of the rise and fall of dynasties. Making Iran the 'ultimate referent' for the sequence of historical events allowed for the emergence of new modes of historical emplotment. Ancient history, which was for so long equated with the sacred history and the cycles of messengers and prophets from the time of Adam to the rise of Muhammad, was re-envisioned. The cyclical time of messengers and prophets gave way to an *Iran-time* connecting the 'glorious pre-Islamic past' to a reawakened present and a rejuvenating future. These newer histories challenged the universality of Biblical/Qur'anic stories. The new historians granted that Adam might have been the father of the Arabs, but he was not the father of humanity. The forefather of humanity, they argued, was the Persian Kayumars.

In the emerging Iran-time, the mythical tempos of *Dasatir*, *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, *Sharistan*, and *Shahnamah* increasingly *displaced* the sacred time of Islam. Reading and (re)citing these Iran-glorifying texts in a period of societal dislocation, military defeats, and foreign infiltration during the nineteenth century allowed for the re-articulation of Iranian identity and the construction of alternative forms of historical narrations and periodizations. The authorization and popular (re)citation of these narratives resulted in a process of cultural *transference* that intensified the desire for a recovery of the ‘forgotten history’ of ancient Iran. This awakening of interest in the country’s pre-Islamic history provided a formative element in the discourse of constitutionalism. The Islamic master-narrative dividing history into civilized Islamic and uncivilized pre-Islamic periods was increasingly displaced with the meta-narratives and periodizations of *Dasatir* and *Shahnamah*. The eras of Adam, Noah, Moses and Jesus were substituted with those of Kayumars, Hushang, Tahmuris, and Jamshid.

The dissemination of *dasatiri* texts heightened the interest in the *Shahnamah*, which was published in more than twenty editions in Iran and India in the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The *Shahnamah* provided valuable semantic and symbolic resources for dissociating Iran from Islam and for fashioning an alternative basis of identity. Its accessibility contributed to its increased recitation in the coffee-houses, important sites for cultural and political production and dissemination. In fact, reciting the *Shahnamah* in the coffeehouses increasingly displaced the narration of popular religious epics such as *Hussain-i Kurd-i Shabistari*, *Iskandar Namah*, *Rumuz-i Hamzah*, and *Khavar Namah*.<sup>9</sup> A number of nineteenth century poets such as Sayyid Abu al-Hassan Harif Jandaqi (d. 1814), Hamdam Shirazi, and Mirza Ibrahim Manzur were, among others, well-known reciters of the *Shahnamah*.<sup>10</sup> The Qajar Aqa Muhammad Khan, Fath‘ali Shah, Nasir al-Din Shah, and Muzaffar al-Din Shah were known to have had their own reciters or *Shahnamah’khvanan*.<sup>11</sup> Hearing that John Malcolm’s *History of Persia* Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir (d.1852) is reported to have suggested that the Shah should have the *Shahnamah* recited instead to him: ‘Why don’t you read the *Shahnamah* . . . You should know that for all Iranians, for the highest to the lowest, the *Shahnamah* is the best of all books.’<sup>12</sup> The importance of the *Shahnamah*, and thus pre-Islamic Iran, in nineteenth-century Iran is also evident from the increased use of the names of its heroes and characters. For example, many Qajar princes were given names such as Kayumars, Jamshid, Farhad,

Firaydun, Nushafarin, Isfandiyar, Ardashir, Bahman, Kaykavus, and Khusraw. This emerging popularity of ancient Iranian names signaled an important aesthetic shift in the constitution of both personal and national identities.

Mimicry of the *Shahnamah*, popular among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets, became an important means for literary and cultural creativity. Known as the Second Firdawsi (Firdawsi-i Sani), Muhammad 'Ali Tusi's *Shahanshah Namah Nadiri* began in 1721 with an account of the desolation of the provinces and the rise of revolts attributed to the 'negligence of the King of Iran-land' (*ihmal-i sultan-i Iran zamin*). This, in his view, provided suitable conditions for the rise of Nadir Shah Afshar (r. 1736–47). The text ended by drawing a parallel between the fate of Jamshid and Zahhak in the *Shahnamah* and that of Nadir Shah who had become intoxicated with power. 'Forgetting the truth like Jamshid' and 'slaughtering the people like Zahhak,' Nadir was beheaded by his own guards.<sup>13</sup> Likewise in 'the Pahlavi author's style' (*bia'in-i guyandah-i Pahlavi*), Fath'ali Khan Saba (d. 1822) described the Irano-Russian war of 1810s in his *Shahanshahnamah*.<sup>14</sup> Among other poets imitating Firdawsi were Visal Shirazi (d. 1845) and his son, Muhammad Davari (d. 1866). Davari was an able calligrapher, transcribing one of the most beautiful copies of the *Shahnamah*.<sup>15</sup> In a versified introduction to his transcribed edition, Davari praised Firdawsi for glorifying the name of Iran and for revitalizing ancient history.<sup>16</sup> He wrote a versified history of Iran from the Mongol to the Safavid period, but due to his early death it was never finished.<sup>17</sup> These imitations of Firdawsi reactivated and disseminated memories of pre-Islamic Iran and thus contributed to the recirculation of a large number of obsolete Persian concepts and allusions.<sup>18</sup>

Veneration of Firdawsi was not limited to 'traditionalist' poets. Nineteenth-century intellectuals such as Fath'ali Akhundzadah (1812–78), Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani (1855–98), and Mirza Malkum Khan (d. 1908), who were critical of Iran's poetic tradition, respected Firdawsi's oeuvre. Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani viewed the *Shahnamah* as a foundation for preserving the 'people/nation of Iran' (*millat-i Iran*):

If it were not for the *Shahnamah* of Firdawsi, the language and the race of the Iranian nation/people [*lughat va jinsiyat-i millat-i Iran*] would have been at once transformed into Arabic after the domination by the Arab tribes in Iran. Like the peoples of Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, the Persian speakers would have changed their race and nationality [*milliyat va jinsiyat*].<sup>19</sup>

Imitating Firdawsi, Kirmani wrote a versified history entitled *Namah-i Bastan* (The Book of Ancients).<sup>20</sup> In the introduction, he accused the classical poets of disseminating falsehoods, idleness, and moral corruption in the person of kings and vazirs. Yet Kirmani praised Firdawsi for ‘inspiring in the hearts of Iranians patriotism, love of their race [*hubb-i milliyat va jinsiyat*], energy and courage; while here and there he also endeavored to reform their characters.’<sup>21</sup> Akhundzadah, who was also critical of Persian poetic tradition, viewed Firdawsi as one of the best Muslim poets. Comparing Firdawsi to Homer and Shakespeare, he asserted, ‘It can be truthfully stated that amongst the Muslim people [*millat-i Islam*] only the work of Firdawsi can be considered poetry.’<sup>22</sup> In his *Majma‘ al-Fusaha*, Reza Quli Khan Hidayat (1800–71) characterized *Shahnamah* as the ‘grand work’ (*namah-i ‘azim*) of Persian poetry comparable only to *Masnawi* of Maulavi.<sup>23</sup> The nineteenth-century authorization and popular (re)citation of the epic *Shahnamah* intensified the desire for the recovery of the ‘forgotten history’ of ancient Iran. By transference, I have in mind the dialogic relation of cultural interlocutors and historical texts, i.e., the *Shahnamah*-narrators and the *Shahnamah*, whereby the language and the themes of the *Shahnamah* reappear in the works of interlocutor.<sup>24</sup> Identification with the ancient world of *Shahnamah* became a formative element of modern national identity.

Several historians contributed to the reactivation of Iran’s ancient history and to the configuration of a glorious past. Mahmud Mirza Qajar’s (b. 1799?) *Tazkirah at-Salatin* began with Kayumars and concluded with the reign of Fath‘ali Shah.<sup>25</sup> *Khulasat al-Tavarikh*, another condensed general history of Iran from Kayumars to Fath‘ali Shah, ended with the events of year 1798.<sup>26</sup> I‘tizad al-Saltanah’s *Iksir al-Tavarikh* of 1842 likewise began with Kayumars and ended with the reign of Muhammad Shah (1834–48) the ruler who had commissioned the work.<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Shah’s interest in pre-Islamic history is evident from his support of Henry Rawlinson’s research on Bistun, which was translated for him into Persian with an introduction by Mirza Muhammad Taqi Lisan al-Mulk (1801–79).<sup>28</sup> Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani’s *Namah-i Bastan*, clearly indebted to *Dasatir* and *Dabistan Mazahib*, also began with Kayumars and ended with his contemporary Nasir al-Din Shah. In his *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, Kirmani synthesized Persian historical texts with Orientalist works on pre-Islamic Iran. *Ayinah-i Sikandari* was hailed as ‘the geneology of this noble nation/people’ (*shajarah namah-i in millat-i najib*).<sup>29</sup>



Authors of these general histories viewed their efforts as attempts to overcome a debilitating historical amnesia. According to 'Itimad al-Saltanah, 'for a civilized people and a great nation. . . no imaginable flaw is more severe than ignorance of the history of their country and a total forgetting of events of the former times.'<sup>30</sup> In his tireless effort to revive the memory of Ashkanid history, 'Itimad al-Saltanah synthesized Orientalist works with classical Persian and Arabic mythhistories.<sup>31</sup> His 'discovery' that the Qajars were descendants of the Ashkanids was highly praised by Nasir al-Din Shah.<sup>32</sup> Jalal al-Din Mirza's *Namah-i Khusravan*, a children's history book, was popular for its illustrations and for its use of 'pure Persian' prose. Akhundzadah praised Jalal al-Din Mirza for his use of pure Persian language by saying, 'Your excellency has freed our tongue from the domination of the Arabic language.'<sup>33</sup> Jalal al-Din Mirza's illustrations invented a visual memory of the past and thus were further used for plaster-moulding and internal decoration in Qajar houses and palaces.<sup>34</sup> Furughi, in his *Tarikh-i Salatin-i Sasanī*, regretted that while 'all over Europe, that is in London and Paris, people know the history of our land [*tarikh-i mamlikat-i ma*], but children of my own homeland are entirely ignorant of it.' He celebrated the completion of his work by declaring, 'I can now say that Iran has a Sasanid history.'<sup>35</sup>

Historical research and the ensuing reconstruction of the pre-Islamic past helped to craft a distinctly nationalist memory and identity. With the rise of Iranian nationalism, pre-Islamic names lost their predominantly Zoroastrian connotations and were adopted as proper names by Muslim Iranians. Likewise, Zoroastrian mythologies were cast as quintessentially Iranian. By anthropomorphizing the Iranian homeland (*vatan*), these mythologies were constituted as the nation's 'spirit and character'.

Emplotted in a tragic mode, these ancient histories of Iran signaled the will to recover lost national glories and to dissociate the Iranian Self from the 'alien' Muslim-Arabs who had dominated Iran. Pre-Islamic myths and symbols were used by nationalists to fashion a new Iran and to re-identify the *millat*. The nationalist thinker Akhundzadah, for example, objected to using a picture of a mosque as the logo for the newspaper *Millat-i saniyah-i Iran*.<sup>36</sup> In a letter to the editor he argued that 'if by *millat-i Iran* you mean the specific connotation prevalent today, the mosque, which is a general symbol for all Muslims, is not an appropriate logo.'<sup>37</sup> He suggested that the newspaper should use a combination of a pre-Islamic symbol, like an icon of Persepolis, and a picture of a Safavid building, in order to capture the spirit of the *millat-i Iran* (the people/nation of

Iran).<sup>38</sup> Kavah the Blacksmith (Kavah-'i Ahangar), another character from the *Shahnamah* of Firdawsi, provided an inspiring icon. Furughi argued that Kavah's famous banner should be seen as the national flag of Iran.<sup>39</sup> Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani portrayed Kavah as a revolutionary vanguard:

Because of the courage and nationalist endeavors [*ghayrat va himmat-i milli*] of Kavah-'i Ahangar, who uprooted from Iran the rule of the Chaldean Dynasty, which had lasted for 900 years, Iranians can truthfully be proud that they taught the nations of the world how to remove oppression and repel the repression of despotic Kings.

Through a process of narrative recoding, Kavah, the restorer of monarchy to Faraydun, was refashioned as a revolutionary nationalist. Similarly, Faraydun, a pre-Islamic king, was depicted as a modernizing monarch who transformed the 'indolent, fainéant, and world-resigning' Iranians into a people interested in 'construction, cultivation, development, the pursuit of happiness and the reform of material life.'<sup>40</sup> Anticipating the formation of a constitutional form of government in Iran, another pre-Islamic king, Anushirvan 'Dadgar' (the Just), was depicted as a constitutional monarch.<sup>41</sup> In a critique of contemporary cultural practices, it was argued that veiling of women and polygamy were not aspects of the pre-Islamic past.<sup>42</sup> These 'historical facts' were used rhetorically in a nationalist political discourse that projected Iran's 'decadence' onto Arabs and Islam.

The protagonists of Iranian nationalism masterfully used history as a rhetorical resource. They inverted the Islamic system of historical narration, in which the rise of Muhammad constituted the beginning of a new civilization and which defined the pre-Islamic period as the age of infidelity and ignorance. Like Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, the forerunners of constitutionalism, construed the pre-Islamic period as an 'enlightened age' (*asr-i munavvar*). They explained that the desperate conditions of their time was the result of the Muslim conquest of Iran.<sup>43</sup> Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadah boldly asserted that 'the Arabs were the cause of the Iranian people's misfortune.'<sup>44</sup> In opposition to the 'weak' and 'despotic' state, which claimed to be the protector of Islam and the *Shari'a*, the protagonists of the 'new age' (*asr-i jadid*) looked back to the pre-Islamic era with great nostalgia. They borrowed pre-Islamic myths and images to articulate a new social imaginary and historical identity. In the emerging nationalist discourse, Islam was defined as the religion of Arabs and as the cause of Iran's weakness

and decadence.<sup>45</sup> Looking back to the idealized pre-Islamic Iran, Akhundzadah, addressing 'Iran', stated:

What a shame for you, Iran: Where is your grandeur? Where is that power, that prosperity that you once enjoyed? It has been 1,280 years now that the naked and starving Arabs have descended upon you and made your life miserable. Your land is in ruins, your people ignorant and innocent of civilization, deprived of prosperity and freedom, and your King is a despot.<sup>46</sup>

The same Arabophobic ideas, in remarkably similar language, were echoed in Kirmani's rhetorical masterpiece, *Sah Maktub*.<sup>47</sup> In such 'novelized' and 'dramatized' accounts of historical processes, the pre-Islamic era was viewed as a lost utopia that possessed just rulers. By contrast, the Islamic period was projected as a time of misery, ruin, ignorance, and despotism. Mirza Aqa Khan called the fall from this imaginary grace the 'reverse progress of Iran' (*tarraqi-i ma'kus-i Iran*).<sup>48</sup> The rhetorical use of history, according to him, was 'necessary for the uprooting of the malicious tree of oppression and for the revitalization of the power of *milliyat* (nationalism) in the character of the Iranian people.'<sup>49</sup>

In a double process of projection and introjection, Iranian nationalists attributed their undesirable customs and conditions to Arabs and Islam. Obversely, desirable European manners and cultures were appropriated and depicted as originally Iranian. In fact, contrary to the 'Westernization' thesis, identification with European culture provided an important component for the long process of historical dissociation from the Arab-Islamic culture that occurred in the nineteenth century. In these endeavors, fake etymology and assumed resemblance facilitated cultural appropriation of modern European institutions. Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, viewing history as the 'firm foundation of the *millat*,' speculated that the French term 'histoire' was actually derived from the Persian word '*ustuvâr*', meaning firm and sturdy.<sup>50</sup> After enumerating a number of Persian words with similar roots in French (i.e., *pidar* = *père*, *dandan* = *dent*, *zanu* = *genou*), he argued that the French and Iranians were 'two nations born from the same father and mother.' The French, who moved to the West, progressed and prospered; Iranians, by contrast, were raided by the Arabs in the East and as a result lost their reason, knowledge, and ethics and forgot their etiquette, norms of life, and means of progress, prosperity, happiness and comfort.<sup>51</sup> Likewise Muhammad Shah (r. 1834–48), in a public proclamation

calling for the adaptation for European-style military uniforms, had argued that these uniforms were really copies of ancient Iranian uniforms. He supported these claims by pointing to the similarities between the new uniforms and the uniforms of the soldiers engraved on the walls of Persepolis.<sup>52</sup> In a similar manner, I'tizad al-Saltanah attributed the 'new order' (*nizam-i jaddid*) of military reorganization to the pre-Iranians. Forgetting their military organization, he argued, Iranians were weakened and defeated by the Arabs whereas Europeans who imitated Iranians were empowered.<sup>53</sup> In another example, Mirza 'Abd al-Latif Shushtari (d. 1805) claimed the discovery of a Persian origin for the European custom of dining at a table. He argued that the term *mizban* (host) was etymologically connected to the word *miz* (table). Accordingly, the compound *miz-ban* (understood as table + keeper) constituted a trace of a forgotten Persian custom adopted by Europeans.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Kirmani attributed the progress of Europe to the ideas of 'liberty and equality' (*azadi va musavat*), which in his view had been introduced in Iran by the pre-Islamic reformer Mazdak.<sup>55</sup> In I'timad al-Saltanah's *Durrar al-Tijan*, modern political concepts such as *mash-viratkhana* and *majlis-i Shura* (parliament), *jumhuri* (republic), and *mashrutah* (constitutional) were used to describe the pre-Islamic Ashkanid dynasty. I'timad al-Saltanah asserted that this dynasty 'like the contemporary British monarchy was constitutional and not despotic.'<sup>56</sup> Jamal al-Din Afghani, at the end of his brief outline of Iranian history from the time of Kayumars to Nasir al-Din Shah, similarly believed that most European industrial innovations, such as the telescope, camera and telephone, had actually been invented by Iranians of earlier times.<sup>57</sup> Similar claims were promoted by Kirmani who viewed Iranians as the inventors of devices as varied as the telegraph, postal service, and ships.<sup>58</sup> In this historical mode of self-refashioning, the architects of Iranian modernity crafted a past that mirrored, and even surpassed, that of nineteenth-century Europe.

The invention of a glorious past was contemporaneous with a thorough restylization of the Persian language. Restyling the Persian language, a process which continues today, was achieved in a dialogic relationship with Iran's Arab- and European-Other, but also with its often-ignored Indian-Other. The relationship with the Persian-speaking Indian-Other facilitated the renaissance and canonization of classical Persian literature. Fear of European colonization, experienced particularly in India where Persian served as an official language until the 1830s, led to a desire for neologism, lexicography, and the writing of grammar texts. The Arab-Other, on the other hand, provided Iranian nationalists with a

scapegoat for the purging of the ‘sweet Persian language’ (*zaban-i shirin-i Parsi*) from the influence of ‘the difficult language of the Arabs’ (*zaban-i dushvar-i Arab*). Through these types of responses, the Persian language was instituted as essential to the formation of Iranian national identity. Kirmani’s observation that ‘language is history,’ and that ‘the strength of each nation and people depends on the strength of their language,’ became accepted nationalist wisdom.<sup>59</sup> This development in Iran paralleled other nationalist movements worldwide.<sup>60</sup>

The rise of a Persian print culture in the late eighteenth century strengthened a literary style which resulted from a dispute among Persian poets of Iran and India. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, India had been an important center for the development of Persian art, culture, and literature and was the site of the emergence of the ‘New Style’ (*Tarz-i Naw*) poetry, known as the ‘Indian School’ (*Sabk-i Hindi*).<sup>61</sup> The poets of the Indian School broke away from the conventional paradigms of the classical Persian poets in order to fashion a distinct style and language.<sup>62</sup> They created new conventions and systems of signification by altering poetic tropes and by coining new compound words. The liberty taken by Indian poets in constructing and shifting the meaning of terms and concepts came to be viewed by the Iranian literati as a sign of their basic unfamiliarity and incompetence in the Persian language. This issue of linguistic competence served as the foundation for intense debates and disputes between Iranian and Indian poets. Siraj ‘Ali Khan Arzu (1689–1756), a leading Indian lexicographer and linguist, outlined in his famous essay *Dad-i Sukhan* one of these controversies that related to the problems of rhetoric, poetic creativity and language identity. Reflecting on whether an Indian poet’s resignification of idioms should be regarded as an error, Arzu took a pragmatic stance. He declared: ‘the Persian poets belonging to countries other than Iran, who are experts in language and rhetoric and have a long experience in poetic exercises, are qualified to amend or modify the meaning of words and idioms and use indigenous idioms in cases of poetic contingency.’ Such sentiments had been previously expressed by the poet Munir Lahuri (d. 1644) in his *Karnamah-i Munir*. Munir criticized contemporary poets who claimed mastery of the Persian language because of their birth in Iran. Likewise, the seventeenth-century poet Shayda Fatihpuri (d. 1632) criticized Iranians who dismissed him due to his Indian lineage.<sup>63</sup>

In an objection to *Tarz-i Naw* poets, Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Mushtaq (1689–1757) and his disciples<sup>64</sup> – Lutf‘ali Bayg Azar Baygdili (1721–80), Hatif Isfahani

(d. 1784), Sabahi Bigdili (d. 1792) – negated the innovations of the Indian School, formulating a program explicitly aimed at returning to the images and language of classical poets.<sup>65</sup> Mushtaq believed that ‘poets must follow Sa’di in *qazal*, Anvari in *qasidah*, Firdawsi and Nizami in *bazm*, Ibn Yamin in *qit’ah*, and Khayyam in *rubā’i*; otherwise they drive on the path falsity.’<sup>66</sup> This authorization of classical poets, later labeled as *Bazgasht-i Adabi* (literary return), was an early expression of literary nationalism in Iran and has had a continuous influence on the modernist historiography of Persian literature. Even though in some instances it led to ‘mindless imitation’ and to the rise of ‘Don Quixotes of Iran’s poetic history’<sup>67</sup> or what Mahdi Akhavan Salis called ‘false Sa’di’s, false Sana’i’s, [and] false Manuchihris’, this literary return was a creative reauthorization of classical texts.<sup>68</sup> By authorizing classical poets and by re-circulating their word choices, the literary return contributed to canon formation and a nineteenth-century literary renaissance.<sup>69</sup>

Notwithstanding the animosity of Iranian poets toward the Persianate poets of India, the development of Persian print culture in India did provide textual resources for a later poetic renaissance in Iran. As with the rise of Persian printing in India, a large number of classical texts became easily accessible for the first time. Printing made possible the formation of authoritative canons and facilitated the dissemination of seminal texts at an affordable price. Cultural and religious movements peripheral to the Shi’i networks of knowledge and power gained new means of propagation and dissemination. Printed copies of *Dasatir* (1818 and 1888), *Dabistan-i Mazahib* (1809, 1818, 1860), *Farhang-i Jahangiri* and *Burhan-i Qati’* (1818, 1858),<sup>70</sup> for example, were widely disseminated in Iran and contributed to the vernacularization of the Persian language. These texts popularized a large number of supposedly obsolete Persian words reactivated by Azar Kayvan and his disciples. *Farhang-i Jahnagiri* of Inju Shirzai (d. ca. 1626) included a chapter devoted to ancient Persian terms known as *zand va pazand* or *huzvarish*.<sup>71</sup> *Burhan Qati’* of Khalaf Tabriz embraced neologisms of Azar Kayvan and his disciples. These words quickly found their way into the works of Iranian poets such as Fath’ali Khan Saba (d. 1822), Yaghma Jandaqi (d. 1854), Qa’ani (d. 1854), Furughi Bistami (d. 1857), Surush Isfahani (d. 1868), Fathallah Shaybani (d. 1890), Fursat Shirazi (1854–1920) and Fathallah Shaybani (d. 1890). Both Saba and Yaghma Jandaqi owned personal copies of *Burhan Qati’*.<sup>72</sup> Yaghma, in many of his correspondences, used unfamiliar and newly constructed Persian concepts instead of the popularly used Arabic equivalents.<sup>73</sup>

He called this ‘recently appeared new style’ (*tazah ravish-i naw didar*), pure Persian, (*farsi-yi basit* or *parsi’negari*)<sup>74</sup> and encouraged his disciples to practice *parsi’negari*. In a letter, Yaghma Jandaqi remarked that *parsinigari* was prevalent among many writers in Iran who were ‘highly determined in their endeavor and have written valuable materials.’<sup>75</sup> The practitioners of *parsinigari* used terms such *amigh*, *akhshayj*, *farsandaj*, and *timsar*, which were re-circulated by the followers of Azar Kayvan in *dasatiri* texts. Persian scholars and lexicographers Purdavud and ‘Aliakbar Dehkhoda have drawn attention to the non-authenticity of *dasatiri* terms. But the proliferation of these words, despite their ‘suspected’ origin, signified a passion for semantic diversification and neologism in the nineteenth-century ‘invention of tradition.’

An important context for the proliferation of neologism during the nineteenth century was the British policy of replacing Persian as the official language in India. Among the charges leveled against the Eastern languages including Persian, one was that they ‘greatly darken the mind and vitiate the heart’ and are not an ‘adequate medium for communicating a knowledge of the higher departments of literature, science, and theology...’<sup>76</sup> Such anti-Persian views justified the British government’s abolition of Persian as the official language of India in 1834. At the same time, this intensified the need for lexicography and neologism as anti-colonial defense mechanisms.<sup>77</sup> Abolition of Persian as the official language in India was noted in Iran. Persian dictionaries published in India provided the basic model and lexical resources for compilation of dictionaries such as *Farhang-i Anjuman Ara-yi Nasiri* (1871), *Farhang-i Nazim al-Atibba’* (1900), and *Lughatnamah-i Dehkhoda* (1958–66). Iranian neologists such as Isma‘il Tuysirkani, Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, and Ahmad Kasravi used many of the terms and concepts objected to in the lexicographical controversies in India surrounding *Burhan Qati*.<sup>78</sup>

With the nineteenth-century governmentalization of everyday life and the formation of the public sphere, Iranian bureaucrats recognized that a style of writing full of allusions and ambiguities was inappropriate for communication and popular politics. Bureaucrats and court historians, continuing a trend set by Indian Persophones, began to take pride in simple and comprehensible writing. Simple language meant de-Arabization and vernacularization of the Persian language. Among the leading practitioners of ‘simple prose’ (*nasr-i sadah* or *sadah nivisti*) were ‘Abd al-Razzaq Dunbuli (1753–1826), Qa‘im Maqam Farahani (1779–1835 or 6), Muhammad Ibrahim Madayihnigar (d. 1907), Muhammad

Khan Sinki Majd al-Mulk (1809–79), Hassan ‘Ali Khan Amir Nizam Garusi (1820–99), Nadir Mirza Qajar (1826–85), and Amin al-Dawlah (1845–1907). With the expansion of the public sphere, these writers sought to close the gap between the written language of the elite and the spoken language of the masses by moving away from ‘sheer display of rhetorical cleverness and skill’<sup>79</sup> and adopting a style directed toward communication with the people (*mardum*).<sup>80</sup> This was the stated goal of official journals and newspapers *Kaqaz-i Akhbār*, *Vaqay‘-i Ittifaqiyah*, *Iran*, *Ruznamah-i Dawlat-i ‘Illyah-i Iran*, and *Ruznamah-i Millati*.

The need to communicate with the public was evident from two significant publicity pronouncements issued by Muhammad Shah in 1839. The first, as explained earlier, pertained to the adaptation of modern military uniforms. This announcement called for the standardization of uniforms with the intended function of promoting the ‘homogenization of all people’ (*hamah mardum bih surat-i tawhid shavand*). The royal publicity explained that the new uniform, modeled after pre-Islamic attire, was lighter, easier to remove, and cheaper to produce. Signifying the formation of a national economy, it remarked that the fabric for these uniforms should no longer be imported from India but made of indigenous materials in Kirman and Shiraz. This printed publicity was disseminated in all the provinces and barracks (*buldan va amsar-i Iran*).<sup>81</sup> In the second public statement, the Shah explained why he had to retreat from his military campaign in Herat. Pressured by the British to withdraw from Herat, Muhammad Shah reassured ‘the people of Iran’ (*mardum-i Iran*) that his retreat was not due to war fatigue or change of mind. He assured the soldiers, cavaliers, and tankers that he preferred an ‘honorable and virtuous/manly death’ (*murdan-i ba ghayrat va mardanigi*) to a luxurious palace life. Here the Shah hailed the soldiers as his ‘brave religious brothers’ (*hamana shuma baradaran-i dini va ghayur-i man hastid*).<sup>82</sup> The need to shape and to contain public opinion necessitated that these pronouncements be written in a simple and easily communicable language.

Along with the bureaucratic ‘simple prose’ movement that addressed an enlarged critical reading public, there was a nascent nationalist attempt to purify the Persian language from Arabic words and concepts. The purist movement in language, contrary to the prevalent historical perception, predated the Reza Shah period (1925–41).<sup>83</sup> Amongst the nineteenth-century practitioners of ‘pure Persian’ were: Mirza Razi Tabrizi, Farhad Mirza, Ahmad Divan Baygi Shirazi, Jalal al-Din Mirza, Isma‘il Khan Tusirkani, Gawhar Yazdi, Reza Bagishlu Ghazvini, Manakji Limji Hataria, Aqa Khan Kirmani, Abu al-Fazl Gulpaygani,<sup>84</sup>



Bahā'u'llah<sup>85</sup>, and Kaykhusraw Shahrukh Kirmani.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the Qajar statesman Mirza 'Ali Amin al-Dawlah demonstrated an ability to write in 'pure Persian' prose in the introduction to his memoirs, but refrained from doing so in the body of the text arguing that 'children of Iranian descent' (*kudakan-i Irani nizhad*) would understand him better in the contemporary language that is mixed with Arabic (*zaban-i imruzi-i Iran kah amikhtah bah navadir-i Tazi ast*).<sup>87</sup> Directly or indirectly, these authors were informed by *Dasatir's* exemplary prose. While Persian purism found a nationalist expression in Iran, as a literary movement it was not limited to Iranian writers. Indeed the Indian poet Asadallah Ghalib (1797–1896) was an unquestionable nineteenth-century master of Persian purism.<sup>88</sup>

The movement for the simplification and purification of the Persian language coincided with the movement for the simplification of Ottoman Turkish. Both were intimately tied to the struggle for constitutionalism. The language reform was not an after-effect of the constitutional revolutions in Iran and the Ottoman Empire but a prelude to them. Purists viewed language as essential to national identity. As Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani argued, '*Millat* means a people [ummat] speaking in one language. The Arab *millat* means Arabophones, Turkish *millat* means Turkophones, and Persian *millat* means Persophones.'<sup>89</sup> The purist movement in Iran, by re-circulating and re-signifying archaic concepts, provided the semantic field for the dissociation of Iran from Islam and formation of a nationalist system of signification and political imagination.

Consciousness of language did not stop with the attempt to purify the Persian language and substitute Arabic terms with their Persian equivalents. There were also attempts to study and to reform the structure of the Persian language. In 1869, Reza Quli Khan Hidayat, lamenting the state of the language, wrote:

In the 1286 years since the *hijra* of Muhammad, the Arabic language has continuously developed and evolved; but because of religious enmity and opposing natures, the Persian language has become obsolete, disordered, and obliterated, and nothing remains of the Ancient Persian texts.<sup>90</sup>

Such observations were important components of the rhetoric of language reform and purification. Compiling dictionaries and writing grammar texts were responses to a melancholic understanding of the Persian language. During this period there were many important books written on Persian grammar: 'Abd al-Karim Iravani's *Qava'id-i sarf va nahv-i Farsi* (1848), Hajj

Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmani's *Sarf va nahv-i Farsi* (1858), Muhammad Hussain Ansari's *Tanbihyah al-sibyan* (1878), Mirza Habib Isfahani's *Dastur-i Sukhan* (1872) and *Dabistan-i Parsi* (1890), Mirza Hassan Taliqani's *Kitab-i lisan al-'Ajam* (1887), Ghulam Hussain Kashif's *Dastur-i Kashif* (1898), and Mirza 'Aliakbar Khan Nafisi's *Zaban Amuz-i Farsi* (1898). These grammar texts, although modeled on studies of Arabic grammar and while they often had Arabic titles, nevertheless provided the ground for developing and identifying the rules of the Persian language.

Protagonists of the constitutional order in Iran were conscious of the importance of language in the struggle for a new identity. The reconstruction of history would not have been possible without the transformation of the language, the locus of culture, and memory. Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani argued that language is in reality 'a history which signifies the general and specific characteristics, behaviors, manners, and forms of belief of a people.' He held the view that 'the strength of the *millat* depends on the strength of the language.'<sup>91</sup> Kirmani thought of writing as a creative act. He argued that the Persian word *nivishtan* (writing) was derived from *naw* (new) and 'it means creating something original.'<sup>92</sup> His *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, a creative act of historical writing, not only subverted the dominant system of historical narration but also the system of signification by creating an Iran-centered political discourse and identity.

Most nationalists viewed writing as a crucial but problematic element for the progress and development of Iran. Some like Akhundzadah, Mirza Reza Khan Bigishlu, and Mirza Malkum Khan argued that the proliferation of scientific thinking was not possible as long as the Arabic script was used. Akhundzadah argued that the reforms in Iran and the Ottoman Empire could not bring about the desired changes without the dissemination of modern sciences, which was only possible with a change in the alphabet. Such a change was necessary because scientific terms had to be borrowed from European languages: 'How can we translate European books into Arabic, Persian, or Turkish when our three languages lack scientific terminologies? We have no choice but to adopt those terms into our language.'<sup>93</sup> Akhundzadah devised a new alphabet based on Latin and Cyrillic, arguing, 'The old alphabet should be used for the affairs of the hereafter, and the new alphabet for the affairs of this world.'<sup>94</sup> Viewing the Arabic script as a cause of Iran's destruction, he revealed, 'My outmost effort and hope today is to free my people [*millat-i khudam*] from this outdated and polluted script which was imposed on us by that nation [*an qawm*] and to guide

my people [*millatam*] from the darkness of ignorance to the enlightenment of knowledge.<sup>95</sup> Likewise Malkum argued ‘The ignorance of the people of Islam and their separation from present-day progress are caused by the defectiveness of the alphabet.’<sup>96</sup> As Bernard Lewis observed, ‘In the inadequacy of the Arabic alphabet, Malkom Khan saw the root cause of all the weakness, the poverty, insecurity, despotism, and inequity of the lands of Islam.’<sup>97</sup> Despite Akhunzadah and Malkum’s nationalist enthusiasm, their argument against the Arabic script was similar to the British promoters of romanization who considered Devnagari and Arabic scripts as ‘barbarous characters.’ For instance, C. E. Trevelyan, arguing for romanization, stated that the words of ‘the English language are so generally indeclinable that their introduction into the Indian dialects may be accomplished with peculiar ease.’ Looking forward to a heavy borrowing from ‘the more scientific and cultivated language,’ he exclaimed: ‘How desirable would be to engraft upon the popular languages of the East such words as *virtue*, *honour*, *gratitude*, *patriotism*, *public spirit*, and some others for which it is at present difficult to find any synonym in them!’<sup>98</sup> The hidden logic of such arguments was clearer to those who were familiar with the British colonial projects. In a sophisticated rebutting of Malkum Khan’s argument, Dardi Isfahani, who had lived in India for many years, argued that the Roman script, as used in English and French, was more irregular and more difficult to master than Arabic.<sup>99</sup>

Instead of importing European terms via the adaptation of the Roman script, I’timad al-Saltanah and Jalal al-Din Mirza called for the establishment of a language academy for the coining of new Persian scientific concepts.<sup>100</sup> This approach involved researching and rethinking history and language within the same scriptural culture. This was the stated goal of a Calcutta-based Persian journal, *Miftah al-Zafar*, that called for an active translation of European scientific texts. The journal’s views on language were developed in a series of articles on ‘Falsafah-’i Qawmiyat va Lughat’ (Philosophy of Nationalism and Language) arguing that ‘sciences could become popular only if they were made available in the national language.’ To support this claim, it argued that if Iranian philosophers had written in Persian, instead of Arabic, ‘philosophical spirit would not have been lost amongst Iranians.’<sup>101</sup> In an editorial, Muhammad Mahdi b. Musa Khan contended that the translation and publication of scientific texts was the secret of European progress. In order to advance, he suggested that ‘Iranians must also translate European scientific texts and, when necessary, they should not hesitate to invent and to coin new concepts’ (*alfaz-i naw barayi anha vaz’ va*

*ja'l kunad*).<sup>102</sup> In another article he noted that sending students to Europe did not promote the general interest of the nation: 'The general benefit of the nation can only be promoted if all fields of knowledge are taught in public schools in the mother language [*zaban-i madari*].'<sup>103</sup>

To strengthen the Persian language, in a letter to the Prime Minister Mirza 'Aliasghar Amin al-Sultan, *Miftah al-Zafar* called for the establishment of a scientific society in Calcutta for the sole purpose of translating European scientific texts into Persian. The response from Tehran was very positive. The editor of the journal, Mirza Sayyid Hassan al-Husayni Kashani, was granted the title 'Mu'ayad al-Islam' (Strengtheners of Islam) and an annual salary of two thousand francs.<sup>104</sup> The Journal followed its design with the established of *Anjuman-i Ma'arif*, which consisted of seventy-three scholars who were capable of translating from various languages.<sup>105</sup> A few years later a similar society, *Majlis-i Akadimi* (1903), was established by Nadim al-Sultan, the Minister of Publications.<sup>106</sup> These two societies were the forerunners of *Farhangistan-i Iran* (The Language Academy of Iran), which was established on the occasion of the Firdawsi Millennium (*Hizarah-i Firdawsi*) in 1935 to advance Persian as the national language of Iran. Following the *Shahnamah* of Firdawsi, which was hailed as 'the certification and documentation of the nobility of Iranian people' (*qabalah va sanad-i nijabat-i millat-i Iran*),<sup>107</sup> the members of Farhangistan sought to Persianize foreign terms and concepts. The purist movement, which had begun in late sixteenth century by Azar Kayvan and his cohorts, was institutionalized in the form of Farhangistan in 1935.

The concern with language affected the development of the Constitutionalist discourse, a discourse best represented in the simple style of newspapers such as *Qanun*, *Sur-i Israfil*, *Musavat*, *Iran-i Naw*, and by writers such as Zayn al-'Abidin Maraghah'i, Mahdi Quli Hidayat, Hajj Muhammad 'Ali Sayyah Mahallati, Sayyid Hassan Taqizadah, 'Aliakbar Dehkhoda, and Mirza Jahangir Shirazi.<sup>108</sup> The nineteenth-century literary mimicry and canonization, restyling of language, and the reconfiguration of history provided the necessary components for the articulation of the Constitutionalist discourse and institution of a new national popular imagination. The Constitutionalist discourse represented Iran as the motherland (*madar-i vatan*) and Persian as the mother tongue (*zaban-i madari*). By anthropomorphizing Iran, the protagonists of the constitutional order also instituted history and culture as expressions of its soul, a national soul that was inherited by all Iranians.



# Memory and Amnesia in the Historiography of the Constitutional Revolution

*Abbas Amanat*

In our days of deconstruction and subaltern studies, no serious historian can afford hiding behind copious footnotes and trappings of textual scholarship and ignore the fact that monolithic narratives often deny the multiplicity of historical reality. Reading against the grain of the monolithic narrative is particularly in order in the historiography of Iran; a tradition that for long suppressed voices of dissent or tried to subordinate them to the collective memory of the dominant culture. Centuries of maintaining multilayered reality through such practices as the Shi'ite doctrine of *taqiyya* (doctrinal dissimulation) made the alternative narrative even harder to grasp. I have no intention, of course, to reinforce the biased Orientalist stereotyping of the Persian culture (from Chardin to Curzon) that characterized Iranians as liars – often to augment the values of an imagined Western morality, or to grind any axes against Iranian historians or historians of Iran. After all the Persian tradition of chronicles and histories are no more or no less biased, deceitful and concealing than Chinese, French or Sudanese. Yet a blissful amnesia often prevails when it comes to the genealogy of Iranian nationalism and its constitutional expressions. It is as though the historians of modern Iran are less sensitive to alternative readings of the past, and less willing to remember forbidden memories and unsettling realities that go against the accepted order of things.

## REREADING A PIOUS PAST

It is a familiar historians' routine, especially in the less-developed field such as modern Iranian history, to complain of a rich but untapped source material that is yet to be utilized by scholarship. This is no more true than in case of the Constitutional Revolution (1905–11) and the bulk of official documents that were left behind from that period as well as the chronicles, diaries and memoirs, diplomatic correspondence, tracts and treaties and newspapers. Moreover, posters, cartoons, announcements, slogans, songs and photographs in many ways are not only supplementary to the written texts but truer to the spirit of the time and speak of alternative realities. Unlike the recent Islamic Revolution that is yet to offer a substantive account beyond the tedium of slogans and state propaganda, the men and women of the Constitutional period were eager to write and publish with a spirit of unspoiled innocence about the events they observed and about themselves, whether they were the ardent supporters or opponents of Constitutionalism or neither.

Yet, despite a large body of primary material and a burgeoning field of historical studies, and nearly a century past the Revolution, issues of approach and objectivity remain largely unaddressed, especially in Persian accounts.<sup>1</sup> Most notable of course is superimposition of a utilitarian view of history that is obsessed with success and failure; a tendency to belittle the Constitutional Revolution as a transitory episode, or some sort of a conspiracy hatched by the British, or a short-lived dream of naïve modernizers that was rudely spoiled by fanatical clergy or a passing expression of mass protest manipulated by the political elite. One may only look at some firsthand accounts of the Constitutional period and their acute observations to be convinced of the enduring public enthusiasm for Constitutionalism among the ordinary people and their indigenous understanding of the *mashrûta* (lit. conditional governance) as a new socio-political order.<sup>2</sup> This is evident even in the widely read histories of the Revolution produced in English and Persian. Yet most secondary literature utilizing a limited range of primary sources remained loyal to a monolithic 'master narrative' that was crafted early in the century in Edward Browne's seminal *The Persian Revolution* and later streamlined by such works as Kasravi's *Tarikh-i Mashrûta-yi Iran*.

The nationalist historiography of the Pahlavi period, for reasons that are primarily to do with the rise of Reza Shah, looked back uncritically (and with some degree of nostalgia) at the Constitutional past. This was a predictable response to the Pahlavi state propaganda that tended to play down the Constitutional period as a disruptive and largely failed movement (but not a revolution). To the

limited extent that the revolutionary process was discussed in the textbooks of the Pahlavi period and official accounts, it was often depicted as an altruistic public effort that nevertheless triggered domestic chaos, foreign occupation and political betrayal; an upheaval that eventually brought to an end by Reza Khan, the savior of Iran. Accordingly, the political objectives of the Constitutional Revolution and its major social and cultural consequences were relegated to an artificially distant past (or as a vivid Persian expression has it, was ‘smacked against the dome of amnesia’ *be taq-i nesyan kobideh shod*). Even the independent intellectuals of the time – Kasravi and Malikzadah are two examples – who offered favorable pictures of the Revolution, by and large remained loyal to the dominant narrative and its myth of failure. Here the revolution had failed – as it did in the writings of pamphleteers and social commentators like Al-e Ahmad in the 1960s – because it eventually facilitated the rise of the Pahlavi dictatorship. For the classic Marxist social commentators (they hardly could be called historians), on the other hand, the Revolution failed because it was a mass movement dominated by a liberal bourgeoisie that was insensitive to the economic and political demands of the masses. Yet save sporadic references, little attention was paid, for instance, to the crucial part played by the Caucasian émigré constituency, including a large body of Iranian oil workers in Baku, in backing the Iranian constitutionalists through financial, moral and ideological support and later by joining the Iranian Constitutionalists during the 1908–9 civil war which included Azarbaijani Muslim, Armenian and Georgian volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

The myth of failure of course is an enduring one. In its latest manifestation post 1979, it is resuscitated by the proponent of the Islamic regime and the like-minded historians to exonerate Shaykh Fazullah Nuri and his *mashru’a* camp. As a forerunner to the Islamic revolution, Nuri is often portrayed as a martyr in the hands of Westernizing secularists. In this reading of the past, the Constitutional Revolution failed because it deviated from its original Islamic course and abandoned its committed clerical leadership. By monopolizing the Majlis and the public opinion, it is claimed, the modernist minority isolated the *mashru’a*-seekers; hence paving the way for foreign intervention and later for the rise of Reza Khan. The success of the Islamic Revolution, it thus went without saying, was because this time around the heirs to the *mashru’a* no longer were duped by the ‘compromising liberals’ and did not conform to their imported modernity.

Needless to say, there is an embarrassing historical lacuna in this literature that serves to cover up for the fact that Nuri and his likeminded followers held



an undivided support for Muhammad 'Ali Shah's and his Russian-backed regime. The alliance with the Qajar royalists either is dropped from this new Islamic reading altogether or explained away as an acceptable compromise.<sup>4</sup> Yet ironically when it came to deeper scrutiny, the Islamically correct scholarship stayed clear from theological arguments set forth by the proponents of the *mashru'a* at the time of the Constitutional Revolution. This pro-*Shari'a* bloc enjoyed a nationwide support among the ranking clergy. In December 1908, for example, some one hundred clerics of various ranks were signatories to a declaration prepared by Nuri expressing disgust for *mashruta* and calling for compliance with the Islamic *Shari'a* and full obedience to Muhammad 'Ali Shah's autocratic rule.<sup>5</sup> Such a position was in effect in conflict with the doctrine of *wilayat-i faqih* that called for the political governance of the jurists. Commenting on Nuri's refutations of Constitutionalism deemed embarrassing and even dangerous to the 'committed' writers in the Islamic Republic because Nuri and his supporters eventually came to renounce any articulations of political authority in favor of the traditional Qajar monarchy. Moreover, they condemned the very idea of legislating a constitution and other laws as direct violations of the doctrine of the finality of Muhammad's prophecy (*Khatamiyya*) and the perfect Islamic creed that it engendered free from any human intervention.

Some commentators in the West – too often with a rudimentary knowledge of modern Iranian history and its complexity – have been prone to superficial readings of the Constitutional Revolution. For them the Constitutional 'movement' is more of an object with a function, a thing to be utilized rather than a process to be understood and its impact assessed regardless of 'positive' accomplishments. Since the Constitutional Revolution did not turn Iran into a democratic paradise, it is implied, it should be viewed as a barren upheaval, a historical fluke. Instead, attention is to be turned into the modernizing forces that came with Reza Shah and his state-building initiatives. Such a utilitarian reading naturally prompts the historians to see the revolution as a vehicle for positivist modernity under the Pahlavids rather than a major socio-political and cultural upheaval on its own right. It is as though the profound changes of the Pahlavi era could occur overnight and that prevailing cultural and military elites of that period could miraculously (or catastrophically, depending on the writer's perspective) descend upon Iran out of the blue.

In dealing with the Constitutional Revolution, a number of writers of the post-Second World War also succumbed to the conspiratorial theories. In the

1950s in particular, such authors as Mahmud Mahmud were quick to detect the British hand behind the Constitutional Revolution. This was at a time when real conspiracies were in making against the oil nationalization movement, or soon after when these conspiracies did succeed in toppling the Musaddiq government. And who can blame the Iranians of that generation for adopting such an outlook? After all, in half a century between the Constitutional Revolution and the 1953 coup, there were enough British, Tsarist Russian, German, Turkish, Soviet Russian and, later, American plots and covert operations in Iran to make any nation paranoiac.

Prime among these theories of course is that the Constitutional Revolution was designed by Sir Edward Gray and the British foreign office and nurtured to fruition on the grounds of the British Legation in Tehran. It was planned to counterbalance Russian influence with the Qajar state and hence facilitate the conclusion of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Secret Accord that divided Iran into zones of influence.<sup>6</sup> Even more tantalizing motive is that support for the Constitutionalists facilitated the eventual British control of the newly explored Iranian oil resources in Khuzestan. Such correlation of course becomes viable with a generous dose of chronological inaccuracy. The Britishers' lukewarm support for the Constitutionalists, it is to be noted, effectively ended in late 1907 whereas the successful exploration of Iranian oil did not occur before 1909. Moreover, the infant industry did not attract the British government's attention before 1913 under the auspices of Winston Churchill as the First Lord of the British Navy. The conspiracy theme was not of course limited to later commentators. At that time, even the Russian Tsarist authorities who came down on the side of Muhammad 'Ali Shah were convinced of the British hand behind the scene.

### THE BABI-AZALI CONNECTION

Conspiratorial readings of the Constitutional Revolution often were articulated at the expense of serious attention to the dynamics of the revolution, domestic forces at work, undeclared loyalties and subaltern networks. Among the many trends at the outset of the movement, the role of the Babi-Azalis in theory and practice, though referred to in recent Western literature, has not been thoroughly addressed in the historiography. At the time of the Revolution, there was a common belief within the royalist circles and among the proponents of the *mashru'a* that the movement of protest and its rapid shift to demands for the 'house of justice' (*adalat-khana*), the *majlis* and the Constitution were the work

of a small group of Babi heretics as well as agnostics and atheists who successfully managed to penetrate lower clerical ranks, incite the public from the pulpit and forge an alliance with ambitious but impressionable pro-Constitutional *mujtahids* of high rank. And obviously there was some truth in that claim. The fact that two of the most popular and outspoken early advocates of the Revolution: Sayyid Jamal al-Din Wa`iz Isfahani and Sayyid Nasrullah Bihishti, better known as Malik al-Mutikallimin, were middle-rank preachers of Babi-Azali background and intellectual leaning, was a potent weapon in the arsenal of anti-Constitutionalists. Moreover, they alleged, with some validity, that behind-the-scene figures with Babi background had infiltrated the camps of the two prominent clerical leaders of the Revolution, Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i and Sayyid `Abdullah Bihbahani, and were the source of anti-Qajar incitements.

These allegations found some resonance in the development of the Revolution's historiography. Remarkably, dissenters with Babi affinity in the camps of the progressive *mujtahids* authored two of the most important and widely read chronicles of the Constitutional period. Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, the author of what eventually became *Tarikh-i Bidari-yi Iranian*,<sup>7</sup> was a typical hybrid of preacher and intellectual dissident that frequented Tabataba'i's circle. We have little reason to doubt Nazim al-Islam's claim that he left a deep impression on that circle and on the course of action initiated by the enlightened *mujtahid*. Nazim al-Islam's complimentary portrayal of his celebrated fellow citizens Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani and Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi as forerunners of the Revolution and martyrs for that cause is not accidental either. Earlier in life, he had studied philosophy with both men whose Babi-Azali leanings were well known and a contributing factor to their brutal murder in Tabriz in 1896 at the hands of Muhammad `Ali Mirza, the recently nominated crown prince and governor of Azarbaijan, on the charge of conspiring to assassinate Nasir al-Din Shah. Both men were sons-in-law of Yahya Azal, the successor to the Bab as recognized by the minority 'non-revisionist' Babis. In Tehran, Nazim al-Islam also attended the teaching circle of Shaykh Hadi Najmabadi, whose reformist philosophical stance often exposed him to accusations of Babi heresy.<sup>8</sup>

Kirman, Nazim al-Islam's hometown, in the nineteenth century was a remote yet remarkably diverse provincial center with at least five major religious communities coexisting, and often competing: the Ni'matullah Sufis, the Shaykhis, the Usulis (known to the Shaykhis as Balasaris or Mutisharri'a),

a sizable Zoroastrian community, and the Babi-Baha'is and the Babi-Azalis (the latter two not yet fully differentiated). Like co-citizens of similar persuasion, Nazim al-Islam was accustomed to this confessional diversity and exposed to a discourse of mystical philosophy (*hikmat*) popular among the city intelligentsia. He no doubt was also familiar with the Baha'i versus Azali debates that engaged the city's Babi community.

A close reading of Nazim al-Islam's history reveals subtle signs of his Babi affinity. Around the time of the 1908 coup, for example, the author was evidently worried about being identified as a Babi sympathizer. Sporadic references to the Babis also abound; but at least in one occasion in the manuscript of his journal (which is first utilized by Saidi Sirjani in his edition of *Tarikh-i Birdari*), he makes references to the Babis and their influence. Nazim al-Islam, who for a time period, identified himself with that cause, petitioned Muhammad Shah for clemency after the coup denying any Babi connection. In his journal, he further admits that his editorial under 'Naqz-i 'Ahd' (braking the covenant) in his newspaper *Kawkab-i Durri* was written in sympathy with the Babis even though he later disclaimed that association.<sup>9</sup>

Nazim al-Islam's counterpart in the Bihbahani camp, Muhammad Mahdi Sharif Kashani, the author of *Tarikh-i Sharif*,<sup>10</sup> was another case of fluid identity. Son of Mulla Muhammad Ja'far Naraqi, a well-known early Babi from Kashan (and author of a Babi polemic, *Tadhkirat al-Ghafilin*), Sharif, who was born in 1239 q./1823, must have recalled the early days of Babi movement when in the 1840s or 1850s, his father, the *mujtahid* of the Naraq, converted in secret to the new religion. Like most Babi-Azali dissidents, Mahdi had a diverse career. Though a mulla with a typical Shi'i *madrassa* education, he later turned to Sufism before joining the *Anjoman-i Ma'arif* (education society) at the behest of Sayyid Yahya Dawlatabadi, another well-known Azali-Babi figure. At the outset of the Revolution, according to Malikzadah (himself son of the aforementioned Malik al-Mutakalamin, another Babi figure of the Constitutional period), he was designated as the chairman of the seminal Secret Society (*Anjuman-i Makhfi*). The Society also included a number of other Babi affiliates as well as of course mainstream Muslims and Zoroastrians.<sup>11</sup> Typical of his cohorts, Sharif did not reveal any significant clues as to his Babi sympathies even though his historical journal mentions his own inclusion into the royalists' blacklist of the Babis prepared at the outset of the 1908 coup. In an introduction to the valuable edition of Sharif's history, the two editors, Sirus Sa'dvandian and Mansureh

Nizam-Mafi (Ettihadiyeh), remained silent on any unorthodox features in the author's past (if they ever were aware of it), nor did they feel it necessary to explain Sharif's motives for joining the revolutionary cause or for producing such a copious journal.<sup>12</sup>

Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi is another important case of deliberate disguise of identity. His extensive memoirs, *Hayat-i Yahya* (Life of Yahya)<sup>13</sup> is the first comprehensive narrative of the Constitutional Revolution to be written with the benefit of a post-revolutionary hindsight. The memoirs of his brother, Mirza 'Ali Muhammad Dawlatabadi – who became one of the leader of the Moderates (*I'tidaliyun*) in the Second Majlis – though not as extensive and well-structured, also offer important clues as to the role of the small but influential Babi-Azali clique.<sup>14</sup> Yahya was known first as a member of the Education Council (Anjuman-i Ma'arif) in the Muzaffari period (1896–1906), and then as founder of the Sadat school for girls. Later, as a key patron of a secret society (*anjuman*), he contributed to the shaping of the Constitutional movement. The Tehran *anjumans* under his control were largely manned by members of the guilds and middle rank of the bazaar who seemingly shared his Babi sympathies. Their father, Sayyid Hadi Dawlatabadi, an influential and affluent *mujtahid* from Isfahan with solid Babi loyalties, was designated in 1886 by Mirza Yahya Subh-i Azal as his representative and served as the leader of Iran's Azali community until his death in 1905. Even more than their father, Yahya and his brother made a clear strategic decision to conceal their Babi identity not only in their revolutionary careers but also in their recording of their lives. Since the Shi'i practice of *taqiyya* was permitted in the Babi doctrine and widely practiced in the Azali camp, the brothers hoped to reach a greater acceptance from the majority population by fully exercising the Shi'ite practice.

The nature of Azali doctrinal concealment goes back to a new phase of Babi activism in the late nineteenth century; an episode which is yet to be fully explored. As early as the late 1880s, we can detect a new spirit of Babi activism concomitant with, and eventually related to, other trends of dissent. It is at this juncture that we witness a greater separation between the Babi-Baha'is and Babi-Azalis in Iran, even though the boundaries between the two were still porous. Browne's account of his 1887 encounters with the Babis of Iran includes a number of individuals vacillating between the two camps, especially in Kirman.<sup>15</sup> The small but active Babis among the lower ranks of the Shi'ite clergy seem to have opted for Subh-i Azal over his half-brother Baha'ullah, in

part because the former was pliant to the idea of anti-Qajar activism which was disapproved by the latter.

During the Regie protest (1891–2) and shortly thereafter, we can notice a tacit move on the part of the Azali sympathizers toward the *mujtahids* when their potential for political power became abundantly clear. The success of the Regie persuaded the Babi-Azalis dissenters to recognize the value of protection and support the ‘ulama of the higher ranks in mobilizing the Shi‘i public in an anti-Qajar camp. Such support seemed both necessary and viable because up to 1890s Babi sympathies, now complemented with notions of modernity, were traditionally palpable among the lower clerical ranks such as preachers, teachers of the madrasas, trustees of the colleges and seminarians, but lacked the backing of the higher ranks. It is possible that the anti-Qajar alliance between the secular freethinker Mirza Malkum Khan and the pan-Islamic activist Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, better known as Afghani, in the early 1890s served as a model for the Babi activists. It was Afghani who in 1891 first appealed to the prominent *mujtahids* such as Mirza Hassan Shirazi, whom he addressed as the supreme leaders of the Shi‘ite community and the Source of Emulation (*marja‘-i taqlid*), to lead the community in its fight against the oppressive Qajar ruler Nasir al-Din Shah.<sup>16</sup> It was also Afghani who, resorting to *taqiyya*, concealed his Shi‘i identity (perhaps a heterodox identity, for he was born in Asadabad region in western Iran with a large Ahl-i Haqq community) so as to broaden his appeal to Muslims beyond the confines of his Shi‘i homeland. Not surprisingly, two of his prominent disciples with strong Babi affiliation, Aqa Khan Kirmani and Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi, hid behind the guise of *taqiyya* and became advocates of pan-Islamism.

Subh-i Azal’s treatise on the conduct of the rulers toward their people, written in June 1892 from his Cyprus exile in response to the French orientalist and historian of the Babi movement, A.L.M Nicolas, is an interesting indication of why Azali-Babism was welcomed by the younger generation of sympathizers with a modernist tilt to political dissent.<sup>17</sup> Azal’s treaties (issued just a month after Baha’ullah’s death) was distinct in its tone and content from most political literature of the period not because it placed emphasis on the ruler’s obligation to be just toward his subjects, a familiar theme in the Persian ‘mirror literature’, even in the nineteenth century. Nor was it because it advocated the need for people’s representation in an assembly to consult the affairs of the state; an issue already recommended in the writings of Baha’ullah and his son, Mirza ‘Abbas Nuri,

`Abdul-Baha (`Abd al-Baha) as early as in mid-1870s. What was new in Azal's tract was the ruler's obligation to follow the will of the people and take advice of the deputies, and a preference for republicanism (*jumhuriyat*) as the second-best form of government to the divinely mandated kingship. Moreover, Azal advocated, perhaps with an eye on the wishes of his growing constituency in Iran, the right of the people to remove an unjust ruler from power as a last resort once any other means of persuasion failed. This is to be done preferably through peaceful means and without bloodshed.

Needless to say that Azal's message had a special resonance among the restive younger clergy of the turn of the twentieth century for it came from a Babi leader who had sustained suffering and exile for a long time. Azal's treatise differed from Baha'ullah's addresses to the world leaders or to Abdul-Baha's 1875 famous essay on government, the *al-Risala al-Madaniyya* (the treatise on civilization) on two other ways. Not only Azal's terse and ungrammatical language stood in contrast to Abdul-Baha's eloquence, but in the former case a clear avoidance in criticizing the Shi'i religious establishment and its conservative worldview. Abdul-Baha's work on the other hand advocated the principals of popular representation, consultation and need for *majlis*, and separation of legislative and executive powers. While encouraging the shah to undertake reforms, Abdul-Baha was careful to direct the sharp edge of his modernist criticism against the `ulama's obscurantism in the obvious hope of curbing the power of the *Shari'a* and its representatives.<sup>18</sup>

Both treatises by Abdul-Baha and Subh-i Azal, and a number of similar accounts, may be seen as part of a transitory political literature in the late nineteenth century influential in the Babi perspective and in turn in the record of the events of the Constitutional period. Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi's memoir is naturally influenced by the Azali rather than the Baha'i viewpoint. In his work the ruling Qajar elite more than the conservative *mujtahid* establishment were accounted for Iran's backwardness and moral decrepitude. Though not entirely devoid of indirect references to his father's Babi affinity, exclusively in the pre-revolutionary period, Dawlatabadi is by no means keen to openly acknowledge the Babi affinity with his own Constitutionalist struggle even though his narrative is written (or rewritten) nearly three decades after the official conclusion of the Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

Conscious effort to conceal the Babi and other heretical identities thus became a second nature to many such activists from Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani

and his friend Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi to Sayyid Jamal al-Din Isfahani, Nasrullah Bihishti and the Dawlatabadi brothers. Similarly, at the eve of the Constitutional Revolution there is a pronounced articulation among lower and middle rank preachers of social and legal ills of the society and the need to remedy these ills by reforming and reconstituting Iran's corrupt political institutions. Such emphasis in the rhetoric of the revolutionary period served as a coded language for subversion not only in the philosophically orientated discourses of *Tahrir al-'Uqala* (the writings of the wise) of Shaykh Hadi Najmabadi, a renowned Tehran *mujtahid* of Babi leanings but in the fiery sermons of Sayyid Jamal al-Din Isfahani.<sup>20</sup> Though both figures remained critical of obscurantist 'pseudo-'ulama,' they were careful not to extend it to all *mujtahids*. Their silence on their Babi affiliation complemented by reformulation for their Persian audiences of Western notions of individual rights, freedoms, progress and the West's technological advances versus Iran's decline. This further was compounded by underscoring their pure 'Islamic' identity and adherence to the social teachings of the Qur'an as foundations of their truly genuine Islamic reformism.

It is hence impossible, and perhaps useless, to search for 'card-carrying' Babis, agnostics and freethinkers among the Iranian Constitutionalists. It is equally formidable, though not impossible, to detect their organized circles the way the Freemasons operated in the American or French Revolutions or the socialist and communist cells in the 1848 revolutions or in the Russian and Chinese Revolutions. No document has yet proved for certain the existence of such circles, except perhaps the deliberate hints in memoirs of Dawlatabadi and in Malikhzadah's history to the existence of gatherings (s. *mahfil*, *anjuman*) and similar coded words. The closest hard evidence perhaps is still to be found in the Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri's anti-Constitutional propaganda, often ignored by later scholarship.<sup>21</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century the Babis themselves were deeply transformed into individuals with competing interpretations of the Babi past as they came to experience competing, and often quarrelling, leaderships. Under Abdul-Baha, the son and successor to Baha'u'llah, even more than his father's days the Babi-Baha'is, who constituted the majority, consciously moved away from the militant anti-Qajar stance in favor of political moderation. The Baha'i leadership slowly reasserted its non-confrontational position toward the Qajar crown in the hope of greater security and in order to escape from recurring waves of anti-Baha'i persecution. The latest was the appalling episode for more than a decade between 1893 and 1906; an episode in 1902 in Yazd in particular



brought out the worst characteristics of a persecuting society. Here, the members of the local `ulama, backed by the *mujtahids* of Isfahan, and with the blessing of the governor Sultan Husian Mirza Jalal al-Dawlah, a son of Zill al-Sultan, put their seal of approval on a period of mob frenzy that was enforced chiefly by the city thugs, the *lutis*. The sadistic killings, rapes and pillage of the Baha'i petty merchants, members of the guilds and low-ranking mullas of Yazd were in part a reaction to an opening reassertion of the Baha'i identity after 1896 assassination of Nasir al-Din Shah and successes in converting to the new faith. The emergence of the Baha'i community of Ashkabad (Per. `Ishqabad) in Russian Turkistan, on the other hand, free from the persecutions of the Iranian homeland and populated mostly by the Babis of Yazd and Khurasan, and the conspicuous construction of a Baha'i house of worship (*mashriq al-azkar*) in that city in part through donations from affluent Baha'i merchants of Yazd may have instigated the Muslim backlash.<sup>22</sup>

By contrast, witnessing the terrible consequences of striving for a distinct identity, the Azali leadership under Dawlatabadis made a clear shift to political activism through greater assimilation into the majority Shi'i community. On the eve of the Constitutional Revolutions both the Baha'is and the Azalis gained new converts and their visibility increased in the Iranian urban environment. One can look, for instance, at the police reports of Colonel Kassakowski, the commander of the Cossack forces on the eve of Muzaffar al-Din Shah's accession in 1896, to sense a general fear of the Babi dissidents and their growing popularity.<sup>23</sup> Yet, despite tangible growth of what may be defined as 'Babi' activism, it is questionable as to what constituted a Babi-Azali identity and to what extent there was loyalty toward the tenets of Bayani religion. The question awaits further inquiry even though it is probable that such loyalty was of minimal degree. It is, of course, wrong to subscribe to the common misperception that *Babi* is a general derogatory label applied to all dissidents in the Qajar period so as to cast them as heretics and apply pressure on them or eliminate them (the same way that dissidents of the Pahlavi era could have been labeled as *Communists* or *Tudehi* regardless of their political or ideological orientation). Even if there was some such indiscriminate labeling, we may conclude that there was also increasing Babi and Baha'i activism during the Muzaffari era and throughout the Constitutional period.

On an intellectual level too, there was a degree of engagement with the Babi teachings and commitment to it. One can, for example, consider *Dar Ta'rif-i*

*Shari'at-i Bayan* (On the definition of the Bayani *Shari'a*), an eclectic philosophical inquiry attributed to Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani; a curious effort to modernize and update the Babi message of renewal along the path of French Enlightenment and the then-fashionable European notions of social contract and civilizational progress. For obvious reasons, the identity of the author or authors remains unknown; but the internal evidence points at Kirmani, both in literary style and the mode of argumentation.<sup>24</sup> Contrary to such modern historians as Firaydun Adamiyat, who in his decidedly lopsided biography of Kirmani belittles his hero's Babi loyalties, Kirmani's preoccupation is evident throughout. Firaydun Adamiyat's omission, of course, leaves much unexplained in Kirmani's life and thoughts, his motivations for anti-Islamic and anti-Baha'i polemics, and his motivation for a nationalistic historical narrative. Kirmani's modernist interpretation of the Bab's *Bayan* is important, yet by and large unsuccessful, given the heavy dose of social philosophy (Rousseau in particular) that he injected into the mostly imagined Babi teachings. Firaydun Adamiyat's rather Manichean approach to history of course gives no value to indigenous dissent and grants no space for fluent identities, especially if that is tainted with heretical beliefs.<sup>25</sup>

Far more important for these crypto-Babis and their sympathizers, however, seems to be the memories of the Bab and the narrative of the Babis' struggle against the forces of oppression and injustice. The messianic spirit of the early Babi era in particular, it is fair to say, contributed to the narrative of dissent, perhaps the only one known to the majority of dissenters in the Qajar period; a resistance against the dominant sources of authority and their culture of power. This is at least true for indigenous dissidents who were exposed to the Western ideas of constitutional state, liberal democracy, and civilizational progress but still articulated these concepts in their own indigenous cultural terms and their own paradigms. For them, the Revolution presented a messianic moment of awakening when forces of injustice and oppression were overcome, forces that manifested themselves in the Qajar state and the 'ulama establishment. This millennial reading of the past had the advantage of invoking the memories of the formative Babi movement in a wider context and a longer time span which culminated in the Constitutional struggle.

The same reminiscence also presented the Constitutional Revolution with its earliest political objectives: call for a 'house of justice' so as to curb, and eventually remove, not only the arbitrary Qajar rule but the oppressive authority of the jurists. The dismantling of the dual sources of authority was part and parcel

of the old Babi agenda, now revived under the guise of constitutionalism. Yet, despite the initial potency of this small clique in formulating a radical agenda, by 1909 the Babi-Azali influence seems to have dwindled partially in favor of the competing non-political Baha'i trend. With the abdication of Muhammad 'Ali Shah and defeat of *Mashru'a* camp, the Babi-inspired radicalism diminished in size and importance. Their advocates were either killed in the coup or lost their initiative to the proto-socialists, the socialists and the Westernizing nationalists.

For the Baha'is on the other hand, a message of moral reconstruction increasingly came to mean dissociation from politics, and especially dissident politics, in favor of engaging in a pacifist endeavor for socio-moral modernity that contested in the main the obscurantist stances of the Shi'i establishment, which was then in retreat. The Baha'i rhetoric held the 'ulama's narrowmindedness and their ignorance of modern discourse responsible for Iran's backwardness and moral degeneration. The Baha'is, more numerous and far better organized than the Babi-Azalis, took advantage of the civil and social liberties granted by the Constitutional Revolution to further their message not only among the emerging urban intelligentsia of the 1910s and 1920s, but among religious minorities including Jewish and Zoroastrian communities.

## CONSTRUCTING A MILLENNIAL NARRATIVE

How do all of these affect the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution? An obvious answer perhaps is the visible absence in the narratives of the period of any non-Islamic or anti-Islamic dissident elements, and least of all the Babi influence; what may be called a conspiracy of silence. Authors such as Sharif Kashani, Dawlatabadi and Nazim al-Islam, for reasons of personal safety as well as untiring quest for acceptability, did their best to conceal past Babi affiliations and current sympathies. They concluded, justifiably one may assume, given the meager record of Azali expansion, that in the guise of an Islamic identity they will have far greater impact on their environment; a guise that ironically became an unalienable part of their identity. A reader or researcher unaware of their background and unconcerned with religious nuances may read through their accounts without ever suspecting a religious deviation. A thorough reading would open in front of the trained mind a coded language of many nuances signifying loyalties, ideals and enmities. Yet without acknowledging these coded messages and the complex identities behind them, some important factual and interpretive questions in these narratives remain unanswered and patterns of

loyalties and disloyalties within these activist networks unsolved. One may never realize, for example, why four of the outspoken and popular advocates of Constitutionalism who built their reputations on the pulpit or on printed pages: Jamal al-Din Wa'iz Isfahani, Nasullah Bihishti Malik al-Mutikallimin, Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi and Jahangir Sur Israfil were not elected as deputies to the First Majlis where they could exert greatest influence on the shaping of the Constitutions? Instead, the First Majlis was filled with often faceless and obviously inarticulate deputies of no consequence or plan. The inclusion among the deputies of figures known for their Babi affiliations, it is important to note, would have cast a shadow in the minds of the opposition over the embattled Majlis and made it the target of even sharper attacks from the conservative quarters. This fact is entirely lost to the historians of next generation, such as Kasravi, or a host of secondary accounts in Persian or English who are either oblivious of these curious exclusion or are in denial or more likely have an agenda of their own.

More puzzling is why during the 1908 royalist coup, despite repeated references in the correspondence and documents of the time to blacklisting and punishing of the 'heretics', the 'Babis' and the 'anarchists', neither the primary sources nor the later studies of the period identified as Babis the major figures who were executed in the Bagh Shah detention. The outspoken Babi activists Malik al-Mutikalimin and Jahangir Sur-Israfil were for long earmarked by the Muhammad 'Ali Shah regime for rounding up and execution. Jamal al-Din Wa'iz was murdered in Burujird on the direct order of Muhammad 'Ali Shah. In the historical accounts of the period and in the later scholarship, the reason for the shah's deep grudge toward them, and the enmity of the proponent of the *Mashru'a*, is always camouflaged and certainly never attributed to the victims' religious orientation and background. Looking through Muhammad 'Ali Shah's eyes, it was naturally more affordable for him and his royalist supporters to eliminate the cursed Babi heretics rather than the good Muslims and not face much public rebuke. Despite Jamal al-Din Isfahani's unceasing allegiance to Islam and the Qur'an and despite his repeated show of loyalty from the pulpit to the shah and the Qajar throne, his murder by the royalist provincial governor was treated as a forgone conclusion even by the Constitutionalists. He received even less of a tribute from the victorious nationalists after the capture of Tehran and collapse of Muhammad 'Ali Shah's regime. The journal of Sharaf al-Dawlah, a deputy of the first Majlis from Tabriz (with a trait of Babi sympathy in his family), which chronicles the events of the 1908 coup at some length, does not even mention

the Bagh Shah executions partly out of fear, one may suspect, but also an unconcealed dislike for the subversives (*mufsidin*).<sup>26</sup>

Despite such omissions, the anti-Constitutional propaganda instigated by Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri and the *Mashru`a* front was very clear on the influence in the Constitutional ranks of the Babis, atheists, and others 'outside the pale of Islam.' This is evident in Nuri's mouthpiece, known as *Ruznama-yi Shaykh Fazlullah* or *al-Dawat al-Islamiyya*, better known as *Lawayih* (edicts, statements; a popular term in the period used by both sides) that was published in the Shah `Abd al-`Azim sanctuary in late 1907 and early 1908. Here (as in *Tadhkarat al-Ghafil* written at the same time period, presumably by Nuri) the Shaykh is adamant about the Babi and other deviatory influences among the Constitutionalists in and out of the Majlis. He is also clear in demanding their eradication. The corollary for such demands, of course, was his well-known objections to principles of equality of all citizens before the law as well as the freedom of expression and publications that were embedded in the Constitution. He considered both provisions diametrically opposed to the fundamental principals of *Dhimmi's* subordination and the abhorrence that Shari'a reserved for unbridled liberty (*hurriya*).<sup>27</sup>

Nuri's antagonism toward the Babis enjoyed substantial support among the `ulama, as appears from the famous petition to Muhammad `Ali Shah in August 1908 bearing 34 signatures by clerics of varying prominence in Tehran demanding an end to the constitution. Nuri, of course, was taken seriously by the Qajar ruler Muhammad `Ali Shah but not by the chronicles of the Revolution then or later. The indigenous accounts of the Revolution aside, we can see a deliberate omission of the Babi presence even in Edward Browne's seminal *The Persian Revolution*; a work of great influence over the formulation of the master narrative of the Constitutional Revolution in English and, as it turned out, in Persian. Here in an interesting case of 'intertextuality,' Browne's reading of the Constitutional Revolution was based on a series of pamphlets originally produced for the Persia Committee as early as 1907.<sup>28</sup> They were, in effect, responses to the conservative British press, especially to David Fraser, the London *Times*' correspondent in Iran. His reports were soon compiled in a volume entitled *Persia and Turkey in Revolt* that came out simultaneously with Browne's.<sup>29</sup>

In compiling his account, Browne had relied partially on his friends among the Iranian Constitutionalists (as well as his old Babi friends), who provided reports

directly or through his former students at the British Legation in Tehran. But he also made ample use of the Persian press, including the earliest passages of Nazim al-Islam's *Tarikh-i Bidari-yi Iranian* that first appeared as a newspaper serial under 'Tarikh-i Zuhur-i Tamaddun wa Bidari-yi Iranian' (a history of the emergence of Iranian civilization and awakening) in *Kawkab-i Durri*, a weekly published as early as March 1907 under the editorship of Nazim al-Islam Kirmani himself (fig. 1). It is indeed likely that Browne was the first to coin the term '*Constitutional Revolution*' as the English equivalent to the Persian *Inqilab-i Mashruti*. The term *mashruti*, of course, had a longer history, going back to the Young Ottomans' in the 1860s, yet the term 'revolution' (*inqilab*) was first adopted for the Constitutional Movement in Tabriz and Rasht in late 1908 and during the civil war.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, in canonizing the Constitutional Revolution's narrative, Browne set in order the sequence of the events and prefaced it with an intellectual genealogy that went back to Jamal al-Din Afghani and Mirza Malkum Khan. By linking



Figure 1: First page of Vol. 1 of the first edition of *Tarikh-i-Bidari-yi Iranian*

the course of the Revolution to the broader theme of European imperial ambitions, he also placed it at the core of a national anti-imperialist struggle against enormous perils that threatened Iran's very survival. He argued that to save the country from the jaws of Anglo-Russian expansion, now set firmly in the 1907 'secret' agreement, the Constitutional Revolution must succeed.

Browne shared his aspirations for the survival of the Revolution with Iranian Constitutionalists like Nazim al-Islam. The attractive embossing on the cover of Browne's book: *payandih bad mashruta-yi Iran* (Long live Iran's constitutionalism) may suggest such an affinity. At least momentarily, he found in the Constitutional Revolution what earlier he had sought in the Babi movement and its history, ever since he became seriously interested in Iran in the 1880s. Like the Babi movement, the Constitutional Revolution appeared to him as a defining moment in Iran's redemption from long era of suffering and disrepair and its course of reawakening to a glorious future. An advocate of Saidian *Orientalism* may dismiss Browne's aspirations and his support for the Constitutional Revolution as a familiar romantic quest, a pro-Persian Byron of a sort who wishes to 'represent' Iranians. Such characterization of course is profoundly flawed. As pages of his *Persian Revolution* confirm, he surely saw continuity in the course of Iranian dissent and was willing to give it a voice. Since 1887, when he visited Iran, he had kept alive his contacts and interest in the Babi-Azalis and Baha'is, not merely as an academic pet project that could land him a teaching position at Cambridge and eventually secure him the chair of Arabic in that university. As his correspondence and some of his random statements demonstrate, the Babi doctrine and Babi communities, both the Azalis and the Baha'is, were alive in his thoughts as a living tradition with potentials to trigger a moral and perhaps even a political awakening in Iran.

By the time of the Revolution, however, Browne obviously was in favor of masking any such connections between the Constitutional Revolution and the Babi past. Like the Babi activists themselves and perhaps on their advice, he became conscious of the dangers that any such association may have ensued for certain individuals and perhaps for the Revolution itself. His four-part project in *The Persian Revolution* clearly shows this vision of national redemption but also his precaution not to jeopardize the future of a mass movement. Thus his 'de-hereticized' intellectual genealogy of the Revolution as treated in the first part of the book avoids reference to the Babi movement altogether. He is even careful not to identify the Babi background of pioneers such as Aqa Khan Kirmani

and Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi, let alone the living Constitutional activists of the time. Being wary of the accusations of the *Mashru'a* camp, he was anxious to demonstrate the religiosity of the *Mashruta*-seekers by augmenting the role of the two ranking *mujtahids*: Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i and Sayyid `Abdullah Bihbahani. Sayyid Hassan Taqizadah, too, appears prominently not only because of his influential role in the shaping of the movement but also because he was free of any Babi affiliation. Parts second to fourth of Browne's narrative further reveal the unfolding of a sacred struggle that eventually was to bring the Iranian nation to the threshold of a Constitutional utopia.

*The Persian Revolution's* deliberate editing of the Babi past from his account is compensated, however, by Browne in a curious, backhanded way. When in an appendix to the *Persian Revolution* he stated the Baha'is dissociation with the Constitutional cause by citing Abdul-Baha's noncommittal statements, he also dropped a slight hint that 'certainly in the past and probably in the present the Azalis have identified themselves to a much larger extent with the popular cause.'<sup>31</sup> One could hardly attribute this and other brief mentions of the Babis to Browne's lack of familiarity with the Babi-Azali presence. Moreover, it is not just an accident of scholarship that in the same year that he published *The Persian Revolution*, Browne also published *Nuqtat al-Kaf* of Hajji Mirza Jani Kashani, one of the earliest accounts of the Babi movement.<sup>32</sup> He produced the Persian text with Persian and an English introductions and a classified index of the *Bayan*. The Persian introduction, though published under Browne's name, was almost entirely written by Mirza Muhammad Qazvini, the renowned scholar of Persian classical culture and a full convert to the style of the orientalist scholarship of his time, who was then in Cambridge, working as Browne's associate. This is later testified to both by Qazvini and by Browne. The introduction offered a summary account of the Babi movement, and especially the circumstances surrounding Mirza Yahya Subh Azal's claim to being the legitimate successor to the Bab. Qazvini's account (translated into English by Browne almost verbatim in the English section in the same volume), served a purpose. One can see a subtle tribute to the Babis and their legacy at the outset of the Constitutional era when for a moment a certain optimism about the future had prevailed. It was as though Browne wished to reinstate a historical continuity left out in his newly constructed narrative of the Constitutional Revolution.

Moreover, we can detect here an equally subtle desire to vindicate the Azali claim to the continuity of the Babi movement through a mass political



movement rather than through the Baha'is' political dissociation, especially after 1907. This was in part because of the Baha'is' reservation about the direction the Constitutional Revolution was taking. As confrontation between the Royalists and the Constitutionalists heated up, Abd al-Baha, the leader of the Baha'i Faith in exile in Palestine, came to view the Revolution as an authentic mass movement but one that is taken over by the Azali radicals and a conspiracy designed by them to oppose and even eradicate the Baha'is. Abdul-Baha's shift of sympathy to the royalist camp and issuance of statements against radicals in and out of the Majlis may be taken as signs of this concern. Such a suspicion was not entirely unfounded. So far as we can ascertain, the Azalis' old enmity toward the rival camp and their desire to underscore their own Islamic commitment were motives for occasional criticism and ridiculing of Baha'i beliefs.<sup>33</sup>

Yet beyond 'de-heriticizing' the Constitutional memory, Browne's narrative most remarkably impacted the historiography of the Revolution among his contemporaries and later generations. The case of mutual influence is evident in connection with Nazim al-Islam's journal. In his 1328 q./1910 preface to the first book version of *Tarikh-i Bidari-yi Iranian*, Nazim al-Islam acknowledged that what persuaded him to bring out his history in a book form was the publication of an account entitled 'Persian revolt' (*shurish-i Iran*) by an English doctor that bore some inaccuracies. The history of the Persian awakening, which first appeared in forty successive fascicules, was to set straight these inaccuracies.<sup>34</sup> This is further testified by Browne, who in the introduction to his 1910 *Persian Revolution* notes:

Moreover the publication of this book (i.e. his own) will certainly elicit information which would otherwise remain hidden and eventually be lost, just as the publication in January 1909, of my *Short Account of Recent Events in Persia* led directly to the publication of the excellent 'History of the Awakening of the Persians' (*Tarikh-i-Bidariy-i-Iranian*) which I have so often had occasion to cite in these pages.<sup>35</sup>

More than being simply an inspiration for Nazim al-Islam, to set the record straight, Browne's work seems to have served as a model for the compilation of his history. There seem to be substantial variance in organization and content between the serial as it appeared in *Kawkab-i Durri* and the book version. In the serial version, Nazim al-Islam's narrative is more like nineteenth-century critical treatises such as Zayn al-Abidin Maragha's fictional travelogue, *Siyahatnama-yi Ibrahim Bayg*.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of the newspaper draft, Nazim al-Islam places

more emphasis on Iran's social and economic ills than on reporting the events of the revolution. In the book version, on the other hand, we detect the progression of a historical narrative aiming to unravel the course of a national 'awakening' (*bidari*); a process with a clear beginning rooted in the dissident trends of the earlier decades and an ending with prevailing of the Constitutionalists over the Royalists. Browne, who also began *The Persian Revolution* with a genealogy of dissent, only seems to have juxtaposed *Tarikh-i Bidari's* order of priority. His chief forerunner to the Constitutional Revolution is Afghani, whose portrait appears in the frontispiece. In *Tarikh-i Bidari-yi Iranian*, on the other hand, it is Aqa Khan Kirmani who receives a similar treatment, albeit a de-heriticized one.

What is even more interesting is Nazim al-Islam's unmistakably redemptive outlook. In a note at the outset of his work, he makes it clear why he considers the people killed in the path of the Constitutionalism as 'martyrs'. He thus implies that the Revolution itself is in a way the fulfilment of Shi'ite messianic yearning for restoring justice and equity. He then cites in full a report (*khavar*) from Muhammad Baqir, the fifth Shi'ite imam, about a nation who will rise (*khuruj*) in the East (which Nazim al-Islam equates with Iran) and whose people first seek their right (*haqq*). The report then continues:

Once that right is denied to them, they will demand it again and once their demand is denied they will place their swords on their shoulders. Then their demand will be granted but they will not accept it. They will rise (Ar. *yaqumu*) and they can not be defeated until the (time of) your Lord (Ar. *sahibikum*). Those of them who are killed are martyrs. But if I lived at that time I would have saved myself for the Lord of the Command (*sahib al-amr*).

Nazim al-Islam clarified that 'the realization (*misdaq*) of this report are the Constitutionalists who over the past two years twice sought their right and the third time when it was granted, they refused until they themselves established their rights (*qa'im-i bi haqq shudand*).<sup>237</sup>

This messianic 'awakening', particularly in reference to the 'minor tyranny' and the rise of the 'holy warriors' (*mujahids*) against supporters of tyranny is in accord with numerous apocalyptic insinuations in the literature of the Constitutional period. Not only the title of Nazim al-Islam's history 'Awakening of the Iranians' implied a resurrection, but the newspaper in which it first appeared, *Kawkab-i Durri* (The Brilliant Star), signified a familiar pre-apocalyptic 'sign' (fig.2).



Figure 2: First page of *Kawkab-i Durri*

Other newspapers of the period of similar orientation also employed apocalyptic themes. Most well known of course is Jahangir Khan Shirazi's *Sur-i Israfil* (Seraphim's Trumpet); a title that ushered the end to tyranny and oppression. The newspaper's emblem only reiterated the chiliastic title depicting the Archangel blowing his trumpet while multitudes of the dead are about to be resurrected from their tombs. The already resurrected among them, both in modern and traditional attires, are pointing at the Seraphim, whose baroque-like

sash carries the French Revolution's motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (fig.3). Another popular organ of the radical Constitutionalists, *Ruh al-Quds* (the Holy Spirit) edited by Sultan al-'Ulama Khurasani also had an apocalyptic ring into it. The actual motto in the newspaper's title appears as '*qul nazzala-hu ruh al-quds*' ('Say! The Holy Spirit was sent down', part of a verse from the Qur'an with obvious messianic undertone (fig.4)).<sup>38</sup>

Figure 3: First page of *Sur-i-Israfil*



Figure 4: First page of *Ruh al-Quds*

More significant than the mere newspaper titles was the idea of 'awakening'. What Nazim al-Islam, *Sur Israfil*, *Ruh al-Quds* and others implied in the familiar language of Shi'i messianism, was a national awakening, a resurrection of their morbid countrymen who have finally risen against forces of oppression and superstition. This was the closest notion writers like Nazim al-Islam could adopt to comprehend and to convey a sense of revolution without resorting to such charged and derogatory concepts as 'revolt' (*shurish*), 'sedition' or 'subversion' (*fitna*), and even revolution (*inqilab*). Only after 1910, when the Constitutionalist *mujahids* prevailed in the civil war over the royalists, the term

*inqilab* gradually lost its negative connotation as a state of climatic and political chaos and came to be adopted as the equivalent of modern revolution.

Another publication of the Constitutional period, a satirical weekly with the curious title: *Istibdad* (tyranny; despotism), also conveyed a messianic undertone. As if reflecting the views of the royalists, whom it labeled *mustabid* (despots, oppressors), the journal satirized the Constitutional movements and its objectives while in reality scandalizing the royalists. Tyrants, needless to add, are a crucial ingredient for any apocalyptic scenario. Popularized in the political parlor of the period by a translation of Kawakibi's famous *Tabayi` al-Istibdad* (itself an adaptation from a European account),<sup>39</sup> the term conveyed the oppression and reactionary politics that was associated with the Qajar state, the overthrow of which was the long-awaited wish of the Babis and now the crypto-Babis. The weekly's editor, Shaykh Mahdi Qumi, also known as Shaykh al-Mamalik, was a Babi with ties to its militant past. His uncle, Mirza Fathullah Qumi, a calligrapher and a Babi radical, was a party to the botched assassination of Nasir al-Din Shah in 1852. He paid with his life. Shaykh Mahdi, a former Azali acquaintance of Browne in Kirman, like many activists of the Kirman circle had opted for political activism by the time of the Constitutional Revolution. His emphasis on despotism and its impending demise no doubt conveyed an aspiration for a utopian era that will dawn with Constitutionalism.<sup>40</sup>

Literature of the Constitutional period offered to its reader this secularized sense of the Resurrection. In the evolving narrative of Nazim al-Islam, for instance, from didactic critiquing of the Qajar state and society to a dynamic chronicling of the revolution, we can detect an apocalyptic paradigm. It is not without a reason that a citation from *Siyahatnama-yi Ibrahim Bag* inaugurated the book's historical narrative. Nazim al-Islam claims that when he was first admitted to Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i's circle in February 1905, the *mujtahid* was busy studying that book. It is the reading of this fictional account that according to Nazim al-Islam led to the creation of the influential 'Secret Society' (*anjuma-i mahfifi*) at the outset of the Constitutional Revolution; hence the beginning of volume one of Nazim al-Islam's account.<sup>41</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence that the shift from fictional to historical should come through the same messianic paradigm as depicted in *Siyahatnama's* last page.<sup>42</sup>

The messianic paradigm, though powerful in shaping the narrative of the Constitutional period, by no means was universal. The yet unpublished account of Hajji Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahim `Alaqband, a Baha'i haberdashery merchant

and a chronicler of the Constitutional period, interestingly does not comply with a redemptive reading of the Revolution. He is an acute and altogether levelheaded observer who does not view the Revolution as a moment of cataclysmic change or a utopian salvation even though he acknowledges its achievements. Beside its invaluable details and inside information about persons and events, what makes his account particularly interesting is the author's inner struggle to reconcile his Baha'i reservations about engaging in any political action with his fascination for Constitutionalism, a preoccupation no doubt motivated by his social class and professionally vested interests. The reconciling is formidable in part because of Abdul-Baha al-Baha's warning to his Baha'i followers in Iran to stay away from the revolutionary course. His precaution, grounded in fears old and new, militated against 'Alaqqband's own sympathies. Abdul-Baha's political non-interventionism, in contrast to the Azali participation, must have been disheartening to those Baha'is who viewed the Constitutional Revolution as a means of acquiring greater freedom and equality for the long-persecuted Baha'i community.

Perhaps the same reason the account of this Baha'i merchant is devoid of idealism and messianic vision is visible in Nazim al-Islam. The Baha'i outlook, being post-millenarian, could no longer anticipate the advent of a messianic savior or an apocalyptically liberating upheaval. For 'Alaqqband, at least on the surface, Revolution did not seem a prelude to fulfillment of Bahau'llah's promises of emergence of an Iranian society with greater justice and tolerance. His pages often record, even more than Sharif Kashani and Nazim al-Islam, the backstabbing, treachery and the violence in the conflict between the State and the Constitutionalists and among the revolutionaries, against the backdrop of deception and corruption of many members of the 'ulama class. Even though he was a less sophisticated reporter than his contemporaries, his narrative is truer to the reality of the revolution as a complex social and political process with many traits and many clashing interests.

Written in 1910 and covering the events just after the convening of the Second Majlis and the factional conflicts between the radicals and the moderates, 'Alaqqband's chronicle nevertheless shared with Nazim al-Islam's history (which came out in the same year) a structured historical process aimed in recording a grand national struggle. Perhaps it was not an accident that despite his reservations 'Alaqqband, like Sharif and Dawlatabadi, came from a Babi dissident background and like them came to view this struggle as a liberating force worthy of recording. Yet the Baha'i aspirations for greater recognition and acceptability

under a Constitutional order were soon dashed as they were increasingly targeted by both sides, and especially by the *mashru`a*-seeking mullas, as proponents of reprehensible freedoms and conspirers for destruction of Islam.<sup>43</sup>

## NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HERETIC CLEANSING

Even in later generations, remembering the Constitutional Revolution was largely left to historians of non-orthodox persuasions. Two obvious examples are Ahmad Kasravi and Mahdi Malikzadah. Kasravi, a scholar, journalist, judge and prophet of a sort, had his own vision of moral reconstruction conceived in his socio-ethical *Bihdini* creed. For him, the Constitutional Revolution was a memory elapsed in the midst of Pahlavi secular nationalism of which, oddly enough, he was an advocate, albeit a non-partisan one. His mission was to evoke that memory, as he proclaims in the preface to *Tarikh-i Mashruta-yi Iran*<sup>44</sup>, so as to demonstrate to the younger generation the patriotic struggle of the ordinary people of the bazaar and the street against forces of superstition and tyranny. Kasravi's innate historiographical skills complemented by his 'pure' Persian style, itself another manifestation of his literary nationalism, rendered a readable account that became a classic, at least for non-specialists. Yet, except for the later years of the Revolution, when as a young seminarian he witnessed the course of events in Tabriz, Kasravi relies on earlier accounts such as those of Nazim al-Islam.

What is different in his history, however, is the shift of emphasis. Oddly enough, he tends to amplify even more than his predecessor the place of the two high-ranking *mujtahids*: Bihbahani and Tabataba'i, as true engines of the Revolution. He does this at the noticeable expense of overlooking, or perhaps consciously avoiding, the role of the lower clergy with heretical tendencies around these *mujtahids*. Such an oversight is at clear variance with Kasravi's declared objective of demonstrating the part of the ordinary people. In all fairness, he does offer a vivid and original account of popular resistance in Tabriz during the civil war of 1908–9 when ordinary people were the chief players against the Islamic *anjoman*.

It is difficult to attribute Kasravi's pro-*mujtahid* latitude to his sympathies for the *mullas*, as he calls them. He was a devout secularist who himself fell victim to his outspoken anti-clerical views. Alternatively, one can perhaps attribute his historical amnesia to the desire to present Tabataba'i and Bihbahani as clerical role models who parted from their conservative peers to embrace modernity and



progress. A more plausible explanation may lie in Kasravi's dislike of any form of Shi'ite manifestation, normative or otherwise. Even though he was the first to speak of Occidentousis (*gharbzadighi*) and despite the fact that he was often the target of sharp clerical attacks (as in Khomeini's *Kashfal-Asrar*), his treatise on the Babi-Baha'i history (*Baha'igari*) betrays a desire for denigrating the Babi episode as a historical error beyond redemption. Even more than Kasravi ever imagined, this polemical pamphlet came to determine the attitude of many generations of Iranian, and non-Iranian, observers about the Babi movement and its history and doctrine. For him the Babi movement at best was an opportunity for awakening that was missed because of the Bab's superstition and timidity, Babis' extremism and the Baha'i shift to a cultish deception. His ideals of modernity, which essentially bars him from a deeper appreciation of dynamics of Shi'ism and its history of dissent, is positivistic to the core and in cahoots with the Pahlavi nationalism of his time. His convictions thus make him view the Constitutional Revolution as nothing but a movement of Westernizing modernity. In such scheme of things, there is no room for indigenous dissent and least of all for the Babis who are barely ever mentioned even as a historical precedence to popular uprisings against the Qajar state and the 'ulama.

Kasravi shared this positivist reading of the past with Iranian intellectuals of later generations, who, often in the guise of secular modernity, nurtured grudges against religious non-conformism. From Al-e Ahmad to Firaydun Adamiyat (not to mention the Islamic 'liberals' and 'committed' revolutionaries) there is distrust toward any religious modernity that questions values of Islam and its finality. Often such convictions were also tainted with embarrassing conspiratorial obsessions, intolerance for religious pluralism, accusations of betrayal and unpatriotic leanings leveled against the Baha'is. Their vision of the past, to the extent that it concerned the underprivileged and the seemingly invisible, was often silent on numerous episodes of persecution, mob violence and brutal killings committed against Babi and Baha'i individuals and communities. So far as can be ascertained, no major narratives of the Constitutional Revolution, whether contemporary or later, care to acknowledge disturbing episodes of 'Babi-killing' (*Babi-kushi*) in Isfahan, Yazd and elsewhere that went on large scale throughout the Constitutional periods. To his credit, Kasravi does not subscribe to conspiratorial theories (as, for instance, the famous forgery in Qum of the 1940s as the 'memoirs' of Prince Dalgorki, the Russian envoy to the Qajar court in the middle years of the nineteenth century).

Yet his overall attitude toward the shaping of the religio-political dissent is surprisingly naïve. After him, other Iranian social commentators and historians of contemporary Iran remained loyal to the accepted genealogy of the Constitutional Revolution; one that conveniently, but ahistorically, lumps together Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, Mushir al-Dawlah, Afghani, Malkum and Aqa Khan Kirmani. What they share, in view of most historians of the Constitutional period, is their appreciation for Western-style modernity and for paradigms of positivist progress. Yet in their works, we can detect a pious avoidance of including voices of dissent and those movements of religious protest that are condemned as outcasts by the very clerical establishment they themselves condemn and criticize. Among many modern authors, one can sense a salient evasion of even acknowledging any association with the Babi past for fear of tainting their heroes' reputation, and those of their own, with charges of heresy. In tracing the roots of the Constitutional Revolution, no historical account in Persian (and with few exceptions in European languages) traces social movements beyond the Regie protest, which is often presented as a purely clerical revolt against the state. Yet few care to mention that some of the chief instigators of Regie, including Muhammad Baqir Najafi of Isfahan, were among the rabid anti-Babi *mujtahids* of their time with dark records of suppressing any intellectual modernity and trends of social change.<sup>45</sup>

More astonishing still is Mahdi Malikzadah's extensive cover up in his history of the Constitutional Revolution.<sup>46</sup> Son of Malik al-Mutakalimin, the author goes out of his way throughout his seven volumes of his rather tedious history not to utter any clue as to the Babi persuasion of his father or any of his cohorts. He accomplishes this extraordinary feat of conformity, even more assiduous than Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi, by speaking euphemistically of the Babi dissidents often as freedom-seekers (*ahrrar*, *azadi-khwahan*) and by juxtaposing Babi loyalties with nationalist loyalties. Malikzadah's other camouflage technique is to blend Babi personalities with other non-Babi figures so as to implicitly deny preexisting networks or inner-group loyalties. His anachronistic language, which puts Pahlavi neology and European translated expressions in the mouth of the mullas and merchants of the Constitutional period, is yet another evidence of his curiously romantic outlook. A product of the Pahlavi modernity, and a member of Majlis in the 1940s and 1950s, Malikzadah's other contribution to the already sanitized memory of his father was to campaign for the erection of his statue at the Hassanabad Square in Tehran. Yet, ironically the timid Pahlavi bureaucracy of the 1960s (especially apprehensive of the clergy's objection after the 1963

uprising) could not tolerate the statue of a crypto-Babi in a Tehran square and it was duly removed from the pedestal less than a decade after its erection.

The renowned short-story writer and literary figure, Muhammad 'Ali Jamalzadah, son of another crypto-Babi preacher, the aforementioned Sayyid Jamal al-Din Isfahani, was no more forthcoming in divulging his father's fluid identity. At the most it is in the memoirs of his childhood, such as *Sar u Tab Yek Karbas*, that we read vague references to the father's unorthodox past; coded references that only are decipherable by someone familiar with his father's Babi affiliation. His portrayal of Babi-killings in Isfahan in the 1890s and later, graphic and moving though they are, are barely connected to his father's troubles and his family's dislocation and exile. In his apologetic preface to his father's biography that appeared many years later along with a reprint of his father's journal, *al-Jamal*, Jamalzadah is careful to portray his father as an all-Islamic figure free of any heterodox impurities.<sup>47</sup>

The contemporary historiography of the Constitutional Revolution, whenever it cares to look back at the landscape of dissent, tended to overlook the role of the outcasts and the marginalized, and above all the heretics who contributed to Iran's vernacular modernity. This is true as much with Firaydun Adamiyat's lifelong scholarship on Qajar reform movements as with the 'committed' historiography of the Islamic Revolution. Firaydun Adamiyat's many studies of early reformers, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir and Mushir al-Dawlah in particular, and of paragons of secularism and constitutionality in the late nineteenth century: Aqa Khan Kirmani, Akhundzadah and Talibuf, and his study of the ideology of the Constitutional Revolution,<sup>48</sup> important though they are as pioneering works in history of period, are primarily concerned with secularizing terms of Western origin. Although it is naïve to label such a historiographical outlook as entirely 'West-intoxicated' (*gharbzadib*), it is fair to say that his blinding appreciation for homogenizing ideologies of the twentieth century left little room for the marginal and the heretical. He remains suspicious, even hostile, to manifestations of religious dissent; for in his regimented nationalism – what he calls 'scientific' method – heresy is as abhorrent as orthodoxy except if it fit into the Firaydun Adamiyat definition of positivistic determinism. Such a perspective is further tainted by a self-righteous and interrogatory style that raves in passing rebuking judgment on his subject matters rather than trying to articulate the historical context. This Manichean world of national heroes and villains naturally appeals to his readers' deepest frustrations and darkest suspicions rather than to their

fair understanding of human weaknesses and failures, sufferings, moral strengths and flaws, and of course fluid and often contrasting convictions in one's loyalties and commitments. Moreover, his personal attacks on historians of Iran on the ground of their Jewish or Baha'i backgrounds, and the anti-Semitic remarks scattered in his works (not to mention his entrenched misogyny) signifies a deeper problem common to a number of intellectuals of the post-war Iran. All in all, despite Firaydun Adamiyat's original contribution to the historiography of political reform and the Constitutional movement, he does not substantially deviate from the narrative that esteems Westernized intellectuals in search of power and reforming statesmen falling from power.<sup>49</sup>

Some younger historians in today's Iran feel all the more obliged to reverse this trend by paying homage to the 'ulama in the Constitutional Revolution and in turn staying away from the discourse of heresy.<sup>50</sup> Predictably, they seek in the *Mashru'a* trend a true precedence for the Islamic Revolution; a current that anticipates the imposing of the *Shari'a* as a guiding social principle and even a road to the Authority of the Jurist (*Wilayat-i faqih*). Yet despite a lip service to Nuri and the clerical writers of the Constitutional period and despite the doctrinaire nature of recent studies, there is a tacit understanding that not all the 'ulama were in favor of the *Mashru'a* and many, especially of lesser ranks, were in search of socio-moral reforms and disapproving of the conservative *mujtahids*. This appreciation of freethinking, however, does not run deep enough in divulging the background and orientation of suspect individuals. Some are not even willing to heed Nuri's repeated assertions that secular Constitutionalism, as he put it, was a heretical conspiracy hatched by Babis and atheists. The new scholarship, thus, despite its passionate defense of the 'ulama, tends to remain loyal to the mainstream historiography. It is unwilling to offer alternative readings because such readings may prove dangerously un-Islamic. The legacy of denial in the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution thus carries on.<sup>51</sup>

By the way of conclusion we may go back to the beginning and ask if at all it matters to dig into the religious and intellectual identities of those who first formulated the historical narrative of the Constitutional Revolution? What difference does it make if we remember that important early histories were written by individuals with fluid loyalties to a fading tradition of dissent particularly if they themselves were unwilling to remember these past affiliations? In answering positively to this question we do not surely intend to reinforce conspiratorial obsessions that consume much of Iran's historiography in the twentieth century.

What is at stake, however, is further appreciation of the seemingly obvious fact that revolutions, and social movement in general, does not occur 'out of the blue'. This may sound like a truism but a necessary one to remind us of that much still remains to be said about the way certain groups, mostly marginalized, heretical nonconformists and freethinkers show greater propensity than others to the ideas of social reform, modernity and revolutionary change? Still more is to be learned as to why indigenous intellectuals of the late nineteenth century sought tactical alliances with high-ranking *mujtahids* to push for ideals that were at par with earlier manifestations of dissent such as Babi creed?

More to the point, it is important to remember how and why the chroniclers of the Constitutional period, who were from a background of dissent, scripted messianic paradigms into their historical narrative and by doing so, in effect, secularized the older Babi discourse of renewal. Seminal though this paradigm was to the formulation of the Revolution's meta-history, in later readings of the Revolution, past traces of it were blotted out from the text along with their authors' alternative identities. The esoteric dissent was consistently excluded from the mainstream of modern Iranian history in favor of an imaginary national solidarity. It is no doubt easier to talk about the Isma'ilis of Alamut, the Sarbadaris, the Hurufis, the Nuqtawis and a variety of Sufi trends of pre-modern period and more or less, though not adequately, incorporate them into the mainstream of the Iranian past. Yet the Babis and Baha'is, even the materialists, atheists and freethinkers still are controversial items who cannot be easily incorporated into the national narrative but as marginal bystanders or despicable outcasts. Such characterization seems to be a direct descendent of the Shi'i condemnation of the 'nefarious sect' (*firqa-yi zalla*). Without such remembrance the national narrative is, and will remain, profoundly a celebration of power and the powerful, of the officially legitimate and of the established and normative creed that cannot admit the downtrodden and the nonconformist. The Babi presence cannot be remembered, as the indigenous atheists and other marginal minorities are not remembered, because such an admission even for the modern historians with a seemingly secular outlook is tantamount to betraying the Shi'i-based national solidarity; one that for several centuries stayed at the core of the Iranian identity. Only those who can abide by the principle of dissimulation in the public space may find a place in the community of conformity only to be redefined by forces of secular nationalism that emerged out of the Constitutional Revolution.

# Disintegrating the ‘Discourse of Disintegration’: Some Reflections on the Historiography of the Late Qajar Period and Iranian *Cultural Memory*

*Oliver Bast*

## A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEFICIENCY AND THREE QUESTIONS

This essay deals with the writing and otherwise of the history of the Qajar period, and *not*, as one might have been misled to believe, with any historiography produced during the Qajar period. What I am particularly concerned with here is the late Qajar period, roughly the years between December 1911, i.e., what is conventionally seen as the end point of the Constitutional Revolution, and the coup d'état of February 1921 that brought the later Reza Shah to the forefront of national politics. I have the strong suspicion that much of what I am going to argue does actually also, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the Reza Khan/Shah period; but I have not yet carried out enough research into the historiography of that period to make such a claim with certainty.

The genre of historiography that I am going to look at is one that I have been practicing myself in the last few years: political and diplomatic history – the much maligned history of the major state affairs and of great men – *die Geschichte der Haupt- und Staatsaktionen und grosser Männer*. But did not the very invitation for contributions to this volume denounce elitist perspectives and call for the consideration of the subaltern? Indeed, potentially very rewarding – some might

say: *more rewarding* – historical inquiries have been made or would be worth making by taking approaches that deliberately turn away from governing elites and their political and diplomatic actions.

Nevertheless, however innovative and unusual these approaches and inquiries are, they often cannot operate without making at least some reference to the framework of political history provided by the much-derided more conventional *histoire événementielle*.

Here, the admittedly theoretically not overly adventurous *Cambridge History of Iran* is a point in case: In volume seven of this work, which covers the twentieth century, the editors saw the need to provide exactly this *evenemental* framework in the first section of the volume, calling it ‘The Political Framework’, before branching out into various more interpretative accounts.<sup>1</sup>

It is fair to say that the *evenemental* framework for the period I am concerned with is more or less taken for granted today and as such it has been the grid of reference for many a chronologically far-reaching and utterly influential syntheses – books like Nikki Keddie’s *Roots of Revolution*<sup>2</sup> or Ervand Abrahamian’s *Iran between Two Revolutions*<sup>3</sup> spring to mind – but the same is also true for thematic historical endeavors such as Parvin Heydar’s book on women and the political process in twentieth-century Iran<sup>4</sup> or, e.g., histories of twentieth-century Persian literature – be it Hassan Kamshad’s classic<sup>5</sup> or Kamran Talatoff’s<sup>6</sup> more recent contribution.

But while the *evenemental* framework is taken for granted nowadays, a closer look at how the historiography of this framework has evolved reveals an astonishing discovery. It transpires that apart from very few exceptions and contrary to the much deplored allegedly overly elitist focus of the historiography on twentieth-century Iran, this *evenemental* framework of political history, which everybody considers to be given today, has been left more or less scholarly unchallenged for roughly 50 years.

Indeed, the *evenemental* framework, as it stands today to inform textbooks, syntheses and thematic studies alike, represents by and large the received wisdom of a late 1930s nationalist consensus that had been put to paper mostly in the 1940s and 1950s by a handful of influential Iranian writers whose works have become canonical.<sup>7</sup> These writers such as Ahmad Kasravi,<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Taqi Bahar,<sup>9</sup> ‘Abdallah Mustawfi,<sup>10</sup> Ahmad Sipih Muvarrikh al-Dawlah<sup>11</sup> have thus been fulfilling for our period a comparable role to writers such as Dawlatabadi,<sup>12</sup> Kirmani<sup>13</sup> or Malikzadah<sup>14</sup> with regard to the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution.

The accounts of the period produced by these writers – although sometimes called 'histories' – are for all intents and purposes memoirs based on the authors' having lived through those events relatively close to the action. I will call them 'quasi memoirs'. Their authors have been able to enhance their works by having access to other eyewitnesses or to their memoirs, by using the occasional isolated document that they could lay their hands on and, in some cases, by the more or less systematic analysis of the contemporary press. These 'quasi memoirs' make valuable sources for the study of Iranian thought in the twentieth century; but they seem to appear rather inadequate to continue fulfilling the role of sole source backbone for the political history of the period they cover.

It might be argued that unlike the earlier-mentioned chronologically far ranging syntheses and thematic studies, there have been, since the 1950s, a number of chronologically more narrowly focused studies touching the political history of our period, which – source-wise – went beyond the above-mentioned 'quasi memoirs', namely by using, sometimes even extensively, British documentary evidence.

Indeed, British documentary sources have been widely used as they became gradually available through very comprehensive and excellently presented volumes of document editions<sup>15</sup> and finally in the PRO (now The National Archives) itself.

However, while the relevant historiography both inside Iran and in the rest of the world became indeed fascinated, if not obsessed with the British documents, one cannot help but note that these documents seem to have been usually approached with a keen desire to find confirmation for the portrayal of the period that the aforementioned influential writers of the 1940s and 1950s had established through their accounts. The relatively recent book by Cyrus Ghani on the rise of Reza Khan/Shah,<sup>16</sup> which extensively covers our period, is a good example for such an approach to the British documentary evidence but it can be found in quite a couple of comparable works published earlier.<sup>17</sup>

At any rate, what has been still missing from the equation until very recently on the *Iranian* side were sources that in terms of their immediacy to the events went beyond 'quasi memoirs', (actual) memoirs and contemporary newspapers, namely Iranian documentary evidence. Here I mean surviving documents relating to the policy making activities of those who exercised political power during our period in the form of (telegraphic) correspondence, reports, memoranda,



minutes, instructions, circulars etc., in other words, by-products of bureaucratic processes that came into being not because their authors wanted them to be read by as many contemporaries or even future generations of readers as possible but by bureaucratic necessity alone being the *raw* result of policy actually ‘being made’. As long as such evidence did not *also* inform the *evenemental* framework for the period, the obsession with the *Asnad-i mahramanah-yi Biritaniya*<sup>18</sup> has probably been a curse rather than a blessing.<sup>19</sup>

Just imagine a situation where all that we knew about, let’s say the political history of Germany between 1900 and 1909, i.e., the Bülow years, would be based on memoirs and other accounts written by contemporaries shortly after the events, on the newspapers of the time, and, as far as documentary evidence goes, on nothing else but the reports sent to Tehran by the Imperial Persian Legation in Berlin and by the Persian consuls and vice-consuls in various German towns.

I admit that this comparison has its limits: the ability of British diplomats in Iran to influence, if not *make* the events rather than just report them was admittedly much bigger than those enjoyed by Iranian diplomats in Germany. However, I think that I have highlighted the historiographical deficiency that has been existing until very recently and in a way still exists (the very latest research – more of which later – will take time to filter down into syntheses and textbook-like accounts) in the coverage of the political history of the last years of the Qajar period, namely the virtually unchallenged prevalence of a portrayal of the period first established 50 years ago through a handful of ‘quasi memoirs’ (not historical research) curiously reinforced by an obsession with British documents, which tended to be read in search of confirmation of the established view while practically no use has been made of Iranian documentary evidence.

Given this situation, my essay tries to do the following three things:

1. To assess the genesis and development of the agreed view of the chosen period’s events as a politically rooted but also still politically influential discourse in Iran itself
2. To speculate on the interdependence between this discourse and *cultural memory* in Iran
3. To discuss the rather astonishing staying power of this, in principle, inner-Iranian discourse, in the extra-Iranian academic world

## DISCOURSES AND CULTURAL MEMORY

What do I mean by discourse and what is *cultural memory*?

As far as the former is concerned, I borrow from Michel Foucault because although skeptical of many of his more impenetrable epistemological claims, I find useful his notion of discourses as developed in his 1969 *L'archéologie du savoir*<sup>20</sup> that he then refined in his later *L'ordre du discours*<sup>21</sup> through the introduction of the notion of *genealogy*.

The notion of *cultural memory* on the other hand has been introduced by German ancient historian and Egyptologist Jan Assmann after having rediscovered the writings of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs going back to the 1930s.<sup>22</sup> Halbwachs had argued that societies, just like individuals, have a memory. Assmann, following Halbwachs, makes it clear however, that this memory unlike the Jungian notion of a collective unconscious does not exist as it were *à priori* but only as a social construct through the memories of the individual members of the society. According to Assmann, a society's *cultural memory* is made up of a pool of quasi endlessly recyclable texts, images and rites. The actively engaging care for this pool – remembering (or forgetting) – creates a collectively shared 'knowledge' about the past that can help societies to create or stabilize notions of identity. In my opinion Assmann's *cultural memory* is not that far from Foucault's *discursive formations* and their relationship to organized bodies of knowledge. However, Assmann's insistence on memory, in the sense of remembering (or convenient forgetting), seems to fly in the face of Foucault's refusal of memory and identity and his insistence on a notion of *discontinuity* when he proposes *genealogy* as the method to study discourses.

Be that as it may, I have to make the qualification that for the sake of my argument I have adapted Assmann's notion in so far as I also include in the *cultural memory* ritualized 'knowledge' about the rather recent past, while Assmann applies the term specifically only to a very distant ancient past separated by what he calls the 'floating gap' from the more recent past. He sees this more recent past being remembered by a so-called communicative memory that in his view is rather different from the *cultural memory*.

Although this *cultural memory* approach has been quite widely embraced during the 1990s, not least thanks to another influential Halbwachs recipient, Pierre Nora, whose *Lieux de mémoire*<sup>23</sup> have inspired many followers amongst historians interested in notions of nation, nationalism and national identity, it has recently

been questioned by a couple of writers. One of the most constructive criticisms of that kind has been formulated by Duncan S.A. Bell in 2003. The reason for Bell's concern with *collective memory* is an attempt to contribute to the theorizing of *nationalism*. He proposes to 'separate out' from the supposedly overarching concept of collective (in Assmann's terms: cultural) memory, the two notions of *memory* on the one hand and *governing myth* on the other hand. He conceives the *governing myth* as the 'dominant narrative' of the nation having a tendency to being oppressive while *memory*, rather than to coincide necessarily with that 'dominant narrative', could also perfectly 'function as a counter-hegemonic site of resistance, a space of political opposition.' Bell also introduces the concept of *mythscape* being the 'temporarily and spatially extended discursive realm' for the struggle over peoples' memories and the formation of nationalist myths.<sup>24</sup> Bell's framework seems promising for yet another, but different, look at the vexed question of Iranian nationalism. For the purpose of this essay, however, I stick to Assmann, not least because, as we will see, in my particular case the *governing myth* or 'dominant narrative' does indeed perfectly overlap with the (collective or cultural) *memory*.

Let's now take in turn each of the three points of my agenda.

### **A Politically Useful Discourse**

Looking at the established *evenemental* framework for our period as provided in the textbooks and used in both, grand syntheses and specialized studies alike, a few overarching themes are clearly identifiable.

The period is portrayed as one of steady decline, if not near complete disintegration, characterized by more or less unchallenged foreign intervention, ineffectual and/or corrupt government, separatism, economic decline, cultural decadence and so on. But under those grim circumstances unwraps a series of events that lead more or less inevitably to the coup d'état of February 1921 and this regardless of the fact whether any one particular account has a positive view of Reza Khan/Shah and his subsequent dictatorship or not. What is important is the inevitability of the coup and the linear process that leads to it. Indeed, the established portrayal of those years read as if the history of this period had been written backward from the coup down toward the year 1911, which marks the beginning of this supposed *period of disintegration*.<sup>25</sup>

It seems legitimate to view this all-pervading tale of an altogether thoroughly rotten period as a discourse, the *discourse of disintegration*. According to

Foucault, discourses need (a) *surfaces of emergence*, (b) *authorities of delimitation*, and (c) *grids of specifications*. Let's look at them in turn.

One might be tempted to conclude simply that this discourse *emerged* as a narrative of legitimization for the usurper Reza Khan. While there is certainly a lot to this explanation, it does not seem to go far enough because it fails to explain why even those that were extremely critically if not hostile to Reza Shah's regime have happily become stakeholders in this *discourse of disintegration*. As Homa Katouzian has demonstrated quasi *pars pro toto* by his analysis of the perception of the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of August 1919, the disdain for this period was and is universal.<sup>26</sup>

Thus if it is not Reza Shah's legitimization alone that is behind the emergence of this discourse, I suggest that it might also have to do with its great *historiographical usefulness*. All stakeholders in this discourse, however different their views might otherwise be, share certain assumptions about progress, modernization and nation-building. However, in order to write history based on those assumptions, nothing is more helpful than convenient cut-off points. Hence I would argue that in order to make the 3rd of Esfand 1299 into the perfect 'hour zero' for the emergence of the modern Iranian nation-state that it has undoubtedly become, it was necessary to make the difference between before and after as great as possible, to emphasize ruptures and to play down continuities. The period between 1911 and 1921 was hence made into a convenient foil, some sort of a chronological rather than spatial *heterodystopia*, before which the emergence of Iran as a modern nation-state could be told much easier<sup>27</sup> than if one had to care for the complex web of continuities,<sup>28</sup> which seems to have actually underlain the process of Iran's becoming a modern nation-state since the nineteenth century. It might also be suggested that for some the principle of creating a convenient foil has also worked as far as the 1911 threshold is concerned: the *period of disintegration* as an aberration that can be easily contrasted with the hopeful departure into the 'right direction' that was the Constitutional Revolution.

The initial *authorities of delimitation* for this discourse were of course the already mentioned influential writers of the 1940s and 1950s. Although they are long dead now, through their legacy, they have remained in charge. This is probably so because the discourse these writers have helped forming has proven to be extremely suitable to those able to *delimit the grids of its specification* ever since these writers published, that is those who have since held political power in

Iran. These regimes might have been quite different in appearance – oligarchic parliamentary democracy up to 1951, dominance by a demagogue with Bonapartist tendencies between 1951 and 1953, increasingly authoritarian, if not dictatorial monarchy up to 1979 and an Islamist regime up to the present day – but the type of strongly centralizing, Persianizing ethnic nationalism that first became state doctrine under Reza Shah has been arguably the major underlying ideology of all of those regimes, however different their appearance.

In my opinion, the fact that this *discourse of disintegration* has been so utterly politically useful for such a long time means it has forever left the refined realm of academic historiography. It has become part of political practices itself, as I have experienced myself when living in Iran between 1995 and 1997.

One example of this is the way the city of Bushire has been working to create some sort of a visual symbol or logo of its corporate identity with the help of an equestrian statue of local First World War hero, Ra'is 'Ali Dilvari, of whom exist apparently no remaining pictorial sources<sup>29</sup>; so that nobody actually knows how he really looked like on his horse. Who was Dilvari? At the beginning of the First World War, Ra'is 'Ali Dilvari, a regional strongman belonging to the Tangistani people inhabiting the hinterland of the port of Bushire, had operated with limited success against British interests in the region but ultimately failed to prevent the British from establishing their control over the major transport arteries and settlements of the region with the help of a locally raised levy force, the South Persia Rifles. While the memory of Dilvari's activities and especially that of his enigmatic brother-in-arms, the legendary German agent Wilhelm Wassmuss, seemed to have been very much alive among the local population ever since the events, it was only in the early 1970s that political expediency pushed Dilvari and his 'movement' into Iran's collective memory through a filmic representation with a clearly nationalist agenda that turned the regional leader into a tragic anti-colonialist fighter for Iran's independence and territorial integrity on a national scale. The reason for this unexpected nationwide remembrance of Dilvari has to be sought in the diplomatic tensions that existed at the time – the moment of Britain's withdrawal from the Persian Gulf – between Britain and Iran regarding the sovereignty of Bahrain, the Tumbs and Abu Musa. It was this perceived appropriation of Dilvari by the *Ancien régime* that made him a *persona non grata* for the post-1979 authorities and keeping the memory of Dilvari became a near subversive act.<sup>30</sup> In the 1990s, however, he was officially rediscovered as an Islamic hero and while local remembrance was once again allowed to flourish, Dilvari

was gradually re-lifted to the national stage as an early precursor of those who had come to power as a result of the 1979 revolution. When in early 1997, the then Parliamentary Speaker, 'Aliakbar Natiq-Nuri, visited the city and region as part of his unofficial campaign for the impending Presidential elections, he explicitly referred to the Dilvari episode.

Closer to the actual Election Day the *period of disintegration* cropped up again in the rhetoric of the pillars of the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At a time in late spring 1997, when it had become clear that the victory of regime candidate Natiq-Nuri, whose election to President of the Republic had seemed a forgone conclusion, was seriously called into question by the momentum gathering behind Muhammad Khatami's campaign, the establishment could be heard making widely repeated dark allusions regarding the alleged necessity for the Islamic Revolution to avoid the fate of the failed Constitutional Revolution that had ushered in the disintegrative period between 1911 and 1921 and eventually authoritarian dictatorship by a dynasty of puppets in the hands of Western imperialists.

These are only two examples that admittedly remain very much at the level of anecdotal evidence but I am sure a more systematic digging will result in more concrete examples of how the *discourse of disintegration* has been pervading political practices in post-1953 Iran.

### **'Sinks' into the Cultural Memory of Iranian Society**

But while there is no doubt that the *discourse of disintegration* has become part of Iran's *political culture* I would argue, and this brings me to my *second point*, that the 'knowledge' it provides about the period, its events, its heroes and most notably its villains is now actually part of the nation's *cultural memory*. Leaders of regional movements like Ra'is 'Ali Dilvari, Mirza Kuchik Khan, Muhammad Khiyabani and others or revered politically active intellectuals such as Mirza Hassan Khan Pir Nia Mushir al-Dawlah or Hassan Mudarris have become unquestioned national heroes while the treacherousness of politicians like Mirza Hassan Khan Vusuq al-Dawlah or Firuz Mirza Firuz Nusrat al-Dawlah is proverbial.

I cannot, at this point, provide the statistical data to back up this claim but have to refer to my experience of living in Iran and 'talking history' to countless Iranians from all walks of life. It remains a desideratum for further research to shed light on the mechanisms that let the politically used academic *discourse of disintegration* 'sink' into Iran's *cultural memory*. It seems particularly difficult to

find empirical evidence to gauge these mechanisms.<sup>31</sup> One obvious place to look at would be school textbooks and the curricula for history teaching at primary and secondary level<sup>32</sup> but I suspect a closer look at literary and other artistic representations of that period would also yield interesting results. One example to cite in the literary context is Hassan Ruknzadah-Adamiyat whose literary treatment of the First World War events in the southwest of Iran<sup>33</sup> is even considered to have been influential in the development of the novel as a new genre in Persian literature.<sup>34</sup> The role of popularizing learned societies, libraries, clubs and later on of museums, memorials and monuments should also be considered.<sup>35</sup>

As far as the perception of individuals is concerned, it would be further interesting to find out when exactly these people began to be remembered (reviled) in this fashion. For in the later 1920s and 1930s, Mirza Kuchik Khan would have been hardly so revered and not many people would have had heard at all of Rai's 'Ali Dilvari, while on the other hand it must then have been still palatable to the majority of the politically aware public to see Vusuq al-Dawlah and Nusrat al-Dawlah being appointed to become cabinet ministers and to hold other prestigious offices such as that of the head of the newly created Academy for the Persian Language (in Vusuq al-Dawlah's case), although at that point in time it was already commonly 'known' that they had received large sums of money from the British in the context of their ill-fated 1919 Agreement with Great Britain. In other words, the exact nature of the 'crime' of these politicians was as well-known in the late 1920s and the 1930s as it is now, but to the contemporaries it seemed to have mattered much less than to later generations, to whom especially Vusuq al-Dawlah has become the unrivalled *Number One* bogymen of Iran's recent history. When did the turn occur?

Inevitably, the question arises as to how the way this period is *remembered* might relate to any attainable account of the historical reality, relate to what *actually happened*.

I am not going to dwell on the epistemological limits of any meaningful attempt to answer this question,<sup>36</sup> but merely note that very recently a few scholars have made some inroads into this allegedly all-too-well-trodden and hence seemingly safely ignorable territory coming up with challenges to the received wisdom.<sup>37</sup> I have been amongst them. I have recently finished some research into this *period of disintegration*, trying to give particular attention – without however ignoring the other sources – to Iranian documentary evidence. I found this evidence in various archives in Tehran, Paris, London and Moscow;

but I also benefited largely from the recent Iranian boom in the publication of document editions.<sup>38</sup>

During this research, I was in for a similar experience as the one described by Afsaneh Najmabadi in her fascinating study of the tale of the *Daughters of Quchan*<sup>39</sup> where she challenged the *evenemental* framework of the Constitutional Revolution that back then had seemed equally lacking the need to be bothered with anymore as our *period of disintegration*: I realized that events which clearly had been of great significance to the contemporaries must have been quasi *written out* of history when those above-mentioned influential writers laid the foundations for the *evenemental* framework that is still widely in use. The sources that I studied did also clearly call for reconsideration if not revision of the portrayal of quite a number of events and personalities, thus putting a question mark behind the premises of the *discourse of disintegration*.

What is interesting in this context is the fact that some of the reconsiderations of the established framework and hence the questioning of the *discourse of disintegration* would have been possible without access to that newly available Iranian documentary evidence just by taking a closer and more critical look at sources that have been available for a long time. That this has hardly happened at all is probably a good indicator that the *discourse of disintegration* has indeed left the realm of mere political propaganda and has 'sunk' into the *cultural memory* of the Iranian society and from there into the works of historians writing outside Iran.

### **To be Perpetuated outside Iran**

Hence let's now consider the *third and last point of my agenda*: the staying power of the *discourse of disintegration* even in an extra-Iranian historiography that had nothing to fear from a state authority that had an interest in the perpetuation of this discourse. To me there seem to be three reasons for this.

*Reason number one* has probably to be the fact that this discourse and the handy contrast it offers has proved useful not only within Iran itself but also for historiographies elsewhere. It is obvious that it appealed to various teleologically inclined schools of historiography that felt the need to trim the history of this period toward the arrival on the scene of Reza Khan. But in its coziness, it also seemed to provide a convenient handle on the period for those who would not necessarily see themselves as partaking in any of these various teleological projects.



I have to admit that I myself saw precious little reason to challenge the accepted view on the period, with which I had been brought up as an undergraduate, when I did the research for my first book in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay in Paris. With hindsight I would say that back then I did probably approach the French archival documents with the same gullible enthusiasm to find the accepted view confirmed that I have denounced in the existing historiography and its obsession with British documents.

*Reason number two* has to do with the problem of access to Iranian documentary evidence. Of course, for a long time it has been nigh impossible to get any access to Iranian documentary evidence that would have had the power to counterbalance the influence of the powerful narratives of the 1930s and the many readings of British sources that were performed with the desire to find those tales confirmed.

But as more and more Iranian documentary evidence regarding our period has become available in countless private and institutional document editions, the argument of non-access seems to lose some of its kudos.

However, one sometimes gets the impression that as soon as a document is published in such an edition, it is dead and buried: while of late these editions have been churned out in a sheer frenzy of document publication, very few people seem inclined to use them to actually write history, while at the same time the gospel of the *Asnad-i mahrimanah-yi Biritaniya* is milled over and over again.

In Iran *itself* this tendency might be put down to the fact that many probably still consider it safer to dedicate their efforts to the editing of documents rather than taking the risk of incurring the wrath of the regime by writing history that would provide a challenge to an officially upheld discourse.

Outside Iran, however, this risk does not exist. Hence, what might play a role is a culture of snobbery toward edited sources that seems to be still around amongst historians of Contemporary History.

Be that as it may, I would argue that there is still more behind the immense staying power of those 1930s tales amongst historians working outside Iran and this brings me to *reason number three*.

This has to do with how the discipline of Modern History of Iran is practiced in extra-Iranian academia, namely in Japan, Europe and America. In my opinion, the relative lack of challenge that the 1930s discourse about our period could enjoy for such a long time is partly due to a dominance of a 'history of ideas

approach' in the field, and I would actually argue that this is probably also true for the historiography of other periods such as the Reza Shah era and beyond.<sup>40</sup>

Supposedly important thinkers and ideologues such as the ubiquitous Akhundzadah, Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani, Malkum Khan, Tabataba'i, Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri, Na'ini, Taqizadah, Sultanzadah, Bahar, Mudarris, Arani and Shari'ati have been endlessly more in the limelight of research than the governing elite of those periods and *their* thinking, motivation and concrete actions, let alone those political and military technocrats whose stake in the modernization process to me seems far more important than that of the over-studied intellectuals. In the extra-Iranian scholarship on Iranian history, we have, apart from countless other publications, at least three serious biographies of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani<sup>41</sup> but only one somewhat hagiographical account of the life of Reza Shah.<sup>42</sup> The only non-intellectual elite group that seems to get a fair deal of scholarly attention are counter-elites such as the 'noble rebels' Mirza Kuchik Khan, Muhammad Khiyabani, Muhammad Taqi Khan Pasyan and others.

Where are, in the face of the towering presence of the thinkers and rebels the monographs about the doers, the movers and shakers that wielded the political power and took decisions? Where are the monographs about the concrete deeds, political and other, of elite members such as Muzaffar al-Din Shah Qajar, Muhammad 'Ali Shah Qajar, Nasir al-Mulk, Vusuq al-Dawlah, Muhammad 'Ali Furuqi, Nusrat al-Dawlah Firuz Mirza Firuz, 'Abd al-Hussain Taymuyrtash, 'Aliakbar Davar, Sardar As'ad Bakhtiyari etc?<sup>43</sup>

In a way these political elites are in actual fact rendered subaltern very much in the same way as the subaltern that are referred to in the invitation to contribute to this volume: the dominant historiography fails to make them speak.

They have been, until very recently, further rendered subaltern by most of the little historiography that finally bothered to deal with them because of this historiography's already-mentioned obsession with British sources: the bulk of the documentary evidence for the study of Modern Iranian History has for a long time been taken not from the own archival legacy of those political elites but from British sources. Taken at face value (as it has all too often been the case) these sources let many of these elites appear as either the willing executive agents of Britannia or helpless pawns in British machinations, but in both cases, and that is the most important result, with no agency whatsoever of their own.

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By way of conclusion I would suggest that it is high time to provide a refuge to those 'homeless texts' that is the increasingly better available but strangely enough widely ignored Iranian documentary evidence. Consultation of that evidence together with a critical re-reading of the already well-known sources would allow to give a voice to those political elites who have been, as it were, rendered doubly subaltern by much of the existing historiography. In this light, it might be possible to assess and potentially challenge the seemingly so-solidly established and well-known *evenemental* framework not only for the late Qajar but also for the Reza Shah period because, as Tzvetan Todorov reminds us *sacraliser la mémoire est une autre manière de la rendre sterile*.<sup>744</sup>

## Agency and Subjectivity in Iranian National Historiography

*Touraj Atabaki*

The Constitutional Revolution (1905–9) in Iran led to drastic changes in socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts aiming at crafting a new political identity for the Iranians. Although these changes are expected to serve as an incentive for the emergence of the modern state, they do not necessarily provide adequate measures to ensure an innovative identity. The production of a new ideology, notably the construction of a shared history, seems to be equally essential in making a nation's new identity. Hence, the new identity is assumed to be linked with the nation's real or imagined past. Therefore, writing national history, which can develop into a persuasive political project, tends to integrate nation with territory thus shaping a significant and unbroken link with the past. This aims at filling the gap between the nation's origin and its origin. While stones, temples, papers and tales were exploited as natural components of the new national landscape, the communal heroes and liberating myths are frequently assigned to mobilize people for political purposes.

Writing the Iranian twentieth-century history has been consciously articulated to a recovery of Iran's self-image. This has become possible through discovering Iran's elite, who accordingly were in charge of the protection of the motherland against external threats, e.g., the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, and, later on, against the colonial powers: the Russians and the British. The national historians, despite their political and ideological affiliations, representing nationalists, Islamicists, or Stalinists, share a common aspiration in narrating the Iranians' past. They exclusively assigned the agency in history to the elite with a distinct class association, faith affiliation and political aspiration that in their multiplicity could be clerics, secular intelligentsias, colonialists and

social or political institutions. Therefore, the historians, who adopt essentialist approach in their endeavor to compile the national history, tend to deny the agency of subaltern and its autonomous behavior that ultimately paves the way to dehistoricize the history.

Writing on the rise and fall of Reza Shah and his implemented reforms is one of the stereotypes of such elitist historiography. While historians, representing various schools of thoughts, concentrate on the role of the Pahlavi elite and their opponents in initiating socio-political changes in the interwar period, there is hardly any account of reference to the accommodation of or resistance to such changes. Similarly, these narratives lack the necessary accounts of how the Pahlavi's agenda was perceived by the non-elite members of the society.

The purpose of this study is to present a comparative account of the nationalist historiography of the first Pahlavi, a criterion of which is its counter-essentialist approach to the process of socio-cultural changes and the question of subjectivity in writing the past. In doing so, this paper is presented in two parts. In the first part, I intend to examine the work of the two Iranian nationalist historians who, while writing on different periods of Iran's history, adopt an elitist approach in their studies. Furthermore, their contribution to the invention of the twentieth-century political culture in Iran has presented them as the architects of the modern Iranian political discourse. They are Pirnia and Mahmud Mahmud, the historian of pre-Islamic Iran and the historian of the Qajar period respectively.

In the second part, I try to argue that for the Pahlavi historians the national history was a tailored discourse whose main task was to institute a mass historical memory juxtaposed with its corresponding amnesia. The natural repercussion of such a task was to ensure a historical legitimacy for the political establishment or those who challenge its entity. For some vernacular intelligentsia, who studied the past, the frequent antinomy was the interpretation of the national history vis-à-vis the nation's mere contemporary manifestation. The past in its entirety was often assumed to be a mirror which reflected the national destiny.

## THE NATION'S PAST

In February 1936, the Iranian Ministry of Education arranged a carnival in which delegates representing high school students from all over the country gathered in Tehran to celebrate Reza Shah's fifteenth year of accession to power. Among the programs, there was a forum where students presented essays on

history and geography of their provinces. Some 19 essays were presented in this forum, covering almost all major provinces including Azerbaijan, Tehran, Khuzestan and Baluchistan. While all delegates portrayed diversity of life in their provinces, they were unanimous in presenting a depiction of Iranian history and her actuality. According to these students, the institution of the monarchy has always been the sole pillar of the country's territorial integrity and the monarchs have been the sole protector of the people's unity. On the issue of Iran's political actuality, they conceptualized that, prior to Reza Khan (subsequently Reza Shah Pahlavi), the Iranian society was on the verge of disintegration and unawareness (*bikhhari*), leading the country to a state of total anarchy. Then 'as a common pattern in the Iranian history, a shining star in the country's dark sky brought integrity and prosperity to this ancient civilization'.<sup>1</sup> Such images of Iranian history, portrayed here by these students, shaped up Iran's political culture throughout the Pahlavi era. This image was partly rearticulated by historiographers of the first Pahlavi period and was eventually incorporated in the national curriculum for history and geography.

Concerned with the country's territorial integrity in the post-Constitutional Revolution period, the Iranian intelligentsia mostly engaged in the debate on the cultural basis of the Iranian nationalism rather than its political aspirations and goals. For some of the intelligentsia, the frequent antinomy was the antiquity of the nation versus its modern image. The past was a mirror of national image and through a process of rediscovering, the national destiny could be defined. Nostalgia for a distant past and ancient glory found most of its cultural counterparts in the nation's genealogical links. Ethnic continuity and ethnic recurrence of Aryan Iranians were often bonded with territorial associations as well as linguistic affiliations.

For the early Iranian enlightened individuals such as Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadah and Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, the totality of Iran and the territorial association of her inhabitants were the major factors in reshaping the Iranian nationalist political culture. In their efforts to reconstruct nationalism, territorial association of Iranians dominated other elements such as ethnicity or language.<sup>2</sup> Hence, a romantic territorial nationalism was gradually reinvented, inspiring the earlier generations of intelligentsias to embark upon change and reform. However, for the intelligentsia of the post-Constitutional era, who were more preoccupied with the notions of authoritarian state-building, linguistic and cultural nationalism became the indispensable driving force for accomplishing

their aspirations. Despite their diverse political views, the common purpose that brought them together was an anticipation of a model society; namely, a coherent and ethnically homogenous European society organized around distinctive concepts of nation and state. Moreover, in their implication of the term 'nation' (*millat*) they aimed exclusively at the titular Persian ethnic group rather than multiethnic conception. They were convinced that the new state-building in Iran would require a low degree of cultural diversity and a high degree of ethnic homogeneity. Consequently, marginalizing other national allegiances, the linguistic affiliation of the Iranians became the sole criterion cementing people together. Consequently, linguistic nationalism gradually replaced the once-prevailing territorial nationalism.

In the years following the First World War and particularly during the first Pahlavi era, promoted by European fascism, such crafted linguistic nationalism became unequivocally apparent. Nostalgia for a distant past and glorifying ancient Iran reshaped Iranian nationalism more along ethnic and linguistic lines recasting the Iranians/Persians against the others. While the Zoroastrian past was continuously idealized, Islam was often conceptualized from a more inauspicious perspective. Arabs were often demonized as the perpetrators behind the demise of the glorious civilization of the Sasanid period. Also, the Turks, who were referred to as the 'yellow hazards',<sup>3</sup> were considered as *others* in the construction of the new Iranian identity. Ignoring the multiethnic nature of Iranian society and demonstrating conviction to the ethnic and cultural superiority of the Persian against the Arab and the Turk became a strong ingredient of the new nationalism.

With the passage of time, the promoters of this brand of revivalist nationalism became the founders of a new national historiography emphasizing the continuity of the Iranian culture and reinstating of its pre-Islamic values. In the new school of historiography, the individual rulers, as the sole guarantors of the country's integrity and sovereignty, monopolized the status of agency throughout the long history of Iran. Moreover, the function of the agent was often associated with a messianic assignment, emerging as a savior when the motherland was suffering from diseases of disorder and maladministration. The apocalyptic paradigm, the Zoroastrian conviction of the advent of the savior *Saushyans* or the Shi'ite passion for *Imam Zaman* (The Lord of the Age) or the messianic spirit of *Bab* in early Babi movement and its yearning for restoring justice and equality, all contributed to the crafting of such criteria and functions of such agency.

Although the notion of messiah-savior was not unknown in the old Iranian chronicles, what distinguished nationalist historiography from its previous chronicle's narration was the rise and fall of the agents. In the old chronicles, God sent prophets to guide His slaves to Him and sent kings to 'preserve them from one another'.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, God granted the kings divine effulgence (*farr izadi*, or as in the Old Persian: *khvarnah*) in order to establish their kingships, salvaging the divine land (*sarzamin ahuraiti*).

Enjoying the divine effulgence, the emerging agent's chief mission was to secure the territorial integrity of his realm and bring justice to its subjects. Such mission was realized through a network of social interactions embedded in the institution of kingship in Iran. The divine sanction, while securing the legitimacy of the ruler's deeds, developed into an indivisible part of the Iranian political culture. Furthermore, the fall of a king or the demise of a dynasty had been associated with the divine fate rather than the incompetence of the state or the ruler himself. Sultan Hussain, the last king of the Safavids, offered his throne to the 'Afghan intruder' by stating that, 'the divine will let me serve as a king of this realm up until now. Now the same divine will have decided to conclude my task and to draw to a close my reign'. Accordingly, Iranian history was marked by the rise and fall of dynasties whose fall came as a result of chaos and where territorial disintegration was viewed pessimistically. At the same time, this led the subjects to expect the appearance of yet another authoritative agent who enjoyed the divine effulgence, if not the popular acceptance, to establish a new order.

In the nationalist historiography, while the ruler was considered the shadow of God on earth (*zill allah*) enjoying the divine rights and entrusted by God to comply with the expectation of His slaves, his failure to govern became secularized and was attributed to the ruler's own ignorance, revelry and voluptuary or, as is a common xenophobic view, to the foreign powers' plots. In the following passages, we shall examine this notion through the works of the two renowned historians of the Pahlavi era, Hassan Pirnia and Mahmud Mahmud.

### **HASSAN PIRNIA<sup>5</sup>**

Following a rather long political career and holding numerous ministerial positions and making history, during the last decade of his life, Hassan Pirnia (Mushir al-Dawlah) opted for writing history and composed his masterwork, *Ancient Iran (Iran Bastan)*. Ancient Iran, which appeared in 3 volumes and 2723 pages, is Pirnia's most remarkable book. His other books include *The*



*Ancient Tales of Iran* (*Dastanhay Qadim Iran*) and *A Short History of Ancient Iran* (*Tarikh Mukhtasar Iran Qadim*), the latter of which was an abridgment of his earlier work *Ancient Iran* and was incorporated in the national curriculum for history.

For Hassan Pirnia, writing about pre-Islamic Iran was a convincing political project creating a direct link with Iran's past that could fill the gap between the Iranians' origin and their actuality. In the aftermath of the First World War, when political legitimacies of the nation-states were chiefly intermingled with a new and larger sense of belonging, Pirnia launched his project aiming at refashioning an all-encompassing totality, bringing about new social ties, identity and meaning, and a new sense of history from one's origin on to an illustrious future. The conviction of the superiority of the Aryan race, still prevailing in the post-War Europe, constituted Pirnia's perception, according to which Iranians were the ancestors of the Aryan race (*nizhad Ariyaii*) linked with their presumed descendants in Europe; the Aryan Europeans. However, Pirnia failed to appreciate the multiethnic diversity of the dwellers of the plateau prior to the arrival of Islam. Inevitably, his essentialist description of inhabitants as the Iranian Aryans, comprising only the titular residents of the plateau, remains exclusive. He writes:

Once the Aryans consolidated their power in the Western Asia, the entire ancient East became Arian and was ruled by the single unified state. The Achaemenian state was the ultimate word in the ancient East.<sup>6</sup>

Subsequent to his genealogical argument, Pirnia studies the locality of the Iranians or the plateau where they lived. Evidently, his work reflects the juxtaposition of the European nineteenth-century historiography with geography. To Pirnia, geography explains not only the national character of the ancient Iranians but it also illustrates their prominent culture. According to Pirnia, the coexistence between the Iranians and their harsh environment formed their presumptuous and warlike character. Nonetheless, Pirnia's perception of the locality of Iran goes beyond the region where the Aryans solely inhabited. It comprises the entire plateau stretching from Mesopotamia to Transoxania where other racial/ethnic groups besides Aryans had dwelled:

In the north, from the Caucasus Mountains to the Caspian Sea and to the Jaxartes [Syr Darya]; in the west, from the Balkan Peninsula to the Adriatic Sea to the Libyan Desert. In the east, from Sindh to the Punjab. In the south, from the Oman Sea or the Persian Gulf to Ethiopia to adjacent Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

Following the description of the ethnicity and the locality of the Iranians, Pirnia peruses the main criteria that contributed to the 'survival' of Iranian civilization as 'one of the oldest civilizations in the region'. According to Pirnia, in her long history, Iran's territorial integrity has been safeguarded by her own agents who act as savior rulers. These agent-saviors often appear either when the country experiences a period of chaos and disintegration or when the injustice and oppression prevail. Therefore, restoring the lost glory of the country becomes the chief task of these saviors:

The progress and development or decline and retreat of Iran depended on the kings' personality. With kings such as Cyrus the Great or Darius Iran developed and with kings such as Darius II or Ardashir II Iran fell into decline. One should realize that when a social class reached its highest level of nobility, endued with great affluence, gradually declines into luxury and moral decay, and thus loses the noble characteristics with which was once identified.<sup>8</sup>

With such an exclusively elitist perception of the political development in Iran, Pirnia in his *Ancient Iran* presents a detailed and deductive account of the ruling elite. He describes in detail the life of ruling agents. On the one hand, victories in war, prosperity, security, and order were all attributed to the wisdom and competence of the sovereign. On the other, the incompetent agent or the ruling elite's indecisiveness was blamed for invasion, defeat, famine, anarchy and the fall of the ruling empire.

The Median Empire ruled the Iranian plateau for 150 years, the Achaemenians, from Cyrus the Great to Darius III ruled for 220 years. The Parthian rule lasted for 470 years, while for the Sasanids it was 420 years. Therefore, amongst all dynasties that ruled Iran, the Parthians reign lasted longer. What paved the way for the fall of this empire was, indeed, the pervasive disarray within the ruling Parthian family that enabled the others to challenge their authority.<sup>9</sup>

### **MAHMUD MAHMUD<sup>10</sup>**

Mahmud Mahmud is another nationalist historian of the Pahlavi era who attributes the agency exclusively to the notable elite whose function is to secure Iran's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. In describing the messianic position of these elite, Mahmud argues that:

Iranians are a very peculiar nation. No nation could be found in this corner of Asia that possesses such intrinsic talent and quality combined with long historical

lineage. This, however, gives a distinctive edge to this nation among others. Therefore, the rise of a man of noble devotion amongst this nation is *highly* anticipated every moment.

It can not be said that the spirit of this nation has been obliterated and its creative faculty (*quvih ibtekar*) has been shackled. This nation has inherent quality and its spirit remains eternal. It is possible that its development may face stiff challenges for a short period of time due to some calamities. Nevertheless, it does not take long before it appears once again with much inventive vigour and maintains its entity. Such is the case that the foreign powers have made concerted effort to destroy Iranian's peculiar spirit over the past hundred and fifty years. However, they have not succeeded yet.<sup>11</sup>

In reviewing the modern and pre-modern history of Iran, Mahmud argues that:

Iran, in no period of her existence, has been deprived of enjoying distinguished leaders. God has always blessed the Iranians. In every period, there were some men of exalted position that took the lead and ruled the kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

Mahmud holds foreign powers responsible for the demise of the Safavids in seventeenth century and assumes that Nader Afshar, Karim Khan Zand and Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar were renowned leaders who were bestowed upon the Iranians by the Almighty God to assist them with their *mundane*.<sup>13</sup> According to Mahmud, the emergence of these notables in the eighteenth century 'led to cleanse the country from the foreign powers' and restored the past glory of the country to the level of Abbas the Great of the Safavids. Furthermore, in a rather panegyric fashion, Mahmud praises Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar, as a 'gift of God' who was commissioned by Him to rule Iran in a most tumultuous period of her history in order to restore the past glory of the Safavids:

This man is one of the most celebrated in the Iranian history. He ruled the country for twenty years and gave back the Iranians the lost glory and dignity. Under his rule, the Iranian borders once more returned to those of the Safavids' glorious period.<sup>14</sup>

Significantly, there is no mention in Mahmud's reference to Agha Muhammad Khan's profile of savagery at Kerman and of his barbarous massacre of Tbilisi that left deep wounds in the Georgian historical collective memory.

In Mahmud's elitist narration, not only the authoritarian rulers appear in a messianic mode in the Iranian history, but there are also other notables who enjoy God's blessing in conducting the nation's affair. For the history of the early Qajar period he names Ibrahim Khan I'timad al-Dawlah Shirazi, Mirza Abulqasim Qa'immaqam Farahani and Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir as three distinguished politicians who 'were sanctioned by God to attend to the nation's affairs.' However, according to Mahmud, the notables, unlike the kings, never enjoy ultimate power and their destinies are subjected to conspiracies instigated by the colonial powers and their local mercenaries. The tragic end of Ibrahim Khan I'timad al-Dawlah Shirazi, Mirza Abulqasim Qa'immaqam Farahani and Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir who served as Grand Viziers in the early Qajar time was the consequence of such conspiracies.

During the last hundred and fifty years and following the arrival of the foreign political agents in Iran, the country has experienced many troubled episodes. Although our knowledge of our contemporary history of Iran is very limited, one can easily conclude that the miseries which Iran has suffered are the direct result of outsider's intervention.<sup>15</sup>

It is not the purpose of this study to assess Mahmud's conspiratorial approach toward the Iranian historiography. Nevertheless, in creating a myth to satisfy nationalist desire for a hero, Mahmud fails to critically examine his elite agents' contribution to these miseries. While the intricacies of the colonial powers' intrigues are carefully examined, there is no inclusive account of these agents' personal deeds. Consequently, victories in war, stability, security and prosperity were attributed to the wisdom of the sovereign and the elite, whereas defeat, chaos, famine and natural disasters were all blamed on foreign powers:

In 1892, Nasser al-Din Shah by paying compensations to the British company repealed the tobacco concession. A year later, in 1893, a horrendous cholera struck and took the life of more than one million Iranians. In the course of two years 1901 and 1902, Iran borrowed some 32 crores of gold from Russia. As a result, the Russians gained an exceptional influence in Iran. During the same period, the British faced various problems in southern Africa [hindering them to sustain their influence in Iran]. Then abruptly, cholera once again swept through Iran, causing massive death and hardship and difficulty.<sup>16</sup>

In giving his verdict on personalities, Mahmud's chief criterion is their attitude and stance toward foreign powers. On the strength of Mahmud's Anglophobia, he considers Mirza Hussain Khan Sipahsalar a proclaimed Anglophile, whose 'sincere desire was to bring Iran under the total compliance of Britain'<sup>17</sup>, while his endeavor to introduce change and reform in the nineteenth-century Iran is passed over in silence. To evaluate Mahmud's assessment of Sipahsalar, let me quote Firaydun Adamiyat, who is known as a great admirer of Mahmud:

Based on comparative studies between various periods in the history of nineteenth century Iran, we are well aware that the period of Hussain Khan is endowed with great historical significance. During this period, we experienced the first signs of change in arbitrary rule and, hence, the establishment of a modern government on the basis of Western civilization. It was understood that various political principles, other than the ancient methods of governance, could be applied. This period witnessed the beginning of a new way of legislation. The development of socio-political thoughts, directly influenced by the European ways of thinking, was notably impressive. The growth of journalism and critical approach towards social debates were amongst the most remarkable characteristics of this period. The emergence of a new kind of public opinion also stems from this period. The most significant social development was the growing understanding of nation and state, recognition of the rights of the individual, the functions of the state and the basis of the state power.<sup>18</sup>

The selective amnesia in Mahmud Mahmud's historiography is the direct outcome of his political inclination. His xenophobic stand not only glorifies the deeds of those who corresponded with his nationalist agenda but it also denies the agency of the others who fail to satisfy the same agenda.

## **MEMORY AND AMNESIA IN WRITING THE NATIONAL HISTORY**

The national historiography in the Pahlavi era reveals the selective amnesia more than any other time. The distant past, being carefully engineered, arrives at the attention of the public space while attempting to overlook the immediate past. This is a classic example of dehistoricization. Ironically, while the iconography of the immediate past fades away from public space, its ideology at a more profound level remains as a prevailing instrument leaving much of the topography of historical memory unaltered.

Evidently, the narrative account of the savior's advent and his yearning to restore justice and equality could not be fulfilled without observing some kind of selective amnesia. The Iranian national 'exceptionalism' is, indeed, the outcome of such enduring effort of recasting oneself by rejecting the other. However, the conceptualization of national exceptionalism in national historiography often depends utterly on the adaptation of selective amnesia. It is assumed that national exceptionalism cannot be professed without selective amnesia. In the Pahlavi national historiography, the selective amnesia has been practiced more than any other period in the Iranian history concentrating on merely the fall of the Qajar dynasty and the rise of Reza Pahlavi as the founder of Pahlavi dynasty. The four imperative years, from launching a coup d'état in 1921, to 1925, when Reza Pahlavi was designated as the first king of the Pahlavi dynasty, are the subject of the most incongruous account in the Iranian contemporary historiography. It is during this important period that distortion and even the amnesia began to be widely exercised. The ensuing political campaign has been recorded as the 'republican uproar' (*ghughay jumhuri*) by the historiographers. In the following passages, I shall present an abridged account of the republican campaign as recoded by various historians. Then by juxtaposing the findings of three Iranian historians of the same period, I shall examine the memory and selective amnesia in Iranian national historiography.

## **NARRATING THE INAUGURATION OF A REPUBLIC IN IRAN: WITH OR WITHOUT THE PEOPLE**

Both during and in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, there were occasional references to the possibility of change in the form of the government in Iran. However, the outbreak of the First World War left no room for open debate on this question. On the other hand, the international community faced new challenges following the First World War.

By the end of the First World War, the Imperial Tsarist Russia was forced to leave the region's political scene and instead a Soviet Socialist Republic raised its flag on the dome of the Kremlin. In the southern region of the old Tsarist empire, for the first time in a Muslim land, the Azerbaijani Musavatis, established their own republic in 1918. These events, together with the extension of the Bolshevik rule, soon had considerable repercussions on the region's political development. A shortlived 'Soviet Republic' was formed in the northern Iranian

province of Gilan in 1920–1. Although it did not enjoy popular support, it was not confronted with a substantial opposition bloc either.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in the southern province of Fars, Bakhtiyari Khan formed a ‘Bakhtiyari Soviet’ and published a ‘manifesto of sorts aimed at more equal and egalitarian relations within the tribe.’<sup>20</sup> In the northern province of Azerbaijan, Shaykh Muhammad Khiyabani challenged the authority of the Qajar Shah by calling the province *Azadistan* and appealed for an introduction of constitutive reforms for the country and more autonomy for the region.<sup>21</sup> As far as the question of the form of the government was concerned, Khiyabani acknowledged that:

We are neither monarchist nor republican. At this stage, our main goal is to have a Majlis, democratically elected, where the deputies can decide on the future form of the government.<sup>22</sup>

He also maintained that:

The will of the people should be given priority over every other matter. If the people wish, they should be able to depose a king and chose a new one. They have a right to even declare a republic.<sup>23</sup>

In the neighboring Ottoman Empire, the Grand National Assembly ratified the separation of the Caliphate from the Sultanate. The latter was abolished on 29 October 1923 and the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed by means of a constitutional amendment and Gazi Mustafa Kemal was elected President. In Iran, following his coup of 1921, Reza Khan was forming his first cabinet as the Prime Minister:

Reza Khan’s reputation had been on a steady rise from the very first day after the coup. His supporters had every expectation that having become Prime Minister he would be able to complete what he had started. He now would take the final step to unify the country and advance bold plans for an economic revival.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the execution of this project proved to be an uneasy task. Although the loyalty of the military was somehow promising, Reza Khan was far from being a trusted politician among the country’s intelligentsia.

The news of establishing a republican government in Turkey caused distinctive reactions in Iran. The traditional establishment, represented by the court, adapted a more cautious approach and sent a congratulatory telegram to Gazi Mustafa Kemal for his newly assumed appointment.<sup>25</sup> Visibly, the

radical-modernist camp was in disarray. On 20 January 1924, a newspaper in Istanbul came out in favor of the establishment of a republic in Iran, too. 'The article was well received in Tehran by newspapers that were supporters of Reza Khan. A Tehran journalist tried to determine what Reza Khan thought of the article. Reza did not answer directly and was non-committal. He was quoted as saying, "the progress of a country depends less on their form of government than on the morale of the people. Take Greece and Great Britain, both are monarchies, while one is decadent and decayed; the other great, vibrant and prosperous. Mexico and France were similarly contrasted as republic."'<sup>26</sup>

As the events of the following months confirmed, Reza Khan was not sincere in his purported impartiality on the form of government. Ghani presents the following assessment of the situation:

The idea of a republic was probably strengthened in Reza Khan's mind during the course of his negotiations with Ahmad Shah to become Prime Minister. Not only was he convinced of the uselessness and cowardice of the Shah and his indifference to the fate of the country, but also of the Shah's capacity to intrigue against him. Furthermore, the generation of politicians who had ruled Iran during 1909–1921 had proven to be incompetent and had lost all self-respect. They had been incapable of independent action and were treated as paid agents by their European sponsors. A republican form of government would change everything and the old crowd of self-seeking unpatriotic notables would be discarded. Reza Khan's principal advisers were all of the same mind and encouraged the idea of a republic.<sup>27</sup>

In early 1924, in the absence of the Shah who was in Europe, apparently enjoying his luxurious life, some radical politicians orchestrated a hasty campaign aiming at establishing a republic in Iran and nominating Reza Pahlavi as its first president, to which he was not ideally suited. In Ottoman Turkey, it took almost four years for Mustafa Kemal Pasha to change the political order, out of the remains of the fallen Ottoman Empire, and then proclaim the republic of Turkey in 1923. Whereas, Reza Khan's appointment to the premiership was barely one month old. The republic was, however, supposed to be declared immediately before 21 March 1924, the Iranian New Year (*Nowruz*). Traditionally, it was at the New Year when the Shah presided over a reception for the state and court officials. However, one practical implication of declaring a republic was that Reza Pahlavi would automatically terminate the Crown Prince taking over him,



accordingly. Many pro-republic politicians believed that this event was nothing more than paying symbolic homage to the Qajar dynasty.

Subsequently, a serious press campaign began in support of establishing a republic system in mid-February 1924. 'Articles in favor of the republic and in abuse of the Shah occurred daily with no evident steps to prevent them'.<sup>28</sup> Republican committees were formed and telegrams from the provinces poured into the capital. Malik al-Shu'ara Bahar<sup>29</sup>, a liberal figure with some profound critique of Reza Shah Pahlavi's performance, refers to the Iranians' gnashing frustration at the last Qajar king. Bahar also recognizes the fact that both the middle-class intelligentsia, who instigated the republican campaign, and the urban middle class, who endorsed it, were sincere in their initiative.

The people were angry with the Qajar king whom according to them whose name was synonymous with the accumulation of wealth/and power. There might be other reasons for such public dissatisfaction, including the Treaty of 1919 [imposed by the British which according to some Iranians was nothing but the total capitulation to the British]. Whatever the root cause was, the idea of a republic emerged amongst the intellectuals and young writers and, eventually, found its way into the press.

Frankly speaking, one should admit that there was some correlation between the republican movement and the constitutional movement. In both of the movements, the middle class were in favor of change [constitution and republic], while the first and the third classes were against it.<sup>30</sup>

Evidently, Bahar is convinced that the campaign was not a well-thought-out movement and, furthermore, did not enjoy a logical structure.<sup>31</sup>

In his book, 'Aliasghar Shamim, one of the renowned founders of the Pahlavi school of historiography, discusses the last Qajar king's rule but presents a very blurred picture of the republican campaign. According to Shamim, the republican initiative was launched by 'some political elites and the majority of the civil servants' who enjoyed the support of the 'crowds' pouring into the streets calling for regime change.<sup>32</sup> While Shamim legitimizes the anti-Qajar act of the crowds by accusing the Qajar kings of 'giving the Iranians nothing but misery',<sup>33</sup> he denies Reza Khan's involvement in initiating the anti-Qajar association. Shamim assigns the agency of the campaign to the 'plebeians' who had a legitimate demand for the political development. Finally Sulayman Behbudi, who served as the personal secretary of Reza Pahlavi, confirms that in mid-March 1924,

the office of Pahlavi was almost everyday packed by the representatives of different guilds, civil servants and religious minorities who intended to show their respective communities' desire for the regime change and the establishment of a republic in Iran.<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, some conventional political parties changed their tendencies in favor of a republican form of government. The Independent Democrat Party of Iran, following a meeting of its board of leadership, declared the following:

1. As of now, by opting for the republican form of government in Iran, we announce that the monarchy and rule of the Qajar dynasty in Iran is illegitimate;
2. We call upon the Majlis to adopt a new Constitution altering the form of government in Iran from monarchy to republic;
3. We call upon our members and supporters throughout Iran to utilize their ultimate power in order to fulfill this demand;
4. In the Majlis, the Independent Democrat Party's fraction ought to take all necessary measures to facilitate the ratification of new bills.<sup>35</sup>

At this time, even a new political party known as the *Hizb Jumhuri Iran* (The Republican Party of Iran) was formed.<sup>36</sup> Its manifesto dated its foundation back to four years ago when they published their first program calling for an end to the Qajar rule in Iran which 'apparently followed by their arrest and imprisonment.'<sup>37</sup> In their new manifesto, the 'governing body' of the party 'once more', by accusing the Qajar's officials for 'the misery they caused to Iranians', calls upon all co-patriots 'to follow the Germans and Turks' pattern and bring down the oppressive rule of the Qajar'.<sup>38</sup>

During the course of 'republican uproar' in Iran, the periodicals' role was significant. Divided into two opposing camps, they endeavored to manipulate public opinion in accordance with their political agenda. On the other hand, the clerics' response was mixed. While the high-ranking 'ulama preferred to keep quiet, watching the public sentiment, the low-ranking 'ulama (mullahs), attempted to make claims and counterclaims. 'Haji Shaykh Javad Murtaza'i, made a speech in the shrine of Shah 'Abd al-Azim, south of Tehran, on 15th February protesting at the Shah's behavior in Europe and exhibiting a photograph of him in European costume, which was also printed in several newspapers'.<sup>39</sup> On 15 February, Haj Aqa Jamal, another low-ranking 'ulama, held a conference

to ascertain the general feeling on the issue and decided to seek guidance from Ayatollah Khalisi who resided in Mashhad.<sup>40</sup>

On 11 February, the fifth session of parliament was officially convened. The main task of this Majlis was to draft a bill abolishing the monarchy and constituting the republic. The supporters of Reza Khan in this session were divided into three camps: some 40 deputies who represented the *Tajaddud* faction (the Revivalists) and were headed by an ex-cleric Sayyad Muhammad Taddayun, some 12 to 13 members of the *Socialist Unifiyah* (The United Socialist Party) led by the Qajar Prince Sulyman Mirza Iskandari, and some 10 to 15 independent deputies.

The opposition, which consisted mainly of 12 deputies, including the most experienced and influential ones, was headed by a demagogue parliamentarian, Sayyad Hassan Muddarris. From the very first day of the Fifth Majlis, it was evident that the anti-republican campaign, although a minority, took the lead in the entire parliamentary debates. The tactics adopted by Muddarris' faction to prolong debates on deputies' mandates, lasting in some cases for more than a week, had a clear twofold objective: firstly to openly provoke the other camp to pacify Reza Khan's non-partisan deputies, and secondly to postpone any debate on the issue of republicanism until after the Iranian New Year. 'Efforts by Reza Khan and his supporters to bring pressure on the opposition had negative repercussions. Representations to Muddarris to co-operate with Reza Khan led some neutral deputies to join his side, and ordinary people outside the Majlis, resenting the implied intimidation, turned against republicanism'.<sup>41</sup>

In mid-March 1924, the pro-republic crowd intensified their presence in the streets of the country's big cities. In Tehran, a large group of people, led by students representing different colleges, demonstrated in front of the Prime Minister's residence, demanding an immediate referendum on the country's form of the government and chanting for a change from monarchy to republic.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, other pro-republican crowds gathered at the Tehran bazaar demanding the bazaaris' full support. Soon, the streets of Tehran became the front line of a diverse policy.<sup>43</sup>

Almost contemporaneous with the republican call in Iran, the Grand National Assembly in Ankara decided, on 3 March 1924, to abolish the House of the Caliphate, expel the members of the Ottoman dynasty from the Turkish Republic, abolish the Ministry of *Shari'a* and Pious Foundations and pass laws for the unification of secular education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*). As Jacob Landau remarks:

Just as the abolition of the Sultanate had been intended to vest all state authority in the Grand National Assembly, that of the Caliphate was meant to conform with the new political ideology with which Mustafa Kemal wished to endow the young Republic of Turkey.<sup>44</sup>

Within a week, the news of Ankara's Grand National Assembly's new decisions reached Tehran. The pro-republican newspaper of *Shafaq Surkh* (The Red Twilight) replicated the news by stating that:

In his public speech, Mustafa Kemal Pasha referred to the necessity of the separation of politics from religion and added that the education and juridical affairs should be liberated from all kinds of ideological influences and be secularized.<sup>45</sup>

The anti-clerical measures adopted by Ankara had a drastic impact on the Iranian religious establishment. Although the world 'Shi'ism' never recognized the legitimacy of the Ottoman House of the Caliphate, for the Shi'i clerics, the unanimity between daily politics and the Islamic jurisprudence was non-negotiable. The Shi'i clerics acknowledged the introduction of the Civil Code in Turkey as an ultimate conclusion of the events in Turkey; beginning with the separation of the Sultanate from the Caliphate, followed by the elimination of the former and the abolition of the latter, leading to the establishment of a secular state. In a leaflet distributed in Tehran, the republicans were condemned of attempting to eliminate Islam:

The republicans intend to uproot the Shi'i Islam from this country. Their purpose is the same as their colleagues in the Ottoman Empire [Mamlakat Usmani]. Under the disguise of republicanism, they abolished the Caliphate and removed the clerics' turbans forcefully<sup>46</sup>

To demonstrate their anger, the high-ranking `ulama turned their attention to the bazaar; their traditional ally. As a result, the bazaar took to the street on 19 March 1924 protesting against republicanism. On 22 March, the day on which the Majlis was due to discuss the proposed constitutional change to establish a republic, 'a group of around 5,000 clerics, merchants, guildsmen and ordinary people gathered round the Majlis building shouting pro-Shah and anti-republic slogans. Muddarris was reported to have the solid backing of the Tehran merchants'.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, 'a large meeting was organized in the Shah Mosque, where sermons were preached against Reza Khan and republicanism'.<sup>48</sup>

When Reza Khan sent two regiments to the Majlis to disperse the protestors, his harsh reaction caused more dissatisfaction among the deputies. Some of them, including the Speaker of the Majlis, Mu'tamin al-Mulk, accused him of using force against the people. Very soon, Reza Khan made a tactical retreat. Later on, upon some consultation and, perhaps, intervention, he agreed to 'relinquish the republican cause, release about 200 jailed demonstrators and promised to respect Islam.'<sup>49</sup>

On the following day, Reza Khan visited the high-ranking 'ulama in Qum. He was asked by them to refrain from promoting republicanism which they believed not to be 'in the people's interest' and did not 'correspond with the country's needs'.<sup>50</sup> Upon his return to Tehran, he issued a statement to the following effect:

In my meeting with the highly respected 'ulama in Qum, once again, I reiterated my obligation to preserve Islam, as laid down to be one of the prime duties of the army. Moreover, we reviewed the events of the last few days and I would like to ask everybody to abandon the demand for a republican form of government.<sup>51</sup>

Consequently, the republican campaign in its early days was aborted by an alliance of the clerics and the bazaar. Reza Khan's failure to assume power through the introduction of republicanism to Iran drove him to employ more traditional tactics in pursuing his cause. Instead of relying merely on the Majlis or backstreet politics, he managed to secure an efficient network within the old establishment, which eventually enabled him to obtain a bill from the Majlis terminating the Qajar dynasty on 31 October 1925. He was appointed as the head of the interim government pending a final decision on the future of the country. On 12 December 1925, the Majlis voted 257 to 3 to lay the foundation in favor of yet another monarchy to be conferred upon Reza Khan. In the following year, he was formally crowned as the first king of the Pahlavi dynasty.

## **REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGNING AS REMEMBERED IN IRANIAN NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY**

In the Pahlavi national historiography, the recording of the events leading to the political campaign to establish a republican form of government has been subject to distortion and amnesia. Many Persian monographs on Reza Shah overlook his role in the republican campaign and give quite a vague account of his accession to power. However, those who tend to acknowledge his role

could be divided into two camps. While there are historians who rebuff the role of social classes in the campaign arguing that the issue of republicanism was nothing but a plot launched by Reza Khan to assume power,<sup>52</sup> there are other historians who acknowledge the popular bases for the campaign, yet they assume that the 'urban cowards' were systematically exploited by Reza Khan and his entourage. Furthermore, they assign the overriding agency to certain factions of the cleric who led the anti-republican campaign by observing the commoners' correct rehearsal etiquette.

### SAID NAFISI<sup>53</sup>

Said Nafisi was the renowned academic, fiction writer, poet and one of the prolific cultural figures of the Pahlavi era. Later in his career, Nafisi embarked upon historiography, too. In 1939, at the invitation of *Sazaman Parvarish Afkar* (Organization for the Promotion of Thoughts), an organization whose policy was to motivate and guide the younger generation to better serve their homeland, Nafisi presented a series of public lectures which later were published as a book under the title of *Pishrafta Iran dar Asr Pahlavi* (Development in Iran during the Pahlavi Era). In his book, Nafisi, while giving a descriptive image of politics and society in the 1910s, makes no reference to the republican movement, throwing the issue into oblivion.<sup>54</sup> According to Nafisi, the seizure of power by Reza Pahlavi was the result of a pervasive popular reception who:

Ultimately awoke from one hundred years of slumber and, in September 1925, all classes from every corner of the country demonstrated their resentment to the Qajar dynasty who could not salvage Iran from a hundred years of deterioration and disintegration.<sup>55</sup>

In Nafisi's account, people had no hesitation designating Reza Pahlavi to the office as the new ruler and even the founder of a new monarchy in Iran. Moreover, the call for the establishment of a republican form of government, from Nafisi's point of view, was never heard in the streets of the Iranian cities less than two years before the parliament opting for the foundation of a new dynasty in Iran.

### IBRAHIM SAFA'I<sup>56</sup>

Another Pahlavi historian, who was more devoted to historiography and established his career as popular historian, is Ibrahim Safa'i, who has been known as one of the architects of the Pahlavi school of historiography. Safa'i's numerous

abridged volumes on biographies of the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution are amongst the main sources of understanding the elitist accounts of constitutionalism in Iran. In the early 1970s, Safa'i's attention was, however, diverted to the post-First World War and the Pahlavi eras, when he published a number of books on Reza Pahlavi's life.<sup>57</sup> In *Kudita Sivvum Isfand va Asar an* (The Coup d'état of 22 February and Its Outcomes), Safa'i presents a detailed account of Reza Pahlavi's accomplishments between the coup d'état, which granted him executive power, and when the convened Constitutional Assembly in December 1925 resulting in his appointment as the new Shah.

Safa'i's account of the republican uproar is as follows:

In early 1923, the idea of changing the regime and establishing a republican form of government in Iran gradually gained momentum within some political groups in Tehran. The press began spreading this thought which finally found its way to the parliament and enjoyed serious supports amongst the deputies. Soon the provinces joined the campaign and a flow of telegrams reached the capital from all over the country demanding founding a republic. The civil servants played an important role during this campaign by encouraging protesters to pour into the street and sending telegrams to support a republic. However, one should admit that there was a genuine desire on behalf of the people who were profoundly disappointed with the Qajar rule and believed that only a republican government headed by Reza Khan, the Commander in Chief (Sardar Sipah), could rescue the country from the misery stricken.

Every day, crowds of 100, 200 and sometimes 300 demonstrated in the streets of Tehran while wearing red shirts and raising the republican flag.<sup>58</sup>

Reza Khan, according to Safa'i, decided to maintain his impartiality throughout the cause:

Although the opponents of the republicans' campaign considered him as the benefactor of the movement, he abstained from getting involved in the cause and remained as the prime minister in charge of responding to the people's grumblings and complaints.<sup>59</sup>

Safa'i also presents a day-to-day account of the political developments both inside and outside the parliament. However, he claims that:

Not only the clerics and their traditional follower, the bazaar, were against the republican form of government, but ordinary people also had some difficulties

in accepting the notion of republicanism in Iran. They were concerned that in Iran, as happened in Turkey, following the institution of republic regime the religion would disappear, Islamic values would be abandoned and the freedom of practicing other religions would be introduced. However, the most profound reason for people's objection to a republic was the fact that the Iranians have principally identified themselves with a 2500-year-old tradition of practicing monarchy and have found the institution of monarchy the key to their survival. Such reflective allegiance with the monarchy made their anti-republican stance even more cumbersome.<sup>60</sup>

### HUSSAIN MAKKI

Hussain Makki<sup>61</sup> is another raconteur of the early Pahlavi years. His work of *Tarikh Bist Salah Iran* (Twenty Years of Iranian History), a reference to 20 years of practicing power by Reza Pahlavi, displays a detailed chronological account of the Reza Shah's time and records. However, his profound anti-Reza Shah stance often leads him to compile an unbalanced account of his accomplishments. Makki believes that Reza Pahlavi was the sole engineer of the republican campaign and refutes any autonomy and spontaneity for the street protesters. He writes:

The idea of changing the dynasty and establishing a republic in Iran was nurtured in Reza Khan's mind by some and was nourished by others. . . . Those people who took on the streets supporting the campaign were either paid or were forced to do so.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, he believes that the republican campaign was a 'fabricated scenario' which was written by Reza Pahlavi and was preformed by 'ignorant crowds':

Arif Qazvini, the idealist poet and song writer was deceived by the vibrant appearance of the campaign and was not aware of the origin of the anti-Qajar sentiments. He staged a pro-republican concert at the Grand Hotel in Tehran where a great number of ignorant and deceived people took part.<sup>63</sup>

He further argues that the foreign powers' intrigue, i.e., the British, was also evident.<sup>64</sup>

The fictitious Republican Committee with few members scheduled to meet the prominent bazaaris in order to force them to close the bazaar as a gesture



of sympathy with the advocates of a republic. However, their attempts ended in failure. The bazaar came in support of the anti-republicans and consequently the foreign powers' plot was aborted.<sup>65</sup>

Makki, in his reference to the anti-republican camp, adopts somehow an essentialist approach. He claims that, from the outset, the clerics adopted a cohesive stance against Reza Pahlavi and his pro-republican supporters.<sup>66</sup> He also praises Muddaris and his performance in the Fifth Majlis arguing that:

Muddaris essentially was not an anti-republican figure. He was even a pro-republican as long as it served the interests of the nation. Nevertheless, he was convinced that the republican campaign was nothing but a plot directed by the British and performed by *Sardar Sipah* [Reza Pahlavi] in order to impose a puppet regime upon Iran. Such regime would not represent the interests of the Iranians but would become an instrument in the hand of the British. Furthermore, Muddaris, in his anti-republican campaign, enjoyed the unequivocal support of the entire nation, who although were displeased with the Qajar king's performance, they finally preferred a non-competent king's rule to that of a puppet dictator.<sup>67</sup>

## CONCLUSION: NATIONAL HISTORY, NARRATING OF WHOSE PAST?

As was argued above, in national historiography, the selective amnesia often reveals itself, more than any other space, in the disassociation with the immediate past. Evidently, the distorted memory, rather than the selective amnesia, embedded in the distant past can depict a crafted narration that the present needs to recast itself. However, the immediate past, with its potential ability to illustrate the present, is a sphere which often becomes the subject of selective amnesia.

After he was crowned, Reza Shah Pahlavi endeavored rigorously to break all his ties with the immediate past. Such attempts directed both in his private as well as in public life. A new genealogy was uniquely created for him where there was no place for undesirable individual. He adopted the surname of Pahlavi and ordered that whoever had done so before should change theirs.<sup>68</sup> In public opinion, the centralized and stable government, with effective powers, was personified by Reza Shah. While he pretended, deceptively or otherwise, to meet the demands of many of the Iranian contemporary liberal intelligentsia,

he never tolerated them, many of whom had prepared the necessary ideological ground for his succession to power. They were either killed or imprisoned or they fled into exile.

During the Reza Shah era as a king (1925–41), any reference to the social and political development during the years between 1921 and 1925 (from launching the coup d'état until being crowned) had to be monitored strictly by the court ideologues. There was an all-out effort to label the pre-1921 years as a period of rampant disintegration of unawareness (*bikhbari*) which was allegedly fostered by the 'despotic', 'corrupt' and 'irresponsible' Qajar government. However, the period between 1921 and 1925 was illustrated as the time of the emergence a man of order whose luminous performance had brought about progress, rule of law. Hence, he was soon rewarded with popular confidence which replaces his military cap with the crown. In such a constructed account, it was too obvious that the republican campaign, together with its supporters and opponents, could fall victim to historical amnesia. Therefore, in Reza Shah's heyday in 1938, Said Nafisi embarked upon an incredibly dramatic recollection of the political proceedings of the immediate past (i.e., 1921–5) making no reference whatsoever to the notion of republicanism in 1924.

On the other hand, both Safa'i and Makki's narratives were compiled post-1941, after Muhammad Reza assumed power. Makki's account was compiled in a rather liberal environment following the abdication of Reza Shah, when taking critical, if not objective, approach toward events was rather possible. Safa'i's account was prepared in Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's glory days (i.e., in the 1970s), when the need for a crafted narration of the past with the aim of securing the continuity of the institution of monarchy was on government's agenda. Interestingly enough, Safa'i and Makki both share the same details in their accounts of the republican movement. However, what make their narratives different from each other are not the details but the political culture within which the narratives take place.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note how profoundly the Iranian national historiography has contributed to the creation of the country's political culture. In the tangled history of the twentieth-century Iran, the elitist images of the constructed past presented by the national historians, including Hassan Pirnia, Mahmud Mahmud, Said Nafisi, Ibrahim Safa'i and Hussain Makki, made the country's political culture suffer from amnesia. Literally, this approach helped to create a false impression by perceiving the idea that only the emergence of

a powerful leadership is able to bring back the country's 'heroic and glorious Islamic or pre-Islamic past' and induce the much needed change and reform. At the same time, the messianic dimension of the Shiite exceptionalism helped to provide a fertile ground for such perception. In the post-1953 coup d'état period, with a major setback that the Constitutional Revolution had suffered, the call for an impeccable savior became more apparent, so much so that the intelligentsia saw no other option but to look once again for yet another redeemer. The architects of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 are greatly indebted to the contribution of the twentieth-century national historiography to the country's political culture.

# The Nation's Poet: Ferdowsi and the Iranian National Imagination

*Afshin Marashi*

At 4:30 p.m. on October 12, 1934, Reza Shah – the founding monarch of Iran's Pahlavi dynasty – arrived in the city of Tus, in northeastern Iran, to make a speech at the dedication ceremony for the newly built mausoleum of the poet Ferdowsi.<sup>1</sup> Reza Shah's speech at Ferdowsi's mausoleum was in fact part of a series of ceremonies and events – including the convening of an international conference of Ferdowsi scholars – held in Iran during October and November of 1934. The month-long series of ceremonies, celebrations, and the conference itself, were all choreographed to mark the millennium of Ferdowsi's birth. By 1934, the Pahlavi state had come to see the importance of elevating the status of Ferdowsi as a cultural icon of Iranian national identity and of commemorating Ferdowsi's poetry as an important milestone in Iranian national history. Ferdowsi's tenth-century poetic masterpiece, the *Shahnamah*, an epic poem comprising over fifty thousand couplets chronicling the myth-history of Iran from its primordial beginnings to a poetic rendering of the Arab-Muslim conquest of the seventh century, had long been central to the pre-modern Persianate literary tradition. The Pahlavi state's interest in promoting the image of Ferdowsi as a public symbol, however – with all of the ceremonial trappings of state sponsorship and official commemoration – was by contrast something very new. By the 1920s and the 1930s, the Pahlavi state had very consciously taken up the task of identifying suitable elements from pre-modern Iranian culture and reshaping them to cohere to the newly universalized standards of the nation-state. Among the attributes characterizing the political-cultural form of *the nation* was a necessary pantheon of 'national heroes' who could be displayed and identified as embodying authentically national characteristics.<sup>2</sup> The Pahlavi

state's interest in elevating the status of Ferdowsi and staging the millennium celebration of 1934 was thus very much a part of an effort to place both Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* at the center of this newly established national pantheon. The numerous efforts of the Pahlavi state in this regard: the rebuilding of the Ferdowsi mausoleum as a suitable monument and site of national pilgrimage, the convening of the international conference of Ferdowsi scholars, the publication and circulation of abridged and now more widely accessible editions of the *Shahnamah*, and the increasingly ubiquitous presence of Ferdowsi's image in the print and popular culture of Iran during the 1920s and 1930s, including through the new medium of film, all worked to ensure that by 1934 there was universal agreement that Ferdowsi was Iran's national poet and that the *Shahnamah* was Iran's national epic.

### BETWEEN ORIENTALISM AND NATIONALISM: THE ORIGINS OF THE FERDOWSI REVIVAL

The work of recasting Ferdowsi in the role of Iran's national poet had its origins – not in the Pahlavi period – but in the cultural, intellectual, and historiographic developments of the nineteenth century. Already by the mid-nineteenth century, as the increasingly globalized model of the nation worked to encourage emerging and would-be nations to tie a literary tradition to their political histories, the *Shahnamah* had been identified as worthy of canonization in the context of Iran's national project. Initially in Europe and the subcontinent, but later increasingly within Iran as well, the production of manuscript, lithographed, and published editions of the epic – as well as works in emulation of Ferdowsi's poetic style – began to accelerate from the early nineteenth century onwards.<sup>3</sup> These nineteenth-century precedents came to herald later twentieth-century developments, when Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* would become the cultural and literary centerpieces for a rapidly crystallizing Iranian national imagination. Most significantly, it was the journals *Kaveh* and *Iranshahr*<sup>4</sup> – the Berlin-based Persian-language journals published during the Great War and its immediate aftermath – that made the vital link between the nineteenth-century Ferdowsi cultural-literary revival and the more formalized twentieth-century political canonization of Ferdowsi as undertaken by the Pahlavi state.

The journal *Kaveh* in particular played a very important role in the political and cultural canonization of Ferdowsi. The journal's name was itself taken from the character Kaveh, the legendary blacksmith in Ferdowsi's *Shahnamah*

who raised the banner of revolt against the tyrant Zahak. The journal was published in Berlin between January of 1916 and March of 1922 under the editorship of Hassan Taqizadah, the political veteran of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11, who by 1915 was carefully re-evaluating the direction of Iranian politics, and gradually coming to see the political virtue of charting a new nationalist course for Iran. Taqizadah and his editorial colleagues – including such luminaries in the early twentieth-century intellectual history of Iranian nationalism as Muhammad Qazvini, Muhammad 'Ali Jamalzadah, Hussain Kazimzadah-Iranshahr, Ibrahim Purdavud, and others – used *Kaveh* as a forum for reflecting on, not only the state of Iranian politics, but also for reflecting seriously about the cultural basis for a new Iranian national identity. The result was a journal which contained a remarkable range of articles, including political analysis of contemporary Iranian and international politics as well as cultural, historical, and literary articles referencing Iranian antiquity. It was within this nexus of analyzing Iranian politics while simultaneously reflecting on Iran's literary and cultural history that the reconceptualization of Ferdowsi began to take place.

Most importantly, it is in the series of articles in the pages of *Kaveh* between 1918 and 1922 that the crucial reassessment of Ferdowsi can be identified. Taqizadah's writing on Ferdowsi in the pages of *Kaveh* begins as part of a larger series of articles in which he comments on the importance of European orientalist scholarship for understanding Iranian history and culture. More than any of his nineteenth-century intellectual predecessors Taqizadah was steeped in the European historical and philological scholarship of his day.<sup>5</sup> He includes no less than five major articles in *Kaveh* devoted specifically to summarizing the historical and philological findings of German, French, and British scholars of Iranian studies.<sup>6</sup> He devotes one full article to the contents of the two-volume *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie* (1896–1904), edited by Wilhelm Geiger and Ernst Kuhn, which was perhaps the most succinct and comprehensive work of its day summarizing European scholarly discoveries vis-à-vis Iran.<sup>7</sup> The first volume was devoted entirely to philological scholarship regarding Iranian languages and included, among others, the writings of the noted scholar Christian Bartholomae (1855–1925) whose work was pioneering in the study of the Gathas and Avesta. Taqizadah summarizes these findings for his Iranian audience. He also summarizes the contents of the second volume, which he describes as focusing on Iranian history and civilization. Here he places emphasis on the history of the Sassanian period and Zoroastrianism. In another article concerning European

scholarship on Iran he describes the contents of Rawlinson's volumes on the Great Oriental Monarchies including volumes six and seven, which focus on the Parthian and Sassanian empires, respectively.<sup>8</sup> He writes that these works are 'important without measure' and encourages his readers to read translated excerpts from these books in the works of Zuka al-Mulk and Etemad al-Saltanah.<sup>9</sup> Yet another article considers and summarizes the work of Friedrich von Spiegel (1820–1905), the great German orientalist whose three-volume *Iranische Alterthumskunde* (1871–8) is one of the most important works analyzing Iranian history, ethnography, culture, and religion in the ancient period. The first volume, Taqizadah writes as he summarizes the contents for his Iranian readers, considers the geography of Iran and details the territorial parameters of historic Iran. The second volume considers the racial characteristics of the Iranian nation and examines the ethnic composition of the population. The third volume considers the history of the ancient period from the Aryan migrations and subsequent relations with the Semites.<sup>10</sup>

Even more important than these articles in the pages of *Kaveh*, are the articles written between 1920 and 1922 in which Taqizadah summarizes and extrapolates on the work of Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), a towering figure in the tradition of German orientalist scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Nöldeke's scholarly interests were primarily in the field of Semitic studies, but his expertise spanned the study of both the Semitic and Indo-European language families. His contributions to Semitic studies included producing a grammar of Syriac, as well as pioneering the modern tradition of Quranic exegesis within European orientalist scholarship. Nöldeke's contribution to Indo-Iranian studies, and ultimately his contribution to the Ferdowsi revival, was no less significant. It was his 1895 article 'Das Iranischen Nationalepos' which became the seminal European scholarly work presenting the *Shahnamah* as the Iranian national epic. Nöldeke originally wrote on Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* in his 1892 work the 'Persischen Studien II' but expanded this earlier work for the publication of 'Das Iranische Nationalepos' in the *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie* vol. II, edited by Geiger and Kuhn.<sup>12</sup> The substance and significance of Nöldeke's writing on the *Shahnamah* also helped the work to find its way into book form very quickly, first in an 1896 edition, and again in the Berlin and Leipzig edition of 1920.<sup>13</sup> The work ultimately found its way into an English translation, commissioned by the Parsi community of Bombay's Cama Oriental Institute in 1930, as well as into a Persian translation by Buzurg Alavi in 1948.<sup>14</sup>

Taqizadah's articles on Ferdowsi in the pages of *Kaveh* were clearly inspired by a wide range of orientalist scholarship, the most important of which was Nöldeke's *Das Iranischen Nationalepos*. Taqizadah's use of the scholarship of Nöldeke and others as the basis of his *Kaveh* articles on Ferdowsi is clearly indicated by both the copious and detailed footnotes that he includes in the articles, as well as within the text of the articles themselves where he directly references and comments on the work of the orientalist tradition. He writes at the beginning of the series of articles, that he had initiated his study of Ferdowsi by reading Edward Browne's *A Literary History of Persia*, but he had come to realize that there were other important works on Ferdowsi which also needed consideration, and which needed to be presented to his readers.<sup>15</sup> Accounting for this larger body of European scholarship on Ferdowsi led him to engage in, what he describes as 'a vast investigation' which comprised 'several months of research and effort.'<sup>16</sup> The result of these efforts is a series of articles which – beginning in the October 15, 1920, issue of *Kaveh* and continuing until the end of the journal's life in March of 1922 – presents to his Iranian readers an account of the literary history of the mythic and epic tradition in Persianate literature from its origins in the pre-Islamic period to the time of Ferdowsi.

Taqizadah's use of this orientalist scholarship is more complex than a simple process of summarizing and translating the findings of Nöldeke and others for his Iranian audience. Rather, as Taqizadah casually suggests, the contents of his Ferdowsi articles in the pages of *Kaveh* represent 'a synthesis of the collected findings of European scholars and my own humble investigations.'<sup>17</sup> Taqizadah's false modesty elides the more crucial interplay between the scientific findings of the orientalist tradition and Taqizadah's appropriation of that tradition to serve the interests of Iran's national project. Taqizadah's articles follow the form of orientalist scholarship, but at crucial points and in significant ways, the content of that scholarship is re-styled and re-ordered to make orientalist knowledge cohere to the demands of nationalist ideology.<sup>18</sup> The similarities of form between Nöldeke and Taqizadah's writings suggest a shared historical epistemology between orientalist scholarship and nationalist ideology. This shared historical epistemology – what Mohamad Tavakoli has called their 'discursive affinities'<sup>19</sup> – is rooted in a common assumption of identifying and excavating a unique *nation-subject* as the object of historical knowledge. The affinities between orientalism and nationalism end, however, when the outward forms of orientalism's scientific project of



cultural excavation transform into the political-ideological project of modern nationalism.

The outward forms of orientalist scholarship are easy enough to identify in Taqizadah's writings. Following the structure of Nöldeke's work, Taqizadah begins with a long series of articles tracing what remains of the textual evidence from the pre-Islamic period that would come to have an influence on Ferdowsi's work. Following Nöldeke's argument, as well as citing and quoting Nöldeke at length, Taqizadah argues that the *Shahnamah* is the culmination of this earlier tradition of epic literature. He uses evidence from the Avesta, as well as a substantial number of other texts and fragments found in Pahlavi, Greek, and Arabic to trace the transmission of the Persianate epic tradition from the earliest times down to the time of Ferdowsi.<sup>20</sup> Again drawing on the work of Nöldeke, in this case citing Nöldeke's translation of Tabari's writings on Iranian history, Taqizadah describes the process by which the texts of the pre-Islamic epic tradition were ultimately compiled and transmitted in the early Islamic period.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, however, Taqizadah's interests in understanding the literary genealogy of the *Shahnamah* goes beyond a mere scholarly or scientific interest of presenting an ordered classification of the linguistic and literary evidence for the study of the *Shahnamah*, or for that matter, of tracing the connections between the intertextual fragments of precursor Persianate epics. Significantly, Nöldeke's scientific project of orientalist research ends with the rational ordering of texts. The science of orientalism, as practiced by Nöldeke and as suggested in his *Nationalepos*, never ventured beyond the realm of the *rational* into the *romantic*.<sup>22</sup> Crossing this boundary is what Taqizadah accomplishes.

While using the form and structure of scientific scholarship, Taqizadah's understanding of the *Shahmanah* is significantly different than his orientalist colleagues. Taqizadah approaches the epic as – not a mere scientific artifact – but as a cultural and ideological text. For Taqizadah, the *Shahnamah* is ultimately of primary importance for its cultural, political, and ideological significance. In discussing Nöldeke's analysis of the precursor texts, Taqizadah not only presents the textual chain of transmission, but then goes on to say that these texts were instrumental in 'resurrecting the spirit of the Iranian nation' in the immediate centuries following the Arab–Muslim conquest.<sup>23</sup> At other points he refers to texts representing the 'seed of this awareness' and the 'nationalist renaissance' in

analyzing the significance of texts produced in the Islamic period that showed an awareness of pre-Islamic Iranian myths.<sup>24</sup> In analyzing the significance of Ferdowsi, Taqizadah again presents the facts of Ferdowsi's life following a scholarly scientific tone, drawing largely from Nöldeke's presentation of the facts, but Taqizadah then goes on to describe Ferdowsi as...

the great lyricist who spun Iranian history and the national story into a perfectly structured narrative, and by establishing this narrative he has created one of the causes of glory for the Iranian nation and has preserved the national story down until today.<sup>25</sup>

Taqizadah's articles on Ferdowsi therefore reflect the interplay between the forms of modern orientalist knowledge, on the one hand, and the imperatives of nationalist ideology on the other. The scientific findings of orientalist scholarship work to order his understanding of Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* but the subtext of his pronouncements in the pages of *Kaveh* seem to go beyond the mere scientific ordering of the text. In Taqizadah's rendering of Ferdowsi, the historical, political, and ideological significance of the poet becomes amplified, Ferdowsi becomes more forcefully identified as the spokesman for the nation, and the *Shahnamah* becomes evidence, not only of a once-felt Iranian identity, but also becomes the blueprint for a new Iranian cultural renaissance.

The origins of the Ferdowsi revival in modern Iranian political culture can therefore be located in the intellectual encounter between the scientific project of German orientalism and the political project of Iranian nationalism. The role of Taqizadah's *Kaveh* articles is crucial in making this link. The nature of that encounter was far from simple however. Nöldeke's work provided the findings of the scientific-orientalist tradition and made those scientific findings available to Taqizadah, and others, in order to be repackaged in the form of nationalist ideology. Orientalism thus *enabled* nationalism by helping to excavate the deep reservoirs of pre-modern Persianate culture in order to find the nation-subject of a new national narrative. The intellectual work of transforming this excavated nation-subject into a political ideology was beyond the efforts of scientific orientalism, but instead was left to Taqizadah and the nationalists to accomplish. The result of this dynamic process of scientific excavation and ideological construction was that by the 1930s the image of Ferdowsi had become available as a national icon, suitable for manipulation and dissemination within the uniquely political project of the Pahlavi state.

## **FINDING FERDOWSI: THE DEBATES OVER THE LOCATION AND DESIGN OF THE MEMORIAL**

By the 1930s, the role of poets as national icons was becoming an increasingly important part of public life in Iran. The rebuilding of the mausoleums of Hafez, Sa'di, Khayyam, and others – and marking them as sites of national pilgrimage – was one part of this pattern. The public fanfare and symbolism surrounding Rabindranath Tagore's 1932 visit to Iran was another example of the newfound centrality of poets and literary figures as public-national figures. Of all of these state-sponsored events it was the millennium celebration for Ferdowsi which was the most important commemorative event elevating the status of poets and poetry as constituent elements of Iranian national identity. The month-long Ferdowsi celebration included an international conference attended by scholars from 17 countries, a major ceremony and speech given by Reza Shah at the newly restored mausoleum of the poet in Tus – which was widely covered in the national press – and other activities encouraging public participation in the celebration, such as the showing of a newly completed biographical film based on the life of Ferdowsi by the pioneering Iranian filmmaker Abdulhusain Sepanta. The cultural and intellectual revival of Ferdowsi, which had gained momentum with Taqizadah's Berlin writings, had now clearly become much more than an intellectual or historiographic project but had instead now come to shape the political and cultural program of the Pahlavi state.

The idea to commemorate the millennium of Ferdowsi was conceived by a semi-official group known as the Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli (The Society for National Monuments). The Society was founded originally in 1922 by a group of Iranian statesmen and cultural figures which included, among others, the prominent court official Abdulhusain Teymurtash, the onetime Prime Minister and member of the diplomatic corps Muhammad 'Ali Furughi, the retired Majlis deputy and historian of ancient Iran Hassan Pirniya, and the Majlis deputy and prominent member of Iran's Zoroastrian community Kaikhosrow Shahrokh.<sup>26</sup> Isa Sadiq recalls that it was in 1926, the year of Reza Shah's coronation, that the Society first conceived of the idea to restore and embellish the site of Ferdowsi's grave. Sadiq, then a member of the Ministry of Education, recalls being asked to attend an informal meeting of the Society in Tehran. 'The Society for National Monuments' he recalled in his memoirs, 'asked me to help raise private funds for the building of a mausoleum for Ferdowsi.'<sup>27</sup> Sadiq also comments that the location and condition of the original grave were only vaguely known

by the members of the Society when they began to seriously consider erecting a modern mausoleum for Ferdowsi.

Locating the site of Ferdowsi's grave had in fact already entered into the discourse of Iranian nationalism. Prior to the discussions of the Tehran-based Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli, both of the Berlin-based Iranian nationalist journals – *Kaveh* and *Iranshahr* – had already discussed locating the site of Ferdowsi's grave and embellishing it into a suitable national monument. In the last of his Ferdowsi articles in the pages of *Kaveh*, Taqizadah had already begun focusing on the available evidence for where Ferdowsi's grave may be located. He cites evidence from medieval literature, as well as evidence from the travel writings of nineteenth century Russian and British orientalist who had themselves already set out to find the grave of Ferdowsi.<sup>28</sup> Based on this evidence, Taqizadah argues that Ferdowsi's grave was most likely located just outside of the city of Tus and argues that 'until the middle of the last century the grave of Ferdowsi was still intact and clearly visible.'<sup>29</sup> Taqizadah does not go on to call for a rebuilding of the gravesite nor does he call for the construction of a mausoleum for Ferdowsi. His preoccupation for locating the site of Ferdowsi's grave does, however, suggest a newfound appreciation for the centrality of Ferdowsi's position within an emerging Iranian national imagination and for associating that national imagination with its physical and material remnants.

A number of articles in the other major Berlin-based Iranian journal, *Iranshahr*, go even further than the writings of Taqizadah in calling for, not only a cultural-literary revival of Ferdowsi, but for the promotion of the image of Ferdowsi as a suitable national icon. In the pages of *Iranshahr* the articles written by Hussain Kazimzadah and a number of his Berlin-based Iranian associates are noteworthy in this regard. Kazimzadah had been one of the activists and intellectuals who had worked with Taqizadah in the publication of *Kaveh*. When that journal ceased publication in the early part of 1922, Kazimzadah inaugurated the journal *Iranshahr* later that same year. The articles in *Iranshahr* are less scholarly and scientific in tone, and are instead much more overtly political and ideological than the articles in *Kaveh*. The four years during which Kazimzadah was the editor of *Iranshahr* (1922–6), overlapped with the gradual political assertiveness of Reza Khan and the eventual establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty. The articles in *Iranshahr* reflect this more assertive and didactic tone and seem concerned with laying out a detailed, pragmatic, and prescriptive blueprint for an Iranian cultural and political revival.

The status of Ferdowsi as a national icon fits precisely into this more assertive and didactic tone found in the pages of *Iranshahr*. In the October 1925 issue of the journal, Kazimzadah includes a long article on the importance of elevating the status of Ferdowsi in the public life of Iranians. The article was published in the same issue in which the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty was announced with great acclaim as ‘The History of Iran Has Been Renewed.’<sup>30</sup> The article, written by the Iranian architect Karim Tahirzadah, who would himself go on to participate in the building of the Ferdowsi memorial, set the nationalist tone for how the revival of Ferdowsi’s memory was to be understood. Writing about Ferdowsi’s importance for Iranian national identity, he writes,

Ferdowsi wrote at a time when, like a foul smoke, the land of Iran was overrun by Arabs. Ferdowsi was the first man who revived national feeling and took the first steps towards bringing back the rights and mores of the nation. Therefore for Iranians it is a source of shame that until today the gravesite of such a nurturer of national feeling has not been established.<sup>31</sup>

He goes on to argue that building such a formal site in memory of Ferdowsi is necessary for instilling a sense of ‘national feeling’ in Iranians. He makes this point by contrasting Iran’s use of public statuary with that of Europe. ‘In Europe’ he writes, ‘children are taken to museums and to public squares and to ancient structures where they are shown statues of their great elders.’<sup>32</sup> Constructing sites of public statuary as places of national pilgrimage, he continues, are important for the national education of children. By seeing these statues, he continues, ‘children are taught their history and in this way they develop a sense of duty to achieve greatness in emulation of the elders.’<sup>33</sup> In contemporary Iran, by contrast, he goes on to argue that, such a sense of civic culture does not exist. ‘Children in Iran are entirely deprived of such encouragement,’<sup>34</sup> he argues. In order for Iran to rise up out of its persistent state of decline, he argues, civic mindedness must be instilled in the population, and the use of statuary and public monuments must be a central component of those efforts. He goes on to say, ‘I am convinced that if our leaders had already built statues in honor of our great elders and in this way had aroused the sense of duty in our children, that Iran would not have fallen into its present state.’<sup>35</sup>

Next he makes a number of detailed suggestions for the building of the Ferdowsi memorial site. First, he argues that the effort to build a memorial to

Ferdowsi must become a national effort that inspires the collective participation of all sectors of Iranian society. He suggests that in every city and town throughout Iran a committee be formed to raise public funds for the building of the site.<sup>36</sup> In addition he calls for the production of a 'very colorful' poster of Ferdowsi to be produced and sold everywhere throughout Iran.<sup>37</sup> In order to raise money for the building of the mausoleum and for the further encouragement of public participation in the project, he also calls for the establishment of a national lottery. The proceeds from the lottery were to go toward the cost of constructing the mausoleum and the winner of the lottery was to receive an illustrated manuscript edition of the *Shahnamah*.<sup>38</sup> He concludes by making a dramatic call for reviving the memory of Ferdowsi,

Dear compatriots! Ferdowsi himself built a great palace in honor of the memory of the past and helped we Iranians to raise our heads among the nations of the world. We Iranians of today must also strive and build a mausoleum in his honor inside this great palace so that both his spirit and our own will be made to live and be proud among the nations and so that the next generation will likewise be made happy.<sup>39</sup>

Kazimzadah goes yet further by proposing the actual physical shape and design of the Ferdowsi memorial itself. In another issue of *Iranshahr*, Kazimzadah includes a discussion of a proposal for the design of the Ferdowsi memorial along with a hand-sketched reproduction of the proposed design. The sketch of the design was not Kazimzadah's, but was rather the proposal of Mirza Karimkhan Tahirzadah Behzad, a Berlin-based Iranian architect who, as Kazimzadah describes, 'received his education in architecture many years ago in Berlin despite the many difficulties of being outside of the homeland.'<sup>40</sup> Kazimzadah and Tahirzadah had worked closely together in Berlin in discussing the issue of Ferdowsi's memorial and Tahirzadah would go on to play an important role in the final construction of the site. Kazimzadah gives a detailed description of the proposed design,

In this design is seen an inspiring garden at the center of which stairs ascend up to a central rotunda with four pillars. Ferdowsi's remains will be interred at the center of this rotunda. Resting over the remains will be a statue of the great poet with a copy of the *Shahnamah* in his hand.<sup>41</sup>

He also gives details of the other elements in Tahirzadah's proposed sketch, including statues of knights, lions, and mythological angels positioned on the grounds of the proposed memorial. While the final design of the completed Ferdowsi memorial would be only partially influenced by Tahirzadah's proposed design, other elements of Kazimzadah and Tahirzadah's suggestions did go on to influence the work of the Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli.<sup>42</sup>

The plans for funding the project through public support was, for example, clearly patterned after suggestions made in the pages of *Iranshahr*. Following the suggestions of their Berlin compatriots, Sadiq and the other members of the Society publicized the fundraising efforts in order to mobilize popular participation and sentiment for the project. Sadiq writes in his memoirs,

The opinion of the Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli and the lovers of the homeland was that the national public should participate in this national duty so that the feeling of national devotedness will be more awakened and that the value and worthiness of their culture and the high status of Iran's heroes will be appreciated.<sup>43</sup>

Among the efforts initiated by Sadiq and the Society was to enlist schoolchildren in the fundraising efforts. Sadiq recalls gathering the students of one school into its main quad and giving students instructions on how to go into neighborhoods and solicit donations for the building of the mausoleum.<sup>44</sup> In addition to the use of schoolchildren, the Society also sponsored a national lottery to raise funds for the project. In 1932 large broadsides were posted throughout the cities to advertise the lottery. The image on the broadside was an artist's rendering of the proposed mausoleum and an image of the mythical bird, the Simurgh, with a copy of the *Shahnamah* in its mouth. The advertisement included a caption equating participation in the lottery with a national duty: 'For the completion of the mausoleum of Ferdowsi and for the celebration of his millennium the Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli invites all Iranians to buy tickets in the lottery as a way of showing gratitude to this reviver of the Persian language.'<sup>45</sup>

The cost of the mausoleum was ultimately 140,000 Tomans and was funded by a combination of public and private donations.<sup>46</sup> Before construction could begin, the site of the mausoleum had to be secured. Kaikhosrow Shahrokh accomplished this with help from the governor of Khorasan and General Jahanbani.<sup>47</sup> The three members of the Society located the traditionally regarded site of Ferdowsi's grave just outside of Tus. By the time Shahrokh and Jahanbani

made their way to the site for the first time in 1927, the original structure was in an extreme state of disrepair. The members of the society eventually negotiated with the owners of the land on which the grave was located to bequeath a portion of the land to the public in order to make a site large enough for the mausoleum and a surrounding park.<sup>48</sup> Once the land had been secured the members of the Society had to select a design for the mausoleum and make arrangements for its construction. Sadiq recalls that Teymurtash was adamant in insisting that the design be in a neo-classical style akin to the tomb of Cyrus, which had, along with other archaeological sites then under excavation by European and American archaeologists, become recognized as a significant national monument.<sup>49</sup> The original style of the now deteriorating Ferdowsi tomb was a traditional edifice reflecting the architecture of the Safavid and Qajar periods. In order to create a suitable neo-classical design the members of the Society turned to Ernst Hertzfeld and André Godard. Hertzfeld was a German-born archaeologist who was excavating in Iran under the sponsorship of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Godard was a French trained architect who spent almost thirty years in Iran and was intermittently Dean of the University of Tehran's Faculty of Arts as well as the first Director of Iran's Museum of Antiquities.<sup>50</sup> The two men collaborated with the Iranian architect Karim Tahirzadah who drafted the original design for the memorial as published in the pages of *Iranshahr*.<sup>51</sup> The final design was a cubic stone structure approximately thirty feet wide and fifty feet tall accompanied by inscriptions from the *Shahnamah* on all sides.<sup>52</sup> The construction itself continued for over two years and was completed just before the beginning of the millennium celebrations and in time for the gala opening hosted by Reza Shah with the conference participants in attendance.

## HEZAREH-YE FERDOWSI: THE MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION AND CONFERENCE

Among the series of ceremonies associated with the millennium celebrations was the international conference of orientalist convened at the Dar al-Fonun between October first and fourth, 1934. The four-day conference received wide coverage in the local press and was presented as an affirmation of Iran's national culture by the world.<sup>53</sup> News coverage of the event included announcements made at the conference of official telegrams received from foreign capitals wishing the conveners well. The German and Soviet embassies also presented



Muhammad 'Ali Furughi, who as Prime Minister and President of the Society for National Monuments was the convener of the conference, with gifts to commemorate the occasion. The German gift was a special edition of the newly completed work by German orientalist Fritz Wolf indexing the usage of every word in the *Shahnamah*.<sup>54</sup> The Soviets presented Furughi with an illustrated manuscript copy of the *Shahnamah* from a Russian museum.<sup>55</sup> There were also profiles of conference participants published in the press and texts of interviews and speeches with conference attendees, as well as detailed descriptions of the conference itself and the papers presented. The profile of Arthur Christensen, for example, included an excerpt from his speech at the conference in which he lauded Ferdowsi and Iranian national culture. 'The acts of aggression which have been perpetrated against the nation of Iran' Christensen is quoted as saying in the 1 November edition of *Ettela'at*, 'however great and powerful, have not been able to diminish the sense of distinctiveness of Iranianness from Iranians.'<sup>56</sup> The receipt of telegrams and gifts from foreign capitals and quotes such as Christensen's were an important part of the millennium celebration. The press coverage of these events worked to present an image of Iran as a national culture worthy of respect in the world. Iran's affirmation by foreign capitals and by the words of European orientalists reinforced this feeling of respect and affirmed Reza Shah's national project.

The speeches made at the conference by Muhammad 'Ali Furughi and 'Aliasghar Hikmat echoed these same themes. Furughi gave the speech to begin the conference. He welcomed the participants and thanked them for making the long journey. He continued in Persian,

You have honored us with your presence, but you have done this rightfully because even though Ferdowsi is of the Iranian people he is also in spirit a child of humanity and, if you will allow me, a father of humanity.<sup>57</sup>

Hikmat, then Minister of Education, next took the stage and, speaking in French, elaborated on Furughi's theme,

The interest shown in the millennium celebrations for Ferdowsi in all countries, and the fact that the nations have sent their most noted scholars to this country and to the tomb of the creator of the Persian epic shows that, despite apparent distinctions, there are no real differences between peoples... It is sometimes said that our century and our world are a century and world of materialism... It is for

this reason that we emphatically affirm that where art and science are manifested the curtain of differences are removed and make apparent the one and true reality: that is to say the unity of peoples.<sup>58</sup>

The speeches by Hikmat and Forughi, and the tone of the millennium celebrations in general, reflected this theme of placing the image of Ferdowsi simultaneously in both a national and international context. Ferdowsi was presented as an embodiment of Iranian national identity, as the promoter of Iran's language and a conveyor of the national memory. At the same time, however, the internationalizing of Ferdowsi's image and the emphasis placed on having Ferdowsi's importance recognized by international arbiters of cultural prestige suggests that Iran's national project was simultaneously aimed at two audiences. This pattern is suggestive of a duality inherent in the construction of national identity, especially in the extra-European world. In order for Iranian national identity to be affirmed it felt the need to be recognized within the world system. Nationalism in Iran, as in the colonial and semi-colonial world more generally, was not only an exercise in internal political consolidation and cultural homogenization, it was also an attempt to project an image outward to the world, declaring a nation's compatibility with and desire to join the new universalism of modernity. The authenticity or worthiness of a national culture was inherently measured in terms of its status in, or contribution to, 'world civilization.' It was this same reasoning that made the Indo-European theory so attractive for Iranian nationalists in the nineteenth century, and it was this same reasoning that encouraged cultural bureaucrats during the Reza Shah period to find elements of Iranian tradition that would be deemed worthy by international standards. The subtext of the millennium celebrations for Ferdowsi, and the conference in particular, was thus to simultaneously elevate the status, not only of Ferdowsi, but of the Iranian nation as a whole, and suggest Iran's association and compatibility with modern values and standards.

This simultaneous attempt to affirm Iran's national project to both an internal and international audience culminated with the ceremony at the tomb of Ferdowsi on October 12, 1934. The ceremony took place in Tus at the site of the newly completed mausoleum of Ferdowsi several days after the conclusion of the conference. The dedication ceremony was to include a speech by Reza Shah at the tomb in the presence of the conference participants who had made the two-day journey by car to the site. News reports from the ceremony were thick

with description, detailing the activities of the participants at the ceremony and embellishing the historic importance of the event for the public: 'Oh yes, yesterday will be recorded as one of those happy days in the life of the new Iran...' <sup>59</sup> wrote the correspondent from *Ettela'at*.

The ceremony itself began at 4:00 p.m. Attendants and staff from the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education stood by dressed in formal uniforms as were members of the Majlis and the Cabinet who were also in attendance. The audience of some two hundred attendees and others – 'scholars from both East and West' <sup>60</sup> as they were described in the newspapers – were also in attendance waiting for Reza Shah's arrival. The audience was seated in rows of chairs facing the front of the imposing stone edifice, which at the beginning of the ceremony was shrouded in Iranian colors. At the base of the tomb was a table where Reza Shah was to stand and deliver his dedication comments. At approximately 4:30 p.m., Reza Shah arrived at the ceremony and ascended the steps leading to the table in front of the monument. <sup>61</sup> There, standing before the audience, he gave the dedication speech for the memorial,

We are very pleased that along with the one thousandth birthday of Ferdowsi we can also accomplish one of the other enduring desires of the Iranian nation, that is the establishment of this structure as a measure of our appreciation and gratitude for the pains which Ferdowsi bore to revive the language and history of this nation... Although the appreciation for this man had not been adequately expressed it was always the case that the people of Iran held the *Shahnamah* in their hearts as a memorial to him [Ferdowsi] However it was necessary to take some action and create an adorned structure which in a visual way will mark the public gratitude of this nation. It was with this idea that we gave the decree to create this historic memorial, this exalted structure which will not be harmed by wind, rain, nor circumstance [Ferdowsi] has already immortalized his name and this ceremony and monument are unnecessary, but appreciation for those who have given service is the moral duty of a nation and we must not back down from this responsibility. <sup>62</sup>

Reza Shah's comments worked to give order to the mausoleum's meaning and assign a fixed set of associations with the memory of the poet. Ferdowsi thus became, in part, a symbol of Iranian national authenticity and the site of his mausoleum became a living reminder of the endurance of that authenticity. In this way both the structure itself and the comments by the shah emphasized,

above all, the theme of national continuity. The Shah's comment that Iranians had *always* remembered the *Shahnamah* was partially true. Certainly the practice of reciting the *Shahnamah* from memory had long been part of the pre-modern oral tradition throughout the Persianate world. More importantly, however, is the novelty of the way in which this traditional memory was now being used. The image of Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* now became very public markers of political allegiance. By sponsoring the construction of the mausoleum and hosting the international celebrations, Reza Shah and the Pahlavi state now came to associate itself with the memory of Ferdowsi. National memory and political legitimization now went hand in hand through the use of Ferdowsi's image.

The frequency and ubiquity of references to Ferdowsi within the Pahlavi state's self-representation to a great extent helps to suggest this point. The image of the mausoleum, for example, became one of the most recognizable images of Iranian society and very quickly found its way onto the national currency. Statues of Ferdowsi also came to increasingly occupy public spaces throughout the cities. The first of these statues was a gift presented to Iran by the Parsi community of Bombay immediately after the millennium celebrations.<sup>63</sup> The bronze statue was placed in the renamed Ferdowsi Square in Tehran. Later the statue was moved to the courtyard of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tehran and a new, larger statue of the poet was placed in Ferdowsi Square. Streets were also renamed in honor of Ferdowsi immediately after the commemorative celebrations. One of the main thoroughfares leading into Ferdowsi Square was widened, lengthened, and named after the poet.<sup>64</sup>

Also planned to coincide with the millennium celebrations was the publication of several new editions of the *Shahnamah*. Prior to 1934 printed editions of the *Shahnamah* were rare and expensive. During the nineteenth century there had been a growing print industry, mostly in India, which published Persian books including canonized foundational texts such as the *Shahnamah*. Until 1934, however, this print industry did not produce texts of the *Shahnamah* that circulated on a mass level. With the millennium celebrations, however, three new editions appeared, now published in Iran and under the encouragement and direct support of the Ministry of Culture. The first was an unabridged five-volume text edited by Abbas Iqbal.<sup>65</sup> Said Nafisi and Sulaiman Haim also published a similar unabridged edition in 1935.<sup>66</sup> Contemporaneous with these new editions, Muhammad 'Ali Furughi, the Prime Minister and a man of letters, edited an abridged version of the text containing twenty thousand couplets, or

less than half of the original text.<sup>67</sup> This one volume edition was inexpensive and allowed the *Shahnamah*, for the first time, to circulate widely throughout Iranian society. In magazines, journals, newspapers, and official school textbooks there was also a prolific amount of writing devoted to the image of Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* after the celebrations. The proliferation of the image of Ferdowsi also entered into the new medium of cinema. In 1936 the pioneering Iranian filmmaker Abdulhusain Sepanta completed a biographical film based on Ferdowsi's life. In the sixty-minute film, Sepanta himself plays the role of Ferdowsi as the film dramatizes the traditional story of Ferdowsi's struggles in composing the poem. Mahmud Ghaznavi, the tenth-century sultan who was the original patron of Ferdowsi's efforts, is also depicted in the film. The final scene of the black and white silent film is of Ferdowsi on his deathbed as he recites lines of his poetry.<sup>68</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The speech made by Reza Shah at the newly built mausoleum and the array of cultural practices employed by the Pahlavi state during the 1920s and 1930s, all worked to assign a fixed set of meanings and associations with the image of Ferdowsi. The circulation of Ferdowsi's image during these two decades worked to – not only associate the image of Ferdowsi with a revived sense of Iranian-ness – but, more importantly, as the political sponsor of the Ferdowsi revival, the image of Ferdowsi now also became associated with the authority of the Pahlavi state. The sponsorship of the millennium celebration, the building of the new memorial, and the hosting of the international conference, were all designed to – not only reinvent the memory of Ferdowsi – but to associate that reconstructed national memory with the political authority of the Pahlavi state. From the point of view of the Pahlavi state, therefore, the Ferdowsi celebrations of 1934 were a technique designed to use a newly reconstructed national memory for the purpose of political legitimization.

The fixing of Ferdowsi's image as a contingent element of the Pahlavi state's self-definition was not pre-ordained from the time of the original Ferdowsi revival of the nineteenth century. The reconstruction and revival of Ferdowsi's position within Persianate culture, as that process unfolded in the nineteenth century and later in the pages of *Kaveh* and *Iranshahr*, had recognized the utility of Ferdowsi as part of a larger re-invention of Iranian national identity. However, there was nothing in the early intellectual reconstruction of Ferdowsi that implied the poet

or the *Shahnamah* as being coupled with or affirming the legitimacy of any particular state or political authority. The use of Ferdowsi's image during the 1930s can therefore best be understood as a process of appropriation and co-optation of Ferdowsi's image by the Pahlavi state – and fixing a stable set of associations with that image. This *fixing* of Ferdowsi's image subsumed the inherently complex, dynamic, and multi-vocal quality of the *Shahnamah's* position within pre-modern Persianate culture, what Prasenjit Duara has described in another context as a cultural system made up of 'a fluid network of representations'.<sup>69</sup>

The fixing of Ferdowsi's image and its association with the specific political project of *Pahlavi nationalism* was therefore something very new, never predetermined, and only one of Ferdowsi's possible cultural-genealogical trajectories, a particular trajectory that was conditioned by the political history of the interwar period and by the cultural logic of nationalism during that time. Understanding the history of the Ferdowsi revival in this way – as the history of one possible cultural formulation from among an array of political-cultural and historiographic possibilities – is therefore the first step toward recovering Ferdowsi and redeploying him as part of the ongoing dynamic of Persianate identity. Ultimately, this historical understanding of Ferdowsi's image can work to reposition Ferdowsi and the *Shahnamah* within the larger field of Persianate culture and identity, and make that image available for new political-cultural imaginings of Iranianness, and for those as yet unimagined.



# The Pahlavi School of Historiography on the Pahlavi Era

*Kaveh Bayat*

The formative stage of what can be termed as the Pahlavi school of historiography goes back to the late 1920s, when by the gradual transformation of the newly established Pahlavi regime to a royal dictatorship, a popular movement for the creation of a strong central government and the implementation of a comprehensive range of overdue economic and social reforms, was reduced to a one man show, and thereby in the emerging school of historiography, step by step an abstract entity, called Reza Shah The Great took the place of a broad based movement for the modernization of Iran. The way in which this phenomenon took shape, based on a series of official and semi-official publications since the early years of the 1920s up to the demise of the regime in the late 1970s, is the main topic of this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Although in the early 1920s, when this new drive for the refashioning of Iran had not yet achieved a dominant political position, the manner in which it was depicted had already acquired a certain exclusive militaristic tint, but it still had retained much of its original diversity; Reza Khan Sardar Sepah was being portrayed as the main repository of authority and the fount of national will for change and progress, but he was not yet portrayed as a lone figure in this mission; a whole range of prominent officers and political figures were backing him, and in the ongoing struggle that was being fought between the remnants of the ancien regime and this new force, no effort was lost for emphasizing how broad based the whole movement is. The military campaigns that were being led by the high ranking officers of the army against different tribal groups and semi independent fiefdoms were fully reported in the national press; and when in the shape of a republican campaign, the same military establishment led a frontal



assault on the Qajar dynasty, the civilian support it had managed to raise was duly recognized.

At this stage, through the regular and detailed coverage of certain military journals such as *Ghoshun* [Army] or *Pahlavi*,<sup>2</sup> books like *Safarname-ie Khouzestan*, a travelogue attributed to Reza Khan on his campaign against Shaykh Khaz'al,<sup>3</sup> or *Sardar-e Pahlavi*, a book by Habibullah Nobakht on the military side of his ascendancy with a specific emphasis on the role of some other high ranking officers;<sup>4</sup> publications such as *Shahanshahi A'lahazrat Reza Shah Pahlavi*, General Tahmasbi's monumental chronicle of the final demise of the Qajar dynasty,<sup>5</sup> the movement that had Reza Khan as its head with all its diverse participants and actors, could still be identified with a concrete base of support, but in a few years time, after the consolidation of the new dynasty, the way in which this movement was depicted, took a different course.

To begin with, by the gradual de-politicization of the society, all attempts to record the political aspects of the recent events and their consequent developments through a much broader perspective, such as what was referred to in the previous section, came to an end. And when after a few years the establishment eventually did decide to compose an official version of its history, the whole era and its upheavals were reduced to a short list of industrial projects, a number of social reforms, and a series of statistics; that is, an abstract force which was usually identified with the person of Reza Shah, as its driving force. In this manner a broad base of support that could have been identified by the names and actions of a multitude of military and civil personalities or the political groups and factions, which were active in this field, was glossed over and the whole movement was reduced and attributed to the resolve of a single person.

Sa'id Nafisi's *Pishrafthaye Iran Dar Doreieh Pahlavi* (The Progress of Iran During the Pahlavi Era) could be characterized as the epitome of this new school of historiography. In 1933 Reza Shah ordered the cabinet to nominate an historian to write down the history of the Pahlavi kingship and Nafisi was commissioned to do so.<sup>6</sup> *Pishrafthaye Iran* that was first published as a booklet by *Sazman-e Parvareshe Akbar* in 1939 and reissued on several other occasions during the rest of the Pahlavi era,<sup>7</sup> was the result of this endeavor. After a brief overview of the last years of the Qajar rule, which is depicted as a period of utter anarchy and chaos, and also a short account of the two basic achievements of the new regime, that is, Iran's political independence and internal security, Nafisi sets to describe the progress made in this period. Of the number of military,

administrative, social, municipal, agricultural, industrial and cultural reforms that he tries to describe in *Pishrafiḥaye Iran*, some aspects that he is more familiar with, such as social and cultural issues, are more detailed and the rest, brief and sketchy. A total neglect of the political aspect of this development, that is, the way in which the new regime managed to mobilize a measure of popular support to oust the Qajar dynasty and eventually to establish its own rule is the most important trait of this book in particular, and the emerging school of official historiography in general.

After the invasion of Iran by the Allies in 1941 and the abdication of the King, the rise and fall of Reza Shah became a popular topic and in the ensuing period of freedom a vast amount of historical books, leaflets and articles were devoted to this subject. A redress of the aforementioned neglect, that is, an attempt to provide a detailed history of the political developments that gave rise to the Reza Shah phenomenon in the early 1920s, was the hallmark of this new development.<sup>8</sup>

In Iran, modern history and the way in which it is interpreted had always had a direct bearing on the political developments of the time and at this particular juncture, the rehabilitation of this neglected period of history and for the most part the rehabilitation of its major participants went much further than a mere academic exercise. For a host of old politicians and also an impressive array of new political forces that did identify with certain pre-Pahlavi political traditions, this new trend had a much more practical function. But as the efforts of this specific set of old and new forces to change the political structure of Iran proved to be futile, their attempts to challenge the dominant school of historiography did not succeed either.

In the early years of Muhammed Reza Shah's reign, he had not yet managed to consolidate his absolute rule, despite the fact that the Pahlavi's rendition of the Pahlavi era had definitely lost its former supremacy, but it had managed – even if in a low profile – to retain some of its entrenched positions. As certain occasions such as the annual commemoration of the '21st of Azar' – the day the Iranian army restored the central Government's authority in Azerbaijan on 12 December 1946 – demonstrated, the ability of the system to regenerate the same outlook had not diminished. In a short span of time the occasion to commemorate the 21st of Azar, the day the Iranian army put an end to the puppet regime of Pishevari in Azerbaijan in December 1946 twisted to a publicity campaign for Muhammad Reza Shah and the successful resolution of the Azerbaijan crisis, in

a total disregard of other important factors, was exclusively attributed to him. The homecoming of Reza Shah's corpse and his reburial in Tehran in the spring of 1950 that was accompanied with a number of official eulogies and publications can also be cited in this regard.<sup>9</sup>

By the consolidation of the authoritarian rule of Muhammad Reza Shah in the early 1960s, a development that put an end to any rival political claim and as a result the types of historical narrations that used to supplement these claims, once again the old and tried rendition of the Pahlavi era regained its former dominant position.

The 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1965 that was shortly followed by the coronation of Muhammad Reza Shah in 1967, provided for an outburst of historical commemorations; for this occasion not only Nafisi's by-now classic *Pishraft-haye Iran* on Reza Shah era was re-issued, but in order to update the consequent developments of Iran and to catalog the additional achievements of his successor, a series of new publications were released as well. Some of them such as *Davam-e Shahanshahi Iran* gave a brief and general overview of both Reza Shah and Muhammad Reza Shah's reign<sup>10</sup> and some like *Iran dar Doreye Saltanat-e A'lahazrat Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi*, a book by 'Aliasghar Shamim – an old hand in the composition of official history text books – only covered the latter's era.<sup>11</sup>

Even though at this stage, the manner in which the Pahlavi's exploits were depicted in the official texts was not that different from the previous tradition and the same exclusive position was relegated to them, but there was a major distinction too.

In contrast to the previous era when the ongoing attempts for the modernization of Iran regardless of a constant reference to Reza Shah, had always retained an impersonal and abstract disposition, now a measure of a personal touch was tolerated. This change that was probably the result of the breach inflicted on the historical edifice of the demised regime in 1940s, did much to reduce that impersonal and abstract disposition.

Besides Muhammad Reza Shah, who at least on two occasions, once in an article he wrote about Reza Shah in 1956<sup>12</sup> and then in his *Mam'oriyat Baraye Vatanam* – (Mission for My Country) – a few years later,<sup>13</sup> took part in this new development, the active participation of a significant number of the 'Others' in this affair, something totally unheard off in the preceding epoch, could be considered its most important feature. In the reign of Reza Shah, as an abrupt

end to the publication of General Jahanbani's report on his campaign in Baluchistan in 1929 or Mahdi Farrokh's inability to publish a book on Iran–Afghan relations in 1935 indicated,<sup>14</sup> no matter how loyal and obedient they might have been, no associate ever dared or was allowed to narrate these developments from a personal point of view. But now the remnants of the Reza Shah era, those whom Ibrahim Khajehnouri had named *Bazigaran-e Asr-e Talayi* (The Actors of The Golden Age) could at least attempt to have a say in this regard; needless to say this was only a privilege granted to those loyal subjects of the regime who were careful enough to acknowledge the Pahlavi pre-eminence and pay due tribute to it.<sup>15</sup>

Even though a number of popular magazines such as *Etelâ'at-e Haftegi*, *Tehran Mossavar* and *Sepid-va-Siah* each had a regular section, usually devoted to the historical memoirs and reminiscences of a number of veteran politicians and bureaucrats, but the most important case to consider in this respect is *Salnameye Donya*. Every year since 1945 up to 1974, a number of old grandees published a section of their memoirs in this almanac. Considering their age and experience, the Reza Shah era formed the main subject of these memoirs and the sycophantic way in which he is treated in these articles is quite telling.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned already, the main body of the official historiography of the Pahlavi era did not lose its original trait and despite those marginal digressions, the paramount position of the Pahlavis as the sole driving force of Iran on the road to modernization and progress was left intact.

Muhammad Hejazi's *Mihan-e Ma* (Our Homeland), a book commissioned by the Ministry of Culture in the late 1950s on the general history of Iran is a good example;<sup>17</sup> the second part of this book that was devoted to the Pahlavi epoch, in contrast to the first section that like any other regular historical study had much to deal with a multitude of events and the interaction of its various actors, once again subsides to a general overview of different industrial projects and social reforms carried out in this era. And in a similar manner, when in 1967 the Ministry of Information published an album of photographs called *Asr-e Pahlavi* (the Age of Pahlavi),<sup>18</sup> despite its illustrated nature and the fact that most of the photographs reproduced in this volume did cover a good number of the era's nomenclature, once again the whole epoch that was pictured through these pictures got reduced to a nameless entity. Most of these photographs don't bear a caption and apart from Reza Shah and the Crown Prince, only in a handful of cases there has been any attempt to identify the individuals present in them.

In the mid-1970s, the approach of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Pahlavi dynasty provided for another celebratory occasion. The method adopted to handle this case was no different from the previous occasions. Once more a commission to coordinate these activities was established and a series of historical studies to extol the 'Age of the Pahlavi' and its various achievements were published. Though the overall approach of these studies did not differ much from the previous examples and none had intended to challenge the exclusive role that had always been depicted for the Pahlavis in the developments of the modern Iran, but a number of factors were bound to undermine some of the main principles of the dominant school of historiography.

First of all in contrast to the past, and probably due to the general developments of Iran in the mid-1970s and a mounting discontent in the society, history and the need to adopt a new strategy in this regard had assumed a clear priority. It was obvious that Sa'id Nafisi's *Pishrafthaie Iran* and a handful of similar studies were no longer serving any practical function, if ever they did. The debates and the measures adopted in the Ramsar conference on the 'Educational Revolution' in the summer of 1976 is an indicative case. In this conference *Shoraie 'Ali-e Farhang va Honar* (the Supreme Council of Culture and Art) was commissioned to prepare a comprehensive program for what was described as the 'Education of Patriotic Culture' (*Amouzeshe-e Farhang Mihani*). Iranian history in general and the history of the Pahlavi era in particular were supposed to form the backbone of this new policy.<sup>19</sup>

The sheer amount of the books and studies published for 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Pahlavi dynasty and also the number of different centers involved in this affair – each with its own approach – did indicate that a major change had occurred in this respect.

Besides various Ministries and state organizations, the Armed Forces each produced a book on the major developments of their respective arms.<sup>20</sup> *Markaz-e Asnad va Amar* (the Centre for Documents and Statistics) compiled a series of documents on certain historical events of modern Iran that were reproduced in a limited edition;<sup>21</sup> the Ministry of Art and Culture that had earlier published two books by Ibrahim Safa'i on the 1921 coup,<sup>22</sup> also produced another range of books by the same author on the consequences of the coup, that is, the different aspects of Reza Shah's rule;<sup>23</sup> The University of Tehran reissued Tahmasbi's *Tarikh-e Shahanshahi A'lahazrat Reza Shah Pahlavi* that had been out of print for a long time;<sup>24</sup> a colossal chronology of the Pahlavi era was

compiled and published by the Pahlavi Library.<sup>25</sup> And *Markaz-e Pazhouhesh va Nashre Farhang-e Siyasi-e Douran-e Pahlavi* (the Centre for the Research and Publication of the Political Culture of the Pahlavi Era), a new institute that had Houshang Ansari as its director, launched a series of glossy books for this occasion; some of these books were the reprint of certain old and out of print publications such as Reza Shah's *Safarname-ie Khouzestan*, or *Safarname-ie Mazandaran*, Reza Shah's travelogue to Mazandaran in 1926 that like the previous one was also authored by Farajollah Bahrami but not published at the time; *Darbare-ie Sevom-e Shahrivar*, a relatively coherent study of the developments leading to the occupation of Iran in 1941 was another book published by the same center; then there was another glossy book on Reza Shah, an eclectic collection of different documents and photographs; and *Raz-e Payandegi* (the Secret of Endurance), a similar collection on the ordeals of Iran during the World War II that was not distributed. On the semi-official side, *Bisto-hasht Hezar Rooz dar Tarikh-e Iran va Jahan* (Twenty-eight Thousand Days in the History of Iran and the World) an illustrated supplement by the *Etela'at* newspaper to commemorate the 50th anniversary was another important case that has been taken into account.

Ibrahim Safaïi's books on the Reza Shah era that were published by the Ministry of Art and Culture, were no longer confined to some general remarks on the personal characteristics of Reza Shah and a customary list of achievements that supplemented them. He did attempt to provide a less mythical image of Reza Shah and explain the historical circumstances that gave rise to him. For Safaïi who had been an active member of Sayyed Zia'din Tabatabaie's press network in the 1940s – the first and foremost victim of the Pahlavi school of historiography – it could hardly be otherwise.<sup>26</sup>

In the same vein in an introductory note on the first issue of *Bisto-hasht Hezar Rooz* the aforementioned supplement by the *Etela'at* newspaper, besides an emphasis on the need to juxtapose the Pahlavi era on a more general context of the Iranian modern history, thus a 28,000-day span of time to cover these developments from 1900 onward, instead of an 18,000-day period that would have sufficed to cover the Pahlavi era, an attempt to provide detailed captions for each of the photographs that were going to form the main attraction of this supplement, is also emphasized. It notes: 'for example in the past [a number of] Reza Shah the Great's photographs had been published, but most of them lack details such as the location of the photos and also the personalities that are in

attendance...'<sup>27</sup> *Bisto-hasht Hezar Rooz* was going to fix these apparently minor negligences.

A perceptible reassertion of the contemporary history was the most obvious outcome of this new development. The very history that appeared to have been properly contained and safely kept away, the multitude of diverse events and the mass of faceless actors involved in them, had started to re-assert itself. There was nothing revolutionary about this phenomenon, even the whole affair could have been interpreted as an effort to prevent a revolution, to demonstrate that the Pahlavis were not alone in the creation of the modern Iran and they had a whole nation supporting them in this venture; if it was the case, as the cliché goes 'it was too little, and too late.' It seems the nation had drawn some other conclusions; history is theirs and they can do without the Pahlavis, or more probably, they can get away with history in general and do whatever they want. But the fact remains that history had finally caught up with the Pahlavis.

# Architectural Historiography 1921–42<sup>1</sup>

*Kamran Safamanesh*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this essay is to examine the changes in the architecture and urban planning of Iran during the twenty-year period between the years 1921 and 1941. This time-period which more or less coincides with the establishment of modern social and urban systems in Iran, has been witness to numerous fluctuations and changes both in terms of historical development as well as various intellectual trends. Even though the intellectual, if not the practical achievements of Europe (popularly known as the West), lay at the origins of most of these changes, the degree and the kind of understanding that the officials, politicians and intellectuals of this period had of the phenomenon of Western civilization played an equally important role in determining the architectural and urban-planning trends at this time.

In the broad sense of the word, architecture and urban design, as part of the process of production of urban commodities, constitute a specific and far-reaching phenomenon in which all social classes and groups take part in as both producers and consumers. Moreover, architecture as a social phenomenon, not only follows the cultural circumstances of society and is impacted by cultural changes but is also affected by the technical and scientific conditions as well as the economic and social relations dominating the manner of production and ownership. Perhaps it is as a result of this multifaceted character of architecture and to a greater extent, urban design, that when change in society gathers pace, the models of architecture and urban design also change and develop with a greater intensity and necessity than other cultural and intellectual currents. Furthermore, the lasting nature of buildings may not only serve as testimony



to the spirit of that period for years to come, but in a sense, can also serve as an appropriate mirror, enabling us to look and see what has passed.

## BACKGROUND

In 1921, when the world was experiencing the aftermath of the World War I, the Qajar dynasty began its decline. After the rise to power of Reza Khan (Sardar Sepah) to the head of military affairs, the country, which had been experiencing a period of instability due to internal and regional developments, entered a new era.

In this interval, the historical identity of the country became subjected to fundamental changes which were often guided by the idea of the emergence of a modern and developed Iran. The criteria for attaining this prospect were defined by the concrete achievements, attributed to the advanced countries of the time. During the years that followed the coup d'état of 1921, the degree of change and development that took place in order to realize this monumental picture, ran so deep that it was not unlike the transformation that took effect in the vision for the management and the fulfillment of the talents of the country. This transformation not only aspired to the attainment of national glory, but it also partially had the revival of the majesty of ancient Iran in mind.

In preparing the grounds and the method for achieving such an end, the officials and the directors in this case were facing the results of several movements in Europe and the West at the same time. What was of utmost importance was deciding which movement was to be relevant; that is, which movement resulted in a paradigm that could be appropriately emulated and implemented. Re-reading the history of that period and finding the kind of relations that the intellectuals and leaders of that period developed with distinct notions like the West, Europe, modernism, or the deceptive models of the West, is critical as it enables us to understand the relationship of their response to the then current movements of the West. Although it is beyond the confines of this article, suffice it to say that most members of the Iranian elite made no distinction between the 'the West' and 'Modernity.' Throughout the past decades when the West constituted the source for the wishes and hopes of some of the pioneers of Iranian society, this notion came to be known as '*farang*.' Similarly, the technical achievements of the West were referred to as 'Western civilizational institutions' and what was understood by the obvious achievements of modernism in

the context of the organization of the governmental affairs and management of the city, extended itself to the establishment of certain urban institutions like municipalities, banks, police departments and the like. Just as goods and products were imported from the West in the form of commodities, so were the outside models of buildings phased in, either out of need, or from some sort of fancy. These ranged from neo-classical styles of buildings to all the various sorts of fixtures which had to be used in them. However, rarely did people distinguish between ideas and objects, and often, they did not pay much attention to the way in which those urban institutions and city structures had to be managed, or the needed experts were to be trained.

The totality of what had taken place in Europe following the Renaissance in terms of the classical and neo-classical styles or the trends that came about in the aftermath of the industrial revolution, in the shape of early modern and modern movements, proved to be of real consequence in the domains of architecture and urban planning in Iran, and now came into view before the enthusiastic, and at times longing, eyes of the Iranian society. According to the wishes of the decision-makers and those responsible for the execution of fundamental, social, political and urban plans in organization and transformation of the exhausted models of the Qajar era, all kinds of concrete and tangible conclusions were stipulated from European urban institutions by the powerful thinkers and officials in Iran.

It seems that the question concerning the manner in which Western achievements were to be transferred and established, and the suitable grounds necessary to continue their performance in the urban context during that period, involved an exciting intellectual discussion. In a similar vein, the totality of the achievements of the intellectual and artistic movements of Europe was spread before the needy eyes of Iranian intellectuals in the manner of a table covered with various sorts of food, whose richness always made them doubt whether they had made the right choice in compensating for their 'backwardness.' However, what is interesting is that even though they varied in their educational backgrounds, in all the selections that they made, the Iranian intellectuals collectively had an appetite for one particular flavor, namely the will to 'progress.' As such it is understandable why this impatience and hastiness in reaching their goals, as well as the uncertainty in the correctness of their choices, constituted the dominant, common characteristic traits of this deprived group of people sitting at the table of '*farang*.'

## THE CENTRAL POWER, THE SUPPORT FOR ACTION

Enjoying the fruits of the spread of '*farang*' as in translating them into practical measures or tangible products was not a possibility in and of itself, unless backed by a practical and reliable source of support. If intellectuals or political and cultural figures gathered round a benevolent or powerful dictator, it was because in their view, reforms were not thought possible without establishing a sense of security and centralization. Therefore, even though the desire for progress in the domains of the management of urban affairs, architecture and construction already existed in pre-Constitutional times, going as far back as the middle of the Nasserī period of 1870s, it became more heartfelt in the twenty-year period, between 1921 and 1941, because of the establishment of a centralized power and the strengthening of a robust will which was considered the support for such an approach. Henceforth, not only did the course of national progress advance with greater speed and intensity, but the domain of its practical achievements and its probing philosophy, also spread to subsequent times.

The elite of the first Pahlavi period, many of whom were the bearers of the notions of liberalism and idealism of the Constitutional Era, were employed by the state to bring about the means of modernity. This was at a time when the historical identity of Iran during this period, whether in terms of ideas, or in practice, had come face to face with an 'opposition,' namely the confrontation between tradition and modernity. Not even in the Constitutional period had the modern idea of the city been opposed to tradition in such a blunt way; rather it was predisposed to, and based on the notion of 'modernizing tradition.' In other words, Constitutional thinking had not regarded tradition as an obstacle, whereas in these new times (1921–42), the measures taken were, by and large, based on rejecting and fighting tradition. Even the manifestations of modernity in Iranian society in the second half of Qajar rule (1866–1921) had been welcomed as a new development that had the capacity to be combined with old paradigms. In other words, the governmental models together with the arts of this period which impacted society on different levels were replete with examples that brought Iranian and European elements together in an attempt to freely combine tradition and modernity. The buildings which were inspired by the two sources of Persian tradition and European architecture in both their foundation and façade can be called 'hybrid buildings,' and in this category, one can include Shams al-'Imarah, Mu'ayyer al-Mamalik's city-dwelling, the building of the Farmaniyah Garden, the 'Ishrat-abad Palace, the Firuzah Palace, the

Farahabad building in Malik al-Tujjar Garden in Shamiran as well as the houses of Mustawfi al-Mamalik and Fakhrr al-Dawlah, and other examples.

However, the intellectual currents which came about following the Constitutional Revolution either demanded making use of tradition amidst modernity or rejecting tradition altogether. In any case, the aforementioned currents, both sought modernity and a desire to become '*farangi*' (new and European). This matter was admitted clearly in the opening article of the illustrated monthly, *Farangistan*:

We want to spend long years with pride and honor. Iran has to start life afresh and everything must become new. We want a new Iran, a new man, we want to make Iran like Europe. We want to flow the current of the new civilization towards Iran. While preserving inherent Iranian moral values, we want to put into effect this great idea that: Iran must become spiritually, physically, outwardly and inwardly '*farangi moab*' (European mannered).<sup>2</sup>

## REJECTING TRADITION AND SEEKING MODERNITY

In view of the social, economic and political changes that took place in Iran in this period, and by paying close attention to the new structures that came about in all matters of society and the urban and architectural measures that were the reflection of the establishment of new infrastructures, one can get a sense of the dominant vision or manner of thinking. In the domain of urban affairs as well as building construction of this period, this vision and thinking led to several major factors impacting the built environment of Iran. This laid the basis for the transformation in the essence and identity of this environment. These factors consisted of:

- The belief in the ideal of modernization and the rejection of tradition
- A practical and serious effort in denying and eliminating the old traditional structures
- Following the paradigm of Europe and spreading the culture of Europeanization
- Establishing physical changes in order to bring about a transformation in the essence and identity of the city and its citizens
- An effort to universalize modernity in Iran by emphasizing the two elements of speed and imitation.

These instances were illustrative of the hostility between the new government of Reza Shah and the Qajar system of government. The new regime considered itself a symbol of modernity and modern Iran, whereas the old rule was regarded as representing backwardness and tradition. Therefore, all that which presented itself in foundation or appearance as traditional or Qajar, had to be replaced with a new element deserving of a 'modern Iran.'

At the beginning and in different manifestations, this contradiction led to the destruction of historical symbols and landmarks within the various realms of city-life, including governmental and public institutes as well as urban spaces and structures. For example, many of the historical gateways and marketplaces were destroyed to make way for the passage of motor vehicles. This hostility and elimination, this modernization and opposition to tradition, resulted in the emergence of hybrid spaces in most cities in Iran, in particular Tehran, the capital city, which served as the center for the initial developments and changes. These took the shape of the spaces of the old governmental institutions vis-à-vis spaces of the new governmental institutions; old commercial and public spaces alongside new commercial and public spaces; the commercial activities of an old culture vis-à-vis by the commercial activities of a new culture; old crossings and pavements alongside new crossings and renovated streets; the structure of the old city vis-à-vis a new structure of the city; and finally, a modern system alongside a traditional system.

## **NEW INSTITUTIONS AND STRUCTURES**

The foundational stone of new political developments was the establishment of a new governmental system. This system gradually came into being with the presence of thoughtful individuals in the domain of political decision-making as well as in shaping of new associations and political and social institutes. In order to set up new institutes and to control and guide the trend for social activities in an urban setting, legal frameworks were put in place. At the same time the social infrastructure of cities were organized so as to accept these institutes and their concomitant social processes.

In this way, the twenty-year period of the first Pahlavi rule (1921–41), was a time for the systemization of social outputs, and the dimensions of this transformation in this relatively short period – aspects of which are visible in terms of ratified laws – were to such a wide extent that it changed the condition of Iranian society completely. Thus establishment of the Municipality (1921),

establishment of the National Heritage Society (1922), ratification of compulsory military service (1925), standardization of measurements (1925), establishment of birth certificates (1925), setting up of the Pahlavi military bank (1925), ratification of the law to build a railway system (1925), the old reforming of the Ministry of Justice, and laying the grounds for a new judiciary (1926), ratification of the law to establish a national bank (1927), establishment of traditional handicraft's guild (1928), ratification of municipal law (1928), establishment of a country-wide educational system, from primary school to university, establishment of a regular army according to the European model, and the institution of a regular taxation system, were among these measures.

In this way, in a short twenty-year period, not only did structures change on city-wide and country-wide scales, but once again (and in this case, many years after the re-opening of Dar al-Funun in 1851), and in a more serious manner, the apparatus for the transformation of the intellectual climate of Iran was made possible in a much more focused way, with the aim of reaching modernity. The domain of most administrative activities, however, lay outside the circles which discussed the idea of modernity. If the administrative activities in the establishment of new and modern urban structures, constituted some progress in the direction of modernism, the academic institutions trained individuals in the field of intellectual development so that they could administer the modern system in subsequent years until the full realization of the movement. One can illustrate the circumstances of this period by means of a simple example: the movement for building schools which began in the late Qajar period can be described in the context of modernism whereas the movement to train teachers and establish the teacher-training college which took place for the first time during the rule of Reza Shah, can be regarded as an aspect of modernity.

## URBAN MEASURES

Among the achievements of that period, the new look that the Iranian cities gained as a result of the short- and long-term attitudes and policies of the first Pahlavi era can today serve as a fitting means to reconsider the history, social inclinations and the intellectual ebbs and flows of the time. The change in the manner of political management and the way in which financial resources were secured in the first Pahlavi period, constituted the most important factors in bringing about a transformation in the intellectual, cultural and ideological foundation for urban development. Furthermore, they subsequently led to a

transformation in the processes affecting large scale construction projects, outside the domain of private ownership, as well as the technical and practical aspects of construction management. The process of management of urban renovation and mobilization was put into the hands of various ministries and specialized organizations which with the passage of time, not only developed and grew in number but also played a more important role in changing the shape of the city.

The most important of these organizations was the Municipality, which commenced its activities in a serious manner before other urban institutions. Besides the Municipality, other organizations like the police, the fire services, charities and the water board company (supervising water distribution in the city) which were affiliated with the Municipality, together with the Department of Traffic which was affiliated with the police, came into being. Telephone services and electricity, in their capacity as modern urban necessities, were developed rapidly, at first by means of the private sector and later through the government. Before that, Post and Telegraph services had already become state-owned. One can also mention other organizations such as the Office of the Registry, or the oil company responsible for providing fuel for modern urban transportation, each of which played an influential role in the future development of the city by way of their administrative policies. The establishment of ministries and their affiliated departments together with educational institutions, banks, hotels, cultural bodies, sports centers, factories, military and security institutions, and modern infrastructure linked to transportation and services associated with it,



Building of the Municipality of Tehran

transformed the framework for the development and growth of the city as well as its content and quality, both directly and indirectly. Furthermore, in addition to the models for development and construction, the methods that were used for this work also originated from Europe which represented the example par excellence of modern civil society.

The location of all these new institutions and organizations was the modern city and their subject, the new citizenship, both of which needed cultivation. That which constituted the transformation of the main structure of the city during Reza Shah's rule consisted of five major changes in the spatial and physical organization of the city. These were:

- Intervention in vast pieces of land, and classifying them according to specific uses
- Establishment of new programs based on new needs and with new structural forms
- The introduction of straight, wide and long stretches of streets, with planted trees and streams, as well as changes in existing public roads according to European models
- The construction of squares and public spaces in a new way
- The attempt to build regulated and designed street façades based on that which had taken place in the late neo-classical period in Europe.

The aims of the new government in bringing about the changes that it had in mind for the country took place in two ways: that is, by means of reforms, and by bringing about a modernist structure. In this way, Tehran as well as other cities in Iran was put on the verge of a new experience in all fields: structural, social, economic and occupational, where speed and imitation were among its most obvious characteristics.

The extent of this modern urban planning scheme very quickly reached the cities of Tabriz, Rasht, Qazvin, Bandar-i Pahlavi, Qum, Shahriza, Hamadan, Khurramabad, Shiraz, Mashhad, Isfahan, Yazd, Ahvaz, Kashan, Arak, Borujird, Babul, Ramsar, Chalus, Sari, Riza'iyah, Kirmanshah, Lahijan and others. The construction and protection of the graveled roads, the establishment of a regular road and rail network, and the increase in the number of motor vehicles were among the factors that not only played an important role in the development and expansion of the aforementioned cities, but also led



to the growth of trade and agricultural activities. In most of the cities that were located on the path of the main roads and the trans-Iranian railway, like Bandar-i Pahlavi, Hamadan, Khurramabad, Ahvaz and others, the roadway and railway companies were the first developmental organizations which undertook the building of some of the administrative and governmental buildings. In the course of these measures, the province of Mazandaran was considered to have greater potential for progress and development than other regions, primarily because of its natural characteristics such as the existence of dense forests, its proximity to the sea, the plentifulness of water and so on. As a result, special facilities such as graveled roads that connected Tehran to Mazandaran, as well as coastal roads which linked the cities of the Mazandaran province to each other, railroad and stations with neighboring motels, power stations, together with different kinds of factories for spinning and weaving silk, public places like guesthouses, luxury hotels, mineral water sources, casinos, beaches with showers installed on them, and a showcase of facilities for the construction of superior villa compounds, as well as farmhouses in a new style and such like were provided for that region. This was in such a way that by the end of this period, Mazandaran was called the 'Switzerland of Iran.' At the same time, in many important cities in Iran various factories were set up for the production of sugar, for weaving and spinning, and as cotton-gins, etc., with the city of Isfahan being considered among the leading industrial cities of Iran because of its possession of a variety of such industries.

The offices of the provincial government together with the municipalities of each city acted as supervisors and policymakers in planning the construction of roads and buildings. They also helped develop the appearance of urban life by providing the services and the apparatus required by the city, namely features like electricity, telephone, graveled roads and ultimately running water. During the years 1925–30, maps which had been drawn for several important cities like Isfahan, Qazvin, Hamadan and Rasht, became the reference for the drawing of new roads and squares. Similar to the laws for regulating the exterior façades of the newly constructed passages of the capital city, a number of standards were conceived for the shopfronts facing the main roads as well as the number of stories for buildings that were adjoining the main streets. An example of this was published in the daily *Parvaresh*. This concerned the first newly constructed street in Rasht and represented a clear instance of the new ways in which state intervention took place in urban affairs and those of private ownership.

### Announcement

Subsequent to the previous warning regarding the erection of buildings on both sides of Pahlavi Street, and in keeping with the plan and order of the Construction Committee of the Municipality, we bring the following to the attention of the respected owners of the lands and buildings on Pahlavi Street:

The existence of one-storey buildings alongside fallow lands which have become places for leaving rubbish and filth, on both sides of the street, not only render the view ugly but also lead to the emergence of chronic disease. Therefore, for the last time, and in order to bring an end to the current situation that Pahlavi Street finds itself in, the Construction Committee warns the owners of the buildings and lands on both sides of the street (stretching from the front of the municipality to the intersection opposite the Garden of Haj Hussain Hatam), that from the date of the publication of this announcement until the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month (6 August 1928), it is necessary that they begin building around the street according to the order below:

1. The respected owners of the fallow lands, and the one-storey buildings (stretching from the front of the municipality until the beginning of the Quruq-e Karguzari Street) should, at once, begin erecting two-storey buildings on the fallow lands and on top of the former one-storey buildings in accordance with the order and plan of the engineer hired by the municipality.
2. It is necessary that the owners of the lands (stretching from the beginning of the Quruq-e Karguzari Street until the beginning of the Garden of the Shahvardian Masihi) begin the construction of at least one-storey buildings with the permission and order from the 'Engineering Committee.'
3. If the respected owners of the lands (stretching from the beginning of the Garden of Mika'il Shahvardian to the intersection of the Garden of Mr. Haji Hatam), are not able to construct buildings on their lands, they should obtain permission from the Construction Committee and the engineer of the municipality, to enclose and fence in the lands. If no measures are taken by the owners of the lands by the end of the stated period, then the Construction Committee of the Municipality will have to follow orders and begin to build on the fallow grounds according to the plans that have been drawn in the name of protection of public health and the completion of the street. The owners of the lands will be charged.

(Signed, the Head of the Municipality, Hajj Mahdi Khan `Amu)<sup>3</sup>

In the cities, the municipalities were not the only organizations to intervene in matters of building and development and to prove effective. There were many other ministries and administrative offices, each of which was responsible for the design and construction of buildings subject to them in Tehran as well as the centers of other provinces and towns. Therefore, each of the ministries, administrative offices, banks and new institutions which had operations throughout the country, set up their own technical and architectural offices. Among them, one can name the building bureaus for the Police Headquarters, the National Bank, the Agricultural Bank, the Sepah Bank, the Customs, the Ministry of the Roads, the Judiciary, the Post and Telegraph office, the humanitarian organization of the Lion and the Sun, the Office of Public Health, the joint-stock Insurance Company, the Office for the Development of Culture, the technical office of the Ministry of Finance, and several other foreign contracting companies which had agreements with the aforementioned offices.

## **THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE FIRST PAHLAVI PERIOD**

One of the most important aspects which distinguishes the architecture and urban planning of the first Pahlavi period from that of the Qajar's, is that the fundamental changes that began in the middle period of the Qajar era and continued until after the constitution in the intellectual and cultural domains bore fruit. That is, in the Pahlavi era, these intellectual explorations and concomitant cultural exchanges not only reached more specific results but also did so at greater speed. These changes were seen in various fields within the domains of architecture and urban planning. To list a few among them, there was – the use of engineers and architects as the main consultants and designers for the foundations of a modern city as well as large governmental and public buildings; the emergence of the first written architectural and urban planning literature; the establishment of organizations and institutions specializing in the teaching of architecture and building-work; the use of the organized expertise of foreign contracting and building companies in setting up industries, urban foundations and large private buildings, and finally the complete use of European-style architecture and modern global styles such as late neo-classical and early-modern styles alongside the discussion of national and Iranian identity in the new architecture of the time.

## ARCHITECTURAL PUBLICATIONS AND LITERATURE

Based on this same importance that the written architectural literature gained in this period, several magazines and publications on architecture appeared. A number of these publications consisted of bulletins which were published by governmental organizations and other than serving as newsletters, they also contained writings which had value in terms of their discussion of technical or qualitative aspects of architecture. Among the most important of such publications was the *Baladiyyeh* magazine, which was published as a weekly from the very first year when the new Municipality was established. However, it was stopped after about a year, although it resumed publication with the appointment of Buzarjumihri as acting deputy of the Municipality. In this way, the publication was halted and then permitted several times in the course of the years. In this publication, many articles can be found which provide cultural and technical justifications for the measures taken by the municipality concerning the new urban planning, the widening of the streets, new styles of architecture and so on. The other important publication was linked to the Archaeology Institute, and published several articles by André Godard, a French certified architect, about the art and architecture of Iran from 1936 onwards.

From this collection, one can name *Iran-i Imruz*, the monthly of the Police Headquarters and the writings of Tahirzadah Bihzad published in the Berlin-based *Iranshahr*. A number of other yearbooks and magazines can also be named whose articles reflected important discussions concerning the matters of city-life, such as city hygiene and guidelines for life and models for modern living.

## ARCHITECTURAL ORGANIZATIONS, TECHNOCRATS AND RESOURCES

Some of the national and urban developmental projects like the setting up of factories, the founding of a trans-Iranian railway system, and basic infrastructural tasks like providing electricity, telephone and water-pipes, which required specialized technical expertise, were carried out by big foreign companies which were in possession of a combination of various technicians and experts and the necessary technical knowledge. The plan for the establishment of the railway began in 1927 and was continued by contractors and small companies until 1933, after which date, it was transferred to the Danish company, Kampsaks.

It was this same company which built a large number of buildings for stations, warehouses and other railway installations across Iran. These buildings had a very simple façade made of cement which was manufactured in the cement factory in Ray, which had been established for the specific purpose of fulfilling the needs of the railway network. In Tehran and some other big cities, in addition to the Railway Station itself, many other buildings like hospitals, administrative buildings and company housing were built for services associated with the railway.

In Tehran and other major cities, the architectural activities of foreign companies were not limited to the various buildings associated with the railway. Among the other buildings completed by them, one can name the Tehran Judiciary, the Tehran Power Station and Tobacco Company, the Sugar Factories of Shiraz, Shahi, Kermanshah, Mashhad, Nahavand, and Abkoo, all of which were built by the Czech company, Škoda. The other buildings which began construction at around the same time, and whose designs were considered very progressive for the time, included the Tehran University. This complex perhaps represents the first instance in modern Iran when a comprehensive plan laid the basis of a large-scale building project. According to this master plan, each one of the buildings of this complex was later designed by one of the Iranian or foreign architects of that time.

Another important point was the concentration of a considerable number of Iranian and non-Iranian intellectuals and trained technicians whose modern education, whether inside or outside the country resulted in their activities impacting society far beyond their technical products. Private drafting and construction offices flourished in 1928, a time when the municipality announced the first series of building codes and regulations regarding building façades. Consequently, from this time on, the advertisements of such organizations can be seen in the newspapers. From among the first Iranian architects who managed such offices, one can name Tahirzadah Bihzad,<sup>4</sup> who was one of the first architects to have acquired his education abroad. An example of this advertisement is mentioned below:

The office of Tahirzadah Bihzad will accept the drawing of any variety of maps, the repair and remodeling of all kinds of old and new buildings as well as the implementation of all types of existing plans. It will also contract in installments, small European-style buildings worth upwards of a thousand tumans. It will accept orders from the provinces.

Looking at maps is free for all.

The founder and manager: Tahirzadah Bihzad, certified engineer with academic degrees.

Tehran, Qavam al-Saltaneh Street, Mirza Sayyid Hassan Khan Alley, Telephone: 2017.<sup>5</sup>

## TEACHING ARCHITECTURE

From the time that the design and implementation of architecture and developmental works in a modern manner became part of the government agenda, the need for teaching of different specialties like design, structural engineering, surveying, assessment, appraisal, and the preparation of design development drawings and of specification booklets etc., was felt. As a result, numerous educational institutions for teaching these areas of expertise came into being. Along these lines, the state-sponsored educational organizations, most of which were under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, took the lead. Engineering classes were among the courses that were initiated by the Ministry of Education. The first session of these classes, which consisted of a fifteen-month training session for assistant-engineers as well as a four-year engineering course, was established in September–October 1927, when 50 people enrolled.<sup>6</sup> Before the rule of Reza Shah, the only such institution that we know of is the School of Fine Arts, set up by Kamal al-Mulk, which taught drawing, sculpture and the art of ornamentation in a relatively limited way. In the Pahlavi era, however, the new municipality, from the outset of its establishment in 1921, set up a school for the training of technical staff in the fields of architectural drawing, assessment and appraisal. After that, in 1927, the state-sponsored Boys' Technical School was founded.<sup>7</sup>

Private institutions for teaching architectural drafting came into being from about 1928. This coincided with the time when new regulations for building-work were announced, obliging the owners to obtain and submit building plans to the municipality in order to obtain permission for construction. The Technical College, which offered a major in Civil Engineering, was one of the first departments of Tehran University that came into being. This College was initially located in a section of Dar al-Funun School.<sup>8</sup> Later, it was transferred to the Technical College which was built in the grounds of Tehran University toward the last years of Reza Shah's rule, more specifically, in 1937.

The biggest step in the teaching of architecture at university-level was taken with the establishment of the College of Fine Arts by Isma'il Mir'at, the Minister

of Culture at the time. This College was opened in the location of Marvi School in September–October 1940, with an annual credit of one hundred thousand rials, and offering three fields in architecture, painting and sculpture. With the approval of the Ministry of Arts and Crafts, the classes in architecture that had been held in the Higher School of Arts, and the fields of painting and sculpture held at the High School for new Fine Arts of that ministry were annulled, and their students transferred to the College of Fine Arts, thus boosting the enrollments in that institution. The founding board of the College of Fine Arts consisted of 12 people,<sup>9</sup> which included the names of André Godard, as the honorary chairman of the College, Muhsin Furughi, an Iranian certified architect, Roland Dubrulle, certified architect, Maxime Siroux, a French certified architect, Alexandre Moser and Khachik Babluyan, both civil engineers. There were, also, teachers with PhD degrees in literature, statuary, painting and archeology. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Sadiq Hidayat, the notable Iranian writer was a member in the administrative cadre of the College and responsible for translating the curriculum from French into Persian.

In the beginning of the Pahlavi era, in addition to the state-sponsored or privately run educational institutions which were established in order to teach architecture, construction and related fields, practical training in architectural offices and technical bureaus of ministries and governmental institutions was prevalent. In view of the fact that from the very beginning of this period, the political authority and the cultural leadership of the country was put into the hands of modernist politicians and intellectuals, in the fields of architecture and urban planning, control over design and determination of technical style and construction was given to the university-trained design engineers and experts. In other words, in this period, the architects, whether by means of creating large and impressive buildings, or by teaching the new architecture, or by writing critical articles on architecture, became the agents who determined the style, the kind of construction-materials and the construction technique for the entire society. From then on, traditional architects became mere agents for architects and engineers, executing their design and expertise more accurately. They followed the example of the buildings conceived by design engineers for building smaller and more ordinary buildings like houses and commercial buildings which in most cases did not yet require people to consult design engineers. They tried to combine the aspects and features of the new architecture with their own process and knowledge of traditional architecture.

Foreign architects who were involved in Iran at this time, made use of classical European models and early modern architectural styles influenced by the industrial revolution, in combination with the outward expression of the idealistic mentality of ancient Iranian architecture and also with elements of traditional Iranian-Islamic architecture, in a way that the new complexes and buildings constructed in the city, created a new scheme in terms of scale, height, shape, character, materials, elements and components, ornament, as well as their position in space and came into coordination and cooperation with the existing structure of the city. In this way, the city took on new characteristics, a new essence and ultimately a new identity. Subsequently, it became possible for these characteristics to spread to other cities in Iran, and for the first time, the measures that had been implemented in Tehran, and which in comparison to the architectural imagination of the Naseri and later periods, were more practical, professional and academic, found the merit to provide a concrete model for similar measures in other cities of Iran.

## STYLES OF ARCHITECTURE

In a short period, the various tendencies and models which were based on the demands of engineers and patrons of buildings came into view in the cities. According to the opportunity that the architects and engineers gained in the domain of designing important governmental and public buildings, their impact on the architectural style of this period can be seen clearly. For example, prior to 1931, the architectural style of the important buildings in Tehran became a hybrid style that was a combination of Iranian and European styles as in the works of Markov, the Russian émigré architect. In the years between 1931 and 1934, the style tended toward a nationalistic one which had been influenced by the archeological discoveries and links to German architects practicing in Iran, and from 1934 onwards, it was influenced by pre-modern and early modern architecture which was put to use by younger architects returning from Europe such as Gevorgian, Vartan Hovannessian and Furughi.

There is no doubt that at some stages, the cultural and propagandistic leaning of the government and Reza Shah himself impacted this current to a certain extent. However, this sort of political effect weakened gradually and from 1936 onwards, disappeared completely. For example, we know that as soon as the dissolution of the Qajar dynasty was announced, the Police of Tehran began to destroy the writings and tiles of the governmental and non-governmental



buildings where the name 'Qajar' could be seen as part of the name of the founder or *vaqf* donor at the top of the building. Needless to say that this was done neither openly nor in the name of the Police, but clandestinely and at night, in the name of the nation's hatred for the Qajar name. We know that during the rule of Reza Shah, many such confrontations and interventions took place. In fact, the role of 'task-masters' and 'patrons' and urban policy-makers and their influence on the cultural developments and matters pertaining to the architecture and structure of the city constitute a lengthy discussion which has not yet taken place in all its details.

It seems that in the architectural and urban planning developments in the years 1920 to 1941 and the evidence that remains of the architecture of the period, one can recognize five leanings. The sizeable number of buildings as well as the involvement of a large number of engineers, architects, artists, authorities and even intellectuals in this twenty-year-period point to the existence of a strong theoretical discussion behind the scenes. This was a tumultuous exploration with much participation which subsequently led to five consecutive intellectual leanings in the construction of the body of the city. Even though priority of construction of a building as well as the length of the building-process according the volume of construction may have created overlaps in the realization of edifices of different periods, in the time and result of architectural and urban planning designs, however, the succession of the five aforementioned styles can clearly be recognized in the evidence of this period. In this study, one should bear in mind the fact that there is little conclusive proof regarding the date of establishment or design of some of the buildings of this period in Iran. In most cases, there are merely hearsays which cannot be considered as accurate evidence for dating the buildings. Having said that, it is still possible to reach an approximate date by means of scrutinizing the construction-materials and studying the styles.

It is worth mentioning that changes in government or in socio-political affairs do not necessarily lead to immediate changes in the physique and structure of the city. Rather, the architectural styles and tendencies affecting the built environment continue in the same manner as previous times for a certain period after the political changes. This was the case in the early years of Reza Shah Pahlavi when the 'national and political will' based on the social changes of the time had not yet manifested itself in city-planning, architecture and the arts, and as a result, the style of the previous periods persisted. Having said

that, the various design tendencies of these two decades can be categorized as following:

**The First Tendency:** The dominant aspect of the architectural works of the first period is expressive of the construction-mode of the Mozaffari period and the last years of the Qajar dynasty. In this way, from the years 1921 onwards, we see the establishment of buildings that have a foundation in tradition although they are intermixed with Western or European architectural elements, details and ornamentations. This is the same style that took shape in Iran from the middle of the Naseri period and persisted until the end of the Qajar era. Its obvious sign is a hybridity and a dual lineage which is clearly consistent with the cultural and social models of the last decades of the Qajar period. Among its characteristics is the relatively free use of concepts, theories, compositions, proportions, modules, elements, ornamentations and materials of different architectural origins. From among the examples of the buildings of this period, one can mention the entrance gate of Bagh-i Milli, the entrance to the Marmar Palace, the entrance to the Parliament, and a number of residential buildings.

**The Second Tendency:** This period is characterized by buildings which have a European neo-classical plan and a façade consisting of elements from pre- or post-Islamic architecture of Iran. This illustrates the efforts of the architects and the patrons in creating a national style derived from traditional Iranian architectural elements so that western or European elements are less visible. However, due to structural similarities between classical Iranian and European architectures – the detailed roots of which go beyond the limits of this discussion, but whose most important features consist of symmetry, centrality, and hierarchy – the use of European neoclassical plans and covering of interior and exterior of the buildings with Iranian elements, was considered to be a practical and acceptable approach.

In this way, the Western and Iranian architects involved at this time could make use of the achievements of the last three centuries in Europe in creating design compositions for administrative buildings, while emphasizing the traditional values of Iranian architecture, by adding traditional architectural elements, orders and adornments, that give this architecture an indigenous quality. In this context, one can mention the new Municipality building, located in the northern corner of Tupkhanah Square (whose construction began in 1921), the main building of Alborz High School (1924), the Teachers' Training



Tupkhanah Square, the grand central square of the city, and the new buildings of Post and Telegraph

Building (1934), and the central Post Office (1928). The above three buildings were designed by Nikolai Markov, a Russian architect who was born in Tbilisi and was employed in the Iranian Cossack force where he met Reza Khan who was also within the force at the time. After the October 1917 Revolution, Markoff decided to take up residence in Iran and soon began practicing architecture again. Markoff's talent as an architect, coupled with his acquaintance with Reza Shah, resulted in his realization of a large number of projects in Iran.

**The Third Tendency:** This period which coincides with the establishment of the building of the Post and Telegraph located in the Tupkhanah Square, clearly illustrates European planning and design principles in all aspects of the plan, elements, and composition. The buildings of the Pahlavi Radio Station (1926), the façade and arrangement of Hasanabad (1928) as well as Mukhbir al-Dawlah squares, the Municipality Café-shop (located at the intersection of Pahlavi and Shah Reza Streets and inaugurated in August–September 1932), are clear examples of the use of a method which thoroughly applies European forms and orders in the construction of the edifice. In practice, this period also confirms a total imitation of European concepts, plans, compositions, patterns, elements and ornaments. However this imitation could not translate into a complete realization of the original model due to the differences in tradition, materials



The main elevation of the Central Branch of the National Iranian Bank (Bank Melli)



View of Anoushirvan Dadgar Girls High School

and the lack of relevant skilled workers and craftsmen in Iran. It is possible to point out examples of the naïve realization of this kind of imitation.

**The Fourth Tendency:** Around 1933, which can be considered the beginning of the fourth period, along with the inclination toward modernity, purging of Arab terms and getting inspiration from pre-Islamic culture which had found its way in many social matters, the eagerness to revive the glory of pre-Islamic Iran also enveloped architecture and became the ‘order’ of governmental buildings and later on influenced the design of non-governmental ones. This took the form of the antiquarian Sassanid style as seen in the building of the National Museum of Iran (which began construction in 1933) or alternatively the



View of the National Museum of Iran (Iran Bastan) influenced by the design of Kasra Palace in Tisfoon, the ancient capital of Iran (near Baghdad)

antiquarian Achaemenid style as seen in buildings such as the Darband Police Station (1933), the Police Headquarters Building (1934), Anushiravan Dadgar High School (1936), the National Bank (inaugurated in 1936), the building of the Iranian Carpet Corporation and some other important buildings designed in the years between 1933 and 1936.

All these examples clearly demonstrate this antiquarian tendency in their outward feature and ornamentation. This time too, the plans of these buildings were derived from late neoclassical or pre-modern European architecture. The presence of foreign architects in Tehran at this time was also an important factor in this development. Thus, similar to the second period, European style plans were used as building foundation with the difference that this time, the architects used the orders and elements of the Achaemenid style, in particular, those of Persepolis and by re-creating them on the façade of these buildings, manifested an idealistic architecture which referred back to pre-Islamic times.

The first building which was built in such architectural style was the building of the Parliament which in 1932 replaced the old building that had caught fire in November–December 1931. Arbab Kay Khusraw Zartushti was appointed the supervisor of this renovation and Ustad Qurban Mi'mar was in charge for the construction. After that, the buildings of the National Bank, the Police Headquarters, the Anushiravan Dadgar and Firuz Bahram High Schools were built with the investment of Zoroastrians. A number of other buildings followed



Elevation of the Police Headquarters Palace demonstrating elements borrowed from ancient Iranian architecture

this trend. Among them one can name the Mortgage Bank, and a number of commercial buildings which at one and the same time made use of Achaemenid ornamentations, Islamic tile-work, European sculptures, traditional masonry, half-European and half-Iranian windows and a composite construction technique. A good example of this is Sara-yi Rushan in Nasir Khusraw Street which is illustrative of an amusing lack of clarity in choosing a concrete design model.

It is worth mentioning that this pre-Islamic style of architecture comes at the time when political and cultural relations between Iran and Germany had warmed up. For example at this time, among others, 70 German specialists were procured to deal with the organization of the Iranian National Bank. It is important to note that at the same point in time, a kind of nationalism based on a racist ideology informed by a belief in the superiority of the Aryan race, and certain mythological tendencies which were also colored with a distaste for Christianity, reached its height in Germany. In the years 1931–2, French and German archeologists carried out important explorations in Iran. At Persepolis, Hertzfeld made discoveries which Reza Shah visited on location. In this same period, more specifically in 1932, two statues of Achaemenid soldiers holding arrows were erected on either side of the stone entrance of Marmar Palace. They were carved by Ustad Ja'far Khan and built in an eclectic style particular to the third period. This addition was a clear indication of the governmental leaning at this time toward an archeological style.



Renovated façade of the National Parliament in the first Pahlavi Era

Among the other archeologists who made important findings in the course of explorations, transferring the knowledge of archeology and promulgating the idea that one should preserve and pay attention to cultural heritage, one can name the two Frenchmen, André Godard and Maxime Siroux. (André Godard had begun his work in 1929 as head of the Department of Archeology.) During their time in country, Godard and Siroux conducted an extensive research on the ancient and traditional architectures of Iran. With the help of Yedda Goddard, Andre's wife, they published a number of volumes under the name of 'Architecture of Iran' (ASSARE IRAN). Their findings had a marked influence on their own body of work in Iran, including their collaborative design for the Hafiz' Monument, Godard's design for the National Museum of Iran (1935), and a number of other joint public building projects.

The establishment of the *Farhangistan* (the Iranian Academy) constructed in 1937, and its efforts in reviving Iranian ancient culture were among the other important developments of this period. Just as during a relatively long period in Renaissance Europe, when the movements of return to ancient Greece led to the establishment of classical, Greek and Roman-style buildings, so did Iran experience a similar idea of return. The difference however was that in Iran, the recreation of the past with its architectural styles was carried out in much haste and within a short period of time.

**The Fifth Tendency:** The last style which was used in these two decades in Iran was the brand of late-nineteenth-century European style early-modernism

which was the result of long intellectual exchanges in scholarly circles in that region. It came about at the ending point of the various modes of classical and neo-classical designs and made way for modern architecture. Among its distinguishing characteristics were symmetrical façades with emphasis on horizontal elongation, simple cement façades, larger windows, presence of unadorned elements, elimination of ornamentation and statuary and attention to function in planning, which were all used in some capacity or other by the pioneers of modern architecture. The building complexes of the University of Tehran, the first effectively modern institution in Iran, were clear examples of this style of architectural design. The original site design for the main University Campus was drawn by Andre Godard. Godard's colleague, Maxime Siroux, who was a graduate of the school of architecture at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, designed the building complexes of the Medical School in the North part of the Campus. The first building that was erected was the dissection hall, which opened in 1934. By 1937, the other main buildings of the Medical School, and by 1938, the building of the Technical College were complete.<sup>10</sup> The building of the University Club, which was a markedly modern design, soon followed. Muhsen Furughi, a contemporary Iranian architect, designed a modern building for the Law School, which opened its doors in 1940.

As such, a number of progressive architects in Iran turned away from the old government-decreed styles and from 1934, in the first years of the fifth period, some of the public and governmental buildings were built in the above mentioned pre-modern style with a simple cement façade, devoid of any imitation from the pre-Islamic ornaments and sculptures. In subsequent years, the number of buildings which were built in this style increased regularly, so that after 1937, this became the dominant style in public buildings. Among these architects were a number who, following the ratification of the 1928 law to send students abroad, had been sent on government scholarships to Europe, and had begun their work in Iran after their return and completion of their studies. The prevalence of this style showed that the intellectual trend of Iranian architecture did not necessarily follow the views of Reza Shah, but that it was under the control of young architects who tried to coordinate their activities with the progressive intellectual trends on a global level. In his memoirs, Mukhbir al-Saltaneh Hidayat refers to the indignant attitude of the Shah regarding the Dissection Hall of Tehran University (1934) which had been built in a modern style, with a simple cement façade:



The Shah went to visit the surgery building and to lay the founding stone for the medical faculty which was to be built in Jalaliyah. The ministers and dignitaries became present. On arrival, the Shah did not like the building which was simple and in the color of cement. He became angry and rebuked it. Everyone became distracted. In that same indignant mood, he put the golden sun-dried brick which had been prepared into a hole which had been dug. No one said anything.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear where this dissatisfaction originated from since in the architectural style of this particular building, there were no signs of grandeur or any use of the different forms of pre-Islamic Iranian architecture.

### **THE ARCHITECTS OF THE FIRST PAHLAVI PERIOD**

Among the first academically trained architects of the first Pahlavi Era was Karim Tahirzadah Bihzad. One of his outstanding works was the Tehran Railway Station as well as the offices of the Bureau of Tracks and railway buildings (located on the western side of the Rah Ahan Square). He was among the first educated Iranian architects who tried to make Iranian society recognize architecture in its modern form. Furthermore, he was among the first architects to have set up an office in Tehran for the purpose of carrying out architectural plans. He was influential in bringing about a particular style of brick façade common to the first widened streets in the Pahlavi period.

Vartan Hovanessian was another Iranian architect who was active in Tehran in the course of three decades until early 1961. He was considered to be one of the most prolific Iranian architects. His most important works can be listed as: the Girls' Academy in Sivvom Isfand Street in 1938; the completion of the building of the Officers' Club; the Darband Guest-house in 1938; one of the palaces of the Sa'dabad compound; Metropole and Diyana Cinemas; the plan for the Railway Station Guesthouse located in the northeastern section of the Rahahan Square in 1940; the plan for Firdawsi Hotel, the main building of the Sepah Bank at the beginning of Sipah Street in 1951; the branch of Sipah Bank in the bazaar; and a large number of administrative buildings, commercial malls and residential houses in Tehran.

Geverkian was another Iranian architect. Even though he spent a short time in Iran (1933–7) following the completion of his academic studies, he designed valuable works among which are the buildings of the Judiciary, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Industry, as well as the amphitheater of the Military School and the building of the Officers' Club.

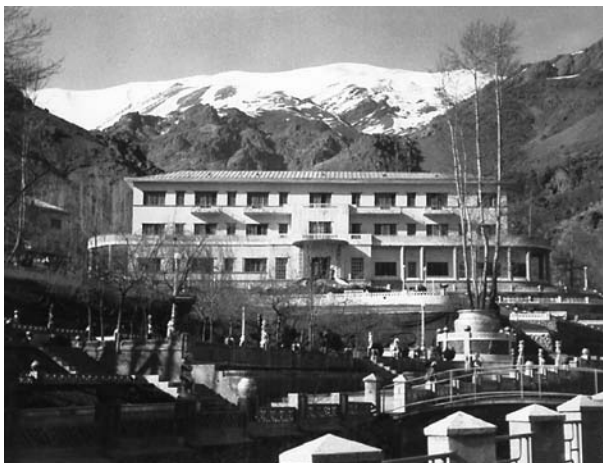
Paul Abkar was considered another of the prolific and influential architects of this time. In the years 1937–69, he designed a number of buildings, the most important of which are Niagara Cinema, the first Radio Station (wireless), the building of the Armenian Catholic Church and the Baghchihban School. Designing in the modern style, he made tasteful and gentle use of the combination of bricks with strips of cements and stone surfaces. He has left behind a number of very interesting residential buildings in Tehran.

Among the architects that influenced not only the architecture of this period but also that of the following period, was Muhsin Furughi. Among the public and governmental buildings that he designed in Tehran, one can list the central branch of the National Bank in Firdawsi Street, the branch of the National Bank in the bazaar, the Central Bank and the Depository of the Crown Jewels, the hospitals affiliated to the National Bank, the Faculties of Law and Literature at the Tehran University, the Insurance Building in Sa'di Street, Firdawsi Department Store and the Mausoleum of Reza Shah in Shahr Ray. In the architecture of public and in particular, governmental buildings, Furughi's overall technique employed a modern style. That is, in terms of design, his buildings consisted of grand and impressive entrances, tall columns and symmetrical front walls, thus pointing to an inclination towards monumentalism, bringing his style closer to pre-modern architecture. In his subsequent designs, his technique gained a leaning toward an International Modern style.

Other than these architects, the names of other Iranian and foreign architects should also be remembered. Among them, there is the German Heinrich



School of Law, University of Tehran



Darband Hotel in Shemiran

who designed the building of the Savings Account of the National Bank; Monsieur Fred, a Romanian who laid the plans for the Café-shop of the Municipality; and 'Ali Khan Muhandis who bore the responsibility of the technical supervision of the building of the Police Headquarters and was the designer of the first Firuzabadi Hospital. Monsieur Egal designed the Post Office, next to the entrance of Bagh-e Milli (Markov, too, is remembered as the designer of the aforementioned building), and the building of the Pahlavi Radio Station; Qelich Baghlian designed the building of the Post and Telegraph in the south of Tupkhanah Square, as well as that in Hasanabad Square; Sharifzadah Qafqazi who was the architect hired by the Municipality designed several buildings in Tehran; Fathallah Khan Firdaws was another engineer hired by the Municipality; Fischer, a Hungarian architect who cooperated with a Czech company (possibly Škoda) and others whose names can be found in a number of documents.

## **FROM FORMAL REFERENCE TO THE WEST AND PRE-ISLAMIC HISTORY TO THE DENIAL OF HISTORY AND COMPLETE ATTENTION TO CONTEMPORARY WESTERN MODELS**

As has been said, the change in the position of those involved and in charge of urban development works in the twenty-year period of the rule of Reza Shah resulted in the emergence of five specific trends. Among the styles that were

tested under Reza Shah, the fifth was the pre-modern trend which was practiced and put into effect in private as well as modern governmental buildings.

In this way, the last trend which was characterized by letting go of the superficial reference to the history of Iranian architecture, and becoming free from the historical discussion of 'tradition' and 'the past,' faced the vanguard or overture of modern architecture with the aim of 'progress.' This, in turn, gave shape to the dominant leanings of the last part of the rule of Reza Shah and that of his son, Muhammad Reza Shah. This period is one when pre-modern architecture is experienced in all its characteristics. It consists of a model that first appeared on the foundation of the late neo-classical buildings and then became the model for buildings which had an entirely modern foundation and façade. Among the examples illustrating this trend in architecture, one can refer to the Dissection Hall of Tehran University (1934), Firdawsi Hotel (1935), the Faculty of Medicine, Giv Primary School (1937), Darband Hotel and the Girls' Academy on Sivvum Isfand Street (1938), the Faculty of Law (1940) and the Faculty of Science at the University of Tehran (1942).

The process of emphasizing a historical approach and pointing out the historiography that dominates this period, whether in its basic foundation or in the return to a pre-Islamic, Achaemeid past, and finally, rejecting history at the end of the twenty-year period, and then entering the modern era, deserves some thought, especially since all this took place within a twenty-year period. One should ask why do buildings become modern from one period to the next. What changes took place in the outlook and ideas of the architects and task-masters for such different transformations and styles to be experienced? Why is it that with the end of this period characterized by buildings with an antiquarian look, as in the case of the Anushiravan School, other buildings in the early modern European style come into being, as in the cases of the buildings of the Firdawsi Guesthouse and the Sa'dabad compound? Why is it that an architect like Markov who built a building like that of the Radio Station in the first period, began to build buildings like the Alborz High School and that of the Municipality in the second period, and in the end, left behind buildings that were even more modern? Needless to say that all these developments took place at the same time as major changes in the fate of a country headed by an individual like Reza Shah, seated at the apex of this tumultuous experience.

It seems that architecture in each of these five aforementioned trends was in need of an ideal model that could respond to the demands of politicians and

supporters of a modern society in keeping with the urban standards of the time. It is for this reason that in this period, architecture became politicized and was used to promulgate political values. 'Coding' the buildings, a tendency to impart external meaning and value, and giving them an external value which consisted of sloganeering to a certain extent, was a policy which did not arise with the architecture prevalent at the time, but its beginnings went back to the intellectual dialog which was fostered in the circle of elites and thinkers that were associated with the state, the physical manifestation of which appeared in the form of architecture and the physical body of the city. In examining this sequence, it is important to pay attention to the changes in architecture and historical elements, as well as their origins which were referred to in distinguishing architectural styles.

The question is, what kind of discussion existed among the intellectuals in the society of this period, to guide this historical search for finding a suitable form to depict an image of Iran and Iranians? What encouragement did the person of Reza Shah, as a military man and one who had not benefited from a high level of education, gain from his power in order to fulfill this aim? Which individuals played a role in guiding this kind of thinking and how did they do this? In other words, who led this intellectual movement? We have named architects like Markov, André Godard, Maxime Siroux, Olgar, Tahirzadah Bihzad, Vartan Hovanessian, Abkar, Geverkian, Muhsin Furughi and others. However, what do we know of the role of the politicians and dignitaries of that period who were alongside Reza Shah? To what extent was their role in this dialog and intellectual movement a conscious one? Individuals like Mukhbir al-Saltanah Hidayat; Zuka al-Mulk Furughi, the Prime Minister; Hikmat, the Minister of Culture; Taymurtash, the Minister of Court; Davar, the Minister of Justice; Musa Nuri-Isfandiari, the Director of the General Office of Industries; Taqizadah, the Minister of Finance; 'Inayatallah Sami'i, the Minister of Foreign Affairs; Jam, the Minister of the Interior; Mu'tamin al-Mulk, the Speaker of the Majlis; Mustawfi al-Mamalik and many. In addition, the role of writers, journalists and intellectuals of other relevant circles is not very clear. Similarly, the part played by the foreigners who found themselves in Iran and the archeologists like Hertzfeld and Girschman, and foreign engineers, some of whose names have already been mentioned, is worth pondering. Documents show that the presence and intervention of a group of the elite of society was an important factor in the dialog that took place in those two decades.

The point that needs to be emphasized is that even though referring to the culture of the Achaemenid and Sassanid, Iran bore much resemblance to the idea

of return in its rival culture, namely Greece and Rome in Renaissance Europe. In this case, the return to an age of glory and power of pre-Islamic Iran in this period, whether in architecture or other visual arts, did not only manifest itself in terms of national pride, a show of force, and nationalism, rather it was indicative of a much more general movement in the cultural affairs of the country. In short, it did not limit itself to a Renaissance quality but it coveted the results of the French Revolution and industrial revolution at one and the same time, and imitated them. Most certainly, the decision-making with regard to such a development did not come from Reza Shah alone, but its intellectual grounds had been prepared by the main players in such a way that Reza Shah, in all his power and speed of action, shared in bringing it about.

Even in paying attention to the architecture of the past, the choice of such referencing was based on a thought process beyond a simple selection or inspiration from purely archeological activities. A very interesting point in this fiction-like scenario is the speed of developments and the change in outlook toward the built environment. It seems that in a short twenty-year period, a reductionist understanding was satisfied only with a brief account of the long-term development of the European society in past centuries. Yet with an abrupt course of action intended to compensate backwardness as wide as several centuries, it tried to reach the final aim of a modern and developed society by organizing the process of participation of each of the main players, as well as the main despot, while gaining help from a national and powerful will. In this way, circumstances were brought about that enabled the directors and players to benefit from the main intentions and wishes of Reza Shah in shaping that which they thought of as appropriate.

This haste in building and in progress which, in some instances, merely paid attention to the façade and appearance at the expense of the foundations and principles, can be clearly seen in a number of buildings of the Reza Shah period which were built quickly. Among them are buildings on a large scale like that of the Police Headquarters (1933–6), which with an area of 22,000 square meters, continued to be the largest building in the country for decades afterwards. Relative to its large floor area, this building was completed in obvious haste, and in some parts without any attention to the basic principles of construction. Yet, at the end, its façade was decorated in a relatively more orderly and elaborate manner. There are many other examples of this kind of operation in buildings, urban measures and other social affairs.

In conclusion, it is fit to mention that the founders of this intellectual movement aspired to reach an environment and state which enjoyed modern and progressive standards. However, much like running a movie at too fast a pace, in a twenty-year period, they tried to put to test, in the context of a city with a Qajar background, all the achievements of the previous hundred years in Europe. This included all of the fruits that manifested in the form of cultural and commercial goods imported by European-educated Iranians or foreign nationals. Perhaps one can compare the discussions that took place among the intellectuals in Iranian society in the post-Constitutional times, whether in terms of theory or practice, to a period in European history when modernist discussions of philosophical, political and social issues, resulted from an intellectual Renaissance and Enlightenment thinking which in practice, led to the French Revolution. The effects and results of this movement can be seen in the thought structures of the Constitutional and subsequent periods. The intellectuals and protagonists of the Reza Shah period were, in some ways, the bearers of the aspirations of the Constitutionalists in this period. As far as it is related to Reza Shah himself, the Pahlavi vision and guiding principle in all the developmental activities that he carried out in the whole country, consisted of modernizing the Iranian society and city according to the standards of the day. The Iran that he had in mind was a powerful country which in foreign policy, was considered an equal to developed countries, and whose internal affairs enjoyed a respectable and credible image in the international community. However, it is clear that he was not informed of the fundamental intellectual changes that Europe had undergone in order to reach modernization. Rather his approach to the matters of state and the country's potential was informed by a sense of patriarchic nationalism. In a conversation with Suleyman Behbudi in Nawruz 1926, he said:

I, too, will die like your father. When he died, your father took with him some two meters of canvas. Since I am a little taller, I will take two and a half meters of calico. All that there is, and what I have, will stay in this world. What I have belongs to the country and is intended for the honor of the country. If what you mean is land, all of it will stay. I see that the owners of such good cultivated lands don't pay any attention to them, and that as a result they have fallen into ruin. All across the north, there are the best cultivated lands whose income can provide the budget for the country. You who have studied geography and history, know where Switzerland is and what resources it has. Does Switzerland have oil like us? Does it have mines? Other than a few clock-making factories, does it have anything else?

Do you know that the budget of such a small country is greater than that of most large countries? Where does it get this income from? It only has beautiful scenery, but it has taken good care of its landscape. All is clean and beautifully adorned, a means for the comfort of tourists. It is for this reason that tourists from many parts of the world take their money to Switzerland in certain seasons, to spend and then return to their home-countries. Why should we not provide such means for our country, whose four corners are like Switzerland. Why shouldn't such money be spent in our country and why should we not benefit? Have you forgotten that I ordered that the wealthy in Mazandaran be told that the person who builds the best edifice will be rewarded by me, but no one did anything. What I meant was that if foreigners wanted to go to the north of Iran, they could at least have a comfortable place to sleep. For this same reason, I ordered that out of my own money, they build small buildings next to the railway, close to various cities and towns. I have heard that if a person wants to see the forest in Switzerland, he must go to the forest and if he wants the sea, he must go somewhere else, and if he wants plains and fields, he must go somewhere else. But in our own Ramsar, a person can stand in one place and just by turning his head, he can see the forest, the plain and the sea altogether. God has given us such a good location and yet it had fallen into such ruin. At last, I had to do this myself. Where can you find the mineral water of Ramsar? I asked the merchants and businessmen to import factories. They paid no attention, so I did it myself. I asked them to build guest-houses and set up companies. They didn't. I had even heard that people install showers on beaches next to the sea. I asked them, they didn't listen, I did it myself. They say that I get something out of nothing! What kind of thing is it that I get? I built guest-houses in Babolsar, Ramsar, and Chaloos. I hired experts in hospitality from Switzerland. And these guest houses are full of servers who eat and sleep all year round. The sea season is all of two months. What kind of returns do these guest houses bear in two months that could compensate the other ten month's expenses? Is there any thing but expense? Why do I do these things? All this is for the honor of the country. I see that we have the best climate and natural beauty, why shouldn't we make use of them? Today I am a king that is at one and the same time, landlord and peasant, guest-house owner, factory-worker and bath-attendant. Don't I know that the king of a country should not be doing these things? But I notice that an Iranian who spends one hundred tumans today, expects to have an income tomorrow from what he has spent. Whereas the foreigners spend millions of tumans, work for years and after many years, they reap the benefits. I, too, love my country, so I take action personally. Tomorrow, when I have gone, all that I have achieved will remain for the country.<sup>12</sup>





# The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography

*Houchang E. Chehabi*

The penchant of Iranians for concocting conspiracy theories or lending credence to them has often been noted. By conspiracy theories I mean models of reality that posit that politics is dominated by the ill-intentioned and conspiratorial machinations of groups whose aims and values are profoundly opposed to those of the rest of society. Typically, a conspiracy theory does four things. First, it attributes the events of history or current affairs to conscious human volition: nothing happens by accident. Second, it sharply distinguishes between the human forces of good and evil, with the locus of the latter lying outside the 'true' community. These evil outsiders can either be foreigners or members of one's own society, typically members of minorities who seek influence while remaining discreetly in the background. Third, it implies a hidden reality beneath and at odds with the superficial appearances of the political and social world: nothing is as it seems. Fourth, it shows how everything is connected: patterns are detectable everywhere, but they are hidden from plain view.<sup>1</sup>

Iranian society is not unique in its receptiveness to this mode of reasoning, of course. Conspiracy belief is a well-nigh universal phenomenon,<sup>2</sup> but it is particularly widespread in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> However, before one jumps to the conclusion that the proclivity to see hidden evil forces at work everywhere *merely* reflects peripheral societies' helplessness vis-à-vis Western hegemony and their own despotic governments,<sup>4</sup> let it be pointed out that conspiracy theories attain their greatest variety (not to say absurdity) in the United States, where in the short span of that country's independence they have been continuously invoked, ranging from an early nineteenth-century belief in the secret intrigues of

an 'Order of Illuminati' to a late twentieth-century preoccupation with the occult machinations of extraterrestrials bent on taking over the world.<sup>5</sup> These continuities were first analyzed by Richard Hofstadter in his seminal essay 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics', from which I draw the inspiration for this chapter's title.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, while culturalist explanations for Iranian conspiracy theorizing should not be dismissed off-hand, they must be used with caution and only as a supplement to general explanatory factors that apply elsewhere as well.

One reason conspiracy theories are popular is that they explain highly complex phenomena by a very small number of simple causes. They are thus both 'elegant' and 'parsimonious', traits that are much admired in scientific theories but are of secondary importance in the messy and incoherent world of human beings. However, it is precisely the appreciation of the human world's complexities that is beyond the intellectual reach of the half-educated who tend to spin conspiracy theories, that is, people who, in Joseph Schumpeter's words, lack 'any first-hand knowledge of international affairs and their personnel, [and also] any organ for the perception of absurdity'.<sup>7</sup>

Simplicity is not the only trait that makes conspiracy theories attractive, for they also contain two in-built defence mechanisms against debunking. First, any missing link in the causal chain is due to a cover-up, which 'confirms' the existence of a conspiracy. By the same token, questioning the justifiability of the general attitude of suspiciousness which underlies conspiracy belief is a sign of naïveté, whereas any attempt to falsify the theory with factual information 'proves' that those so engaged are actually complicit in the cover-up. In a sense, conspiracy theories, being immune to falsification, come close to not being theories at all, and ought perhaps to be called 'conspiracy models', as they above all map reality and make few predictive claims.<sup>8</sup>

This said, what makes the Iranian case noteworthy is that otherwise well-educated and psychologically well-adjusted people are prone to conspiracy belief, and, stranger still, that conspiratorial modes of reasoning inform the work of a number of widely read and influential Iranian historians. Therein lies a major difference between the Iranian case and Western countries, where conspiracy theories tend to be espoused by demi-intellectuals and autodidacts with little formal academic training, people who are 'outsiders to the events' but 'insiders to the larger culture'<sup>9</sup> and who are often resentful of the academic elite. It is significant, for instance, that in his famous disquisition into the flawed reasoning of professional historians, David Hackett Fischer does not include

what might be called the 'fallacy of conspiratorial causal attribution' among the over 30 fallacies that he distinguishes.<sup>10</sup> This would seem to indicate that among professional historians, at least in the English-speaking world to which Fischer's analysis is largely limited, conspiratorial reasoning is not common.

In this chapter I will begin by providing examples of conspiratorial modes of causal attribution among a number of Iranian historians. Of course the vast majority of academic Iranian historians have not had any use for conspiracy theories. The fact is, however, that those who have had a propensity to see conspiracies at work have had a wide readership. In the second section I will attempt to account for the popularity of conspiracy theories among these historians and the public in general, and end with an examination of the impact of conspiracy belief on Iranian political culture.

## **HISTORIANS' DELUSIONS OF CONSPIRACY**

Iranian historical narratives informed by conspiracy paradigms can be divided into two main types: particularistic and universalistic.<sup>11</sup> Particularistic theories implicate all the Western powers competing for influence in Iran, namely Great Britain, Russia and the United States, with those involving the British having been the most popular among members of the elite and the middle classes born before the Second World War. Universalistic theories see global forces at work to prevent Iran from attaining its natural position of political, military, cultural and religious superiority. The satanic conspirators include Hellenic Westernism, Freemasonry, Zionism, the Baha'i religion and even the Shi'ite clergy. The association of Jews and Freemasons is of course a topos in European conspiracy belief as well,<sup>12</sup> but the association of the Baha'i faith to the two is specific to Iran. It derives from the location of the religion's world centre in Israel and from the fact that many Iranian Baha'is were converts from Judaism.

The popularity of conspiracy theories in Iran can be dated to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–9 and especially the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907, which divided the country into two zones of influence.<sup>13</sup> In its aftermath the authority of the central government weakened, leading to a succession of foreign interventions such as the occupation of parts of Iran by British, Russian and Ottoman forces in the First World War in disregard of Iran's declared neutrality; the British attempt to gain a privileged position in Iran as per the 1919 agreement; and the backing of British officials in Iran for the coup d'état of

1921.<sup>14</sup> During most of this period, foreign legations both openly and covertly intervened through individual political notables, tribal khans, big merchants and the ulema. As a result, many members of the Iranian elite became agents of the Western powers and used foreign patronage to enhance their political power. Moreover, since the nineteenth century, elite members of Iran's religious minorities had received a Western education in missionary schools, making them cultural intermediaries between Western civilization and Iranian society. This led to suspicions among some that they were the Fifth Column for Western powers to subvert Islam in Iran. It is in this context of national sovereignty and cultural integrity under threat that an obsession with conspiracies developed.

The conspiratorial paradigm has informed the historical narratives produced by nationalist and conservative groups, religious fundamentalists and even a few Marxists. They will be discussed in that order.

### **Nationalist and Conservative Forces**

Nationalist groups have shown receptivity to a wide range of conspiracy theories from both the universalistic and particularistic repertoires, including the machinations of Hellenic-European forces, Zionism, Freemasons, adherents of the Baha'i religion, as well as British, Russian and American schemes.

One author in this mode was Zabih Bihruz, who argued that the Iranian nation had been the victim of a conspiracy perpetrated by the Western world from antiquity to the present, the purpose of this conspiracy being to prevent Iran from assuming its natural role as the world's most powerful nation. According to Bihruz, this conspiracy was responsible for spreading the false notion that Alexander of Macedonia had actually conquered Persia.<sup>15</sup> Bihruz held that clandestine Manichaean societies have proved to be the most vicious and destructive conspiratorial force in history: it is they who, disguised under various names, have been responsible for, *inter alia*, the defeat of Iran by the Arabs in the seventh century, the conquest of Iran by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, and all rebellious movements in medieval Islamic Persia.<sup>16</sup>

Of the particularistic types of conspiratorial schemes, the idea of British machinations behind all major world events (*dast-i pinhan-i Ingilis*) has been popular among a large number of nationalist and conservative narrators of history since the twentieth century. This worldview was applied retroactively to the nineteenth century, when Russia was still the dominant foreign power in Persia. For example, in an influential book titled 'The Hidden Hand of British

Policy in Iran', Ahmad Khan-Malik Sasani, an ardent anti-British conspiracy theorist, lays out a great British conspiracy to dismantle Persia.<sup>17</sup> The massacre of the Russian minister in Tehran, Aleksandr Griboedov, and his staff by a mob on 11 February 1829,<sup>18</sup> he avers, was intended to encourage Russia to annex the Caucasus and make further advances into Iran.<sup>19</sup> Then the British induced the Ottomans to occupy Bahrain, the Turkomans to seize Gorgan, and the Afghans to take Sistan.<sup>20</sup> They had the Grand Viziers Qa'im-Maqam and Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir murdered because these men championed Iran's territorial integrity.<sup>21</sup> He also asserts that British agents tricked the Russians into taking such outrageous measures as bombarding the shrine of the eighth Imam in Mashhad in February 1912 in order to foster Iranian hatred of Russians.<sup>22</sup> According to him, the British also meddled in religious matters. They controlled the ulema through the so-called 'Indian money', funds donated by Shi'ites of Awadh (Oudh) in British India and transferred to the ulema in Iraq through British diplomatic channels.<sup>23</sup> The British also encouraged the Babis to rebel in the mid-nineteenth century, instigated pogroms against the Baha'is to force them to collaborate with British agents in return for protection, and encouraged Jews to become Baha'is in order to allow them to forge closer ties with the families of Iranian notables and spy on them.<sup>24</sup>

Mahmud Mahmud, a more serious historian, has produced a detailed study of the alleged British scheme for Iran in his well-received and influential eight-volume opus titled 'A History of Anglo-Iranian Political Relations in the Nineteenth Century'.<sup>25</sup> Mahmud believed that the Qajars were under Russian protection and British influence for over a century. The Tobacco Rebellion of 1890–1 dealt a blow to British influence in Iran. However, the British learned a lesson and began to appreciate the significance of the ulema in mob mobilization. They used the 'Indian money', which was put at the disposal of the British envoy in Iran, to infiltrate the high-ranking ulema, and then instigated a group of them to demand a constitutional regime in 1905–7.<sup>26</sup> The Constitutional Revolution, according to Mahmud, led to the weakening of the state and the rise to power of the 'vile lower classes'. The main British objective in stage-managing the Constitutional Revolution was to dominate Iran through the 1907 Treaty with Russia, which divided Iran into two zones of influence. 'The British murdered the great and powerful Nasir al-Din Shah to replace him with the ailing Muzaffar al-Din Shah. They removed Muhammad 'Ali Shah to bring to the peacock throne the ailing boy, Ahmad Shah.'<sup>27</sup>

Even a simple fight can be linked to British designs. Hussain Makki relates that on 9 May 1923 an Iranian and a 'Nejdi Wahhabi Arab' got into a physical fight in Bahrain. After the fight ended, the Iranians thought the matter was over, but the Nejdi Arabs, 'either because of innate wickedness or because they were following foreigners' orders', came back armed, killing three Iranians and injuring 37 others. Makki adds: 'These facts are very interesting and meaningful for all those who know the recent history of Eastern peoples. If the documents pertaining to this affair are ever put at the disposal of a truth-seeking historian, you will see that this affair, along with hundreds and thousands of others, is artificial and the clean blood of a number of Eastern individuals was sacrificed to unclean ends. *The events that occur in the world are all linked.*'<sup>28</sup>

Most of these ideas about a 'hidden British hand' are shared by nationalists of both the Monarchist and National Front persuasions. The two schools of thought are divided, however, on the subject of British connections during the reign of the Pahlavi Shahs. The Musaddiqists share with religious conservatives and fundamentalists the view that the Pahlavis were in league with the British. Not surprisingly, the Pahlavi Shahs and the Pahlavi school of historical writing promote the idea that both Musaddiq and Khumayni had British connections.

The fall of the Qajars and the rise of the Pahlavis is a favourite topic of conspiracy theorists. Some believe that the British plotted to overthrow the Qajars from the time the Russians established the succession of Qajar monarchs in the line of Crown Prince Abbas Mirza as part of the Turkmanchay Treaty in 1828.<sup>29</sup> The Monarchists (e.g., Reza Niyazmand) argue that Reza Khan had actually attempted a coup with German aid as early as 1917, concluding that the fact that in the end it was the British who actually helped him stage the coup d'état of 22 February 1921 does not substantiate in and of itself the claim that Reza Khan was a British lackey.<sup>30</sup> The undisputed fact of a British role in the coup has grown into a mythology in which every event and every action by Reza Khan (later Reza Shah) was controlled by the British.<sup>31</sup> Thus, many (such as Dr. Musaddiq) believed that Reza Shah was commissioned by British intelligence to build the trans-Iranian railway in 1933–8 in provident anticipation of its usefulness for conveying supplies to the Soviets during the Second World War. The unveiling of women, the attempt to purify the Persian language by ridding it of Arabic loan-words, the uncovering of plots against the life of Reza Shah, and even the establishment of the National Bank and the issuance of paper currency were all part of a British design to contaminate Iranian culture, foment Arab–Iranian

conflict, control the Shah and plunder Iran's gold and silver.<sup>32</sup> The British were also said to have established the Qum theological centre in the early 1920s with the secret support of Reza Khan as part of a scheme to contain Communist encroachments in Iran.<sup>33</sup>

The grant of oil concessions to the British and the activities of the British Petroleum Company have also been the subject of elaborate conspiracy theories since the turn of the century. Reza Shah's cancellation of the D'Arcy concession and conclusion of a new oil agreement in 1933 have all been interpreted as a deliberate British design by Musaddiq and his followers, who suspected that Reza Shah's actions were motivated by the desire of the British to extend the term of the concession for 32 more years while at the same time legitimizing it by subjecting it to parliamentary approval, since it had originally been granted in the pre-Constitutional period.<sup>34</sup>

For obvious reasons, the Allied invasion of Iran in 1941 and the country's occupation by British, Soviet and American forces led Iranians to interpret subsequent events in light of conspiracies. The ascension to the throne of Crown Prince Muhammad Reza, the selection of cabinets, the results of parliamentary elections, the rise and fall of personalities, political parties, social clubs and newspapers and even famines and food shortages were all attributed to British scheming.<sup>35</sup> Another conspiracy theory holds that the pro-Soviet Tudah party was formed by British agents and served the interests of the British Petroleum Company.<sup>36</sup>

At the time of the 1979 revolution, the notion of a British anti-Iranian conspiracy reappeared. The anti-American posture of the revolution and the BBC's regular broadcasting of the daily news of the revolution left no doubts for the Shah and for many older upper- and middle-class Iranians that British agents had stage-managed the revolution.<sup>37</sup> A former member of the Iranian government, for example, suggested that the British, in order to stop the industrialization of the Middle East, decided to destroy Iran, using the clergy. Even academics were included in the theorizing, for the author avers that the noted English orientalist Ann Lambton wrote a blueprint for obscurantist government,<sup>38</sup> and another eminent British orientalist, Bernard Lewis, was dispatched to the United States to implement the plan for the British, while making it seem as though the Americans were responsible. The author adds that 'the few people who were involved in overthrowing the Pahlavi regime were for the most part, like Prof. Lewis, Jewish'.<sup>39</sup> Which brings us to universalist conspiracy theories,



which in both nationalist and fundamentalist historiography are focused on Freemasonry, Jews and Baha'is.

It is commonly believed that various elite groups in pre-revolutionary Iranian society were organized in secret Masonic lodges under British control. The British, it is believed, use Freemasonry to advance their secret designs to control world affairs. Isma'il Ra'in, an influential historian of the pre-revolutionary period, penned a multi-volume book on Freemasonry in which he accused almost all elite groups such as courtiers, landowners, tribal chiefs, intellectuals, leading ulema, great merchants, contractors, influence-peddlers and most politicians, including MPs and cabinet members, of being controlled by Masons.<sup>40</sup> Conspiracy narrators also point to the role of well-known Masons as evidence that the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, like the French Revolution, was designed and perpetrated by Freemasons. Freemasons are also thought to have played an important part in the founding of the Pahlavi dynasty.<sup>41</sup>

One chooses to become a Mason, but one is usually born into a religious community. This has not prevented Iranian historians from casting aspersions on entire communities by associating them with hostile foreign powers. Baha'is have been the main targets of such accusations,<sup>42</sup> but Jews are mentioned as well.

The foundational text of much anti-Baha'i polemics is a fictitious memoir attributed to Prince Dimitri Ivanovich Dolgorukov, Russian minister in Iran in 1846–54. In it, Dolgorukov describes how he created the Babi/Baha'i religion so as to weaken Iran and Shi'ism. This document, which is in many ways a functional equivalent of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first circulated in Iran in the late 1930s, and although it was soon shown to be a forgery,<sup>43</sup> it is still reprinted on occasion and referred to in polemical texts.

Firaydun Adamiyat, arguably the most influential Iranian historian of the second half of the twentieth century, evinces a hostile attitude towards both Baha'is and Jews. In his book on the nineteenth-century reformer Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, Adamiyat's virulent nationalism leads him to associate all religious minorities other than Zoroastrians with foreign powers. In his chapter on the Bab, he quotes Lord Curzon on the fact that the Bab's successor, Mirza Subh-i Azal, received a British allowance in his Cypriot exile, which leads him to aver that Subh-i Azal and his followers, the Azalis, were supported by the British. While Curzon indeed states that Subh-i Azal 'is in receipt of a pension from the British government',<sup>44</sup> he dismisses the Azalis as unimportant – begging the

question why the British would have tried to instrumentalize them. Adamiyat then adds the non sequitur that Russians took Subh-i Azal's brother and rival Mirza Hussain-'Ali, the founder of the Baha'i faith, 'and consequently the Baha'is' under their protection'. Adamiyat quotes Valentine Chirol to the effect that Baha'is were Russian spies and that Babism (by which Chirol meant Baha'ism) spread as a result of Russian efforts, especially those of one Captain Toumanky.<sup>45</sup> Here is what Chirol actually wrote:

Perhaps the best proof of the widespread influence of Babiism is the attention which the Russians have paid to it. One of their ablest agents, Captain Toumanky, has made careful studies of the Babi movement in all its bearings, and translated the most important scriptures into Russian. Throughout Persia they keep in close touch with its leaders, thus acquiring valuable sources of information amongst all classes, and on Russian territory outside the Persian frontier they treat the Babis with marked favour. It is, however, difficult even for the Russians always to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, and during the recent riots at Isfahan the Babis who tried to seek refuge at the Russian Consulate found it closed against them, and were massacred at its very gates.

Chirol does add that when anti-Babi (i.e., anti-Baha'i) riots broke out in Tehran a bit later, they were put down by 'a party of Cossacks' which included 'a few Babis',<sup>46</sup> but one must remember that the rank and file of the Persian Cossack Brigade consisted of Persians. This excerpt shows how Adamiyat misquotes Chirol to fit his own conspiracy belief. With the end of the Czarist empire, he continues, Russian protection for Baha'is ended, and then Palestine fell into British hands and attracted Baha'is. Lord Allenby knighted their new leader, Abdalbaha, and 'from now on Baha'is entered British political service' and 'this stream, too, flowed into the Thames'.<sup>47</sup> Nor were Baha'is the only target of his suspicions. Earlier in the text, our ever so patriotic historian asseverates that 'Jews, too benefited from English protection and many spies were chosen from among them, and they played an especially big role in the matter of Khurasan, Afghanistan, and Turkistan'.<sup>48</sup> Here he quotes J. P. Ferrier, who actually wrote, on the pages indicated by Adamiyat, an account of the cruel anti-Jewish riots of Mashhad in 1839 and the forced conversions that followed. Ferrier then writes that many Jews fled to Herat, and these 'are ready to be of service, polite, and certainly more loyal than what one generally expects, or indeed, sometimes finds in persons of that nation'. In a footnote he adds that in Herat 'Major Eldred

Pottinger had shown much kindness to them, and they were very well affected towards us.<sup>49</sup> Which is very far from evidence for spying and hardly betrays a generally philosemitic attitude on the part of the Briton.

Adamiyat's suspicion of Jews and Baha'is also carries over to his appreciation of fellow historians. In the introductory paragraph to the bibliography of his book on the Tobacco Regie of 1890–2, he dismisses as worthless the writings of a number of Jewish scholars, including Nikki R. Keddie, who 'with a fellowship of a Jewish organization studies Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (i.e., al-Afghani) and writes a treatise on the tobacco rebellion'.<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere he stated that Nikki Keddie's Jewishness induced her to exaggerate the role of the Shi'ite ulema in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–9.<sup>51</sup> He also accused Firuz Kazimzadah, a historian who happens to be a Baha'i, of harbouring a 'fanatic hostility' towards Iran and Iranians, and ascribes these feelings to his religious affiliation.<sup>52</sup> In fact, Kazimzadah was denied a teaching position in Iran in the early 1950s because of his faith,<sup>53</sup> and subsequently went on to have a distinguished career at Yale.

### Religious Conservatives and Fundamentalists

Religious conservatives and fundamentalists are in general inclined towards conspiracy schemes.

Fundamentalism in Iran entered a new phase in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution, when a group of young Islamic fundamentalists came together with Ahmad Fardid as their ideological mentor.<sup>54</sup> He provided the members of this group with a Heideggerian philosophical basis for an anti-humanist mode of historical interpretation, and provided a theoretical justification for the physical elimination of liberal intellectuals. Fardid's core fundamentalist objective was to wage a holy war against any and all manifestations of 'humanism' and *gharbzadagi* (literally 'plagued by the West' or 'Westoxication') in Iran. The term *gharbzadagi* was coined by Fardid himself, who had claimed even before the revolution that Freemasons and Jews had been engaged in a great conspiracy to Hellenize the world, including the West, since antiquity.<sup>55</sup> The concept of Westoxication appears to follow from the notion of the 'darkening of the world', a recurring theme in Martin Heidegger's works.<sup>56</sup> According to Fardid, the decadence of the West began in Hellenic philosophy with the human being's (*vujud*) loss of oneness with consciousness (*dilagahi*). Western man, immersed in technology, is more concerned with his being than with his spiritual calling in the world. Humanism, the idea that man is at the centre of the universe and replaces

God, has been the ethos of the West since the time of the Hellenic philosophers. This humanist ethos is in conflict, says Fardid, with the spiritual ethos of the Orient. But the Orient has lost its cultural potency and is dominated by Western civilization. The liberal conception of the free society is useless in a world in which being (*vujud*) and consciousness (*dilagahi*) are no longer well integrated; Fardid believes that the Constitutional Revolution in particular was tainted by the West through Freemasonry and Judaism.<sup>57</sup>

A glance at regime-sponsored history writing in the post-revolutionary period reveals a plethora of conspiracy schemes in interpreting the contemporary history of Iran in general, and the Constitutional Revolution, nationalist and liberal Islamic movements and the history of the Pahlavi era, in particular. Various conservative groups, newly established research institutions, government agencies and intelligence organizations all seem to have been engaged in a systematic effort to fabricate and disseminate all manners of conspiracy narratives. In fact, a number of institutions were established in the Islamic Republic for the sole purpose of rewriting the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iran in view of 'unveiling the machinations' of the great powers and other satanic forces against Islamic nations as a whole, and more specifically their religious centres and Shi'ite ulema. Some of the more active among these institutions are the Markaz-i Asnad-i Inqilab-i Islami (The Archive of the Islamic Revolution), the Markaz-i Barrasi-yi Asnad-i Tarikhi-yi Vizarat-i Ittila'at (The Centre for the Study of Historical Documents of the Ministry of Information [Intelligence]), the Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at va Pazhuhishha-yi Siyasi (The Institute of Political Research), the Markaz-i Barrasiha-yi Islami-yi Qum (Qum Centre of Islamic Studies) and the Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at-i Tarikh-i Mu'asir-i Iran (The Institute for the Study of Iranian Contemporary History). The main publications of fundamentalist groups, in addition to the daily newspaper *Kayhan*, include *Huviyyat* (identity), named after a television programme in which most Iranian intellectuals were defamed as foreign agents. In the latter part of 1990s, not long after the publication and circulation of these historical narratives, some of the more prominent of the intellectuals so denounced became victims of what became known as the chain murders.<sup>58</sup> In the late-1990s, as part of an assault on the reform movement, the publishing company of the newspaper *Kayhan*, published a series of books titled 'The Hidden Half', which denounced a hodgepodge of journalists, politicians, academics and intellectuals of widely different political persuasions as agents of foreign powers. The first individual to

be introduced to the public is Dariush Humayun, a cabinet member under the Shah. A member of Iran's Nazi party (SUMKA) in his youth, he is accused of having been an agent of the 'Jewish Agency' in Iran!<sup>59</sup>

Fundamentalist historiography, such as there is, partakes of nationalist and conservative views of particularistic conspiracies. For instance, in a book published soon after the revolution in Qum and titled 'The True Face of Musaddiq al-Saltana', Hassan Ayat wrote soon after the Islamic revolution that Musaddiq was not only not a true nationalist, he did nothing other than work for the benefit of foreign powers. The book also denies that he had anything to do with the nationalization of Iranian oil.<sup>60</sup> But fundamentalist historiography evinces special virulence in the denunciation of universalist conspiracies, in particular Zionism, which is almost always a euphemism for Jews. While more worldly anti-Zionists often like to distinguish between opposition to Jews and opposition to Zionism, disavowing the former while upholding the latter, at least in the Iranian case many of those who denounce Zionist conspiracies see it as a contemporary avatar of an age-old conspiracy by Jews to subvert Islam. A clear statement of this can often be found on the very first pages of fundamentalist writings. For example, in a learned treatise on *Isra'iliyat* (stories of Jewish origin found in Muslim books) published by the Radio and Television Organization of the Islamic Republic, we read on the very first page that 'the Jews, who were injured enemies of Islam, which had put an end to their glory and dominion and abolished their spurious privileges, always maintained hatred and rancour against Islam in their hearts. [They] never ceased to conspire and plot against Islam, no ruse being ever refused by them. One of the tricks they used to attain their infamous goals was to pollute the limpid water of religious knowledge with their superstitious trifles and legends, and with embellishments that were either the products of their sick minds or had their roots in their falsified books.'<sup>61</sup>

Freemasonry is another favourite target of fundamentalists, and many books about it have appeared in Iran. To give but one example, a book titled 'The Influence of Freemasonry in the Management of Cultural Institutions' informs the reader on the first page that 'devotees of Western culture' became attracted to Freemasonry during their sojourn in Europe, and after their return to Iran they became the guardians of Western interests in Iran. The book then presents case studies of Tehran University, Shiraz University, and the Ministry of Education.<sup>62</sup>

The combined Zionist and Masonic conspiracy is often assumed to be connected to the Baha'i faith, and this Iranian religion is often called *nawmasuni*,

‘neo-Masonry’<sup>63</sup> – even though Iranian Masons did not admit Baha’is and the authorities of the Baha’i faith do not permit the initiation of Baha’is into the order.<sup>64</sup> Particularist and universalist conspiracy belief come together in a multi-volume study of world history by ‘Abdallah Shahbazi, which begins with the rise of the West and analyzes the expansion of Western influence in the world in terms of conspiracies perpetrated by Jews and Masons. One departure from the anti-minority stance of the secular nationalists and conservatives is that fundamentalist conspiracy belief also targets Zoroastrians, whom nationalists consider to be the ‘true’ Iranians. The connection with imperialism is established by ascribing evil intentions to Indian Parsis who, protected by Britain, established contact with their Iranian coreligionists.<sup>65</sup>

### Historical Narratives of Marxists

Iranian Marxists, too, have been affected by conspiracy belief, ascribing many internal events, even the revolution of 1978–9, to Western imperialist plots.<sup>66</sup> Thus Huma Natiq (Homa Nategh) established a parallel between the coup d’état of 1953 and the Islamic outcome of the revolution of 1978–9, and concluded that the latter was a Western imperialist plot as well.<sup>67</sup>

Conspiracies of US imperialism are a recurrent theme in most Iranian Marxist literature, and Maoists added conspiracies by ‘Soviet social imperialism’ to this.<sup>68</sup> In the years before the revolution, *Danishju*, the influential publication of the Confederation of Iranian Students,<sup>69</sup> in particular, often articulated conspiratorial analyses. Thus, the inflationary tendencies in the Iranian economy were attributed to the plundering policies of imperialism.<sup>70</sup> Elsewhere, the purported decline of Iranian agriculture was also attributed to imperialism.<sup>71</sup>

Universalist conspiracy theories also had their adepts among Marxists. In a book titled ‘The Role of Freemasons in Social Events’,<sup>72</sup> the author, after revealing his ideology by dividing human history into stages called primitive communism, slave-owning, feudalism and capitalism, and asserting that bourgeois nationalism and parliamentary democracy were propaganda tools to fool the masses,<sup>73</sup> reveals that Freemasons caused most calamities in modern Iranian history, including the deaths of Sattar Khan and Baqir Khan, two leaders of the Constitutionalist movement, and that of Shaykh Muhammad Khiyabani, a progressive political leader of the late 1910s.<sup>74</sup>

Of course not all Iranian Marxists indulged in conspiracy theorizing. One who did not was Khalil Maliki, who was a founding member of the Communist Tudah party but broke with it in 1948.<sup>75</sup>

## TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION

With few exceptions, these fanciful interpretations of Iranian history have been authored by Iranians.<sup>76</sup> What accounts for Iranians' conspiracy belief? As I have tried to show throughout this chapter, Iranians are not alone in being receptive to it.

### The Impact of Operational Conspiracies

One reason for the popularity of conspiracy belief that is more specific to Iran but still has nothing to do with Iranian culture is the simple and incontrovertible fact, the enunciation of which many readers have no doubt been waiting for with growing impatience, that Iran has indeed been the object of foreign conspiracies. This was also due to the geopolitical situation of Iran, as the country's continued nominal sovereignty in the heyday of European imperialism was due to its being a neutral buffer state between the Russian and British empires, which turned it into an arena in which the Russian and British governments competed for influence and conspired with local leaders to thwart the interests of their rivals. In other words, even a paranoid has enemies, a fact often overlooked by Western critics of Middle Eastern conspiracy belief.<sup>77</sup> While Ann Lambton did not write the blueprint for theocracy in Iran, she did suggest in 1951 that covert means be used to oust Muhammad Musaddiq, her first choice as the replacement for the then-still-constitutionally-mandated Prime Minister being Sayyid Zia Tabataba'i, a pro-British conservative politician who had already been Prime Minister for a brief period as a result of the 1921 coup d'état which received decisive support from British forces in Iran.<sup>78</sup> Such real-life one-time conspiracies have been called 'operational conspiracies',<sup>79</sup> and recourse to them by outside powers obviously reinforces the credibility of wider conspiracy theories that see the hidden hands of foreign powers *everywhere*. Such recourse need not be actual, it suffices if it is justified in theory and included in policy recommendations. Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, some American analysts' treatment of it has poured water on the mills of those who believe the Shah to have been an American puppet. Every time an American speaks of the Iranian revolution, an episode that had profound domestic roots, as 'the loss of Iran' or as a foreign policy 'débâcle',<sup>80</sup> he unwittingly confirms Iranian suspicions. When such analysts then proceed to examine what the US government could have done to prevent the Shah's ouster, they signify that they consider it proper for Americans to decide who runs Iran: precisely what Iranian proponents of conspiracy theories accuse them of having

done. What distinguishes the paranoid style from a sober analysis of operational conspiracies is, to quote Hofstadter, 'not that its exponents see conspiracies here and there in history, but that they regard "vast" or "gigantic" conspiracy as *the motive force* in historical events'.<sup>81</sup>

### Iranian Culture

We now come to those features of Iranian culture that may have furnished a favourable plausibility structure for conspiracy belief.<sup>82</sup> Let us take the three principal characteristics of conspiracy theories in the order in which they were listed at the beginning of this chapter.

First, the attribution of all occurrences to conscious human action. This would seem to run counter to the belief in the ineluctability of fate (*qismat, qaza u qadar*) that is ascribed to traditional Iranian culture. If the belief in the omnipotence of foreigners persists anyway, this is because of their repeatedly demonstrated superiority over Iran beginning in the early nineteenth century. By the same token, belief in foreigners' omnipotence may have been a means to deflect attention from one's own weaknesses. It is true that Musaddiq was overthrown by an Anglo-American conspiracy, but why, the historian must ask, was his government so fragile that it *could* so easily be toppled?

Second, the sharp distinction between the human forces of good and evil. This obviously resonates with ancient Iranian dualism, which saw the world as an arena in which the forces of good battle the forces of evil. The prophet Mani, after all, was an Iranian.

Third, the notion that nothing is at it seems. Here there is congruence, as Iranian culture is indeed pervaded by the idea that appearances are deceiving, and that there is a fundamental opposition between an idealized pure inner core, and an almost inevitably corrupt outer sphere, the *batin* and the *zahir*.<sup>83</sup> This attitude finds religious expression in the Twelver Shi'ite notion that the first eleven Imams were killed by conspiracies of caliphs, and in the practice of *taqiyya*, which allows believers to dissimulate their beliefs under certain circumstances, circumstances whose definition has often been broadened in practice. In terms of Iran's political culture, this distrust of appearances has translated into a high level of mistrust,<sup>84</sup> which is reflected, for example, in the paucity of genuine political parties and the disinclination to compromise, as we shall see below.

All of these cultural traits may be amplified by a certain proclivity for exaggeration that inheres in Iranian culture, a trait that is the polar opposite of



British understatement.<sup>85</sup> This is not a Western stereotype of an Oriental Other, but a fact of life attested in the Persian notion of *igbraq-i sha'iranah* (poetic exaggeration), and even more directly in the Turkish expression *acem mübalağası* (Persian exaggeration).

Ultimately, the prevalence of conspiratorial modes of causal attribution among Iranian historians may also reflect the generally low level of intellectual sophistication of many contemporary Iranian historians. In Iran, as in other Third World countries, a bright student goes to university to become a *duktur*, *muhandis* (doctor or engineer), and *tarikḥ*, *jughrafi* (history and geography) are a byword for useless subjects that one studies when one has failed to be admitted at the *kunkur* (competitive entrance exam for higher education) for any more respectable discipline. In a relatively role-undifferentiated society like that of Iran, historians often become public intellectuals, just as public intellectuals, who, given the high prestige of poets and literati in Iranian society, often have a background in literature, feel free to opine on matters of history. This has meant that the conspiratorial mindset has been defused in society and informs public life. The writer and essayist Jalal Al-i Ahmad is a case in point. In his now famous book *Gharbzadagi*, the central tenet of which he took from the above-mentioned Fardid, he set forth an interpretation of Iranian history that ascribed all ills to conspiracies that came from the West – including Islam.<sup>86</sup> More recently, the exiled literary scholar Jalal Matini, whose lead articles in his quarterly journal *Iranshinasi* routinely cast aspersions on all kinds of non-Iranians (or 'ill-informed' Iranians) for being anti-Iranian, recently published a series of articles in which he tried to show that Muhammad Musaddiq was an ally of the British.<sup>87</sup>

Given the fact that such writers are more widely read than professional historians, who, as we saw in the previous section, sometimes harbour similar thoughts anyway, the reality of the victimization of 'true' Iran, that is, 'Aryan' Iran for nationalists and 'Muslim' (in reality: Twelver Shi'ite) Iran for Islamists, is maintained in countless conversations, allusions and routinely (and unself-consciously) invoked interpretive schemes.<sup>88</sup> Thus the history of Iran popularized among average Iranians by school textbooks<sup>89</sup> never presents Iranian history as the record of the cross-fertilization of different cultures but always as the victimization of virtuous Iranians by cruel and unscrupulous non-Iranians, with political conflicts always interpreted as clashes of 'national' cultures. To take the example of the Achaemenids' wars with the Greeks, the fact that 'Iranian'

troops comprised many Greeks from Asia Minor and that 'Iranian' ships were actually Phoenician, and also the fact that Alexander adopted Persian court etiquette and saw himself as successor to the Achaemenids after the conquest of Persepolis, are not conveyed in 'modern' history books. Ironically, the traditional image of Alexander as the grandson of the Iranian king who returned from *Rum* to claim the Iranian crown that was his by right of inheritance, a story contained in Firdawsi's *Shahnama*,<sup>90</sup> however fantastic it may be, comes actually closer in spirit to the actual encounter between Greeks and Persians in antiquity, which was characterized at least as much by mutual cultural influence as by military conflict.<sup>91</sup> The same is true for Iranians' encounters with Arabs, Turks and even Mongols.<sup>92</sup>

### THE IMPACT OF CONSPIRACY BELIEF ON POLITICAL CULTURE

Although Iran's leaders are more often than not the objects of conspiracy belief, they themselves have been prone to it. The Pahlavi Shahs were cases in point. Reza Shah believed that 'the British were behind all evils of the world'. He even suspected his son [then Crown Prince Muhammad Reza] of being a British agent.<sup>93</sup> As the last Shah's long-time Court Minister and confidant, Amir Asadallah Alam, relates, 'The Shah's suspicions of the British [were] quite incredible; he tend[ed] to see their secret hand behind virtually every international incident.'<sup>94</sup> Muhammad Reza Shah believed that the attempts against his life in 1950 and 1966 were instigated by the British and the Soviets.<sup>95</sup> He also thought, for example, that while Iraq's President Hassan al-Bakr might pose as an Anglophobe, in reality he was a lackey of the British.<sup>96</sup> Muhammad Reza Shah even suspected the anti-British Musaddiq of being a British agent, and believed that the Western powers agreed to replace him with an Islamic regime.<sup>97</sup>

While Alam disagreed with the Shah's belief in particularistic conspiracies, he did believe in conspiracies of the universalist variety, and had a low opinion of the usual suspects: Freemasons and Baha'is. In his diary entry for 13 September 1973, Alam writes: 'Today I went to the celebration of the birthday of the Imam of the Age at Gulistan Palace. Usually I do not attend the religious ceremonies of the Court, as I have no time. But this feast day I always attend, to distinguish myself from the Baha'is. These *bi-vatan* (unpatriotic) Baha'is have infiltrated all walks of public life. It is thought that half the cabinet is Baha'i, causing

a lot of dissatisfaction among the people. General Ayadi, the Shah's personal physician, is known to be a Baha'i, which hurts the Shahanshah a lot.<sup>98</sup> Alam seems to have held a similar view on Freemasons. He suspected Freemasons of having engineered the downfall of Richard Nixon, as the 'basis of Freemasonry is the destruction of patriotic personalities'.<sup>99</sup> Elsewhere he asks rhetorically, 'is it possible for a Freemason, an International[ist], a member of the CIA, a Baha'i, and still have the interests of his nation at heart?'<sup>100</sup>

Alam's deputy for cultural affairs, Shuja' al-Din Shafa, has spun elaborate conspiracy theories in his exile, theories that centre on the Shi'ite ulema. In a book that is widely read among royalist emigrés, he wrote: 'The emergence of the Shi'ite ulema in the tenth century constitutes the greatest conspiracy in Iranian history and perhaps the oldest conspiracy in the world.'<sup>101</sup>

Among the post-revolutionary political elite, conspiracy belief has been even more pronounced. In his treatise on Islamic government, written in his Iraqi exile, Ayatollah Khomeini stated: 'From the beginning, the historical movement of Islam has had to contend with the Jews, for it was they who first established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems, and, as you can see, their activity continues down to the present. Later they were joined by other groups, who were in certain respects more satanic than they.'<sup>102</sup> After his return to Iran, he called America the 'Great Satan' and considered it a conspirer engaged in a continuous plot against Iran and Islam.<sup>103</sup> The Islamic Republic's first president, Abu al-Hassan Banisadr, for his part, propounded the idea that Khomeini was engaged in a conspiracy with the Republican Party to delay the release of the US hostages so as to sway the American electorate against incumbent President Jimmy Carter.<sup>104</sup>

The internalized 'reality' of hostile conspiracies threatening Iran into which Iranians at all levels of society are socialized, has had a number of consequences for political culture. The first is the disrepute of compromise in politics. Compromise is the essence of deliberative politics, as it rejects the logic of zero-sum games and thus minimizes the likelihood of the emergence of resentful losers who will seek revenge at the first opportunity. In Persian, however, the word for compromise, *sazish*, connotes sell-out, if not actual treachery.<sup>105</sup> Iranian politicians and politically interested observers have tended to suspect or accuse those politicians and public figures with whom they disagree (or simply compete for power) of collusion with foreign powers who, *by definition*, wish Iran ill. This is hardly conducive to compromise, as any give-and-take with those of the opposite camp

would compromise (no pun intended) one's patriotic credentials. Politicians like Vusuq al-Dawlah, his brother Ahmad Qavam, his son-in-law 'Ali Amini, and Shapur Bakhtiar, men with impeccable intellectual and patriotic credentials who accepted the prime ministership under difficult circumstances in 1919, 1946, 1961 and 1978, respectively, and who tried to make compromises to lead their country out of a general crisis, were abandoned by most of the political class and have, by and large, not been treated kindly by Iranian historiography, even when they succeeded brilliantly, like Ahmad Qavam, who helped safeguard Iran's territorial integrity by dealing astutely with Stalin.<sup>106</sup> The corollary of this is widespread adulation for those who 'never compromised' – no matter what the final outcome of their self-righteous stubbornness. Here the two obvious examples are Muhammad Musaddiq and Ayatollah Ruhallah Khumayni.

In an article written more than a decade before Khumayni's rise to power, an event that gave the Weberian concept of 'charisma' new currency in scholarly discourse, Robert Tucker noted that there was a connection between the appearance of charismatic authority in a society and the prevalence of conspiracy theories, as the charismatic leader offers to lead the struggle against the conspiracies. The two actually reinforce each other: 'The leader's personality becomes more salient and magnetic for many because of its identification with the conspiracy doctrine, and the latter, however fantastic it may be, becomes more believable because of the leader's earnestness, the obsessive conviction with which he portrays the conspiracy and inveighs against it.'<sup>107</sup> Iranians' receptivity to charismatic appeals would seem not to be unrelated to the millennial expectation inherent in Twelver Shi'ism, although of course most people who were attracted to Musaddiq and Khumayni knew full well that neither of them was the Twelfth Imam.

A third consequence of conspiracy belief for political culture is the marginalization and discrimination of religious and, to a lesser extent, lingual minorities. At least since Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, Iranian nationalism has contained racist and antisemitic streaks,<sup>108</sup> and what with the conflation of patriotism and nationalism, a conflation that is particularly pronounced in Iran due to its sovereignty having been repeatedly violated by outside powers, religious minorities were not even commonly accepted (except perhaps by sympathizers of the Tudah party) as full members of the national community under the Shah,<sup>109</sup> let alone the Islamic Republic. In the Islamic Republic, official discourse routinely speaks of the 'Islamic country' (*kishvar-i islami*) of Iran and the 'Muslim nation' (*millat-i musalman*) of Iran, expressions that by definition exclude non-Muslims.

Religious minorities face a certain amount of resentment in most societies and are often suspected of collusion with their coreligionists beyond their borders – let us not forget how John F. Kennedy had to struggle to overcome Protestant misgivings about his taking orders from Rome. Therefore, the anti-minority suspicions of many of those Iranians who happen to belong to the official state religion, while offensive to all those who conceive of a nation as a *civic* community, is in and of itself not astonishing.<sup>110</sup> But when historians like Firaydun Adamiyat lend their intellectual authority to the association of patriotism and prejudice, civil and human rights violations are implicitly justified. Majority Iranians' indifference to the repression and discrimination of religious minorities, Baha'is in particular, can perhaps be largely explained by the routine character of their denunciation as foreign agents. While secular opponents of the Islamic regime are quick to condemn its human rights abuses, the murder of close to 250 Baha'is since the revolution has elicited relatively little public outrage from Iranian defenders of human rights.<sup>111</sup> As late as 1998, while Iranians both inside and outside Iran waxed eloquent about 'civil' society, the killing of five Muslim-identified dissidents generated far more criticism than the contemporaneous renewal of attacks against Baha'is.<sup>112</sup> It took a quarter century for this silence to be broken, when Shirin Ebadi, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, said in her keynote address to the Fifth Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies in 2004 that 'the rights of the followers of other beliefs, people such as the Bahais in Iran are overlooked and neglected'.<sup>113</sup>

Matters are somewhat less dramatic in the case of non-Persian Muslims in Iran. With the substitution of an identity-based notion of nationhood for the traditional territorial definition in the early twentieth century, the 'true' Iranian came to be defined as a Persian-speaker. Any affirmation of Arab identity in Khouzestan or Turkic identity in Azarbaijan is *automatically* suspected of separatist motivations, which serves to justify repression of local cultures, inaugurating a vicious circle that further radicalizes the upholders of peripheral cultures. This is not to deny that non-Persian pan-nationalisms do indeed tug at Iran's ethnic minorities, but the appeal of irredentist sirens can only grow if non-Persian Iranians who express a fondness for their language and culture are *ipso facto* suspected of conspiring with outsiders to dismember Iran.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, Iranians' conspiracy belief may have affected relations with Iran's neighbours, as successive Iranian leaders have suspected adjacent countries' leaders of collusion with the big powers in view of harming Iran. This view

of one's neighbouring states' leaders as puppets of outside powers is of course common in the entire Middle East, leading L. Carl Brown to speak of Middle Easterners' 'puppeteer theory of international relations'.<sup>115</sup> Many Iranians are still not reconciled to the independence of Bahrain,<sup>116</sup> and feel moved to denounce Russian and British imperialism whenever conversation turns to the Republic of Azerbaijan or Pakistani Baluchistan. This sense of perennial victimhood complicates relations with Iran's neighbours,<sup>117</sup> ultimately to the detriment of Iran and the rest of the Middle East, which is the only region of the world without a regional organization analogous to the African Union or the Association of South East Asian Nations.<sup>118</sup> Where the prevalence of conspiracy belief is most damaging is in Iran's relations with Israel, a country with which Iran shares no border and has no history of territorial or economic conflict, and with which a foreign policy based on a sober assessment of Iran's national interest would pursue if not cordial, then at least businesslike relations.

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this chapter we saw that conspiracy theories appeared after the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–9. A hundred years later there are signs that their popularity is declining. The beginning of the decline of conspiracy belief can perhaps be traced to the corrosive effect of humour. When Iraj Pizishkzad's novel *Da'i Jan Napil'un* appeared in the 1970s and was soon turned into a very popular television series,<sup>119</sup> Iranians for the first time laughed at the conspiracy-centred worldview of a paranoid patriot. The ability to laugh at a belief is a sign that it is no longer taken for granted, but even then many readers of Pizishkzad's comic masterpiece took the novel as a confirmation of the continued relevance of such attitudes, as the author himself has acknowledged.<sup>120</sup>

The success of the revolution and the subsequent occupation of the US embassy and the seizure of the American hostages in November 1979, which were motivated by the fear of another American conspiracy to restore the Shah to the throne, proved the correctness, in the short run, of Khumayni's often-repeated dismissal of American power, politely translated as 'America can't do a damn thing'. This gave Iranians self-confidence, as did the expulsion of Iraqi troops by 1982 from most of the Iranian territories they had occupied after Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iran in the autumn of 1980. By demonstrating to Iranians that they were no longer helpless in the face of outside conspiracies

and could in fact thwart them, the belief in the omnipotence and ubiquity of foreign conspiracies began waning. In June 1988 the post-Islamist thinker Abd al-Karim Surush gave a lecture titled 'Religiosity and Intellectualism' in which he said: 'Political philosophers have taught us that the most decadent political analysis is that which [says] that the world and history are driven by a few conspiring individuals.' Admitting that there are real conspiracies in the world, he went on to suggest that conspiracy theories owed their popularity to their simplicity and the disinclination of people to think.<sup>121</sup> Surush was not alone: in the 1990s the analysis and rejection of conspiracy theories became part of the intellectual baggage of the reformist movement that culminated in the election of Muhammad Khatami to the presidency in 1997 and 2001. The generally freer intellectual climate of these years allowed for all sorts of documents and autobiographies to be published, leading to more sober analyses of modern Iranian history. Ahmad Ashraf's and Ervand Abrahamian's studies were translated into Persian,<sup>122</sup> and by the late 1990s Iranian intellectuals inside Iran began analyzing and debating the root causes and characteristics of conspiracy theories. While most adopted a critical perspective,<sup>123</sup> a few defended the notion that Iran has been a constant victim of conspiracies.<sup>124</sup> This development is less pronounced among exiled members of the former elite, for many of whom Anglo-American intrigues remain an emotionally gratifying pretext for not facing up to the root causes of their historic failure.<sup>125</sup>

After the end of the Iran–Iraq War and then that of the cold war, as globalization advanced and Iran's youth questioned revolutionary orthodoxies, hardliners among Iran's leadership ascribed this development to 'Western cultural aggression' (*tahajum-i farhangi-yi gharb*), going so far as to charge the National Security Council with the struggle against it. It is precisely when subjective reality is no longer taken for granted by new generations that an apparatus to legitimize it is set up by those who have a vested interest in its perpetuation.<sup>126</sup> Iran's current rulers derive part of the legitimacy from having triumphed over conspiracies, real or imagined, and the plethora of institutes dedicated to the maintenance of conspiracy belief has to be seen in that light. Among common people conspiracy belief is still strong,<sup>127</sup> but Iranians are not genetically programmed for conspiracy belief, and perhaps future generations will look back at the predilection for conspiracy theories of educated Iranians who should know better, such as the historians quoted in this chapter, as a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon.

# Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Historiography of Modern Iran

*Mana Kia, Afsaneh Najmabadi, and Sima Shakhsari*

## INTRODUCTION

How have the critical, feminist, and queer theoretical and historiographical challenges that have emerged within the broader contours of the discipline of history impacted modern Iranian historiography?<sup>1</sup> If, as we will propose in this chapter, little has changed, what does that mean for how we think about and write history? How is it that our habits of historical thinking have remained largely centered on writing history as stories of great events and great men, within which marginal room is made for exceptional women?

The two major events that have structured historical writing on twentieth-century Iran are the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution. The great men of our histories are the heroes and anti-heroes of these two events: nineteenth-century intellectuals and politicians, the two Tehran Sayyids and Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri, and the Qajar kings – some of them at least – followed by the Pahlavi Shahs, and figures of resistance such as Mudarris, Musaddiq, Al-i Ahmad, Shari'ati, and Khomeini.

The dominance of the two major revolutions of twentieth-century Iran over our historical narratives has produced an anticipatory mode of historical emplotment: what happened prior to these events is unproblematically written to anticipate and produce the events themselves. Our point, of course, is not to deny that the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution were 'important events.' Nor does it suggest that the men who figured in the stories of these events were not 'great men.' The point is that the dominance of this kind of narrative history has prevented us from asking 'what



makes particular moments in history great events?’ Of course, history writing is about something that really happened; it is not ‘fiction.’ But as one historian has noted, ‘The past happened. But what happened, we do not know and cannot find out. We can only try to represent what *may* have happened.’<sup>2</sup> Writing history is a cultural labor of remembering occurrences, set within particular narratives. As every remembering requires a great deal of forgetting, writing history is always already an act of shaping history. As an exercise in remembering, history itself reads (as its source) how others have remembered events. History writing is a continuous process of producing memories out of prior memories. It is in that sense that we ask: What constitutes ‘the eventness’ of these moments? What determines the historical greatness of some men? How is their ‘greatness’ constituted, and even more provocatively: how is their ‘man-ness’ constituted?

In other words, the purpose of this critical review of some of the best histories of modern Iran is not to catch authors’ blind spots, or find gaps in their texts. It is not an exercise in teasing out the absence of women, gender, and sexuality from their historical subjects and methodologies. That would imply that it is possible to write some sort of total history, when in fact all our narratives are, of necessity, selective and fragmentary. But to accept the impossibility of total history is an act of humility that many historians resist. Acceptance is not a nobler ethical stance. Rather, it encourages us to ask how our fragmentary selectivity of subjects and events affects our selection of sources, the questions we ask, and the reading and writing strategies that we choose. Moreover, depending on the questions we ask (or fail to ask), our selectivity may matter in important ways, in the sense that questions NOT asked, and paths NOT taken, radically shape our historical subjects and our approaches to sources. The scope of history has indeterminate possibilities, but writing history as a totality, or a piece of that totality, creates a subterfuge where the completeness of a given narrative is scrutinized, as opposed to the effect that a narrative frame may have on historical representation. How do we as historians contribute to the shaping of Iranian political culture by whom we include in and exclude from our narratives of Iranian modernity? How do we shape the notion of Iranianness through our forgetfulness and our memorializing?

In this chapter, we suggest that the seeming irrelevance of women as actors and gender/sexuality as an analytic result from the way our historiographies constitute the past. We propose to use the absences of gendered and sexed subjects

in a (self)critical way that addresses some of the challenges facing the historiography and political culture of modern Iran – the subject of this conference.

### STATE OF THE FIELD

In her assessment of Middle East Women's and Gender History, Marilyn Booth concludes that despite a growing, and at times ground-breaking, body of feminist historiography published over the past decade, 'for the most part, gender-aware historical scholarship remains parallel to, rather than incorporated within or central to the discipline of history in and on the Middle East/North Africa region. There remains among historians of the Middle East a silent resistance to the idea of gender as a socially constructed marker of difference within a field of power relations; too often, "women's history" is still regarded as denoting an "add women and stir" approach.'<sup>3</sup>

For our present purpose of assessing the contributions of feminist historiography to 'Historiography and Political Culture in Twentieth Century Iran,' we could begin by asking how, if at all, has feminist historiography changed our knowledge of that history? Has it changed the 'mainstream' historiography of modern Iran? Has it shifted either the topics of historical conversation or our sense of what are history's proper subjects?

Despite the productive move from 'women's history' to 'gendering history,' feminist scholarship has remained a topic of 'special interest,' delegated not to those historians who are interested in general history, but to those who specialize in women and gender.<sup>4</sup> The topic of sexuality is even more marginalized; those who pursue studies of sexuality are often assumed to be motivated by identity politics. This presumed political agenda is seen as a threat to the dispassionate objectivity of proper history which is, Agenda, closely quarantined from political concerns and implications. The proper historians continue to write our general histories.

The program of this conference, for instance, casts the major markers of Iran's history over the last century as 'three major wars; two coups; and two revolutions.' Such a vision for a conference on 'Historiography and Political Culture in Twentieth Century Iran' already defines history and marks the contours of historiography and political culture in particular ways. The critical assessment offered in the conference statement engages Iranian historiography on two levels: first, it focuses on the subjects of/in history, suggesting that, until recently, dominant historiography has been centered on the political elite, thus denying 'the agency

of the subaltern and its autonomous consciousness.’ Second, it addresses the current state of the discipline by distinguishing ‘three areas of historical research. [T]he macro political picture, economic, urban and demographic history [and] the social history of Iran.’ The statement then proposes a turn to subaltern history (as a sub-field of social history) to overcome some of the current limitations of the historiography of modern Iran. Social history, however, generally assumes its subjects as given by relying on class, ethnic and religious minorities, women, and other subjects of social history, including subaltern social history, as already constituted categories. As the critical debates on South Asian Subaltern Studies have extensively elaborated, if subaltern history simply replaces one set of subjects (the elite) with another – what Gayatri Spivak has called ‘subject-restoration’ – it remains oblivious to its own engagement in the production of subject-effects, as well as its own participation in the game of knowledge as power. As Spivak has articulated: ‘[T]hat which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. Yet the continuist and homogenist deliberative consciousness symptomatically requires a continuous and homogeneous cause for this effect and thus posits a sovereign and determining subject.’<sup>5</sup> While subaltern history has expanded the domain of subject categories (by adding peasants and workers, for instance), it has often re-inscribed and re-marginalized already marginalized approaches and topics, such as gender and non-normative sexualities. This is not a problem that can be dealt with by simply adding yet more categories, such as women, because such additions depend on given categories and the presumption of the possibility of completion of categories.

In what follows, we review and critique some of the major contributions to the study of modern Iranian history and culture, from the perspective of gender and sexuality studies in an effort to raise questions about how these methodological issues impact historiographies of modern Iran.

## ABSENT WOMEN

We begin with one of the most comprehensive social histories of twentieth-century Iran, namely, Ervand Abrahamian’s *Iran Between Two Revolutions*.<sup>6</sup> In a book exceptionally rich in detail within a Marxist structuralist framework,

Abrahamian seems to assume the self-conscious and autonomous individual as the subject of history. This centering of the subject cuts across the conditions of existence and the discursive constitution of political and social forces and classes; it produces a masculinist historiography focused on the ideas of these hero/subjects in which the relations of power that produce those thoughts and subjects are lost. The structuralist conceptualization of class is connected to the absence of gender in Abrahamian's historiography. Throughout his book, women are conspicuously absent, while Abrahamian avoids issues of gender that are widely recognized as heated points of contention throughout modern Iranian history. Women remain latecomers to this vision of history, with their subject-hood shaped in the wake of their male kin. Women's presence in these narratives is contingent upon their relations to already-constituted self-conscious male figures and organizations, while men's political activities and positions are never derived from *any female kin* associations.

There is almost no mention in Abrahamian's book of women's organizations or women activists in the context of women's rights, nationalist, or autocratic politics. The few times when he mentions individual women and organizations, it is in passing or as an extension of the Shah or other elite (male) politicians or organizations. The Patriotic Women's Society (PWS), for instance, appears as part of a list of the Socialist Party's activities. No agency is given to the PWS as an organization or to its activists. Indeed, only one of its activists, the first president of the organization, is mentioned; and she is referred to as 'Muhtaram Iskandari, the wife of Sulayman Iskandari,' leader of the Socialist Party.<sup>7</sup> The PWS's brief list of activities is framed within a list of the Socialist Party's activities (Abrahamian, pp. 127–128), reinforcing the impression that the PWS belonged to the Socialist Party just as the PWS leader belonged to the Socialist Party leader.

This tendency to portray women's organizations as unproblematic extensions of the 'main' (male) organization and to qualify the scant number of women mentioned with their marital ties to the 'main' (male) activists also occurs in the discussion of the Tudeh-affiliated Society of Democratic Women. 'The main personalities in these organizations were often the relatives of party leaders – but relatives who had achieved prominence in their own professions or had been active in the early women's movement, especially in the Patriotic Women's Society created by the Socialist Party' (Abrahamian, p. 335). What can we learn by including this women's movement in the historical narrative? Did women's organizations ever disagree with the 'parent' organizations, and if

so, what could this tell us about both the internal dynamics of these groups and the social forces around them? Did these activists actually have agency, or did male kin, through their female extensions (i.e., wives, daughters, sisters), move the women's movement? Does the contingency of women's activism explain why a woman such as Saddiqah Dawlatabadi (1882–1961), who lived an active political life from the mid-1910s through the early 1960s, but whose lifelong activities cannot be subsumed under those of her male relatives, gets no place in Abrahamian's history?

While Abrahamian did not propose to write a gendered history of Iran, his total lack of attention to issues of gender in the interest of writing a general political history reveals that historical generality is implicitly male. Even political and socio-economic issues that are loaded with gendered implications are unimportant in his analysis. In several places (for instance, Abrahamian, pp. 93, 123, 144, 276), Abrahamian notes in passing that gender issues, such as women's education, their legal status in the family, enfranchisement, and women's activity in the labor market created political and social uproar, yet evidently they merit little discussion. By excluding gender, Abrahamian also misses an opportunity to shed important light on his discussion of Iranian secularism. He notes that throughout the modern era, beginning with dissidents of the nineteenth-century (including religious dissent) and the reformers of the Constitutional Revolution, groups have called for 'legal equality of all, irrespective of birth and religion, to secure dignity for all citizens' (Abrahamian, p. 77). Did this language recognize equality and dignity for both men and women, or did it qualify the nature of liberty and citizenship, referring to men only? Abrahamian's silence mirrors the lacuna of Constitutionalist politics that excluded women from citizenship and naturalized 'all' in public political discourse as referring to men only. Even when he discusses a woman of apparent power within the framework of high politics, Abrahamian fails to situate her within the larger scope of Iran's history. We are told that after *Si-i Tir*<sup>8</sup> placed Musaddiq firmly in power, he 'struck not only at the shah and the military but also at the landed aristocracy and the two Houses of Parliament' (Abrahamian, p. 272). Abrahamian then notes that Musaddiq 'forced Princess Ashraf, the politically active twin sister of the shah, to leave the country' (Abrahamian, p. 272). If Ashraf Pahlavi was politically active, enough so to warrant being banished, why do we hear nothing else about her aside from an erroneous reference to her as Reza Shah's oldest daughter (Abrahamian, p. 149)? Is it because we already know her place in society unproblematically as

the Shah's twin sister? Abrahamian's silence produces a gendered political culture under the guise of transparent representation.

We know that this silence is not a question of lack of sources, thanks to Parvin Paidar's book, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran*.<sup>9</sup> Paidar covers almost exactly the same period as Abrahamian's work, and in doing so she places noteworthy emphasis on women activists and women's political organizations. Paidar also relies on the same historiographical paradigm as Abrahamian, dividing her book into three sections: discourse of modernity, discourse of revolution, and discourse of Islamization (which are meant to follow the assumed evolutionary path of the Iranian political process). This categorization raises a set of problems common to modernist histories of Iran, including a tendency to conflate modernization with modernity, and to assume that there was a discursive break between modernity and the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It provokes the question of whether or not the 1970s marked the end of the discourse of modernity.

Reflecting the problems associated with the critical historiography of women in modern Iran, Paidar also undermines any form of women's contestation with state policies and practices. Regardless of the attention she pays to individual women and women's organizations, the state continues to appear as the sole power that co-opts women's movements and awards women rights (Paidar, p. 142). The same pattern repeats itself in her discussion of Family Protection Laws, which she proclaims are the result of the state's modernization policy (Paidar, p. 155). Nonetheless, Paidar's historical analysis is important for recognizing the centrality of gender in twentieth-century Iranian discourse and for making the scant attention to gender in a book such as Abrahamian's appear glaring.

## SUBSERVIENT WOMEN

Projections of the modern state as the determining agent of women's rights currently dominate the writing of Iranian women's history: more frequently than not, states bestow while women receive. Even in a book of essays on Reza Shah's period which proposes to re-think 'history from below,' in most of the chapters, sole agency seems to rest with Reza Shah and other elite actors.<sup>10</sup> Although Cronin suggests that the anthology's chapters on women and gender aim 'to understand and articulate the experiences of women themselves, not merely as objects of state policy, but as active participants in their own history' (Cronin, p. 3), they are in fact based on the premise that all women's organizations were swallowed and digested by the state.

Shirin Mahdavi's article is the most reductive. Here the main social actors are a homogenous group of reactionary clerics set in opposition to the courageous and progressive Reza Shah. The organizations and activism of women prior to Reza Shah's addressing of 'the problems of the women of Iran' (Mahdavi in Cronin (ed), p. 184) are referred to briefly but dismissed as insignificant because 'these were lonely voices in the prevailing consensus of opinion adhering to the views of the Shi'i "ulama"' (Mahdavi in Cronin (ed), p. 183). The agency of even these few activists is, once again, derived from their husbands and fathers (Mahdavi in Cronin (ed), p. 187). Women have no agency of their own, their opinions and actions are parasitically drawn from the real subjects of history. It is Reza Shah who establishes the Ladies' Center, whose lectures are directly responsible for increasing the number of women who discarded their *hijab*. Historically, this article borders on ridiculous, since it seems unlikely that an organization founded in 1935 is responsible for the unveiling of some women in northern Tehran years earlier. For Mahdavi, who locates Iranian women's backwardness in their hijab, it is critical to the progress of the nation that the hijab be removed, by force if 'reason' does not prevail. And 'reason' does not prevail because women, as subjects who lack autonomy, have been 'brainwashed,' by 'centuries of indoctrination' (Mahdavi in Cronin (ed), p. 189).

By contrast, Rostam-Kolayi's essay in the same volume focuses more attention on women by discussing how the difference between the rights that middle and upper class women demanded for themselves, and the rights that they demanded on the behalf of lower class women, preserved class hierarchy. Professional jobs requiring higher education were set as the goals of the former, while vocational work, requiring primary education and training, was set as the goal of the latter. The objective was not upward mobility of the lower classes, but their modernization (Rostam-Kolayi in Cronin (ed), pp. 164–166). Rostam-Kolayi's narrative also tracks enforced unveiling as a gradual process that was greatly debated in the 1920s and early 1930s by a variety of social actors. Her approach displaces the notion that the state/Reza Shah was the sole mastermind of a suddenly announced and instantly implemented dictate, to which women merely complied. Nonetheless, when some activists enter the state, they are suddenly robbed of all agency. 'As the state grew in strength, even pro-government women reformers, such as those in *Alam-e Nesvan*, lost the ability to direct reform and were silenced' (Rostam-Kolayi in Cronin (ed), p. 158). She acknowledges the effect that activism had on Reza Shah's decision to unveil women, in other words how these women's activism

informed, and in turn was informed by, state policy. But once Reza Shah seized women's initiative for the state, this dialectic relation is lost.

### ADDED WOMEN

The issue at stake in asking where are women in these texts and how are they represented is not simply to retrieve history's agential women, but to challenge the notion of already constituted individuals as the proper subjects of history. It is this notion that accounts for the partial integration of women in some more recent texts as *additional* characters to the cast. Chapters are added, and women make a few more appearances in chapters largely about men (cast as the history of society), yet the question of how women and men are constituted in the first place is rarely asked. For women to be simply added to current stories, one has to assume that other characters, as well as the plot of the story, do not depend on the presence or absence of the women later added. That is, the assumption of a self-conscious and autonomous individual as the subject matter as well as the agent of history underwrites the emplotment of the narrative. Such centering of the individual subject ignores the conditions of its discursive production, and hinders our understanding of the relations of power that form these subjectivities. Our historical narratives act as one of the strands of production that constitute 'subject effects'; among other effects, these narratives produce men and women as the only legible subjects, as binarized sexes with polarized sexualities within a presumed regime of heterosexuality. Thus while sexuality, even more so than gender, seems to be missing from present histories of modern Iran, it is indeed a deeply buried, sedimented analytic upon which the readability of the heteronormalized binary man-woman is dependent. Woman as an added category becomes implicated in the production of modern heteronormativity.

Even in a book such as Janet Afary's, *The Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* women remain in this additive mode.<sup>11</sup> For Afary, women, along with peasants and other groups, constitute one of the underdogs of history.<sup>12</sup> Similar to Cronin, Afary centers her book on the concept of 'history from below' (Afary, p. 9). As such, the underdogs, whose views the historian recovers to better 'understand the past' (Afary, p. 1), are presented as objectively defined social groups. The engaged historian is simply a better historian who 'painfully and piecemeal' (Afary, p. 1) overcomes the limitations set by 'the surviving evidence' that tend to primarily emphasize the views of the ruling class. To give a



richer narrative of the Constitutional Revolution, Afary explores its ‘multiclass, multicultural, and multi-ideological dimensions’ (Afary, p. 3). Despite its stated overall goal, to ‘show that the ethnic, class, and gender dimensions of the movement were not obscure, insignificant, and marginal issues with no crucial bearing on the political events’ (Afary, p. 3), the methodological grounding of the book in already constituted categories of ethnicity, class, or gender, produces an additive dynamic. The analysis of ‘the capitalist world economy’ captures textual precedence (as the first chapter) and provides the structural analytic grounding for the rest of Afary’s narrative. The high politics of the Russian Revolution, social democracy and ‘its impact on the East’ (Afary, p. 4), as well as the famous alliance of dissatisfied ‘*ulama*’ and dissident intellectuals drive Constitutional politics. While Afary’s focus on popular, largely urban, associations provides a welcome expansion of existing narrative schemes, its enfolded within the structuralist scaffolding of the analysis obscures the fact that the views of these underdogs are as much produced by the retrieval work of the historian as the views of the political elite in dominant political histories. Inevitably, women become one more added category, with their own chapter, and, despite the author’s best intentions, their presence and impact are largely confined to this turf.<sup>13</sup>

One way of seeing the ‘additionality’ of women’s presence in these texts is to look at books’ indices. The indexing indicates, and in turn reproduces, ‘women’ as a special topic within the larger story of the text. Few books of Iranian history have an item under ‘men.’ Naturalized as subjects of history, men can be taken for granted. However, most books have an item under ‘women.’ The pages indexed under ‘women’ have increased in some of the more recent books.<sup>14</sup> The issue, however, is not a plea for parity, some quota on indexable women. Rather, the very indexability of women, in contrast to the ubiquity of men, highlights their special, additive nature in historical narratives. Women’s indexability at once produces their particularity and the binary heteronormativity upon which the oppositional pairing of particularized women with the generalized men depends.

Two more recent books – Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet’s, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946*, and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi’s, *Re-Fashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* – have been more attentive to integrating gender into their broader historical analyses.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the issue of women as added characters remains a problem that haunts these excellent studies.

While a significant part of *Frontier Fiction's* sixth chapter focuses on gender and the education of citizen subjects, this section reads like an addition placed at the end of the book. A more integrated gender analysis would further complicate notions such as *vatan*, *millat*, and 'national jihad' in earlier chapters. This is not to say that Kashani-Sabet completely overlooks gender in her analysis. She does in fact pay close attention to the gendered language of nationalism throughout the book. For instance, Kashani-Sabet's attention to the change in usage and meaning of *vatan*, from 'motherland' in the Constitutional period to 'fatherland' in Reza Shah's era, not only denaturalizes this term, but also highlights the fact that language, much like borders and frontiers, has its own contingencies and history. However, Kashani-Sabet overlooks gender in other parts of her book, even when it seems equally relevant to her analysis. For example, she rightly argues that the militarization of the nation in Reza Shah's period undermined 'women's contributions to [the] homeland' (Kashani-Sabet, p. 176). However, any allusion to these women's contributions is absent from her narrative. One wonders if this scant attention to gender in other periods has to do with Kashani-Sabet's method, to some extent, still an 'additive' one.

Similarly, the gendered character of the early concept of *vatan*, which is highlighted in Kashani-Sabet's later analysis of nationalism (Kashani-Sabet, pp. 186–198), is ignored. For instance, she discusses the construction of the soldier as the ideal citizen. If 'soldiers set the standard for patriotism,' did not this implied masculinism of the patriot and later the citizen contribute to the exclusion of women's political demands from Constitutional discourse? Masculine patriotism, in other words, mitigated the way women related to *hubb-i vatan* and reverberated later when nationalism attempted to mold society according to a military structure. Not everything can be addressed in one book, but issues that are central to a book's project could have been given more attention. The quotes Kashani-Sabet draws upon are often laced with sexual imagery, yet she pays little attention to the significance of this sexualized language. In fact, she seems to adopt some of this language in her own discussion. For instance, she characterizes Mirza Malkum Khan's critique of Qajar rule as a critique of 'flaccid leadership' (Kashani-Sabet, p. 75). Whether or not she is adopting Malkum's term, she is reproducing the masculinity of the concept of political leadership through the use of a phallic image.

The rhetorical complicity of an author in heteronormatively gendered language of her/his sources shows up in chapter 4 of Tavakoli-Targhi's

*Re-Fashioning Iran*, a chapter with an astute analysis informed by feminist scholarship. However, his analysis reaches its limits when he arrives at the issue of male same-sex practices. In apparent agreement with Mirza Fattah Garmrudi, Tavakoli-Targhi writes, ‘Europeans were reading their own behavior and ways into Iranian character’ (Tavakoli-Targhi, p. 69). Did European narratives about male homoeroticism and homosexuality in Iran not play an important role in the self-fashioning of modern Iranian subjects? Why is it that this incident suddenly becomes a ‘projection’ of European self onto his Iranian Other? Is it because, despite Tavakoli-Targhi’s careful analysis, homosexuality remains a ‘homeless’ historical phenomenon in his historiography?

Tavakoli-Targhi argues that ‘the engendering of the national body as a mother symbolically eliminated the father-Shah as the guardian of the nation and contributed to the emergence of the public sphere and popular sovereignty – the participation of “the nation’s children” (both male and female) in determining the future of the “motherland”’ (Tavakoli-Targhi, p. 113). However, the trope of the nation as family, which dominated late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iranian nationalist discourse, was centered on the sons of the vatan, not the children of the vatan. The nation was overwhelmingly transcribed as the *sons* (*abna’*) of Iran, a male brotherhood of vatani *brothers* (*baradaran-i vatan*). Not only is ‘sons’ the word most frequently used; but socially, sons constituted the nation. Contrary to Tavakoli-Targhi’s mistranslation of *abna’-i vatan* as the descendents of vatan (Tavakoli-Targhi, p. 181), the Constitutionalists’ use of the phrase meant sons of vatan. This is most evident in texts where a contrast appears between *bunat* (daughters/girls) and *abna’* or *banin* (sons/boys). Even when texts used grammatically gender-neutral words, such as *farzandan* (children), the term usually connoted sons. The meanings of gender-neutral words emerge from the discursive contexts of the period, not from dictionary definitions of a later period. The kind of gender-inclusiveness argued by Tavakoli-Targhi inadvertently conceals the historical gender asymmetries of Iranian citizenship in modernist discourse.

While Tavakoli-Targhi resists binarism in his work, sometimes the period’s discursive binarism seizes the upper hand. In discussing matriotic versus patriotic nationalism, Tavakoli-Targhi seems to reproduce a picture of opposing forces without dissecting the process that sets them in opposition to each other. According to Tavakoli-Targhi, patriotic nationalism invested the source of legal sovereignty in the king. By contrast, matriotic nationalism was centered on the

land of Iran envisaged as a woman. In the latter context, women could appear as patriotic participants, albeit as a sign of shame to goad men into nationalist activism (Tavakoli-Targhi, pp. 128–132). But if women's participation served a shaming function, this would produce women's participation as secondary and optional to men's primary and necessary participation in the nationalist struggle. It would indicate that the exclusive participation of women was a perversion of the social order; women's participation was shaming because they were doing men's work. It is a call to uphold the gender order (transformed and transposed onto the sociopolitical sphere) by mobilizing men into action. Citizenship is once again coded as male, with female participation as secondary and ultimately unnecessary.

This logic is strangely reminiscent of the nineteenth-century idea of the feminization of power (Tavakoli-Targhi, pp. 65–70). The Constitutionalists' discursive strategies for invoking male action in the public sphere paradoxically drew on the fears and shame associated with the feminization of political power/sphere. Instead of standing in binary opposition to one another, here the counter-modernist discourse (of patriotic nationalism) and the modernist discourse (of matriotic nationalism) overlap. By setting these discourses in opposition to each other, Tavakoli-Targhi erases the intelligibility of this overlap. While matriotic nationalism may have opened up some space for women in the public sphere, Tavakoli-Targhi seems to have an overly idyllic notion of its power to challenge male or class supremacy.

## WOMEN WITHOUT A NAME

The production of margins and exclusions that deeply damage a text's central project are thrown into sharp relief in a project that is concerned with excavating the marginalizing and exclusionary effects of other histories of modernity. Najmabadi's book, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*, leaves the reader pondering a question that haunts the text: Where is any account or analysis of women's homoeroticism?<sup>16</sup> This writing of history, which questions heteronormative narratives by centering men as those who desire and are the objects of desire, becomes complicit with discourses that see sexuality and eroticism as the exclusive domains of men by ignoring traces of women's desire (same-sex or otherwise). The way that Najmabadi centers *amrads* (young adolescent males) and *amradnumas* (adult men who mimic amrads) repeats the amnesia that erases same-sex practices and

desires of women. If women in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century were subjected to the discourse of *qaymumat* (guardianship) (Najmabadi, p. 207), then a woman who engaged sexually or otherwise with a man's 'possession' would pose a menace to his sexuality. It would degrade a man, perhaps making him even 'less than a woman,' if it were a *woman* (and not another *man*) who violated his *namus* (honor). If, as Najmabadi argues, amradnuma was an abject figure because of his refusal to become a man (Najmabadi, p. 212), a woman who refused to become a woman, and committed *sahq* (literally rubbing, a euphemism for sex among women), would threaten the Iranian masculinity that failed to control and discipline her. If Iranian feminism has disavowed male homoeroticism (Najmabadi, pp. 212–213), the omission of this other abject figure disavows female homoeroticism through rendering it invisible. It also buttresses male homoeroticism as a central and generalized category, thereby regrafting female desire as exceptional, passive, invisible, and contingent on male desire.

It is true that male homoeroticism, despite being actively forgotten and disavowed, is more accessible to historians through sources such as poetry, paintings, and other historical documents, and that women's relative lack of access to writing in the nineteenth century (and before) makes any historical work extremely difficult. But, one can look at sources about men with a sensitivity that searches for traces of female homoeroticism, similar to the way that Najmabadi has found traces of amrad and *ghilman*. There are times in her narrative when the issue of women's transgression surfaces, but those moments are passed over in her analysis. For example, when discussing women's 'cross-dressing' (Najmabadi, p. 213), Najmabadi's analysis is limited to women's sacrifice for a heterosexually imagined nation and to the shaming of men in order to provoke them into political action. Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri's statement about 'women prostitutes roaming the streets of Tehran in men's attire,' is not explored. When Najmabadi writes (Najmabadi, p. 213), 'even when women *actually* dressed as men' (emphasis added), she seems to question the credibility of Nuri's claim, denying the possibility of women's disidentification with femaleness, and thus, overlooking the abjection of those who were not amrads. What if Nuri's observation was actually true, as some late nineteenth-century photographs of cross-dressed women, often assumed to be prostitutes, may indicate? What if the female-male binary that we take for granted (as the book argues) is further complicated not just by manhood's demarcation in relation to amrad, but also by an abject

figure whose menace has completely erased the memory of her existence? How does one explain that while the *amrad* can be retrieved from historical memory (though with much embarrassment and pain), '*mardnuma*' (we allot this name to the abject that has no name, while recognizing that such designation would momentarily become complicit in the later modernist production of gender as binary!) has no history?

Toward the end of chapter 3, Najmabadi mentions the inclusion of 'real women' in the public sphere (Najmabadi, p. 93). Granted, her book starts and ends by destabilizing the gender binary, yet the use of 'real women' in several places suggests naturalized notions of women. While Najmabadi is careful to recognize different masculinities and the relational definitions of manhood, there is slippage when it comes to women, who appear less fragmented and more heterosexually imagined than men. Despite the expectation that the title of Najmabadi's book incites, this analysis creates a home for the *amrad*, while female (same-sex) desires and practices remain homeless.

The limits of historical sources and their availability to historians are often raised to defer and deter feminist and queer critiques of dominant historiography.<sup>17</sup> We are asked to believe that the nature of sources determines the kind of history we write. We write histories of great men and events, for instance, because more men have left written records and more of men's writings have been preserved. Similarly, great events leave enormous traces for us to work with. However, women also left writings, not as numerous as those penned by men, but nonetheless, women's poetry, travelogs, and theological treatises remain largely untapped and unpublished. This marks both a gender line (between male-authored and female-authored texts) and a class line. When we recognize certain written texts as archival sources, we have already produced men and women of particular classes to stand for all men and women. The overwhelming majority of the population, then and now, men and women, live oral daily lives, leaving little 'self-authored' traces behind. Alternative traces, such as registering the birth of a child in the back of a Qur'an, a line of poetry written on the margin of a *divan*, or a phrase written to mark a tombstone, are too often excluded from the archives of history. Other traces of material culture, visual artifacts, shrine objects, textiles and embroideries, etc. are cordoned off to a different field, that of art history. This is yet another disciplinary effect that has impacted what constitutes our mainstream history. Moreover, the limitations of historical sources are confounded with how those sources are read. To write history with

this distinction in mind would force historians to pay attention to what kind of history we write, and thus how *we* produce our historical subjects.

## WRITING WOMEN

Dependency of our historiography on written (manuscripts or published) traces is a problem that deeply shapes what constitute subjects of history, including women's history. Much of current historiography of 'women' is also dependent solely on written records, in particular on the *press* (including Afary, Paidar, Najmabadi 1998). These women, who have become subjects of women's history through historians' readings of their printed articles in the press, then come to stand for 'women,' obscuring the class constitutive work of this historical retrieval.

This dependency on written sources, and especially on the press, is true even today. What becomes news fit to print, and thus the archives for tomorrow's historians to reconstruct the history of today, remains a tiny fraction of particular incidents that become narrativized in a given discursive realm. Such records, today's news/tomorrow's archives, tell us more about that discursive realm than about what happened today or in history.<sup>18</sup> To take this point back into the past should in the very least bring some humility to our historical projects and urge us to surrender the illusion of total history. Although few would today attempt writing total histories, many continue to write as if they are writing a small piece of that larger total project, a project seen as perhaps more complex and difficult but nonetheless *possible*.

Scholars concerned with more recent history garner some advantages, coming from the inter-disciplinary junction of anthropology and history. Successful examples include the works of Amitav Ghosh, Shahid Amin, and Anupama Rao.<sup>19</sup> In scholarship on Iran, however, these two fields have remained largely separate. Anthropological studies of Iran tend to focus on topics of family/kinship/marriage, while history centers on politics, states, and revolutions – a division that reproduces the modernist myth of the private/public divide. One partially successful exception, an attempt to bring the two fields to bear upon research and writing, is Fariba Adelpak's *Being Modern in Iran*.<sup>20</sup>

Adelpak's book richly and elegantly combines the tools of political analysis, history, and urban anthropology. Nonetheless, while Adelpak's choice of *javanmard* (man of generosity and courage, with a public spirit) as the 'changing same'<sup>21</sup> effectively disrupts the conventional norms of historiography to a

certain extent, it inevitably privileges a masculinist approach to history and events. Adelkhah does discuss 'javan-zans' [female equivalent of javanmard] such as Fa'izeh Hashimi; however, this concept remains marginal. The javanmard is really a *mard*. If the *javanmardi* ethos is the assertion of the public self (Adelkhah, p. 43), then women are excluded from the realms of *javanmardi*. At best, they appear only in gestures of self-denial when they become wives of disabled war veterans or initiate polygamous marriages for their husbands (Adelkhah, pp. 44–45). Alternatively, women appear in Adelkhah's text as consumers in emerging public and private spaces, becoming individuals through acts of consumption. Did Adelkhah and her research assistants overlook women's *niku-kari* (public charity) and their giving practices? The only time in the text when a woman gives monetarily is when she donates along with her husband. One wonders how redefinitions of the relationship between the public and private have remained ungendered, in part because even in this anthropological text, Adelkhah and her team get much of their data from newspapers. How much of women's *futuwwat* (generosity) and *nikukari* enters the public's knowledge of these activities? For example, we know that there were women who donated monetary sums independently, or collected these sums to distribute among the 'needy' (before the revolution and after). It would be interesting to know if these practices have been institutionalized in the same way that Adelkhah writes about practices of openhandedness (Adelkhah, p. 73). The public circle of acquaintances sustained by openhandedness, which produces prestige and backing for its participants, presumes a 'male' public presence. One could perhaps imagine the *javanmardi* ethos being taken on by a woman, who could, thereby, change its nature, but because its whole circulation is imbued with a kind of paternalistic machismo, it may never be recognizable in a woman.

Are these women's *javanmardi* ever recognized publicly, or do they avoid state support and recognition? Furthermore, if practices of *javanmardi* are linked to becoming *adam-i ijtimai* (a social subject), how is the *receiver's* selfhood produced in these gift transactions? How are new relationships of class and gender formed through these individualizations? Exploring these issues would, of course, involve fieldwork in the more informal sectors of the economy of openhandedness, but it may add to the analysis by incorporating those who are not recognized in the same way as the more public *javanmard* figures. This is not to say that these women are not social beings and that their practices do not involve a reworking of public and private spaces, for these activities do in fact



entail traveling across the city and engaging in banking activities. Yet, because they do not enter the public record through newspapers, they are subsequently excluded from Adelpkhah's analysis.

## CONCLUSION

We began by asking: what makes men, events, and their greatness? In this overview of issues of gender and sexuality in Iranian historiography we have moved on to asking the same question about women: what if instead of 'women' as an already constituted subject whose history we research, we use gender as a lens for reading the constitution of power relations and the shape of culture? What if instead of presuming the heteronormativity of men and women as biologically given and stable subjects, we look at these subjectivities as historical knots, produced at the intersection of numerous strands that are different emanations of power?

In that context, our historiographical narratives and disciplinary practices about modern Iran become one of those strands that have produced some subjectivities, such as heteronormal men and (less often) women, as legitimate subjects of history writing. Similarly, when we questioned the notion of great events, it was to draw attention to how our own practices of historical writing are implicated in producing certain happenings as historically significant events. As summarized insightfully by Ana Mariá Alonso, 'All histories, whether spoken or written, are produced in an encounter between a hermeneutics and a field of social action which is symbolically constituted. Much of this encounter takes place "after the fact"; histories are retrospectives because the contours of the past are finally delineated and fixed from the vantage point of the present. Thus, the contingency of history-as-action is always mitigated by the backward gaze of history-as-representation which orders and explains, which introduces a teleology hardly evident at the time of the original events.'<sup>22</sup> Some events become subjects of history because they constitute an important part of collective memory. Others are subsequently forgotten. These rememberings and forgettings tell us a great deal about historical and political culture, and regimes of 'knowledge, power, truth' at the time of narrativization – more than what was significant when an action occurred. In other words, the narrative around an occurrence changes, dynamically and continually, as the discursive world of the narrators change. The subsequent historical emplotment of events consolidates a specific configuration of significant and insignificant into some essential truth

about the event, thus occluding its own temporality and contingency.<sup>23</sup> Though historians do not act alone in this process, we are an important part of producing who and what discursively constitutes great events, great men, and exceptional women. In turn, we as historians are constituted by the kinds of historical tales we write.

Iranian historiography has largely resisted 'contamination' by theories of historiography. Such theories are often seen, at best, as opulent products of the West that we do not need to import, or, at worst, as pretentious languages that cover up some historians' laziness to do the really difficult work of archival history. Good history is perceived as theory-free history; historians simply help the silent subjects in the archives gain a voice in the present. But that view of history is itself a particular theory of history: history as an objective, pre-discursive reality with the historian as the external retriever. This is a theory of history that is indeed shared by some feminist historians as well, and to this we now turn.

If, as Booth contends, women's history has not significantly impacted mainstream historiography of the Middle East and North Africa, and, as we have argued, this includes the historiography of modern Iran, we now want to ask, what in the previous decades of feminist scholarship may have contributed to this state of the field? Here we suggest that there are several factors at work, most of them shared by the larger field of feminist historiography. To begin with, one could say that the move from 'women' as a descriptive category to 'gender' as an analytical one is often made only in word use; gender simply stands where women stood before. More importantly, the 'add women and stir' approach makes the added category optional: some like it and do it, others don't. It also participates in the production of women as a special interest category that can be cordoned off as the particular work of historians of women and feminist historians. The 'add women and stir' approach has remained dominant in part because feminist historiography itself has been reluctant to risk opening up the category 'woman' and looking critically into *its* genealogy and history.

This reluctance comes from a resistance that feminist history has enacted against its own paradoxical logic of supplementarity.<sup>24</sup> In its quest to complete the Enlightenment project of centering a humanist subject, that is, the autonomous, individual, unified subject, within the field of history, feminist historiography has been reluctant to be its undoer. As Joan W. Scott has noted, feminist history can be best understood 'as a doubly subversive critical engagement: with prevailing normative codes of gender and with the conventions and... rules

of historical writing.<sup>25</sup> But for some feminist historians, women's history as a strategic intervention to support women's causes seems to conflict with its other subversive work of challenging the dominant paradigms of the discipline. In the debates over women's history versus gendering history, for example, social history was most welcoming of the former, but anxious about the latter, especially as gender became a troubled category itself, as an (always) already heteronormalized (and heteronormalizing) category. And as woman turned out to be no less of a troublesome sign, the cries over 'materiality of women' projected issues of discourse and representation as if these constituted a denial of materiality and a threat to feminism as a political project. The essentialist traces in this historiographic project produce not only women as a special topic, but also its own margins of excluded and at times abjected women. Queer historiography has remained largely marginal to the concerns of feminist historiography, despite persuasive arguments against separating sexuality and gender into separate "proper objects" and domains of study.<sup>26</sup>

In making certain methodological and epistemological choices and refusing others, dominant trends in feminist historiography have often engaged in another form of resistance: not simply 'resistance against theory,' rather, as Elizabeth Weed has argued, resistance against post-structuralism and deconstruction.<sup>27</sup> How does one write history, in particular feminist history, in the wake of deconstruction? How does one narrate and deconstruct the work of one's own narrative at the same time? This is clearly a problem for all history writing, but it poses a particular challenge for feminist historiography since deconstruction was in fact empowering for dealing with patriarchal stories. At the same time, however, it makes our own constitution as feminist historians an effect of writing particular kinds of historical narratives.

Feminism has had a paradoxical relation to the debates over contingency in historical events and their historiography. Feminist historiography has been welcoming of the latter, the contingency of 'what historians have told about the past,' as that has enabled it to insist on a place for women who were present but excluded. But it has resisted the implications of the contingency of 'what happened in history,' meaning that at the time of any event, there were other possibilities that could have, but did not happen.

The implications of this contingency would challenge the inevitability of feminism and feminist historiography. Acknowledging the historicity of feminist historiography's own emergence and its terms of challenge would entail thinking

about gender and sexuality as analytics with their own historical genealogies. Without such genealogies, gender and sexuality become inevitably naturalized and render feminism as a teleological marker of progress.

To the extent that feminist historiography, similar to mainstream Iranian historiography, for the most part has not taken up the challenge of history as representation, that is, how the 'eventization' of occurrences happens, it has blocked its own radical dynamic of going beyond 'add women and stir.' Our received memories as history are already stacked as women-absent, gender-unseen and sexuality-privatized. It is this foundational structure that makes it difficult to break through and rewrite a different form of history that does not follow the 'add women and stir' model. Without challenging dominant historiographical paradigms, women's history cannot but remain a marginalized nuisance.



# Marxism, Historiography and Historical Consciousness in Modern Iran: A Preliminary Study

*Afshin Matin-asgari*

## MARXIST HISTORIOGRAPHY: AN AMBIGUOUS LEGACY

An encounter with Marx's diverse and contradictory claims sharpens the historian's questions, concepts and awareness of the forms of explanation implicit in all historical writing.<sup>1</sup>

H.S. Rigby

Before we can study the impact of Marxist historiography on Iran, we must begin with some definitions and qualifications. First, Marxist historiography refers not to a single coherent school, but to a plurality of narrative genres.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to common perceptions, Marx himself never fully worked out a general theory or philosophy of history. His most extensive theoretical project, *Capital*, had a sharp focus on the present, analyzed through abstract historical models. He also wrote several books and many journalistic pieces on contemporary events, such as revolutions in France, the American Civil War, and British rule in India.

Marx's writings on the European past, feudalism, Asia, and pre-capitalist formations, as well as his occasional glimpses into the future, for example at proletarian revolutions or the transition to socialism, were his secondary concerns.<sup>3</sup> However, in a general but important sense, Marxist narratives, including

Marx's own, differ from other genres of modern historiography because they are not centered on civilization, nation, culture, ethnicity, great men, geography, or divine purpose.

In a second and more concrete sense, a focus on class struggle and revolution is often and correctly seen as central to Marxist historiography. But once again, Marx was concerned primarily with class conflict in Europe's newly emerging social order, particularly in relation to the phenomenon of 'bourgeois revolution.' He wrote no books on the subject of revolution or class struggle in general or across history. It was mainly his followers, from Engels down to Soviet and other historians, who put together a Marxist theory of history, whereby revolution and class struggle propelled humankind forward in stages of universal progress toward socialism.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the conception of history as a process driven by the politics of 'bipolar' class struggle was mostly an invention of Marx's followers, while he himself had more complex, and at times conflicting, views on history, class, and politics. For example, writing on France, his main case study for political history, Marx had argued that well into the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie was neither a homogeneous class nor capable of direct rule. Instead, it was the 'middling strata' – the majority population of small rural and urban property holders – who sustained France's 'Bonapartist' regime, characterized by its relative independence from both the big bourgeoisie and the modern working class.<sup>5</sup>

Last but no least, the thrust of Marx's historical writings set him apart from the two major modern schools of historiography, i.e., the Rankean Positivist and Nietzschean subjectivist schools. Striking a balance between the two, Marx's best works gave a central role to human subjectivity, at least in its aggregate form of class consciousness, in changing any 'given' set of historical circumstances. His more careful reflections on this question remain pertinent to current debates in historiography and theory of history. However, Marx's writings sometimes took Positivist and/or subjectivist turns, allowing for the construction of quite divergent and even contradictory types of Marxist narratives.

Marxist historiography then remains a highly influential but also ambiguous and even conflicted legacy, encompassing narratives ranging from the quite sophisticated to the most formulaic. It is in this potent but problematic sense that Marxism has been enormously influential in modern Iranian historiography.<sup>6</sup>

## THE MASTER NARRATIVE OF MODERN IRANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: NATIONALISM AND MARXISM

Even the deadly blows of Mongols and Tatars could not impair this spiritual unity and so the national state that the Safavids revived centuries after the Sassanids offered nothing new except for a unified government. Thus, neither the Arab conquest nor its subsequent decline and fragmentations impinged upon the unity of Iranian history.<sup>7</sup>

A. Zarrinkub

If modern Iranian historiography has a master narrative, or dominant paradigm, it is nationalism. There are of course varieties of nationalist narratives, displaying a wide range of depth and sophistication. However, they all converge on giving central prominence to an 'Iranian national identity,' defined in terms of political, linguistic, ethnic, or racial continuities with the distant past. As we shall see below, Marxism was the only major paradigm challenging nationalism in modern Iranian historiography. Despite some efforts, no viable Islamic or Islamist paradigm of historiography ever really took shape.<sup>8</sup> Thus, before investigating the Marxist paradigm, we must first appreciate the pervasive presence and the intellectual foibles of nationalist historiography.

Abdulhussein Zarrinkub, a leading historian during the second half of the twentieth century, is among the rare scholars who noted the nationalist biases of his own historiography. In 1957, referring to the first (1951) edition of his famous *Two Centuries of Silence*, he confessed:

At the time, saturated with passion and epic, I saw all that was pure, righteous and heavenly as Iranian, whereas anything not coming from ancient Iran was ugly, wrong and inferior.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, nationalistic 'saturation' continued in Zarrinkub's otherwise erudite oeuvre, as well as in Iranian historiography in general. For a fairly recent sample from the high academe, we may look at the proceedings of a 1993 symposium on 'Iranian Cultural Identity,' organized by *Iranian Studies*, the leading journal in the field. According to the opening statement by Ehsan Yarshater, doyen of Iranian studies and chief editor of *Encyclopedia Iranica*:

Iranian identity is clearly asserted in the inscriptions of Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.), who as an Aryan and a Persian was fully conscious of his racial affiliation and proud of his national identity.<sup>10</sup>



None of the participants in the symposium, all leading Iranian studies scholars, took issue with these blatantly ideological assertions. Such assumptions, of course, were already made axiomatic throughout the twentieth century in works by both Iranian and foreign historians. The opening sentence of a mid-century survey of Iranian history, by contemporary European experts, captures the same vision:

Considering the tremendous role which Aryan man has played in world history, how unfamiliar to us (his descendants) are his origins and the lands that were the cradle of our race.<sup>11</sup>

This racist and essentialist perspective is found also in the programmatic statement of *Yadegar*, a prominent mid-century 'literary, scientific, historical monthly magazine,' edited in Tehran by the historian Abbas Iqbal. *Yadegar's* first issue (1944) opened with Iqbal's editorial declaring the magazine's goals and beliefs as helping the readers better appreciate the Iranian homeland, its past and present, and 'what makes Iran distinguished from and superior to other countries and ethnicities.' Moreover, the magazine was committed to the preservation of Iran's 'heritage of the glorious past,' especially the Persian language, and to the use of 'modern scientific research methods' to investigate 'the lives of the great men of this land.'<sup>12</sup>

In this study, I will argue that Marxist historiography succeeded in Iran because it offered, to both intellectuals and the populace, an appealing alternative to the limitations of both modern nationalist and older elitist, dynastic, religious, racial, and ethnic-based approaches to history. Moreover, I would like to challenge the scholarly discourse on the supposed 'failure' of Iranian Marxism, due to its being 'alien' or 'incomprehensible' to the people, or because Marxist intellectuals were too 'unrealistic' or held 'simplistic' ideas. Such assumptions of the dominant paradigm in Iranian historiography in fact expose the field's own ideological myopia. They show how nationalist blinders distort and erase a record that includes a major Marxist component in the shaping of modern historical consciousness in Iran.

Critiquing nationalist historiography, however, does not mean an automatic validation of Marxist narratives. A balanced re-evaluation must acknowledge the strong Marxist contribution to modern Iranian historiography, while taking to task Marxist authors who perpetuate teleology, determinism, scientism, and dogmatic readings of history.

Despite entrenched conservative resistance and an abundance of new detours and intellectual fashions, the prospects of more critical approaches to Iranian historiography seem brighter than before. With the erosion of narrative history in the last decades of the twentieth century, the nationalist paradigm has faced increasing challenges from feminist, post-modern, and Marxist scholarship. Still, nationalism dominates mainstream historiography, mainly due to its inculcation by the educational and ideological apparatuses of the modern nation-state, but also because post-modernity has not offered equally compelling rival paradigms.<sup>13</sup>

It must be noted that while both nationalist and Marxist historical narratives ultimately involve normative and political perspectives, they relate differently to the politics of the modern nation-state. Twentieth-century Iranian regimes have upheld their versions of nationalist historiography, while they have rejected and repressed Marxist narratives, from which they also have borrowed significantly. Thus, given its systematic suppression and subversion by the nation-state, the persistent impact of Marxism on modern Iranian historical consciousness appears even more phenomenal.<sup>14</sup>

Below, I shall attempt a preliminary sketch of the Marxist contribution to Iranian historiography. More precisely, I will argue that historiography proper was part of a broader Marxist intellectual movement that helped shape a modern Iranian 'historical consciousness.' Thus, instead of focusing on a few 'canonical' texts, I will draw on Marxist narratives in journalism, political tracts, autobiographies, and works of literature. This will demonstrate another contribution of Marxism, i.e., how it helped change the practice of historiography from being centered on 'great books by and about great men' into a much richer and less elitist field of intellectual production.<sup>15</sup>

### **CENTERING THE PEOPLE AND REVOLUTION: THE FORGOTTEN NARRATIVES OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ERA (1900–20)**

The Constitutional movement consisted of two groups: First, ministers, courtiers, and men of fame; Second, bazaaris and men without fame or glory. The first group showed less forthrightness than the second. In sum, it was the unknown group that carried the task forward and therefore it is in their name that history must be written. A. Kasravi.<sup>16</sup>

Marxism reached Iran in early twentieth century, entering a proto-modernist intellectual milieu already influenced by positivist, romantic, and liberal nationalist European thought.<sup>17</sup> At first, the lines of demarcation between these new ideologies were quite murky. This was caused by the transmitters' insufficient familiarity with the original sources, as well as by their deliberate attempts to make foreign and radical ideas more familiar and 'palatable' to Iranians. Ideological hybridity then characterized the initial phase of Iran's socialist thought and history writing.

A fascinating figure of hybridity is Mirza Aqa-Khan Kirmani (1853–96), a pioneer of both socialism and proto-socialist historiography. In the course of a short life, Kirmani seems to have championed, albeit in embryonic form, almost the entire gamut of modern Iran's major religious and political positions. Religiously, he started from heterodox Shi'ism, moved to Babism, and ended up something of a 'materialist.' His politics too cut a wide swatch, ranging from romantic and racial nationalism to socialism.<sup>18</sup> He also had an iconic death – brutal execution on the orders of Qajar authorities – foreshadowing the fate of numerous intellectuals who would radically challenge the status quo.

While Kirmani's socialism was of the pre-Marxist variety and rather diffuse, he may be considered a pioneer of popular or 'social' historiography because of his innovative search for egalitarian patterns, such as the Mazdaki revolt, in older narratives. His eclectic philosophy of history also heralded the syncretism of twentieth-century modernity. It rejected fatalism and determinism, but embraced romantic and even racist nationalism, positing a collective Iranian identity in opposition to Islam and the Arabs.<sup>19</sup>

The Marxist impact proper on Iran began with and was intimately linked to the 1906–12 Constitutional Revolution. Attention to socialist thought and practice in this crucial 'birth moment' of modern revolutionary and democratic politics used to be a trademark of Marxist historiography.<sup>20</sup> However, by the 1970s, the Constitutional movement's leading historian Fereyduun Adamiyat had concluded that 'the horizons of [Iranian] social democratic thought were much broader than previously assumed.'<sup>21</sup> Finally, recent scholarship, during 1980s–90s, indicates that during the pivotal years of 1906–12, Iranian social democrats, backed by their Russian and Caucasian comrades, were the leading advocates and defenders of a secular parliamentary regime. What remains to be investigated further is how the social democrats introduced a modern historical discourse and consciousness centered on the people, progressive reforms, and revolution.<sup>22</sup>

The Marxists institutionalized their ideas by launching Iran's modern political parties, journalism, and popular literature. The country's first modern political organization was the (Social) Democrat Party (*Ejtemā'iyun Ammiyun*), active in second and third parliamentary (Majles) periods.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, it was precisely in reaction to the Social Democrats that the earliest conservative party, i.e., Social Moderates (*Ejtemaiyun E'tedaliyun*), was formed. Anticipating a twentieth-century trend, the Moderate Party's political rhetoric and program, and obviously even its name, were derivatives of the Marxist model.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the two revolutionary publications, *Sur-e Esrafil* and *Iran-e no*, were the harbingers of modern political journalism and a new literary popular culture. Attention to history, both in terms of current events and in the broader sense, was a major concern of this new journalism. *Iran-e no* introduced the first history of the revolution by publishing an abridged translation of E.G. Browne's *Persian Revolution* in 1910, i.e., the very same year the book came out in English.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, in *Sur-e Esrafil*, 'Aliakbar Dehkhoda (1879–1956) discussed new comparative and universal notions of history, claiming major events all over the world showed similar patterns, as if 'an original model were copied.' Dehkhoda argued also that 'the unequal distribution of wealth' made social revolutions inevitable, unless radical reforms, such as land grants to the peasantry, were undertaken. Still, he added, no reformist measure could prevent future social conflict, certain to be engendered by capitalist development. Dehkhoda also repeated the claim, advanced by his fellow social democrats, that socialist principles were more compatible with Islam than with other religions.<sup>26</sup> Thus, *Sur-e Esrafil* waged determined war on reactionary clerics, while contrasting 'true' Islam to obscurantism and superstition. This evasion of a more direct critique of religion marked the attitude of the succeeding generations of Iranian Marxists, who nevertheless were (literally) bedeviled by their conservative religious adversaries.<sup>27</sup>

Beyond scattered journalistic pieces, the first systematic presentation of Marxist views on socialism and history was the 1909 *Critique of the Moderate Party*, by Muhammad-Amin Rzasulzadah (1884–1954). A veteran of the 1905 Russian Revolution, Rzasulzadah was dispatched to revolutionary Tehran by his socialist comrades in the Caucasus. In 1909, he became a founder and chief theorist of the Democrat Party, and editor of its organ *Iran-e no* (1909–11). Referring to Marx as 'the great teacher,' Rzasulzadah's pamphlet invoked the 'iron law' of history, manifested in unceasing class struggle and successive stages of social

evolution. This short exposition was meant to teach 'the historical philosophical experience of civilization, and of the development of the forms of government in the world.'<sup>28</sup> Generally following Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Rzasulzadah explained and tied together the appearance in history of class rule, exploitation, and private property. His exposition, however, was different from the 'five-stage' theory of history that was to be officially formulated in the Soviet Union. Rzasulzadah did not mention feudalism, while he described the first class society as 'patriarchal,' later to evolve into a 'tribal' formation.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, Rzasulzadah's Marxist manifesto called for the full legal equality of men and women, and for the total separation of religion and government. It advocated the freedom of consciousness and religious belief, condemning the clergy's backing of the ruling classes.<sup>30</sup> Last but not least, Rzasulzadah had a rather sophisticated conception of revolution. He was convinced that in countries like Iran, socialists must first cooperate with the nascent bourgeoisie against absolutist monarchy and powerful clerics, khans, and landowners. Only in the future, when capitalism had reached a more mature stage, could there be meaningful talk of a 'socialist revolution.'<sup>31</sup>

The above synopsis summarizes the historical vision and political agenda of Iran's first generation of Marxists.<sup>32</sup> But the trajectory of Iranian and global events soon pushed this vision into the margins. In Iran, great devastation and loss of independence during the First World War enhanced the perception that the Constitutional Revolution had failed. Consequently, both liberal and social democratic models began to recede in the face of a new authoritarian agenda for nation-building, implemented by a benevolent dictator whose iron fist could push the country on the road to modernization and progress. Thus to many post-War intellectuals, Lenin and Stalin, as well as Atatürk and Mussolini, had accomplished similar goals: national independence, a strong modernizing state, forced capital accumulation, and rapid industrialization. This new authoritarian nationalism, and its corresponding Positivist notions of historical progress, formed the core ideology of Iran's influential modernist newspapers of the 1920s, like *Iranshar* and *Farangestan*.<sup>33</sup> It was the same ideology that helped pave the way for Colonel Reza Khan's rise to the throne and defined the general character of his reforms as Shah during the following decade.<sup>34</sup>

Reza Shah's reign (1926–41) coincided with a global shift from social democracy to Marxism-Leninism, a development with a major impact on Iranian intellectual history. By the 1930s, Soviet policies of 'socialism in one

country,' single-party dictatorship, planned economy, and forced collectivization, had redefined socialist theory in the service of an existing political regime. Soviet socialism was a form of collectivism that might benefit the majority of the working population but was directed and implemented from above by a modernizing and authoritarian elite. Moreover, as official state ideology, 'Marxism-Leninism' dictated strict guideline in politics, as well as in cultural and intellectual production, and especially in historiography.<sup>35</sup>

### THE PARALLEL DICTATES OF HISTORY: PAHLAVI NATIONALISM AND MARXISM-LENINISM (1920s–30s)

According to the dictate of history, as well as its philosophy, I beseech you to worship your country. Reza Khan, Minister of War, 1921.<sup>36</sup>

The History of the world's countries shows clearly that the struggle against despotism has always intensified after Constitutions were granted. Therefore, unlike others, we are not disillusioned about Constitutionalism not bearing fruits. We know we do not have them yet. *Haqiqat*, Communist daily, 1922.<sup>37</sup>

In the 1940 introduction to the first complete edition of his monumental *History of Iran's Constitutionalism*, Ahmad Kasravi declares that he is not a historian. This is surprising because Kasravi already was recognized as a first-rate historian, having published some important monographs as well as earlier versions of his Constitutional history during the 1930s.<sup>38</sup> In retrospect, his 1940 disclaimer seems a sarcastic comment on Reza Shah era historiography. Kasravi is distinguishing himself from historians like Said Nafisi, Sayyid Hassan Taqizadah, Abbas Iqbal, Zabih Bihruz, Hassan Pirnia, and Muhammad-'Ali Forughi, who had avoided the perils of contemporary history and instead wrote state-sponsored textbooks or nationalist tomes devoted to the glories of the distant past.

Abbas Iqbal (1896–1955), for example, was commissioned to write surveys of Iranian history for primary and secondary public schools. By the 1930s, Iqbal had published more than twenty such volumes imbued with strong nationalist and occasionally racist overtones.<sup>39</sup> his readers would learn, among other things, that the Persian language was 'totally Aryan and without the slightest resemblance to Semitic languages like Arabic.'<sup>40</sup> Iqbal's chauvinistic declarations at times border on the accusations of modern police states:

[T]hose who ridicule and reject their countrymen's mores and manners as signs of backwardness are doubtless ignorant, ill-intentioned, or traitors.<sup>41</sup>

Iqbal and other Reza Shah era historians considered their methodology to be both modern and 'scientific' (*elmi*). This meant a secular orientation and more careful handling of sources, rather than the ability to see through or critique the nationalist ideology of the modern state. Moreover, although positively inclined toward modern European culture, even the best of the 1920s–30s generation of historians appear barely informed about the more sophisticated schools of early twentieth-century historiography.<sup>42</sup>

The poverty of historical thought under Reza Shah stemmed from a combination of intellectual conservatism, self-imposed censorship, and the desire to tow the state's official line. Forughī, the outstanding intellectual statesman of the early Pahlavi era is a case in point. His *Seyr-e hekmat dar Orupa* (The Path of Philosophy in Europe) (1938–41) was in many ways a brilliant pioneer and certainly the most comprehensive mid-century study of European thought in Persian. But unlike the turn of century reformists, Forughī is utterly uninterested in the philosophy of history, an odd stance for the man who was an architect of modern Iranian historiography through his major contributions to writing the first history textbooks for public schools.

*The Path of Philosophy in Europe*, however, does contain passing comments that reveal Forughī's preference for the historiography of eighteenth-century thinkers like Montesquieu.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the book's chapters on the nineteenth century simply omit Marx and dismiss socialists as 'individuals whose ideas were strange and therefore had no success.'<sup>44</sup> Forughī's conservatism is so thorough that he avoids even discussing eighteenth-century materialist *philosophes*, calling them atheists whose ideas 'need not occupy our time.'<sup>45</sup>

The more dictatorial Reza Shah's rule became, the stronger the tendency of mainstream historiography to directly serve the state. In 1937, the Organization for the Guidance of Thought (*sazman-e parvaresh-e afkar*) was set up to propagate cultural uniformity via the press, school textbooks, the radio, music, the theatre, and public lectures. This virtual 'ministry of thought control' epitomized 'the bloodiest hour of the Pahlavi era' according to the more critical historiography of Muhammad-Taqi Bahar. Still, other historians were happy to serve the state's meticulous guidance of culture. Said Nafisi (1895–1966), for example, described what the new ministry and its 'guides,' i.e. intellectuals like Nafisi, tried to accomplish:

[An] important duty of these guides is to make the people's thoughts, ideals, and desires uniform and create real convergence and unison among them, i.e.,

to prevent the slightest discord in thought, or in human goals and aspirations, among educated individuals.<sup>46</sup>

As the authoritarian-nationalist hold of the Pahlavi political culture solidified, alternative narratives on history, whether liberal or Marxist, faded or were phased out. The most original historian of the 1930s, Ahmad Kasravi, was also intensely nationalistic, although with a radical populist bent that did not fit the dominant mold. His recognition as the 'canonical' historian of the Constitutional era began in the 1940s, but his actual history of Iran's constitutionalism was written in the 1930s and bears the mark of its time.<sup>47</sup>

Kasravi's *History of the Iran's Constitutionalism* was ultimately the epic tale of a failed national revolution, where the 'masses' (*tudeh*) rose and bravely fought for self-determination, but were let down or betrayed by leaders who compromised with the old order of privilege and oppression. The Constitutional Revolution then becomes the heroic-tragic birth event of the modern era, with the people as the main protagonist but left on the stage to continue the struggle for freedom. Kasravi was never a Marxist and fought polemical battles against the communists in the 1940s. His revolutionary historiography, however, was pre-Marxist or rather oblivious to Marxism, of which he apparently had no direct knowledge during the 1930s. Still, in the absence of a major Marxist history of the revolution, Kasravi offered the next-best alternative. He praised the people's role and agency, while blaming intellectual, merchant and clerical leaders for their inconsistencies and shortcomings. This was agreeable to the Marxists whose narratives of the 'Bourgeois Revolution' had the same cast of heroes and villains.

The logical conclusion to Kasravi's narrative was to find a remedy for what the people and their revolution had lacked. Kasravi had left the question open but in the 1940s he came up with a new secularized religion as the answer. Mid-century Marxist-Leninists, however, offered a surgical narrative closure by upholding the communist party's leadership as the remedy. Later, during the 1960s–70s, Islamic-Marxists would combine these two solutions in a powerful ideological hybrid.<sup>48</sup>

During the Reza Shah era, however, as Marxists gradually became the main target of intellectual and political persecution, historiography too was 'cleansed' of socialist influences. The Social Democratic contribution to the Constitutional Revolution had to be erased from official accounts and eventually became a taboo subject. A related sensitive topic was the role of Iranian communists and



the Soviet Union in the failure of the Gilan rebellion and the events leading to the rise of Reza Khan. In 1920–1, local armed rebels in the southern Caspian province of Gilan were joined by Iranian communists and small contingents of the Red Army to declare a short-lived Soviet Socialist Republic. However, this heady bout with revolutionary socialism quickly fell apart when the Soviets withdrew amid a bloody feud between communist and nationalist factions. This allowed Tehran's Cossack Brigade, led by Colonel Reza Khan, to capture Gilan and stamp out the last major vestige of the Constitutional Revolution that eventually had linked up with Bolshevism. The path was now open for a new alternative, soon to be embodied in the Pahlavi dynasty.

The historiography of the Gilan rebellion and its Soviet republic has spurred an intriguing debate that continues to line up a variety of Marxist, nationalist, and Islamist interpretations against each other.<sup>49</sup> But, as we shall see below, the great debate on the Gilan revolution picked up in the 1970s, two generations after the actual events. Meanwhile, back in the 1920s, Marxists and socialists had recorded important first hand reactions to the almost simultaneous rise of the Soviet Union and the Pahlavi regime.

Muhammad-Taqi Bahar's account of politics in the early 1920s is an underappreciated historical study that records the ambivalences of the Iranian left vis-à-vis the simultaneous rise of Reza Khan and the Soviet Union. A young activist of the Constitutional era, Bahar had worked with the Democrat Party and remained a moderate socialist in later life. Although first published in 1941, his *A Brief History of Iranian Political Parties* is a pioneer in modernist historiography and a primary source for the 1920s. On the surface, Bahar's book reads like a pastiche of colorful personalities involved in political intrigue, serving as backdrop to Reza Khan's inexorable march toward dictatorial power. But the narrative also reflects disillusionment with liberal and socialist ideals, a despairing drift into political cynicism, and both fear of and attraction toward Bolshevism. An example of this narrative ambivalence is Bahar's evaluation of the Russian Revolution's impact on Iran. Here, he is categorical that the Bolshevik renunciation of semi-colonial Tsarist treaties saved the country from total ruin. Bahar apparently originated the famous parable depicting Lenin as the savior who freed Iran from 'strangulation' by cutting off his side of the noose placed around the country's neck by the Russians and the British.<sup>50</sup> For decades, this positive evaluation of early Bolshevism became so axiomatic that it echoed even in school textbooks of the Pahlavi era.<sup>51</sup>

Bahar cites his 1921 articles in the newspaper *Nobahar* (New Spring) to show that while at first fascinated by the idea of benevolent dictatorship, he soon realized its folly and dangers. His own proposal at the time was to call on the 'second' (middle) class to mobilize the workers and peasants ('third class') against the rule of a corrupt and oppressive 'first class' of aristocrats.<sup>52</sup> In retrospect, Bahar argued that Reza Khan's dictatorial designs succeeded because democrats and socialists were weak and failed to unite and offer a viable alternative:

The fault rested with a group of demagogic democrats and socialists who could not see themselves capable of leading a decisive majority, strong government, and positive politics.<sup>53</sup>

Interestingly, Bahar's partial blaming of leftists and liberals for the rise of Reza Khan was repeated 55 years later in a historical study by the Tudeh (communist) Party theorist Ihsan Tabari who also claimed this failure was not inevitable and that history could have taken a different course.<sup>54</sup>

Bahar was not alone in recording the left's reaction to the 1920s historic turning point. While one faction among the new breed of pro-Soviet Marxists favored Reza Khan, another had realized the danger and warned against the accumulation of power in the hands of a military commander. The latter voiced its protest in the daily *Haqiqat* (Truth), the semi-official organ of the Iranian Workers' General Union, allied with the recently formed Communist Party. In June 1922, after a very successful six-month run, *Haqiqat* was forced to close down and consequently its traces have also disappeared from mainstream historiography. But according to various sources *Haqiqat* quickly became the country's best-selling daily.<sup>55</sup>

A recently published collection of *Haqiqat's* lead articles shows another stage in the development of Marxist thought in Iran, defined primarily by the presence of the Soviet Union at the center-stage of world history. Almost all of these articles were by Mir-Ja'far Javadzadah (Pishehvareh), one of the most vilified personalities in the historiography of modern Iran. Javadzadah (1893–1947) represents a new intellectual type, coming from working class backgrounds and totally dedicated to Soviet communism.<sup>56</sup>

*Haqiqat* articles document the emergence of a new Marxist paradigm of historical reflection and analysis, something that must have been related to the

paper's success and popularity. First, they show the intellectual appeal of the Bolshevik worldview Javadzadah was so wholeheartedly advocating. This point is missed in nationalist historiography where communists by definition cannot be thinkers but are either dupes or agents of a 'foreign ideology.' Second, while ideologically framed, *Haqiqat*'s comments on global developments and recent world history were uniquely well-informed by contemporary Iranian standards in both journalism or historiography. They included accounts of the rise of the American global power, the demise of the British empire in India and Egypt, brief histories of the European working class, the French Revolution and the Paris Commune, and reports on Soviet developments, up to the launching of the New Economic Policy. Third, regarding Iran, *Haqiqat* called for major reforms, such as labor laws and land distribution, but within a 'bourgeois democratic' constitutional and parliamentary system. The paper strongly opposed the ruling elite and British imperialism, as well as the idea of modernizing dictatorship.<sup>57</sup>

Last but not least, *Haqiqat* practiced its own preaching of cultural modernity by using a simple and direct Persian vernacular, well-suited to the novelty of its revolutionary concepts. Javadzadah was an Azeri, but his political Persian in *Haqiqat* is quite effective as it deploys a simple vocabulary and syntax organized in short and rapid-fire sentences. Thus yet another reason for *Haqiqat*'s success could have been the clarity and focus of its prose in comparison with rival political publications like 'Ali Dashti's *Shafaq-e sorkh* (Red Dawn) or even Taqi Bahar's *Nobahar*.

Another Marxist testimony from the early Pahlavi era is the newly republished writings of Muhammad Farukhi-Yazdi (1887–1939), Iran's first 'proletarian poet.' Farukhi, like Javadzadah, was a communist intellectual from working class backgrounds. Supporting himself as a baker and textile worker, Farukhi was politicized and joined the Democrat Party during the Constitutional Revolution. In 1921, he began publishing *Tufan* (Storm), another openly pro-Soviet paper that was closed down for advocating republicanism and criticizing Reza Khan. However, in 1926, after Reza Shah's accession to the throne, Farukhi was allowed to republish *Tufan*. He had now drawn close to the Court Minister Abdulhussein Teymurtash and changed *Tufan* into a pro-Soviet organ loyal to the new Pahlavi regime. This was possible because in the early years of Reza Shah's reign, the powerful Teymurtash was in favor of better relations with the Soviet Union. He reportedly had even gone as far as claiming that Bolshevism, unlike Marxism, was close to Islam and in fact a form of 'Neo-Muhammedanism.'<sup>58</sup>

Farukhi's writings include a description of his 1927 visit to the Soviet Union. In addition to its value as a primary source, this is the first example in Persian of Soviet travel accounts, a subgenre of contemporary historiography that became influential with works like John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*. For political reasons, traveling to the Soviet Union was extremely difficult, while rare accounts such as Farukhi's were censored. The next Soviet travelogue in Persian was Jalal Al-e Ahmad's 1952 translation of Andre Gide's *Return from the USSR*, a work whose political judgment was on the negative side. In 1964, Al-e Ahmad, then a leading writer and essayist and an opponent of Soviet Marxism, visited the Soviet Union. But Al-e Ahmad's own *Safar-e Rus* (Russian Journey) was somewhat ambivalent, which probably was the cause of its full publication being delayed until 1990.<sup>59</sup>

Farukhi, along with the veteran socialist leader Suleiman Esknadri and journalist 'Ali Dashti, were members of a small official delegation invited to attend the tenth anniversary celebration of the October Revolution. Farukhi described this trip in a series of articles in *Tufan* which were abruptly halted after Reza Shah reportedly admonished the author for being too favorable toward the Soviets.<sup>60</sup> Farukhi's travelogue is a fascinating description of the land and sea route from Tehran to Moscow, plus a brief introduction to the early politics and government of the USSR. Perhaps its most original section is the author's firsthand report on the Soviet leadership conflict between the Stalin and Trotsky factions. Though inclined to the Stalin faction, Farukhi concedes the other side's valid points and includes an outline of Trotsky's critique of Soviet domestic and foreign policies.<sup>61</sup>

In 1928, Farukhi was elected to the Majles, where he repeatedly clashed with its increasingly monolithic decisions. He was beaten up by a fellow deputy and, fearful for his life, fled to Europe via the Soviet Union in 1930. After a few years, he returned to Iran but following the demise and death in prison of his benefactor Teymurtash, he too landed in jail where in 1939 he was murdered for remaining defiant in opposition to Reza Shah.<sup>62</sup>

Farukhi's tragic fate was related to events that made the 1930s an increasingly repressive decade, particularly for Marxists. The most blatant expression of Reza Shah's dictatorship was the passage in 1931 of a special legislation that made membership in organizations opposing the monarchy or espousing 'collectivist ideology' a crime, punishable with three to ten years in solitary confinement. Thus the state could prosecute individuals not only for their illegal activities

but for ‘criminal’ beliefs. The most infamous application of the new legislation was the 1938 arrest and imprisonment of the ‘Group of Fifty-Three.’ Most members of this group were young civil servants and university students, linked together in study groups formed to read and discuss the periodical *Donya* (The World). Edited and featuring lead articles by the Berlin-educated Taqi Arani (1903–1939), *Donya* advocated ‘scientific materialism’ and offered Marxist interpretations of culture, history, and society.<sup>63</sup>

The contribution of Arani and the *Donya* circle is yet another missing chapter in existing intellectual histories of modern Iran. To begin, as early as the 1930s–40s, *Donya*’s worldview had a deep impact, reaching as far as the seminaries in the city of Qum, the center of Shi’i clerical education. Thus the seeds of the 1960s–70s fateful confrontation between Marxism and Islamic thought were planted in the 1940s when Ayatollah Muhammad-Hussein Tabataba’i began to add the study of materialism to his philosophy curriculum in Qum. These courses then formed the basis for Tabataba’i influential 1953 book *Osul-e falsafeh va raveshe-e realism* (The Principles of Philosophy and the Realist Method), a direct response to the worldview first encountered in *Donya*. In this book’s introduction, Murtiza Mutahhari, the most gifted student of Tabataba’i and the leading clerical philosopher of the 1960s–70s, mentioned Arani more than fifty times and explained clearly:

In our references to materialist ideas, we mostly rely on Arai’s writing ... Fifteen years after his death, the Iranian advocates of Dialectical Materialism still cannot improve on his writings.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, Arani’s soon-to-be famous defense, at his own trial, set precedence for a new narrative genre of bearing witness to political history. Its very first sentence reads: ‘To begin, I remind you of the historical significance of this trial.’ The accused then warns his judges that the trial’s proceedings would echo beyond their closed court, reminding them of similar historical cases and contemporary political trials around the world.<sup>65</sup>

Reflecting on the Constitutional Revolution, Arani sketched a vision that would remain at the core of twentieth-century Marxist historiography. He defined Iran’s existing laws as the legacy of a popular but ‘imperfect’ revolution. Political freedoms, such as the freedom of opinion, the press and associations, were ‘purchased with the blood of the nation’ and were of ‘great service’ to Iran. Finally, he listed England, the USA, France and Sweden as countries with ‘high civilization,’ because of their higher degrees of political freedoms, and noted that

Iran was imitating every detail of 'Western civilization' but fell into a 'reactionary lapse' when it came to 'democracy.'<sup>66</sup>

The political tenor of Arani's defense, and of his writings in general, further complicate the typecasting of Iranian Marxists during the 1930s. The intellectual tendency he represented has been claimed by both communists and social democrats. In the end, he seems rather to have stood somewhere between the two, more in line with European Marxism after the First World War and before the consolidation of Stalinism.

### THE MARXIST CONTRIBUTION TO MID-CENTURY HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS (1940S–50S)

Marxism and socialism, in one version or another, were dominant among the left between the 1940s and 1970s and almost monopolized the axiology of the 'intellectual element.'<sup>67</sup>

A. Gheissari

The case of the Group of Fifty-Three is tied to modern historiography by yet another important link. Soon after Reza Shah's fall in 1941, accounts of Arani's and his comrades' brave and principled defiance in prison had acquired legendary proportions as a key chapter in the history of the 'dark days' of Pahlavi dictatorship. This was due partly to the propaganda of the newly formed Tudeh Party, but it owed more to the emergence of the new and increasingly popular genres of 'prison literature' and 'political memoirs.' Earlier experiments with prison memoirs, for example by the journalist 'Ali Dashti in the 1920s, had remained obscure. Dashti's work was politically unfocused and stylistically an awkward imitation of French Romantics. But in the 1940s, Bozorg Alavi's skillfully crafted *Panjah-va-seh nafar* (Fifty-Three Men) and *Varaq pareha-ye زندان* (Prison Scrap Papers) met with great success and opened a new path that was followed mostly by Marxist writers who tried to combine literary production with historical testimony and political advocacy. Alavi himself was well aware that in creating a literary work like *Fifty-Three Men* he was also writing history. In fact he opens the book with a clear statement of intent:

I want to give my work more of a historical dimension thus, in the future, those who seek to learn from history by studying the social conditions of this dark era will have to ponder why doctors, judges, and the sons of the country's richest merchants abandoned their class interests to become communists.<sup>68</sup>

While often acknowledged, the profound impact of the Tudeh Party's Marxism on modern Iran's intellectual scene remains to be analyzed beyond nationalist and Cold War polemics.<sup>69</sup> It seems clear, however, that Tudeh Party intellectuals and their 'fellow travelers' and cohorts created the mid-twentieth century generation's hegemonic discourse on modern Iranian and world history. Actual historical studies by Iranian Marxists, whether original or in translation, appeared later during the 1960s–70s. But the foundations of a Marxist 'historical consciousness' were laid in the 1940s–50s by Tudeh Party intellectuals mainly via journalistic and literary production.

During the 1940s–50s, the Tudeh Party enlisted as members or sympathizers the country's best journalists and most celebrated poets and fiction writers. The latter included Nima Yushij, Ahmad Shamlu, Mahdi Akhavan-Thaleth, Siavosh Kasara'i, Sadeq Hedayat, Bozorg Alavi, Mahmud E'temadzadah (Behazin), Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Sadeq Chubak. Although many of these soon broke with the party, their works continued to exhibit a strong Marxist influence, depicting the suffering of the people, yearning for revolutionary change, and lamenting corrupt and oppressive social conditions.<sup>70</sup>

Marxist intellectual hegemony was almost blatant during the first national congress of Iranian writers, organized in 1946 by the Iran-Soviet Cultural Relations Society and with the active participation of the cream of the country's intelligentsia. This of course occurred during the peak of Soviet and Tudeh influence in Iran when even the conservative Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam had seen fit to include three Tudeh ministers in his cabinet. The congress's inaugural address was delivered by the Minister of Culture Muhammad-Taqi Bahar who praised both Prime Minister Qavam and the Soviet Union as defenders of freedom and intellectual creativity.<sup>71</sup> The lecture concluded on the following note:

Being consists of motion. The thinker or writer who supports inertia and status quo must admit he is sliding backwards. Therefore, go forward comrades and lead your people to the just and righteous fortune that awaits them. God be with you!

An even stronger influence on modern historical consciousness was the translation movement dominated by the Tudeh and other Marxist intellectuals. In mid-twentieth century, before the age of film and television, the first and second generation of modern-educated Iranians formed their general conceptions of the outside world and its history primarily by reading translations of foreign fiction. The most popular authors of this period were Victor Hugo,

Jack London, Anatole France, Mark Twain, Gustav Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Romain Rolland, Ignazio Silone, Pearl Buck, Nikos Kazantzakis, John Steinbeck, Maxim Gorky, Bertolt Brecht, Anthon Chekhov, and Leo Tolstoi. Despite the diversity of genre and theme, this particular literary assortment showed broad images of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history where issues of class, oppression, and social conflict stood out. A panoramic glimpse of this 'worldview' can be found in the oeuvre of Muhammad Qazi, one of the most successful translators of the second half of the twentieth century. Starting in the late 1930s and continuing into the early 1990s, Qazi had close to seventy translations, including major books by all of the above authors. His translations also include classics such as *Don Quixote*, *Telemaque*, *Decameron*, *Jacque the Fatalist*, and *Ikaria*, plus Marxist historical studies of the Middle East, the USA, Latin America and France.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, the core plot of a Marxist-Leninist theory of history was endlessly hammered out throughout various types of leftist publications. Readers of historical fiction, for instance, could be roused to revolutionary fever pitch by the 1952 translation of Jack London's proletarian epic *The Iron Heel*. The book's introduction, by Anatole France, assured readers a socialist future was guaranteed by history:

The future is ours. The rule of the powerful will be destroyed as even its zenith of power betrays the signs of decay. It will be destroyed because all class systems are doomed. The system of wage labor will die because it is unjust. At the peak of its power, bloated by pride and egoism, this system will collapse, just as those of slavery and serfdom were destroyed before.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, students of history could find the same basic message summed up in the 1951 translator's introduction to a collection of articles by Soviet historians on the Constitutional Revolution. The following verbatim translation demonstrates how a brief introductory passage could present the Stalinist philosophy of history:

History is made neither by the elite nor by individuals of genius. Social transformations are inevitable. The hegemonic will of the people is a prerequisite of the above transformations.

No power can resist 'historical necessity.' [Social] transformations can be delayed temporarily, but both the obstacle and its cause will be swept away by the unstoppable flood of history.



The main agent of social transformation is the struggle of classes with conflicting interests, itself caused by and rooted in economic developments, primarily the changes in the means and relations of production.

Individuals of genius are those who understand historical necessity and invest all of their efforts in social progress and actualizing this necessity.

The above points lead to the following conclusion:

History [writing] is not recording a chronicle of events. The first task of history [writing] is the logical analysis of events, i.e., their discovery and explanation in cause and effect [relations]. As mentioned, the causes of historical events must be found in their social and particularly economic foundations. [Thus] the future can be correctly and clearly adduced from the station and development of the 'means of production.'<sup>74</sup>

The anonymous translator then focused on more recent history and repeated Arani's verdict that despite its shortcomings, the Constitutional Revolution had been a 'veritable turning point in the life of the Iranian nation.' The reasons for the revolution's failure, however, remained unclear. It was stated merely that the masses were 'unfamiliar with the laws of history' and 'lacked leadership organization.' This of course was the quick grafting of a Leninist corrective onto Kasravi's despairingly open-ended narrative. And indeed the translator recommended Kasravi's history of the revolution as the only relatively balanced account that paid attention to the masses.<sup>75</sup>

A few translations of more sophisticated Marxist historical texts also appeared by the 1950s. One example was George V. Plekhanov's *The Role of the Individual in History*. Once again, the translator's introduction tried to make Plekhanov more accessible by offering a simplified version of the Marxist position on the 'Free Will v. Necessity' debate. But the commentary went on a different tangent as it labored to uphold 'Free Will' while adhering to historical and economic 'Determinism.' Added to the confusion was the choice of terms such as *jabr* and *ekhtiar* (for 'Determinism' and 'Free Will,' respectively), whose familiar meanings were rooted in medieval Islamic philosophy.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, the same word (and concept), i.e., *jabr*, was to stand for both divine and historical materialist 'determination.'

Apparently mindful of such problems, the more cautious Forughi had coined his own four-word Persian Phrase for 'Determinism.' Forughi also had used three different Persian words for 'necessity,' none of which had the religious and metaphysical connotations of *jabr* – which he equated with the French term *fatalisme*.<sup>77</sup> It is not clear whether mid-century Marxist translators

deliberately chose religious terms for the key concepts of their historiography. But this 'slippage' had fateful consequences. It signified an increasing confluence between Marxist and Islamic metaphysics, a process that by the 1960s had facilitated the transformation of Plekhanov's 'Monist' view of history into the Unitarian (*Towhidi*) ideology of 'Islamic Marxists' like 'Ali Shari'ati (1933–77) and the Iranian People's Mojahedin Organization.<sup>78</sup>

'Islamic Marxism' was a label used in the 1970s by government propaganda to indicate the eclecticism, and hence supposed confusion, of its leftist Muslim opponents. Yet it accurately described an intellectual and political tendency that had been in the making since the mid-century. In 1944, a group of young activists had formed the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists. The new trend borrowed wholesale from Marxist political and economic theory, but rejected philosophical materialism and specifically argued against historical and economic 'determinism' (*jabr*), which was equated with pre-destination (*taqdir*) and hence impinged upon humanity's God-given ability to choose its future. Muslim socialists were active during the 1940s–50s political struggles and by the 1960s some of their second generation members began to formulate the ideology of the People's Mojahedin Organization. 'Ali Shari'ati also became an activist following his father in the God-Worshipping Socialists movement.<sup>79</sup>

## ECLECTIC MARXISM IN THE ERA OF THE SHAH-PEOPLE REVOLUTION (1960s–70s)

Q: Are you telling me that, in a sense, you are a socialist?

A: Certainly. My White Revolution is an incentive to work. It is a new original kind of socialism.

Oriana Fallaci's interview with the Shah, 1973.<sup>80</sup>

In a Marxist society, real Islam can be justified as a superstructure, and we, too, approve of such an Islam, the Islam of [Imam] Hoseyn and Mawla 'Ali.

From Marxist poet Khosrow Golesorkhi's last defense in the military tribunal that condemned him to death in 1974<sup>81</sup>.

A characteristic of the 1960s–70s was the eclecticism of political culture, historiography, and historical consciousness, in a time period often remembered for its major intellectual preoccupation with the question of Iranian 'authenticity.'<sup>82</sup> During these decades, Marxism remained a dynamic intellectual force, both in

its independent appeal and in terms of influencing Islamist thought and even the official ideology of the state. Moreover, in an intellectual milieu marked by multiplicity and contention, the Marxists too were divided into several competing schools.

It must be remembered that even during the mid-century, there was more to Iranian Marxism the Tudeh Party and Stalinism. Since the mid-1940s, leading intellectuals had broken with the party and by the 1950s–60s, figures like Khalil Maliki, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Eprim Eshaq, Anavr Khame'hi, 'Aliasghar Haj-Sayyed-Javadi, and Naser Vosuqi, launched an intellectual trend that was Marxist-influenced but independent and often hostile to both the Tudeh Party and the Soviet Union. Their ideas were expressed in periodicals like *Elm va Zendegi* (Science and Life) (1959–62), *Andisheh va Honar* (Thought and Art) (1954–63), *Negain* (1965–72), *Arash* (1961–9), *Jahan-e No* (New World) (1966–7), and *Ketab-e Hafteh* (Book of the Week) (early 1960s), as well as in more popular weeklies such as *Ferdowsi* and a host of literary and semi-political magazines and anthologies (*jong*) published in Tehran and other major cities. In tune with Cold War alignments, Muhammad Reza Shah's regime (1941–79) sometimes found leftist but anti-Soviet polemics useful and allowed them to be aired. In general, however, the government did not favor independent leftist publications and increasingly censored and/or closed them down. Still, leftist periodicals were popular and as soon as one was closed down another would appear to take its place.<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, the regime had become more vulnerable to Marxist ideological encroachments. This was manifest in the conception and implementation of the reform project called the White Revolution (1963s to the 1970s). To begin, the project's official designation, i.e., the Revolution of the Shah and the People, and all of its key planks, i.e., land reform, women's political rights, workers' profit sharing, nationalization of natural resources, and expansion of public education, were all borrowed from the agenda of Iranian socialist and Marxists. Meanwhile the official discourse of the White Revolution was heavily indebted to Marxist readings of modern history: The Shah claimed his revolution had ended feudalism, freed the workers, peasants and women, created an ideal welfare system, and championed the global struggle against imperialist oil cartels. If the Shah was to circumvent and outdo a Red Revolution with his White one, then it made sense for the regime to recruit first renegade Tudeh members and then (during the 1970s) loyal Maoists to serve in key governmental posts.<sup>84</sup>

By the mid-1970s, the Shah, who occasionally claimed to be a socialist, had assigned a special task force of intellectuals, including Marxists, to formulate an original 'dialectical philosophy' of the White Revolution. An expression of the Shah's genius, the new philosophy was to be based on a unique global vision, 'Neither Western, Nor Eastern.' Unfortunately for the Shah, a popular revolution burst upon the scene and confiscated much of his legacy, including the ideological baggage borrowed from Marxism, all quickly refashioned to fit a new Islamic garb.<sup>85</sup>

The Shah's claim to having launched a veritable social revolution also brought to the center of official and opposition discourse questions on Iran's 'backwardness,' its current 'stage' in historical progress, and a host of other problem related to conceptualizing Iran's pre-modern history. The regime's official ideology insisted that the Shah's reforms had abolished 'feudalism' and placed Iran on the path of economic, social, and technological progress. The opposition disagreed and, influenced mostly by Marxists, it was plunged into a lively and multi-vocal debate on the trajectory of Iran's history and historical development.

Tudeh Party publications saw the 1960s reforms as half-measures borrowed from the Left which nevertheless put society on a path of capitalist development. Like most of the opposition during the 1960s–70s, the party called for the restoration of constitutional government and an end to the Shah's personal dictatorship – rather than advocating armed struggle, revolution, or socialism.<sup>86</sup> It also proposed the possibility of a 'non-capitalist path of development.' This meant that countries like Iran might forge close economic and political ties to the USSR and thus delink from global capitalism to eventually adopt a Soviet-style 'socialist' system.<sup>87</sup>

As for specific works of historiography, while in exile during the 1960s–70s, Tudeh Party organs, for example *Donya*, occasionally featured articles on the history of Iranian communism. The party also published translations of Lenin's *Selected Works* and the first and second volumes of Marx's *Capital* and his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. In 1977, just prior to the outbreak of the revolution, the Tudeh Party finally published a comprehensive text on recent Iranian history. A translation of the Soviet historian M.S. Ivanov's *The Modern History of Iran*, this book quickly became an embarrassment because Ivanov had a somewhat positive estimation of the Shah's reforms, while condemning the clergy's opposition to them as reactionary.<sup>88</sup>

The Tudeh Party's foremost theoretician, Ihsan Tabari (1917–89) is among the few Iranian Marxists who has received some attention as a thinker in scholarly studies. Farzin Vahdat cites Tabari's writings as an example of Iranian Marxist thought engaging with modernity. He notes how young Tabari started out in the 1940s as a Stalinist, passed through the 1950s de-Stalinization, and by the 1960s–70s showed interest in existentialism and the Marxist humanist critique of alienation and commodity fetishism. Throughout, Tabari remained interested in the historical dimensions of Iranian culture, for instance finding much that was admirable in the mysticism of Hafez and Rumi.<sup>89</sup> Tabari's excursions into historiography, for example his *Jostarha'i dar jahanbiniha va jonbeshha-ye ejtemai' dar Iran* [Investigation into Social Movements and Worldviews in Iran] (1979), also contain noteworthy reflections, albeit embedded in a framework that Tabari himself ultimately would reject as 'Marxist scholasticism'.<sup>90</sup>

During the 1960s–70s, however, the Marxist-dominated debate on Iranian backwardness, development, and history raged well beyond the Tudeh Party. Muhammad-'Ali Khonj, Ahmad Ashraf, Frahad No'mani, Baqer Mo'meni and others debated the applicability of Marxist theoretical models such as feudalism and/or the Asiatic Mode of Production to the pre-twentieth century Iranian history. The same theoretical concerns also marked contemporary academic studies and even university curricula, as can be seen for example in the compilation of notes taken from lectures by Hamid Enayat, one of the country's well-established scholars and political thinkers.<sup>91</sup>

If the Marxist impact on the regime and dissident intellectuals was indirect, its hegemony in the radical opposition was almost total. By the 1960s–70s, Marxists of various stripes overshadowed the Tudeh Party in the student and guerilla circles that were in the forefront of the opposition.<sup>92</sup> These circles were also active participants in the intellectual debates on the history and class structure of Iranian society, especially as these questions affected the choices of revolutionary strategy and tactics. Meanwhile, the radical student and guerilla movements proved the most fertile ground for the crossbreeding of Marxist historical discourses with those of nationalism and Islam. 'Ali Shari'ati and the founders of the Organization of the Iranian People's Mojahedin were products of this milieu and consciously drew on Marxism to formulate a revolutionary and Islamic reading of history. 'Islamic Marxism' thus provided the 1970s' most seductively radical philosophy of history, spurring much of the guerilla armed actions that were soon followed by a popular revolutionary explosion at the end of the decade.

According to Shari'ati and the Islamic Marxists, history was an arena of class struggle, beginning with Cain and Abel and continuing down to the present. Biblical and Qur'anic prophets, and especially Muhammad and the Shi'i Imams, had been revolutionary leaders, a role that in modern history was to be performed by leftist Muslim intellectuals (and not the clergy). Oppression and exploitation could end only when a popular revolution overthrow the domination of imperialism and its 'puppet' (Pahlavi) regime, thus ushering the arrival of an egalitarian classless (*towhidi*) society. 1960s–70s texts expressing the Mojahedin's views on history include: *Cheguneh Qur'an biamuzim* [How to Study the Qur'an], *Masa'el-e hadd-e jonbesh-e ma* [The Critical Problems of our Movement], *Jonbesh-e Hussein* [Hussein's Movement], *Shenakht* [Epistemology], *Takamol* [Evolution], and *Tarikhcheh-e sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran* [History of the Iranian People's Mojahedin Organization]. Shari'ati's works often dwelled on historical themes too. Some examples are his *Eslamshenasi* [Understanding Islam] (1969), *Mazhab alai-h-e mazhab* [Religion Against Religion] (n.d.), *Jabr-e tarikh* [Historical Determinism] (1975), and *Abu Dhar: khoda-parast-e sosialist* [Abu Dhar: The God-Worshipping Socialist] (1980). Similarly, numerous works by Shariati exhibit a constant engagement with Marxism; but one of his less-noted writings, *Jahatgiri-e tabaqati-e Eslam* [The Class Orientation of Islam] (1980), comes closest to a Marxist critique of organized religion and is critical of the Shi'i clergy's historical conservatism.<sup>93</sup>

The main branch of the Marxist-Leninist guerillas, the Organization of the Iranian People's Feda'i Guerillas, also had its share of eclecticism and creative tensions prevalent among Stalinists and more-independent Marxists. The Feda'i movement was in fact an amalgam of radical Marxist groups from diverse ideological and political backgrounds, all of whom agreed on the necessity of armed actions against the regime. Their most orthodox Marxist-Leninist theoretician was former Tudeh member Bizhan Jazani (1937–68), who wrote a number of works in prison, including an influential synopsis of modern Iranian political history, arguing for armed actions serving the creation of a multi-class anti-dictatorial popular front. More original and less noted is Jazani's brief critique of Islamic history, the Shi'i clergy, and Islamic Marxism. Here he breaks with the old tradition of Iranian Marxists to argue forcefully that the Qur'an and Islamic ideology are at odds with Marxism and warns against the Mojahedin's attempts to mix the two. In light of the clerical takeover of the 1978–9 revolution, Jazani's critique of 'Islamic Marxists' rings prophetic:

Their submission to religion places them at the mercy of the clergy who might label them infidels and thus decisively impact their standing with the religious masses they wish to recruit. In other words, high ranking clerics would have the power of life and death over these religious (Marxists), whom the clergy can destroy when the revolutionary process no longer serves their interests.<sup>94</sup>

It is important to note that leading Feda'i theorists, for example Mas'ud Ahmadzadah (1946–72) and Amir-Parviz Puyan (1946–71), had become Marxist after passing through a formative phase of religious activism. While ostensibly secular and militantly Marxist, their writings display a semi-religious obsession with heroic martyrdom, mixed with fanatical admiration for the redemptive violence of revolutionary struggles in Algeria, Cuba, and China. On the other hand, the Feda'i movement had certain links to the anti-Stalinist and even anti-Leninist factions of the left. In the mid-1970s, for example, a small Marxist group, operating mostly outside of Iran, engaged the Feda'i leadership in a series of debates on Stalinism and Soviet socialism, showing sharp Marxist disagreements on a host of important issues, including the philosophy of history.<sup>95</sup>

The most original theorist of the guerilla movement, Mustafa Shu'aian (1934–75), was an anti-Leninist Marxist with a ferocious polemical prose in the style of Kasravi and Al-e Ahmad. Shu'aian's major work was a revisionist Marxist history of the Soviet Union's relations with the Gilan revolution in the early 1920s. The book tried to prove that even under Lenin the Soviet regime betrayed world revolution as evidenced by its 'opportunistic' treatment of the Gilan rebels. Shu'aian's extreme hostility to the Soviet Union and the Tudeh Party seems to place him virtually in the same camp as Iran's anti-communist nationalists and Islamists. But he was adamantly opposed to the Shah's regime and took his own life when cornered by the police after a street shootout. More significant than Shu'aian's Manichaeian obsession with revolutionary purity and the Soviet Union, however, is the example of his writings as a major independent departure in Iranian Marxist historiography.<sup>96</sup>

Shu'aian is an iconoclast historian, placing no authority above criticism. He clearly relishes the role of the left's internal gadfly, while freely confessing his own limitations and more than ready to admit mistakes. Ironically, he seems not to have had access to works by Marx or the more critical Marxist thinkers. Instead, the sources cited in his 500-plus study of the Gilan revolution (completed in 1968 but published in Italy in 1976) display a highly incongruent intellectual toolbox. All of these are in Persian, many in translation, and almost all were

published legally in Iran. Shu'aian's main source and inspiration was *Sardar-e jangal* [Forest Commander], the first narrative history of the Gilan rebellion, written by Ibrahim Fakhra'i and published in 1965. He also relied on the major Constitutional historians, Kasravi, Malikzadah, Dowlatabadi, and Firaydun Adamiyat. Other sources used include Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*; Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World history*; George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West: Under Lenin and Stalin*; the leftist periodical *Jahan-e no*; the memoirs of Anthony Eden and Iranian politicians; and official treatises and documents published by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Soviet Embassy in Tehran.<sup>97</sup>

Shu'aian's access to certain Marxist and semi-Marxist sources points to the existence in Iran during the 1960s–70s of a current of 'legal' and academic Marxism with considerable impact on historiography. 'Legal Marxism' meant books, especially in translation, that were allowed to be published legally. During the two pre-revolutionary decades, history seems to have become the second field (after literature) where translations of certain left-leaning and even Marxist works were tolerated. Among the former, works such as Will and Ariel Durant's multi-volume *Story of Civilization* and Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*, stood out as best-sellers, won official prizes and were reprinted several times throughout the 1960s–70s.<sup>98</sup> Other legally published socialist or Marxist translations included a wide assortment of titles such as Nevins and Commager, *The Pocket History of the US: The Story of a Free People*; Henry Marchant, *Les Jeunes rouges*; Edgar Snow, *Red China Today*; Leon Trotsky, *My Life*, and *Reform or Revolution: Interviews with Herbert Marcuse and Karl Popper*.

A number of orthodox Marxist historical works also appeared legally. Most notable were Karim Keshavarz's translations of academic studies by Soviet historians. For instance, translations of I.P. Petroshevsky's *Islam in Iran* (1970) and of a collaborative volume by Petroshevsky and other Soviet scholars, *Iranian History from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1968) offered a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the whole span of pre-modern Iranian history.<sup>99</sup> Due to its potentially sensitive discussion of Islam's origins, Keshavarz's translation of *Islam in Iran* included about a hundred pages of 'explanatory notes' by a Shi'i scholar, M.R. Hakimi. This addendum is a remarkable text in its own right. While constantly 'correcting' Petroshevsky, in light of basic Shi'i beliefs, Hakimi is surprisingly open to accepting much of the overall Marxist historical paradigm. Following Petroshevsky, he uses concepts like 'Muhammad's revolution,' emphasizes the prophet's close contacts with 'the masses and the peoples,' and



argues that 'Islam's major conflict with Iran was about liberating the people and destroying the aristocracy and the class system...'<sup>100</sup>

By the 1970s, legal and academic Marxism had spread to fields allied with history. For example, Yahya Aryanpur's *Az Saba ta Nima* [From Saba to Nima] (1972) was an influential study of modern literature contextualized in relation to political history. Even more influential, and almost a sacred text to pre-revolutionary leftists, was Amir-Hossein Araypur's *Zamineh-e jame'eh-shenasi* [the Foundations of Sociology]. First published in 1965 by Tehran University and in its tenth print by the mid-1970s, this work was mostly a free translation of American authors William F. Ogburn and Meyer F. Nimkoff, *Sociology*, (1958), to which Arayanpur had added material from a few other sources.<sup>101</sup>

The most outstanding Marxist historian of this period was Moretza Ravandi whose multi-volume *The Social History of Iran* began publication in 1960 and continued into the 1970s, going through numerous reprints and reaching a wide readership. The 803-page first volume, for example, covered 'the social history of Iran and the most ancient nations from the beginnings to the Islamic era.' This work is a surprising synthesis of Soviet and mainstream Euro-American historiography. Mostly in Persian translation, the latter include studies by Will and Ariel Durant, H.J. Wells, Bertrand Russell, Arthur Pope, Roman Girshman, Richard Frye, Ann K.S. Lambton, Phillip Hitti, Gordon Childe, George Sarton, Edward Gibbon and Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>102</sup> A 'soft' but persistent Marxist thread runs through Ravandi's historiography, but his numerous non-Marxist sources also speak loudly and in a multiplicity of voices. Moreover, and perhaps mindful of censorship, Ravandi presents Marxist interpretations as hypotheses open to further investigation. Overall, Ravandi's complete oeuvre was an unprecedented and successful attempt at providing Iranian readers with a comprehensive introduction to global and social history.

## REVOLUTION ISLAMICIZED: CONTEMPORARY MARXIST RESPONSES TO THE 1978–9 REVOLUTION

As Marx warned, history answers no questions and fights no wars for us. By itself history does nothing: The end products depends on humans, real living humans, fighting for their ideals.<sup>103</sup>

A. Pasha'i, 1979.

The Iranian Marxists' contemporary understanding of the 1978–9 revolution and the emergence of the Islamic Republic is a topic of intense controversy.

Often the Marxist are cast as traitors to the nation's best interests, or perhaps naïve blunderers who paved the way for the rise of Islamism and its subsequent clerical takeover.<sup>104</sup> Careful attention to the historical record, however, would show a more complex picture. As noted above, Marxist reactions to the 1970s rise of Islamism were not uniform. Similarly, although large groups of newly politicized youths followed the Tudeh Party in support of the Islamic Republic, equally large segments of the left, including the majority of the Marxist intellectual elite, opposed the new regime from the very start. Testimonies to the Marxist opposition's rather sober grasp of that particular historical moment are found easily in the contemporary press. The concluding part of this study, therefore, will revisit some of the more outstanding contemporary Marxist reflections on the crucial revolutionary conjuncture of 1979–80.<sup>105</sup>

A few months after the fall of the Shah, a new Marxist weekly, titled *Ketab-e Jom'eh* (Friday Book), appeared under the editorship of the acclaimed poet Ahmad Shamlu (1925–2000). *Ketab-e Jom'eh* featured commentaries on current events, selections of contemporary fiction and poetry, mostly by Iranian authors but some in translation, art criticism, photojournalism, political cartoons, little vignettes on science and chess, and finally a segment on popular culture (*Ketab-e kuche*). It also had a special section on contemporary history and historiography. The one-year run of this publication, from July 1979 to its closure in May 1980, chronicles the reaction of Iran's leading Marxist thinkers to the revolution and the emerging Islamic Republic.

The opening sentences of *Ketab-e Jom'eh*'s first editorial, most likely by Shamlu, were a historical warning in prophetic language: 'Dark Days are ahead ... a time that sets itself up by denying democracy, nationalism, civility, culture and the arts.' Such dark days, the readers were assured, were bound to be swept away by 'history's determinism.' But this would come only after 'the present generation and the next' had suffered 'a back-breaking burden.'<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the first issue's lead article was a translation of Berthold Brecht's 1935 warning to European intellectuals on the arrival of fascism, obviously implying the same for Iran.

Issues 4–7 featured 'round table' discussions by 'representatives of radical thought without party affiliation' on the 'complex problems of Iranian society.' The participants were mostly Marxist intellectuals, including writers, historians, economists, sociologists, and political activists in Iran and abroad.<sup>107</sup> Naturally, a major theme of debate was the intellectuals' role in the revolution and, in particular, whether they had contributed to popular illusions. The country's leading

historian, Firaydun Adamiyat, argued that intellectuals had played a prominent role in the revolution, which he described as a truly 'national' movement encompassing various classes. Surprisingly, Firaydun Adamiyat praised the guerrillas, whose 'militant ideology' he dubbed as 'the most important revolutionary literature of our time.' However, he went on to claim that only those possessing 'critical reason' (*aql-e naqad*), could be called intellectuals, a criterion that according to Firaydun Adamiyat would exclude Islamist thinkers like Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati. This was in keeping with Firaydun Adamiyat's Positivist philosophy of history, entailing an ultimately 'rational and secular movement.' Firaydun Adamiyat's categorical rejection of religious thinkers as intellectuals was later expanded into a scathing attack on Islamist historical thought, thus sharply defining one side of a culture war that rages to the present.<sup>108</sup>

Interestingly, most participants in the *Ketab-e Jom'eh* debate disagreed with the eminent historian. Instead, they tended to argue that intellectuals came from various social backgrounds, hence representing different worldviews. Shamlu insisted that the Shah's systematic repression had prevented the intellectuals from linking up with the people, thus causing the revolution to turn into a 'blind' revolt. This argument too would soon become a familiar explanation of the left's failure in competition with the Islamists. While having a certain validity, Shamlu's argument was too general and tended to deflect the need for more serious criticism of the Marxists' shortcomings in both theory and practice.<sup>109</sup>

*Ketab-e Jom'eh's* round table discussions ended abruptly and without conclusion, but an editorial in issue 14 affirmed the journal's strong commitment to 'democracy,' as a universal human achievement above and beyond particular class interests.<sup>110</sup> Then a series of articles by Baqer Paraham covered the widening conflict between independent Marxists and the Tudeh Party over controlling the Iranian Writers Association. In addition to pointing out the independent left's major differences with the Tudeh Party, Parham's articles were the first documentary history of the Writers Association, an important chapter in twentieth-century Iran's intellectual history.

Starting with issue no.18, an anonymous author wrote brief but insightful commentaries on weekly political developments. The taking of American hostages, for example, was explained as a pre-planned coup with three main objectives. First, to bring down the liberal provisional government of Prime Minister Mahdi Bazargan. Second, to beat the Marxists in the game of 'anti-imperialist' popular mobilization, while deflecting attention from demands

for revolutionary social change. Third, to bargain more strongly with the USA to accept a clerical regime.<sup>111</sup>

*Ketab-e Jom'eh's* specific coverage of history and historiography began in issue no.2, with 'Ali Pasha'i's article setting the tone for a new departure within the Marxist paradigm. This piece was in fact Pasha'i's introduction to his translation of Jean Chesneaux's *Pasts and Presents*, parts of which were published during the following weeks. Pasha'i's take on Marxist historiography went far beyond the dour determinism of the daily journals of the Tudeh Party and other Iranian Marxist-Leninist organizations. According to him:

The past is as dead as its makers. It finds meaning only through what is of value to us. The past, and not what we are fed in its name, is a product of our collective memory. The only reason for our interest in the past is to understand the present and to glance at a possible future.<sup>112</sup>

Pasha'i thus rejected the professional historians' investigation of 'the past for its own sake' or for 'broadening the horizons of knowledge.' He contended that notions of history always have been shaped by 'power structures,' particularly by states. Therefore, official primary sources, from the Zoroastrian Avestas to modern television programs and government archives, are saturated with distortions and 'lies.' He praised Frederick Nietzsche and Alexander Herzen for critiquing objectivist historiography, citing Matthew Arnold's labeling of history as the 'great Mississippi of lies.'<sup>113</sup>

The model historian, according to Pasha'i, was Chesneaux. Unlike 'dogmatic vulgar' Marxists, Chesneaux did not reduce history to 'economic determinism.' His Marxism was not a 'theory of history' but a call to Praxis. Not only the working class, but women, minorities and all those involved in actual struggles against dominant 'power structures,' had to free themselves from the historiography of the 'existing order.' They all needed new historical visions to guide their revolutionary struggle. New vistas then would reflect the multiple view points of all those oppressed by dominant power structures, i.e. groups like the Kharajites, Qarmatians, Mu'tazilis, Mazdakis, atheists, Babis, Bolsheviks, terrorists, communists, and Marxists.<sup>114</sup>

*Ketab-e Jom'eh's* other resident historian was Khosrow Shakeri, a student opposition leader in Europe who during the 1970s had gathered, edited, and published documents on early twentieth-century Iran's Marxist and working class movement. Shakeri now republished some of these, especially those

dealing with topics that paralleled current conditions. He also wrote revisionist accounts of the Pahlavi monarchy's 1920s origins and of its return to power in 1953. While relying on close primary source analysis, Shakeri's interpretations diverged considerably from the narratives of Soviet and Tudeh Party historians, which he criticized relentlessly.<sup>115</sup>

*Ketab-e Jom'eh* was not the unique historical testament of independent Marxism during the revolution. Marxist critiques of the revolution appeared from the very moment of its triumph and found public resonance, for example, in the massive crowds attending the 1979–80 protests called by various leftist organizations.<sup>116</sup> Voices of leftist dissent were prevalent in widely read newspapers like *Ayandegan*, *Paygham-e emruz* and *Ahangar*, as well as in the publications of Marxist groups that warned of a fascist drift in the new regime. In November 1979, for instance, a Marxist group called The Workers' Path (*Rah-e kargar*) published five booklets titled *Fascism: Nightmare or Reality?* It predicted the 'most probable prospect' for Iran being a fascist regime ruled by a 'clerical caste.' The primary task of such a regime would be to safeguard capitalism and the class system during Iran's ongoing revolutionary crisis. Referring to Marx's analysis of French Bonapartism, the Workers' Path also argued that the new regime represented an amalgam of political interests, not identical to those of any single social class.<sup>117</sup> This early analysis of right-wing Islamism as a fascist movement would resurface 25 years later in the enormously popular writings of the Islamic Republic's disillusioned intellectuals, like Abdolkarim Soroush and Akabr Ganji, who of course did not credit their Marxist predecessors.<sup>118</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The following sketch of key themes and topics, mainly defined and discussed by Marxists, shows the centrality of their contribution to the historiography of modern Iran:

(1) The social and class character of the Constitutional and Islamic Revolutions, the Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Republic; (2) The impact of imperialism on Iran, questions of underdevelopment, land reform, and the rentier capitalist state; (3) The role of various social classes and strata, especially the secular and religious intellectuals, as agents of historical change; (4) The question of strategy and tactics, i.e., political, ideological, and cultural mobilization, or armed actions, in the struggle to bring about social change; (5) The debate over conceptualizing Iran's pre-modern history and socio-economic formations

(feudalism versus the Asiatic mode of production); (6) Social history, including the role and contributions of subaltern classes and groups such as workers, peasants, pastoralists, and women; (7) Finally, the broad debate over the modern meaning of history and historiography, particularly in terms of challenging the dominant nationalist paradigm.



# Islamist Historiography in Post-Revolutionary Iran

*Kamran Scot Aghaie*

Is there an identifiable ‘Islamist Historiography’ in post-revolutionary Iran? Stated differently, has the ideology and rhetoric associated with the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1978–9 inspired an approach to historical writing that can be considered a ‘school of historiography?’ If so, what are its key features or tenets? How has it been applied in practice? How effective has its propagation been? Has it displaced other historiographical approaches and trends? More broadly speaking, what are the general trends in historiography in post-revolutionary Iran?

In an effort to answer the above questions, this essay will explore the emerging Islamist trends in historiography associated with and following the Islamic Revolution. It will be argued that the revolutionary rhetoric associated with Khomeini and his followers inspired an ideological approach to history that has a relatively clear, although problematic, methodology along with a set of core tenets. This historiography, which was promoted by the state and by Islamists who to varying degrees followed the ‘line of the Imam,’ shares some core tenets with post-colonial approaches to historiography, such as the stress placed on the power of knowledge generally, and of the construction of history specifically, as a tool of subjugation by elites or Imperialist powers. However, they went much farther, while simultaneously focusing much more narrowly, in identifying a global conspiracy to use the power to construct history as a means of Imperialist domination. They have considered foreign scholars, both Western and Marxist, to be actively contributing to the pursuit of colonialist agendas. While they often praised certain strains of traditional Muslim historiography and praise the Muslim or Iranian contributions in the area of historiography, they often



were highly critical of indigenous historiographical traditions. For example, they rejected 'court historiography' or 'royal historiography' on both technical and political grounds, and indict modern indigenous (in this case Iranian and Muslim) historians for emulating Western historiography, and for being swayed by nationalism, secularism, materialism, or Marxism.

Some historians who adhere to the revolutionary political ideology have applied these ideas to studying the Islamic revolution, Iranian history, and Islamic history. They tend to stress the importance of religion in Iranian history, the central role of the 'ulama in populist rebellions or movements, the twin evils of local despotism and global imperialism, and divine determinism in history. They argue that materialism as an approach to history is deeply flawed, and that secularism and communism are politically inspired ideologies that aim to destroy Islam in order to dominate Muslim societies. Specifically, they stress that Iran's national character is essentially Islamic and Shi'i, rather than being ethnically or culturally based, that Islam is liberating and progressive, rather than being oppressive and backward, that Hussain's martyrdom at Karbala (680 AD) is a universal model of revolution, and that the 'ulama and Islam have historically struggled to liberate humanity in accordance with ideals of divine justice. These views have been promoted in many ways, including in school textbooks.

However, Islamist historiography in Iran was by no means ubiquitous. Historians of diverse ideological persuasions have continued to influence the evolution of historiography in Iran. In some cases this has resulted in conflict and confrontation with the Islamist historians or the state; while at other times they have simply gone quietly about doing their work, especially in cases where they have practiced pragmatic self-censorship. There are both points of congruence, and points of contradiction between the ideals expressed by these historians and the Islamist historians referred to above. For example, they also tend to use methods consistent with post-colonial studies, or even post-modernism, are critical of court historiography, and are often critical of communism. However, on a series of specific issues they diverge from the Islamist historians. For example, they do not always consider Islam and the 'ulama to be proponents of liberation and justice, nor do they necessarily consider Islam and Shi'ism to be a fundamental characteristic of Iran's 'national character.' Also, while they are often critical of Western scholarship on Iran and Islam, they also often praise or emulate Western historiographical methods, which tend to inform and help to shape their methodologies.

One final point that will be discussed in this study is the proliferation of publications containing primary documents such as archival materials, memoirs, travel accounts, court and *waqf* documents, and diplomatic records. These publications, because they often include little or no analytical prose, may seem at first glance to be devoid of political or historiographical implications. Especially since discussions of historiography tend to be concerned essentially with the historian's theoretical approach to analysis or synthesis of such documents. However, the publication of primary documents is in reality part and parcel of the historiographical debates of the post-revolutionary period. The selection of episodes for which to publish documents is in and of itself highly significant. Publishing primary documents related to Pahlavi policies and actions, leftists, Islamist revolutionaries or opposition leaders, Qajar court officials, United State intelligence activities, Russian or British invasions, imperialist domination, or concessionary treaties all accomplish various political aims. Similarly, the selection of documents related to social, cultural, or economic history, along with other academic issues, also reflect historiographical concerns, as historians try to create space for the study of such subjects. These publications also represent a strategy of avoiding controversy by having the documents 'speak for themselves,' even when the editor, through the process of selecting a topic and the types of documents to be included, has already determined indirectly what the documents will say. Therefore, these publications are not devoid of political or academic implications, and are best understood as representing trends in historiography in post-revolutionary Iran.

First, the core ideas regarding historiography, as set forth by Khomeini himself, and articulated by Islamist historians like Murtiza Mutahhari and Abu al-Fazl Shakuri, will be analyzed. The core tenets of this approach to historiography will be presented and discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of specific examples of issues that have created contention, such as treatments of nationalism, Islam in Iran, the Constitutional Revolution, the Musaddiq era, the Pahlavi regime, and Imam Hussain's rebellion. This will include a discussion of how school textbooks are used to propagate these themes. Next, historians who do not follow this school or methodology, but who nevertheless have promoted historiographical methods will be discussed in relation to the Islamist approach. These historians, such as Firaydun Adamiyat, Morteza Ravandi, and Abdolhussein Zarrinkub, have at times been at odds with the state ideology. And finally, the academic and political implications of the upsurge in the publication

of primary documents, such as treaties, archival materials, memoirs, and diplomatic records, will be analyzed, with a view to demonstrating their academic and political implications in relation to the above-mentioned historiographical trends and debates.

This paper will not undertake the Herculean task of presenting a comprehensive survey of history books published since the revolution. While such a project needs to be undertaken, even a highly superficial survey of such a vast quantity of books would inevitably tend toward becoming an annotated bibliography, which would divert this paper away from its basic purpose. Therefore, the focus of this preliminary study will primarily be on selected works that explicitly discuss historiography, with a few specific examples of historical texts being given for selected themes and trends. Another subject that warrants serious and systematic study but which will not be included in this study is the proliferation of various *Bonyads* or *Mo'assasehs* in Iran, which can be thought of as a uniquely Iranian variation on NGOs. These foundations and associations are critically important because they have taken on a variety of academic functions, traditionally associated in the West with universities. While they theoretically must be approved by the state, they work in a largely unregulated fashion, which has implications for academic freedom, and the production of scholarship, especially when one compares them to universities, which are generally under more direct state control. A systematic study remains to be done on these associations, and would likely yield fascinating results.

## ISLAMIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

Khomeini did not write systematically about history, let alone about historiography. While he did interpret various historical events, they usually were religious or political events, and his analysis was primarily ethical, political, or strategic in nature. Also, his primary concern with history tended to be related directly to representations of the Islamic Revolution or the Pahlavi regime. He did, however, express some views about history, historians, and historiography that have influenced some historians to take a particular approach to the writing of history. One of the rare but good examples of Khomeini's views on history and historiography, and one that is explicitly cited by at least one Islamist historian, whose work will be discussed below, is a letter he wrote in 1988. He addressed this letter to a historian, named Hojjat al-Islam Hamid Rowhani

(Ziyarati), who, with the assistance of the *Bonyad-e Shahid* (Martyrs Association), was working to write a history of the Islamic Revolution.

After thanking him for working on a history of the Islamic Revolution he goes on to say in the letter:

I hope that you will be able to carefully document the epic and eventful history of the unprecedented Islamic Revolution of the heroic people of Iran. You as a historian must be aware of what a great task you are undertaking. Most historians write about history however they desire, or however they are instructed [by others], rather than how it really happened. They know in advance what the conclusion of their books will be, and they in fact reach that conclusion in the end.<sup>1</sup>

This quote illustrates several important points about Khomeini's view of history and historiography. He is essentially pointing out the problems posed by bias in writing history, which he signals by referring to 'however they desire.' While he does not specify here what sort of bias to which he is referring, the reference to 'however they are instructed' implies that they are merely agents of some higher political power, or of ideological forces of some sort, presumably governments or imperialist powers. The final sentence, in which he states that historians reach their conclusions before even starting to write their books, implies that this bias is by design rather than by accident. In other words, most histories are not the product of evidence, as should be the case in 'positivist' history, rather they are the product of ideology, politics, desire, and personal motives.

He further clarifies these ideas, before going on to explain how he would like the history of the Islamic Revolution to be written (ironically he is outlining the desired conclusions he hopes this historian should argue before he has gathered and analyzed the relevant evidence):

I want you to try as hard as you can to make clear the goal of the uprising of the people. Why is it that historians slaughter revolutions in the slaughterhouses of their own motives or those of their masters? Today, like with all histories of revolutions, a group of people, Easterners and Westerners alike, are occupied with writing the history of the glorious Islamic Revolution. You will have done a great service to Iranian history if you are able to base history upon audio-video documentation in the common language of the masses of suffering people, containing the complex issue of the revolution. The foundation of histories of our Islamic

Revolution, like the revolution itself, should be built upon the shoulders of the barefoot [masses who are] disfavored by the powers and the superpowers. You must show how the people struggled against tyranny, and the oppression of stagnation and backwardness, and put the ideals of Muhammad's Islam in place of the ideals of Royal Islam, Capitalist Islam, and false Islam, or in one word American Islam. You must show how in the rigid environment of the seminaries of that time that every movement was accused of being Marxist or British, and how a few members of the 'ulama joined the poor and suffering people of the streets and bazaar hand-in-hand, and plunged themselves into danger and hardship [water, fire, and blood] until them came out victorious.<sup>2</sup>

His vision of the history of the Islamic Revolution is simultaneously ideological, political, and populist. He clearly feels that politically motivated scholars have falsely represented many previous revolutions. Hence, historians either have malicious motives themselves or are governed by the malicious motives of 'their masters.' One important problem with this historiographical approach, he says, is the willful neglect of the perspective of the masses of people in favor of elitist perspectives, which presumably are motivated by the desire to obtain or maintain positions of power. He therefore is suggesting that willful neglect by historians of 'the will of the people' in their struggles against oppression and tyranny is a chronic historiographical problem. He also portrays Islam and the 'ulama as populist leaders who have joined with the masses to struggle against tyranny with the aim of achieving justice and a moral society. His vague reference to the fact that historians around the world, both 'Eastern and Western,' will be writing the history of the Islamic Revolution, supports the idea that there is an immediate need to properly represent the revolution before it is misrepresented by others. All these ideas are important in shaping the development of and Islamist historiography centered around the revolutionary ideals and rhetoric.

There are many religious historians who at least loosely follow this general approach, such as his associate and fellow revolutionary Murtiza Mutahhari, who has written in-depth works on history and historiography, and who is referred to by many later Islamic historians, who consider him to be a role model. Examples of his work will be discussed shortly. However, by far the most systematic representation of the Islamist approach to historiography is by the religious historian Abu al-Fazl Shakuri, who has published two books on historiography. The first book, *Jarayanshenasi-e Tarikhnegari-ha dar Iran-e Mo'aser*, (Studying The Trends in Historiography in Modern Iran) was published in 1992

by the *Bonyad-e Engelab-e Islami-e Iran* (the association of the Islamic Revolution of Iran), which is based in the shrine city of Qum. His second book, *Daramadi bar Tarikhnegari va Tarikhnegari-e Mosalmanan* (Introduction to Historical Outlook and Historiography of Muslims), was published in 2001 by *Markaz-e Entesharat-e Daftar-e Tablighat-e Islami-e Howzeh-e Elmiyyeh-e Qum* (the Publication Center of the Office of Islamic Propagation of the Religious Seminary of Qum). These two books will be analyzed here in some detail because they are excellent examples of the comprehensive treatment of a revolution-inspired historiography, which is also shared by some other Islamist historians in Iran.

The overarching characteristic of this approach to historical writing is the belief that the struggles and conflicts associated with colonialism and imperialism have assumed many different forms, including economic, military, political, intellectual and cultural clashes. They believe that knowledge and the power to construct history are fundamentally important in this struggle, as imperialists use the construction of history as a weapon to expand their political, cultural, economic, and military influence. While the relationship between political power and control over the production of knowledge is commonplace in recent Western scholarship, especially among such approaches as post-modernism, the Islamist version of this argument is somewhat different.

Shakuri, much like Khomeini, believes that there is a Western imperialist project, which makes use of the construction or 'the misrepresentation' of the histories of the world as a means to dominate and control the world. Historians are then understood to be either willing accomplices or staunch opponents of this agenda. It is perhaps not surprising that in this method objectivity is asserted but is not systematically adhered to. The following quote from Shakuri's writing is illustrative:

The science of history is among the useful forms of knowledge or scholarship, which in the modern world has become a tool of influence used by World-dominating Imperialists. They use the science of history as the simplest and yet the most mysterious means to [impose] their authority and ideology [onto others]; and by means of forgery and falsification of the historical events of nations, they strive to colonize their thoughts and views. Meanwhile we do not attribute sufficient importance to the science of history and the teaching of Islamic History.<sup>3</sup>

He goes on to say that Muslims and Iranians need to be self-aware of their history if they are to combat the hegemony of the West. He argues that there

is a conscious strategy by Western scholars and leaders, whom he views as the enemies of Islam and Muslims, to separate Muslims from their own history and sense of self. The basic idea is that if Muslims are insecure about their own culture and 'national character', then they will be susceptible to cultural domination by the West. This, he says, is why it is critically important for Muslims to produce detailed studies of their own history. He laments the lack of high quality historical scholarship among modern Muslims, and forcefully argues for the promotion of historical scholarship in Islamic seminaries. He lists several specific strategies employed by Westerners to achieve global domination. He accuses them of falsifying Islamic history, working to change indigenous languages, changing indigenous scripts (i.e., Turkey, Central Asian languages, etc.), struggling against most religious traditions and local customs, and dividing Muslims by promoting ethnic, national and regional identities at the expense of religious identity and unity.<sup>4</sup>

This approach to historiography is not, however, simply a reassertion of a 'nativist' perspective on history and historiography. It involves a systematic critique of four major traditions of historiography: (1) indigenous court or royal historiography, (2) classical Muslim historical scholarship, (3) Orientalism in both the Western and Eastern block countries, and finally (4) Iranian and Muslim historians, who follow their lead.

Royal or court histories are, in Shakuri's estimation, highly problematic for technical and stylistic reasons, as well as ideological and political reasons. For example, he is quite critical of several technical and stylistic characteristics of royal or court histories. He says that they tend toward exaggeration and use obscurantist writing. They flatter and defame people whom they are discussing in their text. They often lack modesty and realism in their writing. In terms of structure, they tend to write isolated and disconnected histories that do not sufficiently relate events to global trends or long-term trends over time, nor do they properly analyze the events to draw independent conclusions. He also argues that their use of evidence is insufficiently rigorous.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of the political and ideological problems with these writings, he argues that court historians provide an elitist view that represents the interests of the rulers and their clients, while systematically ignoring opposition and populist views. They rely almost exclusively upon state records and documentation, which tell us little or nothing about broader trends in society. They also tend to focus on the lives, affairs, and priorities of the ruling elite, which are often at odds

with other segments in society. In other words, they are often royalty-centered or king-centered. Since these historians are usually dependant upon the rulers for patronage, he argues that their accounts are highly susceptible to political influence and censorship. Court historians also tend to sanctify power and glorify the ruler or ruling group. For example, he says that they tend to glorify specific ethnic groups, who happen to be ruling at the time. This point is also closely related to his critique of the rise of nationalist sentiments in the modern period. Overall, Shakuri's criticisms of the political and ideological problems with court histories center on how state power and elite perspectives dominate in the process, which irretrievably compromises the integrity and authority of court or royal histories.<sup>6</sup>

Closely related to his critique of royal historiography is his assessment of the classical Muslim tradition of historical scholarship. While he glorifies the significant achievements of these classical Muslim historians, he still is quite critical. He is particularly critical of what he calls a relative decline in Muslim historical scholarship, which created the environment in which colonialists were able to make advances in the modern period. He argues that classical Muslim historians were often sloppy or inconsistent in their methodologies and in the recording of facts and dates, and that they often exaggerated and were imprecise. He criticizes the problematic uses of *isnads* and the science of *hadith* criticism as they relate to historical texts. He also says that they neglected social and economic history, were often influenced by problematic sectarian views, or were forced to practice *taqiyyeh*. He is particularly critical of their general desire to avoid politically sensitive issues entirely, which caused them to ignore important ideological movements and uprisings.<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, his criticisms of traditional historians are consistent with the critiques put forth by most modern secular historians in the West. However, they are motivated by different concerns. While many modern secular historians push their analysis to include non-elites and broader social phenomena, it is because these subjects have not been sufficiently studied. Shakuri's aim is to illustrate the political populism of Muslims, the 'ulama, and Islam itself. Thus, the driving force behind his critiques is more political or ethical than it is academic.

The third approach to historiography that Shakuri critiques is colonialist or imperialist historiography. Like Khomeini, his critique centers on the idea that there is a global conspiracy on the part of colonialist powers to dominate the



world economically, politically, culturally and intellectually. Colonialist historians, whom he often refers to as Zionists and Christians/Crusaders, share in this conspiracy and contribute to its basic aim of world-domination. Shakuri characterizes colonialist historiography as being arrogant, self-aggrandizing, Eurocentric, and atheist. He says that they stress secular or materialistic conceptions of history, particularly Marxist or East Block scholars.<sup>8</sup>

In relation to the history of Iran, he argues that these scholars stress the ethnic or national identity of Iranians at the expense of their Muslim heritage. According to this argument, they glorify Iran's pre-Islamic history and denigrate its Islamic history. He also believes that they take Western nations as the pinnacle of civilization, and as models to be emulated around the world.<sup>9</sup> He accuses them of deliberately using ancient Iranian history to spread falsehoods about Iran. For example, according to Shakuri, colonialist historians falsely claim that ancient Iranians were idol-worshippers, that Islam was imposed upon Iranians against their will and at the point of a sword, thus separating Iranians from the most fundamental aspect of their national character, which he identifies as Islam. He also says that they deliberately misrepresent rebellions, and even falsely exaggerate the importance of Judaism in Iranian history.<sup>10</sup> Like many other Islamist historians, he displays a noticeable tendency toward xenophobic and religiously based polemic against Christians and Jews, often using the terms Crusaders and Christians interchangeably, and likewise the terms Zionists and Jews.

In relation to the history of Islam, he argues that these scholars disrespect Islam and the Prophet Muhammad by attributing worldly motives to him, and worldly origins to Islam. He claims that they attribute idol worship to Muhammad prior to receiving revelation, and consider Islam to be fundamentally flawed or lacking. He says that they argue that Islam is inherently incapable of dealing with modern contexts and issues. This is why they continually stress the pressing need to fundamentally reformulate Islam in accordance with Western ideals and priorities, particularly in line with Protestant ideals. As an essential part of this project, he says that they felt it necessary to prove that Islam is derivative of other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. Additionally, they stress the negative qualities, real or fabricated, in Islamic civilization to prove that Islam and Muslims are inherently barbaric and violent.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most striking characteristics of this critique of Western historiography, and one which is shared by much scholarship on the subject in Iran today, is the focus on Orientalism rather than more recent academic approaches

or schools of historiography in the West. While Orientalism is often the favorite target of criticism among Islamists and secular scholars in both the East and the West, the discourse in Iran tends to focus on Orientalists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Ignaz Goldziher, Will Durant, Carl Brockelmann, and William Montgomery Watt. This is not surprising, since the earlier phases in Orientalist scholarship most closely conform to this type of critique. However, it also reflects a pattern of drawing upon a longer-term tradition of criticism of the West in Iran and Muslim countries that goes back at least to early Islamic Modernist thinkers like Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (Asadabadi).<sup>12</sup>

Shakuri is also quite critical of some Iranian and Muslim historians whom he portrays as blindly emulating Orientalists. He draws upon the ideas of such scholars as Franz Fanon and Edward Sa'id to argue that these historians serve as intermediaries of colonialist rule, as a sort of intellectual version of the 'dependent elites' that have been discussed in post-colonial studies. He particularly singles out Morteza Ravandi and Firaydun Adamiyat for scathing criticism. Abdulhussein Zarrinkub is similarly criticized. We will return to these historians shortly. His overall criticism of such historians is that they, willingly or unwilling, end up directly serving the interests of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>13</sup>

This historiography or approach to writing history, while systematic, ideologically coherent, and in line with some trends in modern secular 'academic' scholarship, is fraught with methodological difficulties. The focus on the power derived from controlling the process of constructing history is consistent with similar arguments in a variety of methodologies, such as post-modernism, post-colonial studies, and subaltern studies. The critique of the role of scholars in imperialist projects, especially in the case of Orientalism and more recent trends in area studies, also cannot be rejected. Many academics have historically been involved in supporting the foreign policies of their governments. This seems particularly relevant in the United States since September 11, as political pressure has been directed at American scholars to lend active scholarly support to US foreign policies in the Middle East, South Asia, and elsewhere. The criticisms of court historians and traditional Muslim historians, is also not far off the mark of recent historiographical critiques originating in the West. These ideas, therefore, should not be dismissed outright. However, this Islamist historiography clearly goes too far in its blanket assertions, its selective application, and its paranoid view of the world, in which everyone is either an active revolutionary or an instrument of

tyranny. This leads to the unavoidable conclusion that this approach will not have a significant global influence on academic historical scholarship. For example, it is not realistic to expect that this method will have an academic impact on Western scholarship comparable to that of the subaltern school of historiography, which emerged in South Asia. That being said, this approach does significantly influence the representations of history in Iran today.

## SELECTED THEMES IN IRANIAN HISTORY

Let us now turn our attention to the issue of the origins and practical application of variations of this historiographical method to specific events in Iranian history. Let us begin with a discussion of two selected events or themes, which have sparked a great deal of scholarship, and which serve as excellent examples of the application of a 'revolutionary historiography' to specific topics. The first theme or episode is the nature of Shi'ism and the role of the 'ulama in society, as embodied in the Battle of Karbala and interpretations of Ashura. The second is the relationship between Islam and Iranian identity. After discussing these two events, we will turn our attention to four additional historical episodes identified by Ervand Abrahamian in his discussion of Islamist uses of history for ideological purposes. The four episodes treated by Islamists that he analyzes are the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–9 and its aftermath (especially 1910), the Gilan-based Jangali Rebellion of 1915–21, the rise of Reza Shah in 1921–5, and the Musaddiq era of 1951–3.<sup>14</sup> The Islamist treatment of these four historical events illustrates the pattern of portraying the 'ulama as defenders of the pious and oppressed Iranian masses, the corruption of the royal regimes, the betrayal of Iran by leftists and other secularists, and Imperialist encroachment on the rights of Iranians.

## SHI'ISM AND ASHURA

This essay will not cover the competing interpretations of the 'Karbala Paradigm' in the broader political discourses that emerged during the revolution itself, because these have been discussed extensively in other publications by this author.<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this essay, what is important is the series of historiographical issues related to the representation of the Battle of Karbala in historical texts. It is impossible to speak of the historiography of Karbala without starting with Hussain Va'ez Kashefi's 1502 composition entitled *Rowzat al-Shohada*, which has been considered by many to be the canonical text within

this tradition. It was based on earlier sources by prominent `ulama like Sa'id al-Din's *Rowzat al-Islam*, or al-Khwarazmi's *Maqatal Nur al-'A'imme*. However, Kashefi's book became the standard text for a new set of 'Karbala narratives.'<sup>16</sup> The main theme of Kashefi's narrative was commemoration of the tragedy of Karbala through acts of ritual mourning and crying. The key issue being reinforced by Kashefi was that mourning for the *imam* leads to earthly reward and eternal salvation.

In the modern period numerous religious scholars put forth their versions of the story of Karbala, some of them contradicting Kashefi's approach. Salehi Najafabadi, a religious scholar who studied with Khomeini in the 1960's, was one of the first modern scholars to attempt a revision of the Karbala narrative. Najafabadi's revision focused on two key points. First, he argued that Hussain intended to overthrow Yazid, who had transgressed to the point where it was imperative for someone to remove him from power. Second, he proposed that Hussain did not know in advance that he would be martyred at Karbala, a fundamental Shi'i belief. Opposition to Najafabadi's revisionist interpretations did not take long to surface. Numerous religious scholars attacked his views as heresy. They even accused him of promoting the views of Orientalists and non-Muslims. However, he also had some supporters. Ayatollah Montazeri, Abu al-Fazl Musavi, Muhammad Shari'at Isfahani, Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, and other members of the revolutionary leadership surrounding Khomeini himself, praised some of his views both verbally and in writing.

This debate raged until Murtiza Mutahhari tackled the issue in the 1970s. He wrote a history of Karbala in which the movement of Hussain was depicted as a holy epic or event (*hamaseh-e moqaddas*), and a movement for Islamic reform. He argued that historians should focus upon the heroic character of Hussain. He compared Hussain to Alexander the Great and national heroes like Rostam of Iran. All were characterized by intensity of purpose, awe-inspiring dignity, bravery, zeal, and honor. However, Hussain's movement and character were unique because they were holy, i.e., they were characterized by humanity, the love of truth, selflessness, and adherence to belief and to the holy burden or responsibility his great spirit inherited from previous *imams*.<sup>17</sup> Mutahhari argues the 'moral' of this historical event is that Muslims should actively emulate Hussain in the form of active rebellion against corrupt rulers. He explained that Karbala served as a tragic, but potent, example to the believers that the whole system of the *khalifeh* was unjust and therefore un-Islamic, and that the grandson of

the Prophet would not condone a hereditary *khalifeh* like that of the Umayyad dynasty.<sup>18</sup>

One fundamental component of Mutahhari's reconstruction of the history of the Battle of Karbala was a systematic critique of existing historical representations. Mutahhari argues that historical accounts of Karbala have been misunderstood and misrepresented by Muslim historians. He speaks extensively about the disservice they have done to Hussain and his cause by their corruptions of the story of his martyrdom at Karbala.<sup>19</sup> He identifies two types of corruption, of literal meaning and of interpretation or understanding. Concerning the first type, many important facts associated with the events at Karbala have been changed, added, or left out altogether. He identifies several scholars, such as Hajji Nuri, who have identified such falsifications of the story.<sup>20</sup> For example, 'Ali's portrait is painted even though his appearance is unknown to the Muslims, and Zeyn al-'Abidin is always portrayed as being sickly, when in reality, he was only sick on the occasion of the uprising. Perhaps the most striking example is a line of poetry, which was supposed to have been written in reference to an important character in the story named Leyla. As it turns out, the line was actually an excerpt from the fictional story of Leyla and Majnun, which has no relation to Karbala at all. Such false facts, according to Mutahhari, have been introduced into the story for so long that they are actually accepted as truth, without being subjected to scrutiny.

These corruptions of facts have been accompanied by (and were often the cause of) corruptions in understanding or interpretation, which he considers far more dangerous than the literal errors. As a result of the false interpretations of the event, its meaning has been in danger of being lost forever. For example, he says that some people have interpreted the event as being similar to, or even derivative of, the Christian view concerning the crucifixion of the Prophet Jesus, i.e., that he made a personal sacrifice of his life for the purpose of absolving humanity of their sins<sup>21</sup>. Mutahhari states that this, as well as other such interpretations, constitutes a corruption of the story and a misrepresentation of the character of Hussain. One reason for such misunderstandings is simply an accumulation of falsehoods that obscured the real events; but another reason is that the dark or tragic side of the story has been unduly stressed.

He argues that historians, by focusing excessively upon the tragic details of the event, have failed to properly portray the true purpose of the uprising and martyrdom of Hussain. He argues that the tragic side of the battle is only the

means of transmitting the Islamic ideals that were characterized by his actions.<sup>22</sup> Thus the tragic actions taken against Hussain and his followers are merely a means toward a holy end, which is the realization of this Islamic ideal, which is in turn characterized by the actions taken by these martyrs. Therefore, he argues that an undue stress being placed upon the tragic side leads the believers away from the intended purpose of the movement.

Mutahhari goes on to identify two agents or propagators of these corruptions, the Umayyad government, and the Shi'is (both the average believers and the 'ulama).<sup>23</sup> Interestingly enough, the only government that he mentions is that of the Umayyad rulers, who actively corrupted the meaning of the movement because they were the epitome of what the movement was aimed at destroying.<sup>24</sup> However, they were largely unsuccessful in eliminating the memory of Hussain and his martyrdom, which has been preserved by the Shi'is of the household of the Prophet.

He also considers Shi'is to be guilty of corruption<sup>25</sup>. He says that the average Shi'i believers have a tendency to glorify the heroes of this story, which has resulted in a tendency to encourage falsification of historical facts associated with this event. They are often more deeply moved by false accounts of the story than they are by truthful ones. This has resulted in the 'ulama or *rowzeh khans* (givers of the ritual sermons commemorating Karbala), religious scholars and orators whose business it is to present and preserve this story, giving in to popular pressures to exaggerate to the point of corruption.<sup>26</sup> They do this because they are financially dependent upon pleasing their audiences, and because of a general desire for fame and fortune. He believes that even the most respected scholars can be guilty of this type of conduct. Therefore, the instigators of the corruptions are the average believers, while the implementers of the corruptions were the 'ulama or *rawzah khanha*. The stage of this corruption, in turn, has been the various Shi'is rituals like the *rowzeh khsani*, in which there is a dramatic recounting of the story of Hussain's martyrdom at Karbala. The result of all of this corruption has been that the meaning of the event is misunderstood, Muslims are misled into ignoring their Islamic duties, and true Islam is in danger of extinction.

Mutahhari's critique of the historical representations of Karbala is consistent with broader trends of Iranian Islamist historiography. It also was definitely a contributing influence on the emergence of the later Islamic approaches to writing history, which made justice and injustice, a central theme in Shi'ism,

its primary concern. His understanding of the historical representations of Karbala must be understood within the context of the Revolutionary Islamist view that Shi'is are involved in a struggle against tyranny and global imperialism. The Pahlavi regime and the international imperialist powers are thus associated with injustice, and the suffering masses (i.e., the Third World, Muslims, and Iranian Shi'is) with justice and righteousness. This, in itself was a break from the earlier conceptions, which placed the Sunnis and hypocritical Shi'is at the top of the list of transgressors. Thus, a set of symbols, which originally was used as a vindication of the Shi'i cause, became a vindication of oppositional movements in Iran. In most cases the 'imperialist order' was introduced into the narrative, the Sunnis were redefined as being included in the conception of the 'just self' and the Pahlavi regime was cast in a mold similar to that of imperialists. The histories of the Battle of Karbala have undergone a process of reinterpretation, the result of which was a synthesis of historical accounts stressing new revolutionary themes. These changes reflect the changing political and social patterns of Iran in the latter decades of the twentieth century, as new historical accounts were written in a much more explicitly political manner, reflecting revolutionary Islamist sensibilities.

## THE HISTORY OF ISLAM AND IRANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Another extremely controversial theme that is represented and debated by historians in Iran is the complex and nuanced treatment of Islam, nationalism, and Iranian identity. While Islamists in Iran assert their opposition to nationalism, there are some nationalistic tendencies in their constructions of history. Ervand Abrahamian and Hamid Dabbashi have pointed out that Khomeini and his followers have on occasion made use of nationalist rhetoric in mobilizing the Iranian masses. David Menashri argues that Khomeini's views concerning nationalism evolved over time, being relatively less hostile toward nationalism during his exile, and turning hostile during the revolution and the early years of the Islamic Republic, which gave way to political pragmatism as early as 1984.<sup>27</sup> Menashri states that Ayatollah Borujerdi 'viewed both the monarchy and Islam fundamental to Iranian nationalism and wrote in defense of national concepts.'<sup>28</sup> He says that Ayatollah Shari'atmadari 'viewed Islam as the cohesive element of Iranian nationalism and the main instrument in the strengthening of Iran's national unity and sovereignty.'<sup>29</sup> He makes similar references to other 'ulama, like Taleqani.<sup>30</sup>

Haggay Ram argues a similar point, although his focus is somewhat different.<sup>31</sup> He concludes his analysis of K-12 school textbooks from the pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary period by saying that the government of the Islamic Republic has been promoting various forms of national identity in Iran for the past two decades. He argues that ‘for all its revolutionary and Islamic-universalist hyperbole, post-revolutionary Iran remained committed to the Pahlavi dynasty’s conception of the ‘immemorial Iranian nation’ – the sense that it has always ‘been there,’ in antiquity as in the modern epoch – as was for articulated by European/Pahlavi master narrative of Iranian history, its very basic “story line”’.<sup>32</sup> Golnar Mehran has also studied post-revolutionary textbooks, and has argued that the state has represented Iranian national identity according to a dualistic model which defines the ‘Self’ vs the ‘Other’ as Iranian vs non-Iranian, Muslim vs non-Muslim, male vs female, and good vs evil. The national ‘character’ is thereby constructed and promoted by privileging certain characteristics over others.<sup>33</sup>

While nationalist tendencies are sometimes part of the state-sponsored ideology, nationalism has been treated with a great deal of suspicion by Islamist historians, because they believe that national identity is essentially divisive, and that imperialists have deliberately exported nationalism to regions of the world in an effort to use national and ethnic identity, along with other divisive identities like religion or sectarian affiliation, as a tool to ‘divide and conquer.’ Hence, imperialists are accused of deliberately encouraging sectarian divisions, and heretical religious movements like the Babi, Sheykhi, and Baha’i movements.

Islamists associate with the revolution and the Islamist regime, on the other hand, have promoted an Islamic identity that is believed to encourage unity, which in turn serves to resist imperialism by uniting Muslims. This pan-Islamist rhetoric, which is so typical of Khomeini and historians who are influenced by the revolutionary ideology, like Abu Al-Fazl Shakuri or Murtiza Mutahhari, includes scathing criticisms of nationalists.<sup>34</sup> However, Iranian national identity is a more complex matter. While the Islamist historians have treated nationalism as divisive, they have not necessarily rejected national identity entirely. Rather, they tend to treat it as an acceptable identity, but one that must always be made subservient to Islam and Muslim identity.

Again Murtiza Mutahhari’s writings provide an excellent example of the approach spawned by the revolution. He published a book titled *Khadamat-e Motaqabel-e Islam va Iran*, (the Mutual Contributions of Islam and Iran to Each Other), in which he presents Iran’s history as being inextricably tied to



the history of Islam.<sup>35</sup> This text was tremendously influential in the post-revolutionary period in terms of how Islamist historians treated Iranian national identity, especially as it relates to Islam. This seminal work can be characterized as an attempt to Islamize Iranian nationalist identity, by relating Iranianness to Islam.<sup>36</sup> He rejects the idea that ethnic or racially based nationalism can serve as the basis of a constructive identity.<sup>37</sup> Instead, he favors an identity that is based on shared experience, but not just any shared experience. He believes that the most important shared experience of Iranians and Muslims is shared suffering.<sup>38</sup> This ties in well with the ideals of constant suffering and struggling against oppression, which are so central to the revolutionary rhetoric, anti-colonialist sentiments, and even Shi'ism itself. He goes on to argue that the nations that cause this suffering are the 'Other'.<sup>39</sup> The unavoidable conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed, is in his view, the strongest basis for national unity because it provides a sense of common interest in ending suffering, a common sympathy, a sense of brotherhood, and a strong sense of the malevolent 'Other' (the imperialists).

Mutahhari also addresses the issue of whether or not Islam is Iranian. He argues that Islam is not inherently Arab or Iranian, so it could not be foreign or alien to Iranian identity. He also discusses the idea of whether Islam was imposed on Iranians or was voluntarily adopted. He argues that Iranians voluntarily accepted Islam because their own local faiths, such as Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, were unable to meet their needs. Thus, he argues that there is no relationship between Arab/Muslim rule and the adoption of Islam by Iranians. He goes on to say that ideologically, Islam is not the property of any single people. It is universalistic in both its message and its culture. Any person can join this community, and any culture can exist within its framework. Therefore, when Iranians joined the Muslim World they were not required either to adopt Arab culture or to abandon their own culture. Iranians became part of this new community and their culture one of the bases of Islamic culture.

The next component of his argument is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Iranian history and Islamic history by demonstrating that Iranians contributed more to Islam than any other Muslims have, even the Arabs.<sup>40</sup> He also argues that Iranians contributed greatly to the Islamic cause by struggling to spread the message and by fighting its enemies. He argues that the spread of Islam in the East was almost entirely due to the efforts of Iranians.<sup>41</sup> Iranians,

therefore, should be proud of the fact that they occupy the highest position of status in the Muslim community when it comes to the question of historical contributions to Islam. For example, in the area of philosophy he identifies Ibn Sina, in the area of law he refers to Abu Hanifah, and in the area of theology, he refers to al-Ghazzali, all of whom he considers to be Iranian. Such intellectuals as these are then presented as being among the most important thinkers of their day. Thus, Iranians have contributed more to Islam than any other group of people. An important component of this argument is that Shi'ism is not an Iranian variant of Islam. This is consistent with his argument that Iranians did not change their fundamental natures by becoming Muslim. If Shi'ism were merely an Iranian response to Arab cultural domination, both Shi'ism is discredited and Iranian Islam.

In summation, Mutahhari's view of Iranian nationalism is at once negative and conciliatory. This reflects a general trend in Islamist historiography, officially rejects nationalism as divisive, but at the same time displays nationalist tendencies. This is not entirely a contradiction, because these Islamists are not in practice rejected Iranian ethnic, or cultural heritage. Instead, they are insisting that Islamic identity and adherence to Islamist ideals supersedes other identities, like ethnicity, language, or cultural experience. They also assert a moral basis for this nationalism both by referring to divine authority, and by appealing to anti-imperialist and populist sensibilities.

There are many other historical themes we could discuss if not for the lack of sufficient space here. A brief discussion of four selected historical episodes by Ervand Abrahamian will serve to round out this treatment of historical episodes by Islamists as they relate to leftist politics. These four events are excellent examples of how historical events have been represented in such a way as to stress the heroic struggle of the 'ulama in defending the masses from oppression and preserving Iran from foreign domination. Equally stressed is the idea that secularists, and above all, leftists, have betrayed the ideals of patriotism by spreading Western ideals and in some cases serving as agents of foreign powers and corrupt and tyrannical Iranian rulers.

Interpretations of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution have always been somewhat contentious. The Islamists have generally represented the Constitutional Revolution in political treatises, historical texts, and even in school textbooks, as being inspired and led by the 'ulama and conservative religious patriots. Their aim was to curtail the corruption and tyranny of the Shah, and

reduce foreign exploitation of Iran. This movement, they contend, was then hijacked by secularists and leftists, who were enamored of Western ideologies, or were even serving as agents of foreign interests. They praise Fazlallah Nuri, who began by supporting the revolution, but later played a key role in defeating what he considered to be secular and leftist elements among their ranks. He is therefore portrayed as the first martyr of the religious populist struggle in modern Iran. This is in sharp contrast to the representations of the revolution by many other scholars, especially secularists, liberal nationalists and leftists who have tended to stress the importance of the secular leaders, and the two revolutionary clerics Behbahani and Tabataba'i. In fact the 'hijacked' revolution theory is often represented in opposite terms from the Islamists, by claiming that merchants and intellectuals initiated the revolution with some minor support from religious leaders, who later 'hijacked' the revolution. These historians represent Nuri negatively as a conservative opportunist, or worse.<sup>42</sup>

The Islamist portrayal of the Jangali rebellion has generally focused on the central and heroic role of its leader Mirza Kuchek Khan. While most nationalists have portrayed him as an uncompromising patriot, the Islamists have particularly stressed his role in combating foreign influence by leading a rural, populist, peasant revolution against the oppression of Iranian rulers, and the invasions of foreign powers. This portrayal necessarily involves de-emphasizing any leftist connections either with secular nationalists in Iran, or with foreign powers like the Soviet Union, with whom he had a rather complex relationship. The simplistic portrayal of Mirza Kuchek Khan as a patriotic martyr leading a populist rebellion fits into the broader idea of the oppressed Iranians struggling heroically against the corrupt Iranian crown and the imperialist foreign powers who conspire to dominate Iran.<sup>43</sup>

The third event Abrahamian discusses in the Islamist treatment of the rise of Reza Shah in 1921–5. This has obvious political implications for the Islamists, considering that it was his son Muhammad Reza Shah whom they overthrew in the 1978–9 revolution. The central focus of the Islamists' treatment of the rise of Reza Shah is the idea that the 'ulama, in particular Ayatollah Sayyed Hassan Modarres, actively opposed the coup of 1921 and Reza Shah's coronation of 1926. They also have stressed that Reza Shah was supported by the corrupted elite members of society and by leftists. Here again, the 'ulama are portrayed as the defenders of the masses by fighting to stop the rise to power of an oppressive and tyrannical king.<sup>44</sup>

The fourth and final example is the Musaddiq era. Abrahamian argues that Musaddiq poses particularly difficulties for Islamists because while he was definitely a secularist, he had an uncompromising nationalist and anti-imperialist record. Therefore, the Islamists did not portray him negatively. Instead, they downplayed his relative significance, and stressed the importance of his ally in the oil nationalization movement, Ayatollah Kashani. They stress the important role of the Tudeh party in betraying Iranian interests and contributing to the eventual failure of the oil nationalization movement.<sup>45</sup>

The idea that the *`ulama* have historically supported the never-ending human struggle against oppression and tyranny is part of a larger Islamist worldview in which Islam generally, and Shi'ism specifically, are revolutionary by nature. This theme is extensively discussed in the Islamist historiography. This worldview is part and parcel of the Islamist interpretation of the Battle of Karbala, which is one of the most important events in Shi'i history. According to Islamist interpretations of the events at Karbala are more overtly revolutionary in their tone, stressing the idea of ideological and armed struggle against the oppressive caliphate. On the surface, the Islamist variant of the general Shi'i understanding of Hussain's movement seems very similar to traditional Shi'i interpretations. However, in actuality, the Islamist construction is distinct in several important ways, and debates have raged among Iranians regarding the exact nature and implications of Hussain's seventh-century rebellion.

## **ISLAMIST HISTORIOGRAPHY IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS**

Let us now turn our attention to questions of propagation of this approach to history. The above themes have been propagated in many different ways by the Islamist regime. One of the most important means has been the publication of school textbooks on history, social studies, Islamic studies, and language and literature. The Islamist historiography discussed above has helped to shape the parameters, foci, and representations of human history. For example, in textbooks on world history the tendency is to identify movements for justice and independence all over the world. This is less pronounced in the treatment of medieval history, but becomes more apparent in the treatment of modern history. The distinctive feature of the Islamist construction is the focus on the negative aspects of imperialism along with anti-imperialist movements around the world. Therefore, while Western world-history textbooks tend to treat modern world

history largely as the history of imperialism or colonialism, in Iranian school textbooks world history is treated largely as the history of anti-imperialism.

They begin with a discussion of the emergence of modern Europeans as imperialist powers around the globe. Then, in each case, local independence movements are identified and discussed. For example, they discuss the Urabi rebellion in Egypt, the Abd al-Qadir's rebellion in Algeria, the conflicts associated with the French domination in Africa, American domination in Latin America, the Taiping rebellion, etc. The primary focus, however, is upon the anti-imperialist efforts of Iranians and Muslims. The general approach is to represent heroic struggles of Iranians and Muslims against two malevolent forces, local despotism and international imperialism. In this struggle, imperialist powers like Britain and Russia strove to dominate Iran and Muslims by applying several ideological tactics, which are consistent with the Islamist historiography discussed above.

In this struggle Iranians are portrayed simplistically as either being complicit in the imperialist agendas, or courageous in their struggles against them. Reformists are portrayed as heroes and patriots, while rulers like the Qajars as well as anti-reform officials are portrayed as despotic, corrupt, and traitorous. The nineteenth century is portrayed as an intellectual and political 'awakening' for Iranians, as they became more interested in struggling against oppression, and increasingly relied on the 'ulama for leadership in this pursuit. Islamic modernists like Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (Asadabadi), Muhammad Abduh, and Zughlul are discussed.<sup>46</sup> In fact, virtually every anti-imperialist struggle in Iran is portrayed in populist and religious terms, usually stressing how the 'ulama represented indigenous populist aims, and they refer to anyone who is killed in such pursuits, cleric or non-cleric, as a martyr. In a section dealing with Reza Shah earlier protests are referred to as follows.

He [Reza Shah] remembered how movements like the Tobacco Protest, the Constitutional Revolution, the uprising of Khiyabani, the Jangali uprising, etc. had originated from people's faith in Islam and the revolutionary 'ulama of Iran, which endangered the interests of despotism and Colonialism. He therefore knew that if the root of these movements – i.e., Islam – was not eliminated sooner or later he would face [a major uprising].<sup>47</sup>

Imperialists are credited with promoting a local dependent elite, in particular Reza Khan (later Reza Shah), whom they brought to power, and who promoted

their interests in Iran. Reza Khan is repeatedly referred to as an agent of foreigners, and his policies are represented as originating from Europe, and representing imperialist interests.

Additionally, Reza Khan, who laid the foundation for the economic dominance of the West in order to turn this country into a market of consumers of European goods, knew all too well that as long as the society, from the standpoint of culture, has not changed, and religious values, which inspired resistance to the West, and to the commercialization of the society still existed, it was impossible for his masters to achieve their economic goals.<sup>48</sup>

These local dependent elites are portrayed as carrying out the interests of imperialists by crushing local uprisings that are led by the 'ulama, and which represent the interests of 'the People.'

Hence, once again a noble movement, originating from the people and led by the 'ulama, was temporarily crushed by the despotic government at the behest of the colonialist powers.<sup>49</sup>

Alienating Iranians and Muslims from their true nature and heritage, a theme that is so prominent in the Islamist historiography, is among the most important strategies discussed in this regard.

European industrialists, in order to turn third world countries into consumers of their goods, launched a comprehensive attack on the traditional national and religious values of these countries. He [Reza Shah] ordered, in the name of civilization and renewal and struggle against the worship of the past, ordered that every must wear the same clothing; in addition to this, he [banned covering] Hijab for women. One of the main goals of this policy was to distance [Iranian] society from its true nature, in order to turn it into consumers of foreign goods. However, the Muslim people of Iran rose up and opposed these efforts;<sup>50</sup>

Imperialists are portrayed as following a 'divide and rule strategy.' Even indigenous sectarian conflicts are attributed to imperialist machinations.

English and Russian imperialists, in addition to all their efforts to weaken Iran and Iranians, and because they viewed the religious unity of Iranians as a major threat, tried to turn Iran's Islamic unity into dissension by creating diverse sectarian

religious divisions. They strove in this direction by creating the Babi movement during the reign of Muhammad Shah, and later the Baha'i [movement] during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah.<sup>51</sup>

The Islamic revolution is represented in great detail, and is contextualized within the broad trends outlined above. In other words, the `ulama generally, and Khomeini in particular, are represented as the leaders of populist indigenous movements against the malevolent aims of global imperialism, led initially by the British and Russians, and later by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Shah is then represented as the agent of these imperialists. What is important for our purposes here is that, it is clear that the themes developed in the Islamist approach to writing history are propagated using school textbooks.

## OTHER TRENDS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

While the focus of this chapter is Islamist historiography related to the Islamist revolutionary ideology in Iran, another very important question is whether or not this Islamist trend in historiography was the only trend during this period. In other words, have Iranian historians mostly 'fallen into step' with these ideologically inspired historians, or has diversity managed to survive, at least to some degree, in an environment of censorship and Islamist hegemony? While some historians have followed the Islamist approach, many more have gone about writing history without this overtly political agenda as their methodological guiding principle, and still others have had divergent ideological influences, such as leftist, secularist, and nationalist ideals. Still others have been driven by more academic concerns or have followed international or Western trends in historiography. In short, historians in post-revolutionary Iran have precariously continued to be relatively diverse in their approaches to history. While some have had clashes with the ruling revolutionary ideology, many have managed to go about their work, which has often required that they avoid the most controversial issues that might provoke censorship or other hostile responses by the government.

While a thorough analysis of these diverse, non-Islamist trends in historiography is beyond the scope of this chapter, a discussion of a few representative examples will suffice to demonstrate the relative degree of hegemony of the Islamist trends in historiography. There are several post-revolutionary examples

of books on historiography that are diverse in their approaches or are primarily academic in their orientation, which brings them in line with broader international or Western approaches to writing history. A good example is the 1982 publication *Tarikhnegari dar Islam* (Islamic Historiography).<sup>52</sup> This book consists of translations of articles, some of which are by the same Orientalists who are so scathingly criticized by many Islamists, such as H. A. R. Gibb, Bernard Lewis, Clement Huart, Felix Tauer, Albert Hourani, and Richard Frye. Another excellent example is Mansureh Ettehadieh and Hamed Fuladvand's 1986 book *Binesh va Ravesb dar Tarikhnegari-e Mo'aser* (Theory and Practice in Modern Historiography).<sup>53</sup> This book was published by Nashr-e Tarikh Press, which has emerged as a major academic force in Iranian history and historiography. This collection of essays discusses such topics as the Annales School of historiography, French history, anthropology, sociology, Fernand Braudel, and even Max Weber. Ahmad Tajbakhsh's 1997 book *Tarikh va Tarikhnegari* (History and Historiography), similarly presents translations of articles on historiography from very diverse perspectives, drawing upon diverse sources, including such Iranian scholars of history as Abdulhussein Zarrinkub, 'Ali Shari'ati, as well as western historians like W. H. Walsh, Arnold Toynbee, and others.<sup>54</sup>

Simin Fasihi's 1993 book *Jarayanha-e Asli-e Tarikhnegari dar Dowreh-e Pahlavi* (Fundamental Trends in Historiography During the Pahlavi Era) is a thoughtful and thorough discussion of historiographical trends during the Pahlavi era.<sup>55</sup> Fasihi explores the role Western historiography has played in the emergence and development of academic historiography in Iran. She even discusses Marxist historiography, although the general hostility toward Marxism in Iran must be part of the reason for apologetic justifications of her decision to include this in her study.

In the meantime, many old-school secular historians, many of whom began their careers during the Pahlavi period, and many of whom have at times been attacked by Islamists, or were even 'purged' by the regime, have managed to continue influencing Iranian historiography.<sup>56</sup> Some have continued to publish, and many have had a lasting influence through reprints of their earlier works. For example, Abdulhussein Zarrinkub was taken to task by Islamists for, among other things, his negative views of Islam and his promotion of secular nationalism as the primary Iranian national identity. However, he has continued to publish his work since the revolution, and his older books, such as *Do Qarn-e Sokut* (Two Centuries of Silence), *Tarikh dar Tarazu* (History in the Balance),



and *Tarikh-e Iran ba'd az Eslam* (the History of Iran after Islam) have continued to be published up the present.<sup>57</sup>

Since I have discussed Zarrinkub's construction of Iranian history in detail elsewhere,<sup>58</sup> it will suffice here to point out that Zarrinkub's approach to Iranian history contradicts the Islamist historiography in almost every way, although he did modify his views in some respects after the revolution. His approach to history and historiography is explicitly secular, Iranian nationalist, anti-Arab, and anti-Islam. Like many secular nationalist historians, he glorifies pre-Islamic Iranian history in favor of Iran's Islamic history. He argues that Islam was imposed on Iranian at the point of a sword by less 'civilized' Arabs, until after more than two centuries, Iranians finally reasserted their national identity through military struggle as well as a cultural renaissance. This challenges the Islamist representations of Islam as a liberating force for Iranians, and the assertion that Islam is at the core of Iran's 'national character.'

Firaydun Adamiyat's voluminous scholarly publications, such as *Ashoftegi dar Fekr-e Tarikhi* (Confusion in Historical Thought) and *Fekr-e Demokrasi-e Ejtemai' dar Nehzat-e Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* (The Ideals of Social Democracy in the Constitutional Revolution) have also been published and republished multiple times after the revolution.<sup>59</sup> While his work has significant flaws and methodological difficulties, Adamiyat is recognized internationally as one of the leading academically oriented historians of Iran. He has consistently pushed for a secular, and relatively academic, approach to the writing of Iranian history, which has caused many Islamist historians and ideologues to condemn his work.

His short treatise *Ashoftegi dar Fekr-e Tarikhi*, which was published in 1981, serves as a great example of how his approach to history contradicts some of the basic tenets of Islamist historiography. In this piece Adamiyat challenges the view that the Constitutional Revolution was motivated by infatuation with the West, and a desire to slavishly emulate the West, and impose Western values, including Freemasonry and Jewish influence, on Iranians against their will. He accuses critics of the secular constitutionalists of being hostile toward freedom and democracy.<sup>60</sup> He also challenges the anti-intellectualism, anti-Westernism, and conspiratorial tendencies of writers like Al-e Ahmad, who consider Western imperialist conspiracies to be the driving force behind most modern historical events, as well as the representations of those events by historians. For example, Adamiyat rejects the argument that British oil interests were behind the Constitutionalist movement.<sup>61</sup>

Adamiyat also systematically critiques Mahdi Bazargan's accusation that the Constitutional Revolution failed 'because the constitutional revolution was not fundamentally or deeply in accordance with the political or social development of the nation or the `ulama,'<sup>62</sup> He also rejects the claim that state officials like Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir worked with imperialist powers against the interests of Iran and Muslims, while the `ulama always played a populist role as opposition leaders, who curtailed abuses of power by the state, and protected the interests of the Muslim and Iranian masses by struggling against Western domination.<sup>63</sup> Adamiyat goes even farther in saying 'Sayyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi did not start the "Tobacco Protest" nor did he play any important role in it.'<sup>64</sup> He also denies that Grand Ayatollah Mirza Shirazi was the inspiration for the protests.

Even from this brief discussion of selected points made by Adamiyat, it is clear that his approach to history generally, and his views on specific historical themes and episodes sharply contradict the Islamist approach to history. While this particular publication was printed two years after the revolution, when censorship and government control of publishing was relatively more lax as compared with later periods, variations on these ideas can be seen in his many other publications, which have been repeatedly published in Iran up to the present. He, along with the other historians discussed above, also demonstrates how non-Islamist historians with diverse approaches to historiography have at least in some cases managed to survive and write histories under the hegemony of the Islamic Republic. Despite the political dominance of Islamist historiography, academic or secular trends in historiography have still continued to survive, evolve, and develop in Iran. These interesting trends warrant further analysis in a separate study.

## **PUBLICATION OF COLLECTIONS OF PRIMARY DOCUMENTS**

Any analysis of post-revolutionary Islamist historiography would be incomplete without a discussion of the proliferation of publications of primary documents. Abbas Amanat, who has discussed this phenomenon, argues effectively that there are several contributing factors to this trend. These include, among other things, historians wanting to avoid political controversy associated with analytical prose, a lack of a systematic or effective historiography for dealing with Iranian history, a preference among readers for texts rather than ideologically partisan analysis

or synthesis, and even the shifting tastes of wealthy book collectors.<sup>65</sup> Two additional areas that deserve attention, especially in relation to the topic of Islamist historiography in post-revolutionary Iran, are the political and academic implications of the publication of primary documents.

First, Islamist historians in Iran, some working for the state and others working independently, have published collections of primary documents as part of their political and historiographical projects. Second, it is certainly true that many historians have undertaken the compilation, editing and publication of such collections partly to avoid the sorts of negative attention that analytic prose might attract from Islamists and the state. However, these projects also have purely academic justifications as well, which reflect more academically oriented approaches to history and historiography.

Islamist historians have been fairly active in publishing primary documents.<sup>66</sup> While some of these collections seem somewhat innocuous, others constitute a strategy to use primary documents to put forth an ideologically motivated view of specific incidents in history. Such document collection focuses on specific historical episodes in order to negatively portray the Pahlavi regime, or the United States and other imperialist powers like Britain and Russia. One of the most dramatic examples is the 1987 publication of a collection of selected documents from the United States embassy in Tehran.<sup>67</sup> These documents, which the American diplomatic staff had shredded, were painstakingly reassembled by an Islamist student organization. The documents that seemed incriminating or had to do with the United States' political role in Iran were published. This clearly was an ideological assault on the United States on the global stage, using primary documents rather than telling the story in the more traditional method of writing analytical or synthetic history.

A similar method has been used to discredit the Pahlavi dynasty by using primary documents. There are many examples of such publications, which usually rely on SAVAK documents, and other historical records, or recordings of speeches and articles. In such cases, the selection of the topic tells a great deal about the critique being put forth. For example, in 1998 a branch of the Ministry of Information devoted to the compilation and publication of primary documents published a two-volume collection titled *Bazm-e Ahriman* (The Devil's Banquet).<sup>68</sup> In this collection a diverse array of documents, records, and photographs were assembled along with commentary and analysis to put forth a scathing critique of Muhammad Reza Shah's 1971 celebration of the 2500th

anniversary of Iran royal history. This collection was used to demonstrate the moral depravity of the Pahlavis by showing the affluence, squandering of scarce national resources, and moral decadence (according to Islam) of those in attendance.

The Shah's father Reza Shah was also subjected to a similar critique by the Association of Cultural Records/Documents of the Islamic Revolution. They published a book containing documents related to Reza Shah's 1936 banning of the Islamic veil, which has traditionally been mandated for Muslim women.<sup>69</sup> Other critiques of the Pahlavis using primary documents include publications about the SAVAK's reports on selected events and individuals, such as the 'Ulama, Khomeini, or 'Ali Shari'ati. Publications like these reflect a strategy to construct Iran's history in accordance with the Islamist approach to historiography by using primary documents rather than writing analytical or synthetic histories.

While this trend was going on many other collections of primary documents were also being published by the state and by private associations and presses. Most of these are diplomatic or political documents, especially from the Qajar period, which is viewed as a relatively less controversial period. While not all of these document collections are compiled with specific ideological or political agendas, some are, especially those published by the Foreign Ministry. For example, there are several multi-volume collections published by this ministry containing diplomatic correspondences between the Iranian and Ottoman rulers.<sup>70</sup> Another large collection contains international treaties between Iran and foreign states, especially imperialist nations.<sup>71</sup> These documents tend to confirm the generally negative perception among Iranians of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century imperialism of the British and Russians, along with the corruption and incompetence of many of Iran's rulers. For example, one collection published by the Foreign Ministry is titled *Asnad Darbareh-e Hojum-e Engelis va Rus be Iran* (Documents Relating to the Russian and British Invasion of Iran).<sup>72</sup> Such texts perhaps are best viewed as a middle ground between explicitly political collections of primary documents and those motivated by more academic concerns. While they conform to the sensibilities of academics and the broader Iranian readership, they also do not contradict the Islamist view of the history of imperialism in Iran, and therefore pose few problems in terms of censorship. Thus, allowing space for history to be produced without such dramatic ideological distortions.

There have been encouraging signs, albeit rare, that the publication of primary documents has created opportunities for historians motivated by more academic concerns to contribute to the process of constructing Iran's history. For example, there have been a small number of publications of primary documents that tend toward social history. While these are few in number one hopes that this may be a tentative beginning of a new trend that takes up steam. In 1990 for example, *Nashr-e Tarikh* Press, which is the leader in this area, published a volume edited by Sirus Sa'dvandiyan and Mansureh Ettehadieh containing data from cadastral surveys of Tehran during the latter decades of Qajar rule.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, in 1998, the Association for Iranian National Records/Documents published a two-volume collection containing police reports for Tehran in 1885–6. These sorts of collections are not especially useful in the ideological and political debates surrounding the Qajar period. Instead, they reflect an academic (and to some extent popular) interest in the social and cultural history of Iran. Unfortunately, such publications are still few and far between, but the fact that they exist at all indicates that the publication of primary documents is also part and parcel of the ideological and academic trends in historiography in Iran.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has attempted to present a picture of some of the dominant trends in Islamist historiography in Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1978–9. In conjunction with the revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic Islamist historians, inspired by revolutionary ideology and rhetoric have promoted an approach to history that is ideologically politicized. The state has promoted the Islamist approach in history in different ways, including the use of school textbooks and the publication of primary documents and records that are aimed constructing history in accordance with their ideological vision of the world. They have also been highly critical of several other strains of historiography, some of which have managed precariously to survive in this environment of Islamist hegemony. In particular, the Islamist historians have launched attacks on Western secular approaches to history, Marxist-inspired methods, royal or court histories, and even traditional Muslims' contributions to historical writing and historiography. They have favored an approach to history that stresses the politics of historiography and the political power of knowledge, which is then used and abused by imperialist powers to subjugate the populations and nations

of the globe. The flip side of this coin, therefore, is the struggle by Islamist historians to reclaim their history, and use that same power to resist globalization, in its many political, economic, cultural, and ideological forms. However, the hegemony of Islamist historians has been far from complete, and other interesting trends in historiography continue to evolve and develop in Iran today.



# Notes

## 1 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY IRAN: MEMORY, AMNESIA AND INVENTION

- 1 On politics and historiography see: Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780, Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Bernard Lewis, *History Remembered, Recorded, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); I. Gershoni, 'Imagining and reimagining the past: The use of history by Egyptian nationalist writers, 1919–1952', *History & Memory* 4, 2 (Fall/Winter 1992): 7.
- 2 For more on memory, agency, subjectivity and historiography see: Depish Chakrabarty, 'Postcolonial and artifice of history: Who speaks for "Indian" past?' *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992): 1–26; Touraj Atabaki, *Beyond Essentialism. Who Writes Whose Past in the Middle East and Central Asia?* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2003).

## 2 HISTORIOGRAPHY AND CRAFTING IRANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

- 1 An earlier version of this article appeared in *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Nationalist Historiography* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Publishers in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2001).
- 2 My usage of narrative 'emplotment' is informed by Hayden White's pioneering contribution in *Metahistory*: 'Providing the "meaning" of a story by identifying the *kind of story* that has been told is called explanation by emplotment. If, in the course of narrating his story, the historian provides it with the plot structure of a Tragedy, he has "explained" it in one way; if he has structured it as a Comedy, he has "explained" it in another way. Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind.' See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 7.
- 3 Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, in Bhram Chubinah (ed.), *Maktub-i Shahzadah Kamal al-Dawlah bah Shahzadah Jalal al-Dawlah: Sah Maktub* (Paris: Intisharat-i Mard-i Imruz, 1981), p. 166; idem, *Ayinah-i Sikandari* (Tehran: n.p., 1908), p. 523.
- 4 By 'schizophrenic' I have in mind not the clinical definition but a person's simultaneous identification with cultural discourses that are independent of one another. By 'schizochronia' I intend a fractured view of historical time, which is elaborated in my forthcoming article 'Modernity and Schizochronia.'



- 5 Muhammad Hashim Rustam al-Hukama, in Muhammad Mushiri (ed.), *Rustam al-Tavarikh* (Tehran: n.p., 1969), pp. 423; 309, 378, 391, 418, 459; 309; 61; 383, 392, 395, 458; 69, 396; 81, 82; 130; 466.
- 6 Muhammad Hassan Khan I'timad al-Saltanah, in 'Abd al-Hussain Nava'I (ed.), *Mir'at al-Buldan* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tihran, 1367/1988), p. 3.
- 7 See Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson, Bollingen Series xci: 2. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 17–24.
- 8 For lists of *Shahnamahs* printed in the nineteenth century see Iraj Afshar, *Kitabshinasi-I Shahnamah* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar-i Milli, 1968), pp. 191–9; Javad Safinizhad, 'Shahnamah ha-yi Chap Sangi', *Mirs-i Farhangi* 14 (Winter 1996): 21–24.
- 9 For studies of recitation traditions see Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub, 'Sukhanvari', *Sukhan* 9, 6 (1958): 530–5; idem, 'Sukhanvari', *Sukhan* 9, 7 (1958): 631–7; idem, 'Sukhanvari', *Sukhan* 9, 8 (1958): 779–86; idem, 'Tahavvul-i naqqali va qissah khvani, tarbiyat-i qissah khvanan va tumarha-yi naqqali', *Iran Nameh* 9, 2 (Spring 1991): 186–211; Bahram Bayza'i, 'Namayish dar Iran: Naqqali', *Majallah-i Musiqi* 3, 66 (1962): 15–33; Mary Ellen Page, 'Professional Storytelling in Iran: Transmission and Practice', *Iranian Studies* 12 (Summer 1979): 195–215; 'Ali Al-e Dawud, 'Coffeehouse', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Ehasn Yarshater (ed.). (Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) vi. 1, pp. 2–4; Hussain Lisan, 'Shahnamah khvani', *Hunar va mardum* 14, 159/160 (Day/Bahman 1975): 2–16.
- 10 Ahmad Divan Baygi, *Hadiqat al-Shu'ara* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Zarrin, 1985), pp. 425–7.
- 11 Muhammad Ibrahim Bastani Parizi, 'Shahnamah akhirash khush ast', *Nay-i Haft Band* (Tehran: 'Ata'i, 1974), pp. 259–373.
- 12 Cited in Hussain Lisan, 'Shahnamah khvani', *Hunar va mardum* 14, 159/160 (1975): 2–16; Fath al-Din Fatahi, *Safar Namah*, p. 919.
- 13 Muhammad 'Ali Tusi, in Ahmad Suhayli Khwansari (ed.), *Shahanshah Namah Nadiri* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar-i Milli, 1970), pp. 22 and 224.
- 14 Mirza Fath'ali Khan Saba, *Shahanshahnamah* (Bombay: Malik al-Kuttab, 1867), p. 41.
- 15 According to Iraj Afshar, Davari's copy was in the possession of Farah Pahlavi and was held in her personal library. See his 'Shahnamah, az khatti ta chapi', *Hunar va Mardum* 14, 162 (1975): 24.
- 16 For Davari's introduction see Mahdi Hamidi, *Shi'r dar 'Asr-i Qajar* (Tehran: Ganj-i Kitab, 1364), pp. 210–15.
- 17 Hamidi, *Shi'r dar 'Asr-i Qajar*, p. 175.
- 18 On this point see Malik al-Shu'ara Bahar, *Sabk shinasi: tarikh-i tatavvur-i nasr-i Farsi*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Khudkar, 1958), p. 348.

- 19 Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, *Ayinah-i Sikandari* (Tehran: n.p., 1906), p. 14.
- 20 *Namah-i Bastan*, which was completed by Shaykh Ahmad Adib Kirmani after the execution of Mirza Aqa Khan, was also known as *Salar Namah* (Shiraz: Matba' i Muhammadi, 1898). The alternative title bore the name of 'Abd al-Hussain Mirza Farmanfarma Salar Lashkar who sponsored the publication of *Namah-i Bastan* in Shiraz. On this point see Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, in 'Aliakbar Sa'idi Sirjani (ed.), *Tarikh-i Bidari-i Iraniyan: Muqaddamah* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1967), pp. 175–88.
- 21 Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Bidari-i Iraniyan*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Agah, 1983), pp. 222–3.
- 22 Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadah, in M[uhammad Ja'far Mahjub] Subhdam (ed.), *Maktubat-i Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadah* (Paris: Mardé Imruz, 1985), pp. 33–5.
- 23 Reza Quli Khan Hidayat, *Majma' al-Fusaha* (Tehran: Karkhanah-i Aqa Mir Muhammad Baqir, 1878).
- 24 For a theoretical formulation of transference in the field of historical research, see Dominick LaCapra, 'History and Psychoanalysis', in *Soundings in Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 30–66.
- 25 Mahmud Mirza Qajar, 'Tazkirah at-Salatin' in *Majma' al-Mahmud* (Kitabkhanah-'i Milli-i Iran, manuscript #F/2349).
- 26 *Khulasat al-Tavarikh* (Kitabkhanah-'i Milli-i Iran, manuscript #F/266).
- 27 'Aliquli Mirza I'tizad al-Saltanah, in Jamshid Kayanfarr (ed.), *Iksir al-Tavarikh* (Tehran: Visman, 1991). This edition only includes the Qajar period.
- 28 Henry Rawlinson, *Tarjumah-i Kuh-i Bistun*, intr. Lisan al-Mulk (Kitabkhanah-'i Milli-i Iran, manuscript #F/291); Henry Rawlinson, *Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistun Deciphered and Translated* (London: J. W. Parker, 1847).
- 29 Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, *Ayinah-i Sikandari* (N.L., 1908), p. 637.
- 30 I'timad al-Saltanah, *Durrar al-Tijan*, p. 4.
- 31 In an appendix to *Durrar al-Tijan*, Vol. 1, pp. 202–35, I'timad al-Saltanah introduced 82 European historians and classicists whose works he had used. Among the authors authorizing his text were: Edward Gibbon, Sivester de Sacy, Comte de Gobineau, Étienne Flandin, Friedrich Max Müller, John Malcolm, Victor Delacroix, Henry Rawlinson, and George Rawlinson. I'timad al-Saltanah had collected the works of these authors during his visits to Europe with Nasir al-Din Shah.
- 32 Nasir al-Din Shah letter to I'timad al-Saltanah, dated 1891, was added to the first volume of *Durrar al-Tijan*. For I'timad al-Saltanah's speculation see *Durrar al-Tijan*, 3: 154–7.
- 33 Akhundzadah to Jalal al-Din Mirza, 15 June 1870 in *Alifba-yi Jadid va Maktubat*, p. 172; quoted in Hamid Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan*, p. 92.
- 34 Dust 'Ali Khan Mu'ayyir al-Mamalik, *Rijal-i 'Asr-i Nasiri* (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1982), p. 54.

- 35 Furughi, *Tarikh-i Salatin-i Sasani*, 1: 194, 2: 196.
- 36 The inaugural issue of *Ruznamah-i Millat-i Saniyah-i Iran* was published on fifteenth of Muharram, 1866. The logo appeared on the first page of issues 1–34.
- 37 Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadah, in Baqir Mu'mini (ed.), *Maqalat* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Ava, 1972), pp. 44–5.
- 38 Akhundzadah, *Maqalat*, 45. On Kavah-'i Ahangar see Jalil Dustkhwah, 'Kavah-'i Ahangar bih rivayat-i naqqalan', *Iran Nameh* 10, 1 (Winter 1992): 122–144; Turaj Darya'i, 'Sahm-i manabi'-i Hind va Urupayi dar shinakht-i Shahnamah: Huviyat-i Kavah-'i Ahangar', *Iran Shenasi* ix, 2 (Summer 1997): 279–84.
- 39 Furughi, *Tarikh-i Salatin-i Sasani*, 2: 194.
- 40 Kirmani, *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, respectively 75–6 and 76–7.
- 41 For a study of Anushirvan's epithet, the just (*dadgar*), see Jalal Khaliqi-Mutlaq, 'Chira Anushirvan ra Dadgar Namidahand?' *Faslnameh-i Hasti* (Summer 1993): 109–116.
- 42 Furughi, *Tarikh-i Salatin-i Sasani*, 2: 195–196; Kirmani, in Bahram Chubinah (ed.), *Maktub-i Shahzadah Kamal al-Dawlah bah Shahzadah Jalal al-Dawlah: Sah Maktub* ([S.l.: Mardé Emruz, 1991), pp. 80–7.
- 43 Kirmani, *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, p. 9.
- 44 Akhundzadah, *Maktubat*, pp. 32–3.
- 45 It should be pointed out that Persian chauvinism became a component of the new secular political strategy. This anti-Arab tendency was to some degree similar to the *Shu'ubiyah* movement which had developed as a reaction to the Muslim conquest of Iran.
- 46 Akhundzadah, *Maktubat*, pp. 20–1.
- 47 Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, in Bahram Chubinah (ed.), *Sah Maktub: Maktub-i Shahzadah Kamal al-Dawlah bah Shahzadah Jalal al-Dawlah* (Paris: Mardé Emrouz, 1991), pp. 68–9.
- 48 Kirmani, *Sah Maktub*, p. 166; idem, *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, p. 523.
- 49 Letter to Mirza Malkum Khan dated 15 Jumada I, 1311; cited in Faraydun Adamiyat, *Andishah'ha-yi Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani* (Tehran: Payam, 1978), p. 55.
- 50 Kirmani, *Ayanah-i Sikandari*, pp. 17 and 14.
- 51 Kirmani, *Sah Maktub*, pp. 270–1.
- 52 Mirza Muhammad Taqi Lisan al-Mulk, *Nasikh al-Tavarikh*, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, (Tehran: Islamiyah, 1344), pp. 359–361; I'tizad al-Saltanah, *Iksir al-Tavarikh*, pp. 499–501, particularly 500. It is important to note that the proclamation was followed by three Qur'anic verses, which had been identified by Hajji Mirza Aqasi in support of the new uniform.
- 53 I'tizad al-Saltanah, *Iksir al-Tavarikh*, p. 290.

- 54 Shushtari, *Tuhfat al-'Alam*, p. 268.
- 55 Kirmani, *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, pp. 522–3.
- 56 I'timad al-Saltanah, *Durrar al-Tijan*, Vol. 1, p. 106.
- 57 Jamal al-Din Afghani, “‘Tarikh-i Ijmali-i Iran”, appearing in Fursat Shirazi’, in ‘Ali Zarrin Qalam (ed.), *Divan Fursat* (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Sirus, 1337), pp. 28–73.
- 58 Kirmani, *Ayinah-i Sikandari*, pp. 106–110.
- 59 Kirmani, *Sah Maktub*, pp. 260 and 266.
- 60 See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, particularly pp. 37–46 and pp. 67–82.
- 61 On the Indian School see Aziz Ahmad, ‘The formation of *Sabk-i Hindi*’, in C. E. Bosworth (ed.), *Iran and Islam: In Memory of the late Vladimir Minorsky* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), pp. 1–9.
- 62 Among the leading figures of the India School were poets such as Kalim Kashani (d. 1650), Sa’ib Tabrizi (d. 1670), Ghani Kashmiri (d. 1667), Shawkat Bukhari (d. 1695), Nasir ‘Ali Sirhindi (d. 1696), Juya Tabrizi (d. 1706).
- 63 Siraj al-Din ‘Ali Khan Arzu, in Muhammad Akram (ed.), *Dad-i Sukhan* (Rawalpindi: Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies, 1974), respectively, pp. x, xxx–xxxii, xxxiv, and xxxiv.
- 64 ‘Abd al-Razzaq Maftun Dunbuli, in Hassan Qazi Tabataba’i (ed.), *Tajribat al-Ahrar va Tasliyat al-Abrar* (Tehran: Mu’assisah-i Tarikh va Farhang-i Iran, 1970), pp. 213–216.
- 65 Nostalgia for classical literature was also an important component of both Arab and Turkish nationalism. In this regard see S. Moreh, ‘The neoclassical Qasida: Modern poets and critics’, in G. E. von Gruenbaum (ed.), *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), p. 156.
- 66 Cited in Mawlawi Muhammad Muzzafar Hussain Sab, in Muhammad Hussain Ruknzadah Adamiyat (ed.), *Tazkirah-i Ruz-i Rawshan* (Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Razi, 1964), p. 737.
- 67 Shams Langarudi, *Maktab-i Bazgasht*, p. 129
- 68 Mahdi Ikhwan Salis, *Bid’at va Badayi-i Nima Yushij* (Tehran: Intisharart-i Tuka, 1978), p. 22.
- 69 For an insightful re-evaluation of the ‘Return Movement’ see Ghulam ‘Ali Ra’di Azarakhshi, ‘Darbarah-i sabkha-yi shi’r-i Farsi va nahzat-i bazgasht’, in Iraj Afshar and Karim Isfahaniyan (eds.), *Namvarah-i Duktur Mahmud Afshar* (Tehran: Majmu’ah-i Intisharat-i Adabi va Tarikhi, 1985), pp. 73–112.
- 70 Muhammad Mu’in has shown that words such as *akhshij*, *anbaz*, *tavanish*, *kunish*, *manish*, *nava* and *niru*, which were considered as *dasatiri* inventions, are indeed words that can be found in older Persian texts. See his ‘Lughat-i Ibn Sina va ta’sir-i anha dar adabiyat’, in Mahdukht Mu’in (ed.), *Majmu’ah-i Maqalat* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Mu’in, 1988), pp. 529–71.

- 71 See Chapter II.
- 72 See Fath'ali Khan Saba, in Muhammad 'Ali Nijati (ed.), *Divan-i Ash'ar* (Tehran: Iqbal, 1962), p. 676.
- 73 For a collection of Yaghma's writings, see Abu al-Hassan Yaghma Jandaqi, in 'Ali Al-i Dawud (ed.), *Majmu'ah-i asar-i Yaghma Jandaqi: Makatib va munsha'at*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Tus, 1983).
- 74 Abu al-Hassan Yaghma Jandaqi, *Kulliyat-i Yaghma Jandaqi* (Tehran: Ibn Sina, 1960), p. 49; Aryanpur, *Az Saba ta Nima*, p. 114.
- 75 Yaghma Jandaqi, *Majmu'ah-i Asar*, 2: 85; idem, *Kulliyat* (Tehran: Ufsit, 1960), p. 56.
- 76 'The Rev. A. Duff[s]... address to the General Assembly of the church of Scotland', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* 18 (1836), 'Asiatic Intelligence' section, pp. 86–8.
- 77 Among dictionaries edited and published in numerous editions in India were *Bahr-i 'Ajam*, *Bahar-i 'Ajam*, *Bahr al-Javahir fi Lughat al-Tib*, *Burhan-i Qati'*, *Chiragh-i Hidayat*, *Dari Gusha*, *Durr al-Fakhir Litaj al-Masadir*, *Farhang-i Anandraj*, *Farhang-i Farrukhi*, *Farhang-i Jahangiri*, *Farhang-i Rashidi*, *Ghiyas al-Lughat*, *Haft Qulzum*, *Kashf al-Lughat va al-Istilahat*, *Khazinat al-Amsal*, *Khiyaban-i Gulshan*, *Lughat Dari va Pahlavi*, *Lughat-i Firuzi*, *Madar al-Afazel*, *Majma' al-Furs-i Sururi*, *Mu'ayyad al-Fuzala*, *Mustalahat al-Shu'ara*, *Nafayis al-Lughat*, *Navadir al-Masadir*, *Nasir al-Lughat*, *Shams al-Lughat*, *Siraj al-Lughat*, *Tahqiq al-Istilahat*, *Surah*, and *Zubdat al-Lughat ma'ruf bih Lughat-i Sururi*.
- 78 *Burhan Qati'*, written in 1652, became the locus of one of the most interesting and understudied lexicographic controversies in Persian. Asadallah Ghalib (1797–1869), the celebrated Urdu poet, in 1860 wrote a critical review of *Burhan-i Qati'* entitled *Qati'-i Burhan* (1862), and five years later he added a new introduction to it and renamed the work *Dirafsh-i Kavyani*. Ghalib's harsh criticisms of the author of *Burhan Qati'* led to a great literary controversy and publication of many responses and counter-responses.
- 79 Hafiz Farmanfarmayan, 'Introduction', in Amin al-Dawlah, *Khatirat*, p. 5.
- 80 On the simplification of Persian prose, see Bahar, *Sabk Shinasi*, 3: 361; Shakoore Ahsan, *Modern Trends in the Persian Language* (Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Institute for Persian Studies, 1976), p. 34; 'Abbas Zaryab Khu'i, 'Sukhani darbarah-i munsha'at-i Qa'im Maqam', in Iraj Afshar (ed.), *Namvarah-i Duktur Mahmud-i Afshar*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Adabi va Tarikhi, 1987), pp. 1433–1455.
- 81 'Sharh-i Manshuri kah Shahanshah-i Ghazi Muhammad Shah bikhatt-i Khwish Nigash', in Lisan al-Mulk (ed.), *Nasikh al-Tavarikh*, Vol. 2. (Tehran: Islamiyah, 1965), pp. 326–8.
- 82 'Sharh-i Manshuri kah Shahanshah-i Ghazi Muhammad Shah Qajar dar muraji'at-i az Hirat bikhatt-i khwish bitamam-i bugurgan-i dargah raqm farmud', in Lisan al-Mulk, *Nasikh al-Tavarikh*, Vol. 2. (Tehran: Islamiyah, 1965), pp. 327–330.

- 83 For studies of language reform and purism see John R. Perry, 'Language Reform in Turkey and Iran', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (1985): 295–330; M. A. Jazayeri, 'The modernization of the Persian vocabulary and language reform in Iran', in I. Fodor and C. Hagège (eds.), *Language Reform: History and Future*, Vol. 2 (Hamburg: Buske, 1983), pp. 241–268; Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, 'Language reform movement and its language: The case of Persian', in Björn Jernudd and Michael Shapiro (eds.), *The Politics of Language Purism* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 81–104.
- 84 Abu al-Fazl Gulpaygani, in Ruhallah Mihrabkhani (ed.), *Rasā'il va Raqā'im* (Mu'assasah-'i Milli-i Matbu'at-i Amri, 1974). In a letter, Gulpaygani lists the following individuals as practitioners of *parsinigari*: Mirza Muhammad Hussain Khan Suraya, Mirza Hassan Khushnivi Isfahani, Mirza Shaykh 'Ali Yazdi who is viewed as the real author of *Namah-'i Khuwra'van* that is attributed to Jalal al-Din Mirza, Mirza Lutf'ali Danish, pp. 480–2. I thank Sholeh Quinn for making this collection available to me.
- 85 Baha'u'llah, 'Tablet to Manackji Sahib', *Star of the West* 1, 1 (21 March 1910): 5–9. I am grateful to Juan Cole for making a copy of the 'Tablet' accessible to me.
- 86 Kaykhusraw Shahrugh Kirmani, *Furugh-i Mizdisni* (Tehran, 1909).
- 87 'Ali Khan Amin al-Dawlah, in Hafiz Farmanfarmayan (ed.), *Khatirat-i Siyasi* (Tehran: Kitabha-yi Iran, 1962), p. 5.
- 88 For instance see Asadallah Ghalib, *Dastanbu* (Aghah: Matba'-i Mufid-i Khalayiq, 1858).
- 89 Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, *Sah Maktub*, p. 265.
- 90 Reza Quli Khan Hidayat, *Farhang-i Anjuman Ara-yi Nasiri* (Tehran: Kargah-i 'Ali'quli Khan, 1881), p. 2.
- 91 Faraydun Adamiyat, *Andishah'ha-yi Mirza Aqa Khan-i Kirmani* (Tehran: Payam, 1978), pp. 162 and 274.
- 92 Kirmani, *Ayina'h-'i Sikandari*, p. 118.
- 93 Akhundzadah, *Maqalat*, pp. 187 and 193.
- 94 Letter to Mirza Muhammad Rafi' Sadr al-'Ulama, dated 18 Muharram 1129, appearing in *Maqalat*, p. 205.
- 95 Letter to Haji Shaykh Muhsin Khan, dated 4 February 1869, in Akhundzadah, *Alifba-yi Jadid va Maktubat* (Baku: Farhangistan-i 'Ulum-i Jumhuri-i Shuravi-i Susiyalisti-i Azarbayjan, 1963), pp. 1137–1140; quote on 1140.
- 96 See Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan*, p. 90.
- 97 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 428.
- 98 'To the President, Vice Presidents, and Committee of the Calcutta School Book Society', in *The Application of the Roman Alphabet to All the Oriental Languages Contained in a Series of Papers, Written by Messrs. Trevelyan, J. Prinsep, and Tytler*,

- Rev. A. Duff, and Mr. H. T. Prinsep* (Calcutta: Serampore Press, 1834), pp. 1–30; quote on p. 13.
- 99 Mirza Isma‘il Dardi Isfahani, ‘Tahrif-i Alifba-yi Musalmanan’, in *Tarikh-i Jahan* (Qum: Kitabkhanah-i ‘Umumi-i Hazrat-i Ayatollah al-‘Uzma Mar‘ashi, #2439), pp. 550–643.
- 100 I‘timad al-Saltanah, *Tatbiq-i Lughat-i Jughrafiya‘i* (Tehran: Dar al-Intiba‘at, 1893), p. 68; Faraydun Adamiyat, *Andishah‘ha-yi Talibuf-i Tabrizi*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Damavand, 1984), p. 85.
- 101 ‘Falsafah-‘i Qawmiyat va Lughat’, *Miftah al-Zafar* 4 (1897): 56.
- 102 ‘Falsafah-‘i Tabi‘i’, *Miftah al-Zafar* 2, 2 (15 September 1898): 1–2; quote on p. 2.
- 103 Mirza Mahdi Khan, ‘Geology ‘Ilm al-Arz’, *Miftah al-Zafar* 2, 5 (1998): 5–6.
- 104 ‘Arz-i Tashakkur’, *Miftah al-Zafar* 2, 8 (22 November 1898): 125, 127, 128.

### 3 MEMORY AND AMNESIA IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

- 1 For a survey of the historiography of the period see *Elr*: Historiography VIII. Qajar Period (A. Amanat) and IX. Pahlavi Period (A. Amanat). As with encyclopedic entries, this essay almost entirely concerns itself with the Persian historiography of the Constitutional Revolution up to 1979. The Western treatment of the Constitutional period and the Persian scholarship after 1979 deserve separate studies. Among the few Western scholars who paid attention to the heterodoxies and dissent are M. Bayat’s two studies: *Iran’s First Revolution: Shi‘ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909* (New York, 1991) and her pioneering *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse, 1982).
- 2 One example is the daily journal of a deputy of the first Majlis from Tabriz, Mirza Ibrahim Khan Baghmishih-i, Sharaf al-Dawlah, in Y. Zuka (ed.), *Ruznamih-yi Khatirat-i Sharaf al-Dawlah* (Tehran, 1377/1989) that chronicles solid support for Constitutionalism inside Iran and in the Caucasus.
- 3 E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 76–7; and J. Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution* (New York, 1996), pp. 81–3 are two examples.
- 4 See for example M. Ansari, *Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri va Mashrutiyat: Ruyarui-yi Du Andisbeh*, 3rd ed. (Tehran, 1378/1999). The author’s well-researched but highly laudatory account of Nuri’s anti-Constitutional campaign entirely disregards his numerous statements in support of Muhammad ‘Ali Shah’s coup, the Qajar autocratic rule and the destruction of the Majlis. See also M. Turkaman, *Maktubat-i Shahid Shyakh Fazullah Nuri* (Tehran, 1363).
- 5 Sharf al-Dawlah, *Ruznamih*, p. 311.

- 6 See for example M. Mahmud, *Tarikh-i Ravabet-i Siyasi-yi Iran va Inglis dar Qarn-i Nuzdahum-i Miladi*, Vol. 8 (Tehran, 1328 sh./1949), chaps. VIII, pp. 89–94.
- 7 1st ed., Vol. 10 (Tehran, 1328/1910); 3rd ed., ed. ‘A. A. Saidi-Sirjani, Vol. 3 (Tehran, 1346–49 sh/ 1967–1670).
- 8 Nazim al-Islam also studied with a Shaykhi teacher in Kirman, though he never found himself at home with the Kirmani Shaykhis. See preface to *Bidari* (p. xxiii) by Muhammad Hashim Kirmani.
- 9 See *Bidari*, III, 153–164. On two occasions where there have been sensitive references to the Babis and their influence, they were deleted though it is not clear whether the omissions are by the author or the editor. The former case corresponds to the murder of the Babi detainees in Bagh Shah after the 1908 coup and the bombardment of the Majlis (III, 163). In his petition to Muhammad ‘Ali Shah, he insists that teaching of the Babis set a course that led into the coup. The latter, appearing at the very end of the third volume (III, 536–537), concerns Shaykh Ibrahim Zanjani’s reading of the charges brought against Nuri during his trial in 1909. Here, there is an unambiguous reference to the importance of the Babis but from here on the remnant of Nazim al-Islam’s journal is missing, presumably destroyed.
- 10 Published with the awkward title: In M. Nizam-Mafi and S. Sa’dvandiyan (eds.), *Waqi’at Itiifaqiya dar Ruzigar*, Vol. 3 (Tehran, 1362 sh./1983).
- 11 M. Malikzadah, *Tarikh-i Mashrutiyyat-i Iran*, Vol. 7 (Tehran, 1327–35 sh./1948–54), I: 236–244.
- 12 Sharif, *Waqi’at*, pp. ix–xxi.
- 13 Vol. 4 (Tehran, 1336 sh./1957). Based on his journals, his memoir was completed in 1317 sh./1938. For his biography see *Elr*: Dawlatabadi (A. Amanat).
- 14 *Khatirat-i Sayyid ‘Ali-Muhammad Dawlatabadi* (Tehran, 1362/1983).
- 15 See for instance his account of several Kirmani Babis vacillating between the two camps and especially the eccentric figure that Browne identifies with a pseudonym: Shaykh Ibrahim of Sultan-abad (*A Year Amongst the Persians*, 3rd ed. [London, 1950], 475–589).
- 16 See A. Amanat, ‘In between madrasa and the marketplace: The designation of clerical leadership in modern Shi’ism’, *Authority and Political Culture in Shi’ism* (Albany, 1988), pp. 98–132 (119–121).
- 17 I am indebted to Juan Cole for first drawing my attention to this treatise. A copy of the Persian text is in Browne’s manuscript collection at Cambridge University Library (available at <http://www.h-net.org/bahai/areprint/azal/M-R/M/muluk/muluk.htm>). For the translation with an introductory note see J. Cole, trans., ‘Treatise on Kingship for A. L. M. Nicolas’ by Subh-I Azal.’ *Translations of Shaykhi, Babi and Baha’i Texts* 8, 1 (August 2004) in <http://www.h-net.org/bahai/trans/vol8/azalking.htm>.
- 18 Originally written in 1875, perhaps in the context of the ephemeral opening of Iran’s political horizons under Mushir al-Dawlah in early 1870s, Abdul Baha’s



- work saw the light of the day only after the defeat of the royalists in the Iranian civil war of 1908–9. Its publication (Cairo, 1329 q./1911) coincided with Abdul-Baha's Egypt visit at the outset of his European tour.
- 19 For dating of his memoirs, the apparent contemporaneity in style and the vocabulary of camouflage see Amanat, *Elr*: Dawlatabadi. J. Cole's nuanced analysis of Dawlatabadi's memoirs uses Asadullah Fazil Mazandarani's important biographical data (under Hadi Dawlatabadi in the unpublished *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, Vol. 6) to clarify some unaddressed episodes in the lives of the father and the son. I am indebted to him for generously sharing with me his paper entitled 'The Young Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi and Azali Babi Revolutionary Thought', Middle East Studies Association, 2000.
  - 20 *Tahrir al-'Uqala* (Tehran, 1312/1933) is a collection of ethico-mystical treatises by Najmabadi with an undertone of Islamic modernism. A collection of sermons (*mawa'iz*) of Sayyid Jamal Isfahani delivered in Tehran mosques between 1906 and 1908 and published simultaneously in *al-Jamal* weekly with wide circulation is to be found in I. Yaghma'i, *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi: Sayyid Jamal Wa'iz Isfahani* (Tehran, 1357/1978).
  - 21 None of the standard histories of the Constitutional period have taken seriously Nuri's allegation that the Constitutionalists' ranks were infiltrated by the Babis, nihilists and the atheists (*mulhids*). These are often dismissed as his effort to defame the Constitutionalists.
  - 22 Graphic accounts appear in Muhammad Tahir Malmiri, *Tarikh-i Shuhada-yi Yazd* (Cairo, 1342/1923) and in Napier Malcolm, *Five Years in a Persian Town* (New York, 1907). See also A. Amanat, 'Persecuting society and its tormented other: Historical roots of the Babi-Baha'i persecution in Iran', in D. Brookshaw and S. Fazel (eds.), *The Baha'is of Iran* (London, 2007).
  - 23 *Khathirat-i Kulunil Kasakufski*, trans. 'A. Jali, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1355/1976), pp. 74–98.
  - 24 For a study of this unpublished, and less-known, work of Kirmani see my forthcoming *Bayan Reinterpreted: Aqa Khan Kirmani and Modern Readings of the Babi Thought*.
  - 25 F. Adamiyat, *Andishehha-yi Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani*, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1357/1978). The author in his authoritative fashion dismisses Aqa Khan's Babi engagement in a single sentence as a short-lived rebellion against 'bigotry and strictness' even though, he makes sure to assert, Babism later only added 'a handful of superstitions to a heap of superstitions', p. 24.
  - 26 He only reports (Sharaf al-Dawlah, *Ruznama*, p. 247), tongue in cheek, the execution of Qazi Ardaqi. On his father's Babi connection see A. Fazil Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, Vol. 3 (Tehran, 1923/44), pp. 25–6.
  - 27 The nineteen issues of this journal are reprinted as *Ruznama-yi Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri*, Supplement to *Majjala-yi Danishkadih-yi Adabiyyat-i Danishgah-i Tihran* (Tehran, 1359/1980). See also Edward Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (Cambridge, 1914), pp. 94–5. A reprint of *Tadkarat al-Ghafil* appears in

- Gh. Zargari-nizhad, *Rasa'il-i Mashrutiyyat* (Tehran, 1374/1995), pp. 171–91. For a summary of Nuri's *mashru'a* doctrine see *Elr: Constitutional Revolution: I: Intellectual Background* (A. Amanat).
- 28 A. Amanat, 'Edward Browne and The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909', intro. to a new edition of Edward Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*, Persia Observed Series no. 1 (Mage Publishers, 1995), pp. ix–xxvii.
- 29 London, 1910.
- 30 For geneology of *mashruta* and *Inqilab* see *Elr: 'Constitutional Revolution: I'* (A. Amanat). For early usage in the Constitutional period see for instance the first occurrence of French term '*revolution*' in early 1909 in Sharaf al-Dawlah, *Ruznama*, p. 336.
- 31 p. 429.
- 32 Brill, Leiden, 1910. For discussion on the text and circumstances of its publication see my *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, 1989), pp. 423–4; and D. MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 134–153.
- 33 In 1922 toward the end of his life Browne, in an obituary on the occasion of 'Abdul-Baha's death, shared with the readers some of his disillusionments with the outcome of the Constitutional Revolution. In a balancing act he also in the final volume of his *Literary History of Persia* paid greater homage to Baha'i literature. By that time the Azali clique was almost completely receded into a fading memory.
- 34 Eventually published in three volumes (Tehran, 1328 and 1330 q./1910–12).
- 35 p. xxi.
- 36 Earlier on the first edition (Cairo, 1290 q./1873) was available to the Persian readers. Four other editions appeared between 1905 and 1909: Tehran, Calcutta, Bombay and Istanbul, making this imaginary traveler account a bestseller of the Constitutional era. Following references are to Istanbul edition (n.d. [1327 q./1909]).
- 37 p. 5. Another version of this report, which appears to be popular at the time, is cited by Sharaf al-Dawlah (*Ruznama*, 327) quoting Imam Juma'a Khu'i's quotation from Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*.
- 38 XVI: 102.
- 39 For this work and its origin and influence see *Elr: Constitutional Revolution: I* (A. Amanat).
- 40 For the information on Shaykh Mahdi Qummi I am indebted to John Gurney who first drew my attention to this interesting figure. See J. Gurney, 'Shaykh, Shahzada, va Sharghshinas: Safarnama-yi Edward Browne', in M. Zamani-niya (ed.), *Sayih-sar-i Mibrabani* (Tehran, 1383/2004), pp. 438–504 (448) and the forthcoming A. Gheissari, 'Despots of the World Unite! Satire in the Iranian Constitutional Press: the *Majalleh-ye Estebdad* (1907–1908)' in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*.

- 41 II, pp. 3–5. The introductory material was added later in the book version to supersede the actual narrative of the event.

- 42 Zayn al-ʿAbidin Maraghaʿi, *Siyahatnama Ibrahim Bag* (Istanbul, n.d.), p. 252. The text reads:

O countrymen wake up from your slumber!

Sober up from the wine of arrogance and self-praise.

Stay away from ignorance and contention,

Unify in the preservation of the homeland.

Below the image of a rooster than appears these lines:

O the bird of dawn (murgh-i sahar)!

Do not bother with a far-reaching song.

The way the oblivious slumber has conquered us,

We will not be awoken until Seraphim blows in his trumpet (*nafkha-yi sur*).

The images of a muezzin and a man blowing in his horn in turn is followed by these verses:

It is the dawn, hear how the muezzin chants.

His sound is heard afar by all.

He warns that flood of subversions (*fitan*) arrived from both directions,

You the oblivious wake up from the slumber of ignorance.

- 43 An open petition by the Anjuman-i Bahaʿian (society of the Bahaʿis) to Muhammad ʿAli Shah cited in Sharaf al-Dawlah's *Ruznama* (pp. 276–7) appears to be a clumsy forgery, at least in the form it has reached the author. Yet it is an interesting document, for it reflects genuine Bahaʿi aspirations for legal recognition and freedom of expression as well as their frustration. It however is entirely fanciful, and conspiratorial, in claiming that the Bahaʿis were responsible for kindling the Constitutional flame and threatening that they will be able to kill it off at will once they acquired their legitimate rights.

- 44 First published in 1316 sh./1927 as a series of articles under the title *Tarikh-i Hizhdah-sala-yi Azarbaijan* in Kasravi's own newspaper, *Payman*. Later appeared in complete form Vol. 3, (Tehran, 1319 sh./1930) and afterwards as *Tarikh-i Mashruta-yi Iran*, Vol. 2 (Tehran, 1330 sh./1951).

- 45 English accounts mostly follow Lambton's lead who in her praise for establishment and dislike for dissent often over-emphasizes the authority of the Shiʿi clergy and hence Regie as a clerical 'rehearsal' for the Constitutional Revolution.

- 46 *Tarikh-i Inqilab-i Mashrutiya-yi Iran*, Vol. 7 (Tehran, 1327–35/1948–56).

- 47 For translation of *Sar u Tah Yek Karbas* see M. A. Jamazadah, *Isfahan is Half the World: Memories of a Persian Boyhood*, trans. W. L. Heston (Princeton, 1983). See

- also my review of this work in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986): 934–935. For Jamalzadah's preface to his father's biography see Yaghma'i, *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi*.
- 48 *Idiology-yi Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat-i Iran*, Vol. I (Tehran, 1355 sh./1976).
- 49 Firaydun Adamiyat's historical work, his personal history, and the political context in which his many contributions were produced deserve an independent study. Also of significance is his influence on generations of Iranian readers that are carried away by his polemical style. For a telling example of his regretful omissions see A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 457, n. 113.
- 50 Ghulam-Hussain Zargari-nizhad and Muhammad Turkaman, to name two.
- 51 A recent examples is S. Yazdani's naive denial of any trace of heterodoxy among leading Constitutionalists 'Heterodox Intellectuals of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution', in R. Gleave (ed.), *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London, 2005), pp. 174–192. It is as though the author is examining an entry in an identity card rather than addressing the complexity of multiple identities in sociological and historical sense. His monolithic reading is further compounded by limited knowledge of the sources.

#### 4 DISINTEGRATING THE 'DISCOURSE OF DISINTEGRATION': SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE LATE QAJAR PERIOD AND IRANIAN CULTURAL MEMORY

- 1 Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 7: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 2 Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).
- 3 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Limited Paperbacks, 2nd printing with corrections 1983).
- 4 Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 5 Hassan Kamshad, *Modern Persian Prose Literature* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966).
- 6 Kamran Talattof, *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999).
- 7 The term 'canonical' for that kind of publications is used by Afshin Matin-Asgari, 'The intellectual best-sellers of post-revolutionary Iran', *Iranian Studies* 37, 1 (2004): 73–88, here 74.



- from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part II, Series B: Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East, 1918–1939 (Editor: Robin Bidwell), Vol. 16: Persia I: The Anglo-Persian Agreement, January 1919–June 1921 (Bethesda, Maryland: University Publications of America, 1990). The Committee of Imperial Defence's official campaign history is also worth mentioning in this context: Frederick James Moberly, *Operations in Persia 1914–1919*, compiled, by arrangement with the Government of India under the direction of the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence (London: H.M.S.O., 1929). This document-based account, which had been produced for a restricted circulation only, became widely accessible in 1987 thanks to a facsimile edition released by the Imperial War Museum. It has also been translated into Persian by Kaveh Bayat: Jaymz Firidrik Mabirli, '*Amaliyat dar Iran: Jang-i Jahani-yi Avval, 1914–1919*' (Tehran: Mu'assasah-yi Khadamat-i Farhangi-yi Rasa, 1369/1990).
- 16 Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah: From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Rule* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998).
  - 17 See amongst others in reverse order of publication: Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998); Houshang Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia 1918–1925* (London: Cass, 1990); William Joseph Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I* (London: Cass, 1984); Werner Zürer, *Persien zwischen England und Russland 1918–1925: Grossmachteinflüsse und nationaler Wiederaufstieg am Beispiel des Iran* (Bern et al.: P. Lang, 1978). Jay E. Simkin's valuable however unpublished 1978 doctoral dissertation is another example: Jay Edward Simkin, *Anglo-Russian Relations in Persia 1914–1921*, unpublished PhD dissertation (supervisor M. S. Anderson) (London: London School of Economics, 1978).
  - 18 For the term see the sensationalist title of three volumes of translations of the *not* at all *secret* but *openly published* British documents contained in the above mentioned document editions: Javad Shaykh ul-Islami (ed./trans.), *Asnad-i mahramanah-yi vizarat-i kharijah-yi Biritaniya darbarah-yi qarardad-i 1919 Iran va Ingilis*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Kayhan (Vol. 1) & Intisharat-i adabi va tarikhi-yi Mawqufat-i Duktur Mahmud Afshar Yazdi (Vols. 2 & 3), 1986 or 1987–8 or 9).
  - 19 To get some idea of possible reasons behind the stated obsession see Ahmad Ashraf, 'The appeal of conspiracy theories to Persians', *Princeton Papers, Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 5 (1996): 57–88, especially 62–8.
  - 20 Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).
  - 21 Idem, *L'ordre du discours: leçon inaugurale au Collège de France prononcée le 2 décembre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).
  - 22 Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: C. H. Beck, 4th edition 2002). The book was first published in 1992.
  - 23 Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92), published in English as *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Vol. 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, [1996]–[1998]).

- 24 Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Mythscapes: Memory, mythology and national identity', *British Journal of Sociology* 54, 1 (2003): 63–81.
- 25 It is exactly this term that Abrahamian applies to this period, see, Abrahamian, *op. cit.*, 102–118.
- 26 Homa Katouzian, 'The campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, 1 (1998): 5–46.
- 27 For a better understanding of what I am trying to get at here see Reinhart Koselleck, 'Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe', in idem, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 211–259. This collection was first published in 1979. What Koselleck deals with in this essay seems far away from my contention regarding the historiography of late Qajar Iran but the methodological considerations regarding the formation of exclusive and negating notions (*Begriffe*) and the tendency of making sense of history through them apply directly to our situation, see, *ibid.*, 214–218.
- 28 In a case that is – with all the necessary caution – comparable, namely that of the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey under Mustafa Kemal, the politically useful discourse of a complete rupture has been already challenged successfully by historians who have discovered deep running continuities; see e.g., Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Rôle of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905–1926* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984).
- 29 Information obtained orally from the *Markaz-i Bushahr-shinasi* on 4 March 1997.
- 30 This looks like a point in case for the framework of understanding proposed by Bell, *op. cit.* (see above note 24).
- 31 In this context a look at Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's essay 'Contested memories: Narrative structures and allegorical meanings of Iran's pre-Islamic history', *Iranian Studies* 29, 1/2 (1996): 149–76 is interesting as it provides some clues with regard to such mechanisms for the late nineteenth century cultural memory of Iran's ancient past. It also illustrates, however, and perhaps even more so, the difficulties of any such attempt: it is relatively straightforward, if not always easy, to gather and then analyze the treatment of a period in published historiography but far more complicated to find out how (and whether) the results of this historiography did actually 'sink' into the cultural memory.
- 32 For first results see Haggai Ram, 'The immemorial Iranian nation? School textbooks and historical memory in post-revolutionary Iran', *Nations & Nationalism* 6, 1 (2000): 67–90. See also idem, 'Post-1979 Iranian National Culture – A reconsideration', in Moshe Zuckermann (ed.), *Ethnizität, Moderne und Enttraditionalisierung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002). [=Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte, 30 (2002)], pp. 223–53.
- 33 Muhammad-Hussain Rukn-zadah-Adamiyat, *Daliran-e tangistani* (Tehran: Ava, 1931 or 32). See also idem, *Fars va jang-i bayn al-milal*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Matba'ah-yi Sirus, 1933 or 1934 and 1948 or 1949).

- 34 See Christophe Balay, *La genèse du roman persan moderne* (Téhéran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1998).
- 35 For an attempt of going into this direction, albeit mainly focusing on the establishment of a dominating narration regarding Iran's ancient past and especially its built heritage, see Talinn Grigor, 'Recultivating "good taste": the early Pahlavi modernists and their society for national heritage', *Iranian Studies* 37, 1 (2004): 17–45.
- 36 For a perspicacious analysis of the wider issues pertaining to our problem, namely the historiography of the Middle East and Central Asia as a whole see Touraj Atabaki, *Beyond Essentialism: Who Writes Whose Past in the Middle East and Central Asia* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2003).
- 37 One often finds these challenges hidden, as it were, in introductions to document editions, that are of course themselves part of the challenge, see, e.g., Mansurah Ittihadiyah and Su'ad Pira (eds.), *Majmu'ah-yi mukatabat, asnad, khatirat va asar-e Firuz Mirza Firuz Nusrat al-Dawlah*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Kitab-i Siamak & Nashr-i tarikh-i Iran, 1999 or 2000) or Riza Azeri Shahriza'i (ed.), *Hay'at-i fauq al'adah-yi Qafqaziyah* (Tehran: Markaz-i Asnad va tarikh-i diplomasi, Vizarat-i umur-i kharijah, Markaz-i chap va intisharat, 2000 or 2001). For a (still very rare) monograph in this vain see Kava Bayat, *Tufan barfaraz-i Qafqaz* (Tehran: Markaz-i Asnad va tarikh-i diplomasi, Vizarat-i umur-i kharijah, Markaz-i chap va intisharat, 2002).
- 38 The research in case is my joint Universität Bamberg/Université Paris III doctoral thesis *Die persische Außenpolitik und der erste Weltkrieg* that I am currently preparing for publication as a monograph in English. For already published partial results see the following two articles: Oliver Bast, 'Putting the record straight: Vosuq al-Dowleh's Foreign Policy in 1918/19', in Touraj Atabaki and Erik J. Zürcher (eds.), *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London & New York: I.B.Tauris), pp. 260–81; and idem, 'La mission persane à la conférence de Paix et l'accord anglo-persan de 1919 : Une nouvelle interprétation', in Oliver Bast (ed.), *La Perse et la Grande Guerre* (Téhéran/Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran/Peeters, 2002), pp. 375–425.
- 39 Afsaneh Najmabadi, *The Story of the Daughters of Quchan: Gender and National Memory in Iranian History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998).
- 40 That this problem is not confined to the historiography of Iran illustrates a recent programmatic essay by Arthur Marvick, 'Knowledge and language: History, the humanities, the sciences', *History* 87, 285 (2002): 3–18.
- 41 (1) Homa Pakdaman [Homa Nategh], *Djamal-ed-Din Assad Abadi, dit Afghani* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1969); (2) Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani': A political biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); (3) Anwar Moazzam, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Muslim intellectual* (New Delhi: Concept, 1984).
- 42 Donald Newton Wilber, *Riza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1975).



- 43 On this imbalance in scholarly attention see also Bert G. Fagner, 'World War I as a turning point in Iranian history', in Oliver Bast (ed.), *La Perse et la Grande Guerre* (Téhéran/Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran/Peeters, 2002), pp. 441–7.
- 44 Tzvetan Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire* (Paris: Arléa, 1995), p. 33. In this pamphlet Todorov deals mainly with France's memory of the occupation but the gist of his argument seems also to ring true for the Contemporary History of Iran.

## 5 AGENCY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN IRANIAN NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

- 1 *Maqalat Danishamuzan Markaz va Vilayat* (The Writings of High school Students of Centre and Provinces) (Tehran: Majlis, 1936), p. 30, p. 52, pp. 58–60, p. 73.
- 2 For a comprehensive study of Kirmani's contribution to Iranian modern historiography, see: Mohamad Tavakoli Targhi, *Refashioning Iran. Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
- 3 Mahmud Afshar, 'Khatar Zard va Siyah' (The Yellow and Black Hazard), *Ayandih* (Future), 24 (1927), pp. 916–929.
- 4 Mohamad Tavakoli Targhi, 'Contested memories: Narrative structures and allegorical meanings of Iran's pre-Islamic history', *Iranian Studies* 29 (1–2): 158 (1996).
- 5 Hassan Pirnia (Mushir al-Dawlah), politician, lawyer and historian, was born in 1872. Son of Nasrullah Khan Na'ini, the first Prime Minister of the Constitution era, he studied in Moscow and joined the Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1902. He translated numerous legal treaties from foreign languages into Persian and contributed in compiling the first Constitutional Code of Iran. He held a number of Ministerial posts, including the Minster of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and the Prime Minster. In 1923 he retired from politics and devoted the rest of his life to the writing of history. The first volume of his masterwork *Iran Bastan* was published in 1927. He died in 1935 in Tehran. For the life of Pirnia see: Mahdi Bamdad, *Sharh Hal Rijal Iran* (Life of Iranian Notables), Vol. 1, 4th ed. (Tehran: Zavvar, 1992), pp. 323–4.
- 6 Hassan Pirnia, *Iran Bastan*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Zarrin, 2003), p. 41.
- 7 Ibid., p. 674.
- 8 Hassan Pirnia, *Iran Bastan*, Vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Zarrin, 2003), p. 1419.
- 9 Hassan Pirnia, *Iran Bastan*, Vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Zarrin, 2003), pp. 2448–9.
- 10 Mahmud Mahmud (1892–1965); following his early years of education in Tabriz, he pursued his graduate studies at the American College in Tehran. He was a middle-ranked civil servant for 30 years until he was elected as a deputy for Majlis in 1944 and 1949. He then became the governor of Tehran. His earlier publications were on studying the British policy in Asia and Africa during the nineteenth century. Later on, he focused on Iran and began an extensive study of

- the Anglo-Iranian political relations in the nineteenth century, which he published it in eight volumes.
- 11 Mahmud Mahmud, Introduction to the first edition of Firaydun Adamiyat's book: Firaydun Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran ya Varaqi az Tarikh Iran* (Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir and Iran or a Page of Iran History) (Tehran: n.p., 1944).
  - 12 Ibid.
  - 13 Ibid.
  - 14 Ibid.
  - 15 Ibid.
  - 16 Mahmud Mahmud, Introduction to Mihdi Davudi's book: Mihdi Davudi, *Qavam al-Saltanah*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: n.p., 1948).
  - 17 Mahmud Mahmud, *Tarikh Ravabit Siyasi Iran va Ingilis* (A History of Anglo-Iranian Political Relations in the nineteenth Century), Vol. 3 (Tehran: Iqbal, 1965), pp. 929–30.
  - 18 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Andishih Taraqi va Hukumat Qanun, Asr Sipahsalar* (The Idea of Progress and of the Government based on Law, the Sipahsalar Era) (Tehran: Khawrazmi, 1977), p. 473
  - 19 For a detailed study of the 'Soviet Republic' in Gilan see: Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920–1921: Birth of the Trauma* (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995).
  - 20 David Brooks, 'The enemy within', in Richard Tapper (ed.), *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 358–9.
  - 21 Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan, Ethnicity and Autonomy in the Twentieth-Century Iran* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1993), pp. 46–51.
  - 22 'Ali Azari, *Qiyam Shaykh Muhammad Khiyabani dar Tabriz* (The Uprising of Shaykh Muhammad Khiyabani in Tabriz) (Tehran: Safi' alishah, 1975), p. 341.
  - 23 Ibid., p. 428.
  - 24 Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah, From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Rule* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999), p. 307.
  - 25 In the absence of the king, the heir to the throne, Hassan Mirza signed the telegram. See Hussain Makki, *Tarikh Bist Salah Iran* (Twenty Years History of Iran), Vol. 2 (Tehran: Bungah Tarjumah va Nashr Kitab, 1980), p. 437.
  - 26 FO 371/10144, 25 February 1924.
  - 27 Cyrus Ghani, op. cit., p. 308.
  - 28 FO 416/74 No.110, 22 February 1924.
  - 29 In addition to his literary publication, Muhammad Taqi Malak al-Shu'ara Bahar published the first volume of his shorter history of political parties of Iran (*Tarikh Mukhtasr Ahzab Siyasi Iran*) in 1944. What appeared to be the materials for the

- second volume of Bahar history were first published in the periodical *Mihr Iran* in 1941–2. In 1984, Bahar's son, Mihrdad Bahar, published these articles separately. Bahar's narration of the political developments of the time passes through his autobiography, giving it a highly personal flavor. However, in the absence of any detailed account of party politics in the post-Constitution Iran, Bahar's narration remains the most reliable account.
- 30 Malak al-Shu'ara Bahar, *Tarikh Mukhtasr Ahzab Siyasi Iran* (Shorter History of Political Parties in Iran) (Tehran: Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, 1994), pp. 41–2.
  - 31 Ibid., p. 41.
  - 32 'Aliasghar Shamim, *Iran dar Duwrah Saltanat Qajar* (Iran during the Qajar Realm) (Tehran: Ibnisina, 1963), p. 678.
  - 33 Ibid., p. 677.
  - 34 Gholam Hussain Mirza Salih (ed.), *Reza Shah, Khatirat Sulayman Bibbudi, Shams Pahlavi, 'Ali Izadi* (Reza Shah, Memoirs of Sulayman Bibbudi, Shams Pahlavi, 'Ali Izadi) (Tehran: Tarh nu, 1993), p. 123.
  - 35 *Setareh Iran* (Iran's Star), p. 149 (17 March 1924).
  - 36 Ibid., p. 144 (10 March 1924).
  - 37 Ibid.
  - 38 Ibid.
  - 39 FO. 416/74, No.129, March 1924.
  - 40 Ibid.
  - 41 'Abdullah Mustafi, *Sharh Zindigi Man ya Tarikh Ijtima'i va Idari Qajariyyah*, (My Biography or the Social and Administrative History of Qajar), Vol. 3 (Tehran: Zavvar, 1964), pp. 407–408.
  - 42 Malak al-Shu'ara Bahar, *Tarikh Mukhtasr Ahzab Siyasi Iran*, op. cit., p. 43.
  - 43 Ibid., pp. 40–41
  - 44 Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam, Ideology and Organization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 181.
  - 45 *Shafaq Sorkh*, (10 March 1924).
  - 46 Mansourah Taddaunpur (ed.), *Asnad Ruhaniyat va Majlas* (the Document of Clergy and Majlis), Vol. 3 (Tehran, Markaz Asnad Majlis Shora Islami, 1997), p. 40, document 12.
  - 47 FO 416/74, No. 165, 26 March 1924.
  - 48 Ibid.
  - 49 Malak al-Shu'ara Bahar, op. cit., p. 54. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 134.
  - 50 'Abdullah Mustafi, op. cit., p. 601.
  - 51 Hussain Makki, op. cit., p. 520.

- 52 Narration of Hussain Makki definitely falls in this category.
- 53 Said Nafisi (1895–1966), the elaborate academic of the Pahlavi era published more than one hundred volumes on politics, history and literature. He reached the halcyon days of his academic life in the 1930s when he became one of the most renowned cultural figures of the first Pahlavi era. In addition to his academic career, he was also engaged in politics holding numerous governmental offices. He was also known as one of the promoters of Reza Shah's cultural policies.
- 54 Said Nafisi, *Pishraftiha Iran dar Asr Pahlavi* (The Iranian Advancement in the Pahlavi Era) (Tehran: Dabirkhanh Sazaman Parvarish Afkar, 1939).
- 55 Ibid., p. 20.
- 56 Ibrahim Safa'i (1914–2007), journalist and popular historian who studied law and initiated his early vocation as journalist. Following the Second World War he became a political activist and joined the conservative camp. In addition to numerous abridged biographies of the leaders of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, Safa'i published six volumes of important documents related to the Constitutional Revolution. In the early 1970s, he joined the Ministry of Culture and Arts and launched a new series of publications on the history of Pahlavi.
- 57 Ibrahim Safa'i, *Kudita Sivvum Isfand va Asar an* (The Coup d'état of 22 February and Its Outcomes) (Tehran: Shirkat Ufsit, 1974); Ibrahim Safa'i, *Panjah Sal* (Fifty Years) (Tehran: Vizarat Farhang va Hunar, 1977). Ibrahim Safa'i, *Reza Shah Kabir va Tahavolat Farhangi Iran* (Reza Shah the Great and Cultural Developments in Iran) (Tehran: Vizarat Farhang va Hunar, 1977).
- 58 Ibrahim Safa'i, *Kudita Sivvum Isfand va Asar an* (The Coup d'état of 22 February and Its Outcomes). Op. cit., pp. 78–9.
- 59 Ibid., 79.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Hussain Makki (1913–1999) journalist, political activist, member of the Iranian parliament in 1940s and popular historian. His major historical narrative is *Tarikh Bist Salab Iran* (Twenty Years History of Iran) published in 8 volumes covering twenty years (1921–1941) rule of the Reza Shah Pahlavi. By considering the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi as authoritarian, his work obviously could not be published during the rule of Pahlavi dynasty. While the first volume was published in 1944, following the abdication of the Reza Shah, the 8th volume was published about 40 years later in 1985 subsequent to the revolution of 1978–1982 which put an end to the Pahlavi era.
- 62 Hussain Makki, op. cit., p. 446.
- 63 Ibid., p. 483.
- 64 Ibid., p. 500.
- 65 Hussain Makki, op. cit., p. 487.
- 66 Ibid., pp. 489–521.

- 67 Iraj Afshar, *Nadiri-h-karan* (The Celebrities) (Tehran: Nashr Qatirih, 2004), p. 157.
- 68 Among them was Mahmud Mahmud who was surnamed as Pahlavi. In 1924, he was approached by Amir 'Azam to change his surname and adopt a new one. Refusing to adopt a new name, he confined it to Mahmud both for his first name as well as his surname. See: Mahmud Katira'i, 'Bi Yad Mahmud Mahmud', *Nigin*, 43 (1968).

## 6 THE NATION'S POET: FERDOWSI AND THE IRANIAN NATIONAL IMAGINATION

I would like to thank Touraj Atabaki, Touraj Daryaei, Kahtleen Kelly and Malina Dunk for commenting on earlier drafts of this article. Thanks as well to Houchang E. Chehabi who suggested this topic to me more than a decade ago. I am also thankful for the comments of discussants and audience members at the 2004 Middle East Studies Association Annual Conference, the University of Arizona, and the University of California at Davis. This article is based partly on my monograph, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

- 1 *Salnameh-ye Pars* (Tehran: n.p., 1935), p. 22; *Ettela'at*, October 13, 1934.
- 2 Hobsbawm's discussion of the French Third Republic's canonization of the 'revolutionary pantheon' and the American 'cult of the Founding Fathers' suggest analogous practices elsewhere. See Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass-producing traditions: Europe 1870–1914', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 272. Anderson's discussion of the tombs of unknown soldiers may suggest a similar form of national symbolism. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), p. 11.
- 3 The number of editions is striking, first in India and then in Iran. See Edward Edwards (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Persian Printed Books in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1922); Iraj Afshar, *Kitabshe-nasi-ye Ferdowsi* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli, 1976), pp. 270–285. For the earlier Ferdowsi literary revival see especially Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 96–104. The linking of national history with literature ultimately goes back to Herder's notion of *nationalallitteratur*. For a discussion of this issue see, for example, Robert Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 190. For a discussion of how Herder's category of national-literature was applied to the Indian context see Vinay Dharwadker, 'Orientalism and the study of Indian Literatures', in Carol A. Bredkenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspective on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 164–7.

- 4 For the journals *Iranshshahr* and *Kaveh* see Keivandokht Ghahari, *Nationalismus und Modernismus in Iran in der Periode zwischen dem Zerfall der Qagaren-Dynastie und der Machtfestigung Reza Schahs: Eine Untersuchung über die Intellektuellen Kreise um die Zeitschriften Kaweh, Iranshahr und Ayandeh* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2001).
- 5 For the history of German orientalism and its importance for Middle East and Islamic history see especially, Jennifer Jenkins, 'Introduction', in Jennifer Jenkins guest (ed.), *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol. 24, no. 2 (2004), pp. 97–100.
- 6 *Kaveh* (Berlin). The articles are from the following issues: February 15, 1918 (no. 25), 12–14; March 15, 1918 (no. 26), 7–8; April 15, 1918 (no. 27), 10–12; May 15, 1918 (no. 28), 8; and July 15, 1918 (no. 29/30), 14–15. This series of articles is not signed and may have been written collaboratively with other members of the editorial collective.
- 7 *Kaveh*, April 15, 1918 (no. 27), p. 11. See also Rüdiger Schmitt, "Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers).
- 8 *Kaveh*, May 15, 1918 (no. 28), p. 8.
- 9 Ibid. He is referring to the important works by these two authors at the Dar al-Fonun: Zuka al-Mulk's *Tarikh-i Sasanian* and Etemad al-Saltanah's *Tarikh-i Bani Ashkan*. These two works were seminal texts in the modern Persian historiography of the ancient period. They are both largely derivative of Rawlinson's texts, but are not strict translations.
- 10 *Kaveh*, July 15, 1918 (no. 29/30), pp. 14–15.
- 11 For a discussion of Nöldeke's place in the history of German orientalism see Rudi Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities: German Orientalists Since Theodor Nöldeke* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968), pp. 11–15.
- 12 Wilhelm Geiger and Ernst Kuhn (eds.), *Grundriss der iranischen philologie*, Vol. II (Strassburg: K.J. Trübner, 1895–1904).
- 13 Theodor Nöldeke, *Das iranische nationalepos: Besonderer Abdruck aus dem Grundriss der iranischen philologie* (Strassburg: K.J. Trübner, 1896); Theodor Nöldeke, *Das iranische nationalepos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1920). It is the 1920 edition that Taqizadah cites. Taqizadah's articles directly coincide with the publication of the 1920 edition. See also A. Shahpur Shahbazi, *Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers/Harvard University, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1991), Chapters 1 and 2; Olga M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2006), Part 1.
- 14 Theodor Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic, or The Shahnamah*, translated from the German into English by Leonid Bogdanov (Bombay: Executive Committee of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930). The first of numerous Persian editions was published in 1948 with Buzurg Alavi's translation as *Hamaseh-ye Melli-ye Iran* (Tehran: Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1948).
- 15 *Kaveh*, October 15, 1920, (new edition, no. 10), p. 9.
- 16 Ibid.

- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Tavakoli-Targhi has described a similar process of dialogical cultural encounter. See Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, pp. 4–8, 18–23.
- 19 Ibid., p. 4.
- 20 *Kaveh*, November 13, 1920, (new edition, no. 11), pp. 7–12; December 13, 1920, (new edition, no. 12), pp. 7–12.
- 21 Ibid., (no. 12), p. 8.
- 22 Nöldeke was rigorous, careful, and conservative in his textual judgments, not prone to historiographic romanticism. Paret describes '[h]is greatest concern was to grasp and analyse facts. He called himself a rationalist . . . everything in his publications is subjected to strict objective criteria . . . if he is not sure of a fact he says so, or else leaves it out of the discussion altogether.' Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities*, pp. 12–13.
- 23 *Kaveh*, (no. 12), p. 8.
- 24 Ibid., January 11, 1921 (new edition, no. 1), pp. 11, 13.
- 25 Ibid., October 3, 1921 (new edition, no. 10), p. 12.
- 26 For the Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli see: Hussain Bahar al-Umumi, *Karnameh-ye Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli, 1976 [2535]); Isa Sadiq, *Yadegar-e 'Omr* (Tehran: Vezarat-e Farhang, 1966), Vol. 2, pp. 201–2; Kaikhosrow Shahrokh, *Yaddashtha-ye Kaikhosrow Shahrokh* (Tehran: n.p., 1977), pp. 160–1; *Salnameh-ye Pars* (Tehran: n.p., 1935), pp. 18–20; Iraj Afshar, *Kitabshenasi-ye Ferdowsi*, includes numerous original documents from the Anjoman.
- 27 Sadiq, *Yadegar-e 'Omr*, p. 201.
- 28 He cites the writings of J.B. Fraser, A.W. Jackson, Percy Sykes, and Jukowsky. *Kaveh*, December, 1921, (new edition, no. 12), p. 23.
- 29 Ibid., (no. 12), p. 24.
- 30 *Iranshahr* (Berlin), October 23, 1925, [Tehran: Iqbal Reprint edition], p. 705. I am indebted to Houchang E. Chehabi for this reference.
- 31 Ibid., p. 731
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., p. 735.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid., p. 737.
- 40 Ibid., (August 23, 1925), p. 610.

- 41 Ibid., pp. 611–613.
- 42 For the architectural history of the Ferdowsi monument see Talinn Grigor, ‘Recultivating “good taste”: The early Pahlavi modernists and their society for national heritage’, *Iranian Studies* 37, 1 (2004): 17–45. See also A. Shahpur Shahbazi, ‘Ferdowsi: iii Mausoleum,’ *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers), and the important unpublished dissertation by Mina Marefat, ‘Building to Power: Architecture of Tehran, 1921–1941’ (PhD Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988).
- 43 Sadiq, Yadegar-e ‘Omr, p. 210.
- 44 Ibid., p. 202; Shahrokh, Yaddashtha, pp. 164–165.
- 45 Afshar, Ketabshenasi-ye Ferdowsi, p. 338
- 46 Sadiq, Yadegar-e ‘Omr, p. 210; Salnameh-ye Pars (1935), p. 19.
- 47 Shahrokh, Yaddashtha, pp. 161–162.
- 48 Sadiq, Yadeqar-e ‘Omr, p. 203; Shahrokh, Yaddashtha, p. 163.
- 49 Sadiq, Yadegar-e ‘Omr, p. 203.
- 50 For André Godard’s role in the architectural history of Iran see Mina Marefat, ‘The protagonists who shaped modern Tehran’, in Chahryar Adle and Bernard Hourcade (eds.), *Téhéran: Capitale Bicentenaire* (Paris: Bibliothèque Iranienne, Institute Francais de Recherche en Iran, 1992), pp. 105–7.
- 51 Grigor states that the original design for the Ferdowsi memorial was by Hertzfeld and only later commissioned to the Iranian architect Tahirzadah only for him to be fired for incompetence, see Grigor ‘Cultivating “good taste”’, *Iranian Studies* 37, 1 (2004): 37. Tahirzadah’s original design for the memorial, however, was proposed in the pages of *Iranshahr* in 1925 (August 23, 1925 issue; p. 612 of *Iqbal* Reprint edition). A comparison of Tahirzadah’s 1925 design with the final design proposed by Godard and Hertzfeld suggests collaboration between Tahirzadah and Godard/Hertzfeld.
- 52 Sadiq, Yadegar-e ‘Omr, p. 203; Shahrukh, Yaddashtha, pp. 164–5.
- 53 The Tehran conference also coincided with other Ferdowsi conferences in London, New York, Berlin, and Moscow, which had been organized with the help of the Iranian diplomatic corps abroad. The Iranian press took interest in discussing the proceedings of these other conferences as well. See Ettela’at October 2, 6, 1934. The text of the Iranian ambassador to Nazi Germany, who attended the Berlin conference, was printed in the October 6 issue. ‘The celebration of the greatest Iranian national poet’s millennium... which has brought together eminent German orientlists... will hopefully affirm the spiritual and intellectual connections between Germans and Iranians.’ For the millennium celebration see also A. Shahpur Shahbazi, ‘Ferdowsi: iv Millenary Celebration,’ *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers).
- 54 *Ettela’at*, October 4, 1934; *Glossar zu Firdousis Schahname* remains a monumental concordance to the text. See A. Shapur Shabazi, p. 16.



- 55 *Ettela'at*, October 4, 1934; *Salnameh-ye Pars* (1935), p. 28.
- 56 *Ettela'at*, November 1, 1934.
- 57 Muhammad 'Ali Furughi, 'Opening remarks', in *Hezareh-ye Ferdowsi* (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1983), p. 16.
- 58 'Aliasghar Hikmat, 'Opening remarks', in *Hezareh-ye Ferdowsi*, p. 10.
- 59 *Ettela'at*, October 13, 1934.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.; *Salnameh-ye Pars* (Tehran, 1935), p. 22.
- 62 *Salnameh-ye Pars* (Tehran, 1935), pp. 54–5; *Ettela'at*, October 13, 1934.
- 63 Sadiq, *Yadegar-e 'Omr*, p. 232.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., p. 233; Afshar, *Ketabshe-nashi-ye Ferdowsi*, pp. 276–7.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Muhammad 'Ali Furughi (ed.), *Khulase-ye Shahnamah-ye Ferdowsi* (Tehran: Ibn Sina, 1934).
- 68 To my knowledge, the film itself is not extant. A synopsis of the screenplay and a discussion of the filmmaker can be found in numerous sources including: Mamad Haghghat, *Histoire du Cinéma Iranien* (Paris: BPI Centre George Pompidou), pp. 31–33; Jamal Omid, *Abdulhusain Sepanta: Zendegi va Sinama* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Tehran Faryab, 1984), pp. 49–54.
- 69 Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 7.

## 7 THE PAHLAVI SCHOOL OF HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE PAHLAVI ERA

- 1 The history textbooks of this period and their way of interpreting the Pahlavi era is a more complex issue that I have not dealt with in this paper.
- 2 In both cases the early issues of them; *Ghoshoun* (Winter of 1922 to 1924) and *Pahlavi* (Summer 1923 to 1925). Unlike *Ghoshoun*, *Pahlavi* was not officially affiliated with the Army.
- 3 [Reza Shah Pahlavi], *Safarname-ie Khouzestan* (Tehran: Matba'e Kol-e Ghoshoun [the Army Press], [1924]).
- 4 Habibullah Nobakht, *Sardar-e Pahlavi* (Tehran: Matba'e Majles [the Parliament Press], n.d.).
- 5 Amir Lashkar Abdullah Tahmasbi, *Shahanshai A'lahazrat Reza Shah Pahlavi* (Tehran: Matba'e Majles [the Parliament Press], 1305 [1926]).

- 6 For further information see the copies of related communications enclosed at the end of Nafisi's *Tarikh-e Mo'asser-e Iran* (The Contemporary History of Iran) (Tehran: Ketab Foroushi Foroughi, 1966).
- 7 By the same title in 1944, by the name of *Tarikh-e Shahriari Shahanshah Reza Shah Pahlavi* in 1965 and also a new title – *Tarikh-e Mo'asser Iran* (The Contemporary History of Iran) – in 1966, as far as I know.
- 8 Malek-o-Sho'ara' Bahar's *Tarikh-e Mokhtasar-e Ahzab Siassi-e Iran* (The Short History of the Political Parties of Iran) (Tehran: ?, 1944) and Hossein Makki's *Tarikh-e Bist Sale-ie Iran* (The 20 Year History of Iran) (Tehran: Ketab Foroushi Elmi, 1944) are the most important historical products of this period. For further information see Kaveh Bayat, 'Tarikh-e Bist Saleh' (The 20 Year History), in *Goft-o Gu*, no. 7, Summer 1985, pp. 61–69.

*Bazigaran-e Asr-e Talayi* (The Actors of the Golden Age) a series of weekly pamphlets by Ibrahim Khajehnouri in early 1940s that was later published as a single volume (Tehran: ?, 1943) is a good example of the popular genre of historiography that took shape in those days.

For a collection of different anecdotes and tales published in various newspapers and magazines in those years on Reza Shah see Ne'matollah Mehrkhah, *Ketab-e Reza Shah Az Zaban-e Rejal, Omara' Lashgar, Nevisandegan, Darbarian* (Reza Shah as Narrated by Dignitaries, Army Generals, Writers, Courtiers); Tehran: Chapkhane-ie Sepehr, 1946; and also *Khaterat-e Reza Shah Kabir* (The Memoirs of Reza Shah The Great); (Tehran: Vol. 3, Sazman-e Chap-e Shohrat-e Mah, 1953–5) that is a collection of memoirs by a number of people about Reza Shah (and not his memoirs as the title suggests).

- 9 For the background of these developments that was mainly instigated by General Razmara see *Khaterat va Asnad-e Sepahbod Haj-'ali Razmara* (compiled by Kambiz Razmara And Kaveh Bayat) (Tehran: Entesharat Shirazeh, 2003), pp. 186–198, Two books by Muhammad Reza Khalili Araghi – a protégé of Razmara – are a good indicator of the manner in which this publicity campaign was launched; *Khaterat-e Safar-e Azerbaijan va Kordestan* (Memoirs of a Trip to Azerbaijan and Kurdistan), Tehran, second Edition, Chapkhane-ie Artesh 1949, and *Bazgasht* [Return], on the occasion of the 40th day of Reza Shah's burial, Tehran: Chap Taban, 1950.

Apart from some other official publications such as a booklet by the Police, titled *Ejmal-i az Tarikh-e Doureieh Zamamdari-e A'lahazrat Shahanshah-e Faghid Reza Shah Kabir* (A Short Review of the Reign of the Late Reza Shah) (Tehran: Shahrban-i-e Kole Keshvar, 1950), the funeral of Reza Shah also gave rise to some sort of genuine nostalgic feelings as well. For example see Yousef Farrahi's *Ro'yai-Shab-e Sevom-e Esfand 1324* (the February 21st 1945 Dream) an attempt to justify Reza Shah's oppressive rule by a comparison between the orderly situation of his reign and the chaotic situation of Iran after his demise. (Tehran: Ketab foroushi-e Elmi, 1947); see also *Ayine' Sepass* (the Mirror of Gratitude) a less elaborate attempt by Zabihollah Ghadimi (Tehran: Bongah-e Matbooati-e Emrooz, 1950).

- 10 Published by 'Madreseie 'Ali-e Zabanha va Adabiyat-e Khareji' (The Advanced School for Foreign Languages and Literature), author unknown, Tehran: 1967.

- 11 Tehran: 1967.
- 12 'Reza Shah Kabir' in *Mardan-e Khodsakhte* (Self Made Men), a collection of articles compiled by Ibrahim Khajenouri, Tehran: Amir Kabir 1956, pp. 6–40.
- 13 Tehran: Ketabha-ie Jibi, 1961.
- 14 *Nazari be Mashrigh* (A Glance Towards the East) the first volume of Mahdi Farrokh's *Tarikh Siassi-e Afghanistan* (The Political History of Afghanistan) has 1314 (1935) as its date of publication but as a note in the last page of the book indicates it was actually published in the early 1950s.  
The fate of General Amonollah Mirza Jahanbani's memoirs and the manner in which he eventually manages to publish them is noteworthy. In 1928 he conducted a successful military operation against a tribal rebellion in Baluchistan, but his attempt to publish a report on this campaign in *Ghoshoun*, the official journal of the Army in 1929, was not successful. After a few issues (nos. 13–14, 1929), *Ghoshoun* – with no explanation – ceased to publish the rest of the report and it was only after two decades, in 1957, that the whole report was published in a book form (Tehran: Chapkhane-ie Majlis, 1957).
- 15 In the early 1920s, Jahanbani as a high ranking officer also took a leading part in the military campaigns of the new regime against Simko, the leader of a Kurdish tribal uprising in Azerbaijan. His reminiscences of this campaign though mainly dealing with two specific operations – the Battles of Shekaryazi and Saridash – took the title of *Khaterati az Douran-e Derakhshan-e Reza Shah Kabir* (Memoirs of the Glorious Era of Reza Shah the Great), (Tehran: ?, 1967.) Janhanbani's memoirs have recently been reissued under a new and more appropriate title, *Sarbaz-e Irani va Mafhoum-e Ab va Khak* (The Iranian Soldier and the Concept of Water and Soil), (Tehran: Entesharat Ferdos, 2001).
- 16 See Muhammad Golbon, *Fehreste Si salei-ie Salname-ie Donya* (An Index for 30 Years of Donya Almanac) (Tehran: Mo'ases-ie Motale'at Tarikh Mo'aser Iran, 1994).
- 17 Tehran: Entesharat-e Vezarat-e Farhang, 1959.
- 18 *Reza Shah Kabir Pahlavi Avval* (Reza Shah the Great, the First Pahlavi) (Tehran: Entesharat-e Vezarat-e Etele'at, Vol. 1, 1967).
- 19 See Jahangir Gha'em-maghani, *Iran Emrouz* (Modern Iran) (Tehran: 1979), pp. I–III.
- 20 For example see Sepahbod Kazemi & others, *Tarikh-e Panjah Sale-ie Nirou-ie Zamini Shahanahabi-e Iran* (The 50 Year History of the Imperial Iranian Ground Force) (Tehran, 1976); Sarhang Morteza Tolo'i *Tarikh-e Nirou-ie Havaii Shahan-shahi* (The History of the Imperial Air Force), Tehran: 1976; Sarhang Jahangir Gha'em-maghani, *Tarikh-e Gendarmerie Iran* (The History of the Iranian Gendarmerie) (Tehran, 1976).
- 21 For example see *Mobarezeh ba Rahjou'ie Biganegan dar Omour-e Keshvar* (the Struggle against the Meddling of the Foreigners in the Affairs of the Country), Vol. 1, n.d. this set of documents was compiled by Ibrahim Safa'i but the name

of the compiler (and also the date and the place of publication) of some other collections are not indicated. For instance, a copy of these publications titled *Vaghaie' Azerbaijan* (The Events of Azerbaijan) in 216 pages that is in the possession of the author, which contains a collection of documents and reports from the archives of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Army on the crisis of Azerbaijan (1945–6), only has the stamp of 'Markaz-e Amar va Asnad' and a series of numbers for its different sections – in this case, nos. 15–1 – on its cover.

A collection of these documents was deposited at the 'Markaz-e Tahghighat', the research centre of the Imperial Court and this centre started to publish a series of detailed catalogues about them; see Darbar-e Shahanshahi, *Fehrest-e Asnad va Madarek, Siasi* [political], Vols. 1&2, 1354 [1975]; *Ejtemaee* [social], Vol. 1, 1354.

- 22 *Zaminehaie Ejtemai'e Koudeateie 1299* (The Social Ground of the 1921 Coup) and *Koudetaie 1299 va Asare Aan* (The 1921 Coup and Its Outcome) (Tehran: Shoraie 'Ali-e Farhang va Honar, 1974).
- 23 *Panjah Sal, Az Zadrouz ta Tajgozari-e Reza Shah Kabir* (50 Years, from the Birthday to the Coronation of Reza Shah the Great); *Reza Shah Kabir va Tahavolat-e Farhangi-e Iran* (Reza Shah the Great and the Cultural Developments of Iran); *Reza Shah Kabir dar Ayine' Khaterat* (Reza Shah the Great in the Mirror of Memoirs) (Tehran: Shoraie 'Ali-e Farhang va Honar, 1976–7).
- 24 Tehran, 1355 [1976].
- 25 Tehran: Ketabkhane-ie Pahlavi, Vol. 7, 1976.
- 26 Abdolkarim Tabatabaie, the editor of *Salname-ie Donya*, was also an active member of Sayyed Zia's network of newspapers in the 1940s.
- 27 'Sokhani Koutah Dar barei-e in Majmou'e' (A Brief Comment on this Collection), in the introductory issue of *Bisto Hassht Hezar Rooz*, Tehran: Etela'at, n.d. [probably early June, 1976].

## 8 ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIOGRAPHY 1921–42

The images in Chapter 8 are from the author's own collection

- 1 The original version of this article by the present author and in collaboration with Mr. Behrouz Monadizadah was presented in April of 1999 at the Bam Conference for Architecture and Urban Planning in Iran, under the title of 'a Study of the Architecture and Urban Developments of Iran during the Period of Establishment of Urban Dwelling.'

The present article which is a summary of further studies consists of two parts of 'architectural' and 'urban' developments. The section on 'urban measures,' in the original body of this article does not appear in this publication due to limit of space and will appear as an independent article in another journal.

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- translation of this article. I would also like to thank Ms. Parisa Manouchehri for her careful revisions to the English text.
- 2 Yahya Aryanpour, *Az saba ta nima: tarikh-i sad-o-panjah sal adab-i farsi*, Vol. II, 5th ed. (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahami-yi Kitabha-yi Jibi, 1978), p. 235.
  - 3 *Parvarish*, 26 July 1928.
  - 4 Hussain Khan Tahirzadah Bihzad was director of old industries in the General Office of Industry and Agriculture.
  - 5 *Ittila'at*, 20 January 1929.
  - 6 *Ittila'at*, 6 September 1934.
  - 7 *Ittila'at*, 22 April 1934.
  - 8 *Ittila'at*, 27 September 1934.
  - 9 *Nashriyyah-i danishkadah-i hunaraha-i ziba*, no. 1, 1950, p. 8.
  - 10 *Majalla-e Ta'lim va Tarbiyat*, vol. b, no. 5, July–August 1934, p. 302.
  - 11 Mahdiquli Hidayat and Mukhbir al-Saltanah, *Khatirat va khatarat. Tushah'i az Tarikh-i shish padishah va gushah-i az dawran-i zindagi-i man* (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Zavvar, 1965), p. 408.
  - 12 Ghulam Hussain Mirza Salih (ed.), *Riza Shah: khatirat-i Sulayman Bibbudi, Shams Pahlavi, 'Ali Izadi* (Tehran: Tarh-i naw, 1993), pp. 377–379.

## 9 THE PARANOID STYLE IN IRANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

- 1 This list is based on definitions in Geoffrey Cubitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 1 and 2, rephrased on pp. 300–1; and Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 3–4.
- 2 Barry Coward and Julian Swann (eds.), *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe: From the Waldensians to the French Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Harry G. West and Todd Sanders (eds.), *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Léon Poliakov, *La Causalité diabolique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1980–5).
- 3 See L. Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 233–252; and Marvin Zonis and Joseph Craig, 'Conspiracy Thinking in the Middle East', *Political Psychology* 15, 3 (1994), pp. 443–59.
- 4 This theme is developed by Jon W. Anderson in his 'Conspiracy Theories, Premature Entextualization, and Popular Political Analysis', *Arab Studies Journal* 4, 1

- (Spring 1996), pp. 96–102, where he argues that conspiracy theories constitute a form of political participation by those who are excluded from decision-making.
- 5 Gregory S. Camp, *Selling Fear: Conspiracy Theories and End-Times Paranoia* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997); Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*; West and Sanders (eds.), *Transparency and Conspiracy*. American conspiracy theories are so varied and widespread that they even have their own encyclopaedia: Peter Knight (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2003).
  - 6 Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), pp. 3–40. Like Hofstadter (p. 3), I do not use the term ‘paranoid’ in a clinical sense but borrow a clinical term for other purposes. Hofstadter’s caveat seems to have been missed by Anderson, who criticizes him for overly psychologizing conspiracy theories. See Anderson, ‘Conspiracy Theories, Premature Entextualization, and Popular Political Analysis’, p. 96.
  - 7 Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975), p. 55n.
  - 8 In this they resemble vulgar Marxism, in which disagreement can easily be dismissed as stemming either from class interest or false consciousness, and Freudian psychoanalysis, where disagreement just proves the sceptical individual’s repression of his ‘true’ feelings.
  - 9 Anderson, ‘Conspiracy Theories, Premature Entextualization, and Popular Political Analysis’, p. 100.
  - 10 David Hackett Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
  - 11 The following discussion is adapted from A. Ashraf, ‘The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians’, *Princeton Papers* 5 (Winter 1997), pp. 57–88.
  - 12 See Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung, 1776–1945: Philosophen, Freimaurer, Juden, Liberale und Sozialisten als Verschwörer gegen die Sozialordnung* (Berne: Herbert Lang, 1976). This book’s very title, which includes ‘philosophers, Freemasons, Jews, liberals, and socialists’, reads like a *Who is Who* of the Islamic Republic’s conspiratorial imagination. A short English version of the arguments can be found in Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, ‘The Story of the Jewish-Masonic Conspiracy, 1776–1945’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 11, 6 (1977), pp. 1–8.
  - 13 Zahid Ghaffari Hishajin, *Ti’uri-yi Tawta’a dar Farhang-i Siyasi-yi Mu’asir-i Iran: Az Mashrutiyyat ta Inqilab-i Islami* (Tehran: Surush, 2005), pp. 132–8.
  - 14 On which see Stephanie Cronin, ‘Britain, the Iranian military and the rise of Reza Khan’, in Vanessa Martin (ed.), *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 99–127.
  - 15 Zabih Bihruz, ‘Dibachah’ to Aslan Ghaffari, *Qissa-yi Sikandar va Dara: Pazhuhishi Tarikhi Piramun-i Safar-i Jangi-yi Aliksandir-i Maqduni bah Khavar* (Tehran: n.p., 1964), pp. ii–xxiv.

- 16 Ibid., pp. xxviii–xxxx and Zabih Bihruz, *Taqvim va Tarikh dar Iran* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Iranvij, 1942), pp. 10–13. This book has recently been reprinted: Tehran: Nashr-i Chishmah, 2000.
- 17 [Ahmad] Khan-Malik Sasani, *Dast-i Pinhan-i Siyasat-i Ingilis dar Iran* (Tehran: Saziman-i Ispandar, n.d.).
- 18 See Laurence Kelly, *Diplomacy and Murder in Iran: Alexander Griboyedov and Imperial Russia's Mission to the Shah of Persia* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002).
- 19 Sasani, *Dast-i Pinhan*, pp. 1–6.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 19, 42–52, 104–5.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 7–12.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 63–68.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 102–4. On this see Juan Ricardo Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722–1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- 24 Sasani, *Dast-i Pinhan*, pp. 100–2.
- 25 Mahmud Mahmud, *Tarikh-i Ravabit-i Siyasi-yi Iran va Ingilis dar Qarn-i Nuzdahum-i Miladi*, eight volumes (Tehran: Iqbal, 1949–54).
- 26 Ibid., Vol. 6, pp. 332–38.
- 27 Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 225.
- 28 Hussain Makki, *Tarikh-i Bist Salah-yi Iran*, Vol. 2 *Muqaddamat-i Taghyir-i Saltanat* (Nashr-i Nashir, 1983), pp. 341–2. Emphasis added.
- 29 Hussain Makki, *Mukhtasari az Zindagani-yi Siyasi-yi Sultan Ahmad Shah-i Qajar* (Tehran: n.p., 1944, Amir Kabir, 1983).
- 30 Riza Niyazmand, *Riza Shah: Az Tavallud ta Saltanat* (Bethesda, MD: Bunyad-i Mutali'at-i Iran, 1996), pp. 141–8.
- 31 See, for instance, Muhammad Gholi Majd, *Great Britain and Reza Shah: The Plunder of Iran, 1921–1941* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).
- 32 Hussain Kay-Ustuvan, *Siayasat-i Muvazana-yi Manfi* (Tehran: Taban, 1950), p. 34; Ghulam-Riza Musavvar-Rahmani, *Kuhnah Sarbaz* (Tehran: Rasa, 1985), pp. 440–7, 517–518; Bizhan Nikbin (ed.), *Guzashtah Chiragh-i Rah-i Ayandah* (Tehran: Nilufar, 1983), pp. 31–3; Ja'far Shahri, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i-yi Tihran dar Qarn-i Sizdahum*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Rasa, 1988), pp. 219–21, 629, and Vol. 5 (Tehran: Rasa, 1989), p. 309. Cf. 'Abdallah Mustawfi, *Sharh-i Zindigani-yi Man ya Tarikh-i Ijtima'i va Idari-yi Dawra-yi Qajariyya*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Zavvar, 1964), pp. 325–8.
- 33 Mirza Yahya Dawlatabadi, *Tarikh-i Asr-i Hazir, ya Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. 4 (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-yi Ibn-i Sina, 1953), pp. 289–91; Muhammad Taqi Haji-Bushihri, 'Ruhallah Khumayni: Tufuliyat, Sibavat, va Shibab', *Chashmandaz* 5 (Autumn 1988), pp. 11–37. For their part, many members of the ulema believe that it was the British who were behind Reza Khan's policy of suppressing the

- ulema at Qum and other religious centres. See Ashraf, 'The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians', p. 14.
- 34 Abu al-Fazl Lisani, *Tila-yi Siyah ya Bala-yi Iran* (Tehran: Mihr, 1950), pp. 135–214. For a refutation of this particular conspiracy, see Javad Shaykh al-Islami, 'Qaziyya-yi Tamdid-i Imtiyaz-i Naft-i Junub', *Ayandah* 14, 1 (1988), pp. 13–25.
- 35 Lisani, *Tila-yi Siyah*, pp. 353–393; Jāfar Mahdiniā, *Zindagi-yi Siyasi-yi Razmara* (Tehran: Nashr-i Giti, 1984), pp. 167–71 and 235–67.
- 36 For details see Ashraf, 'The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians', pp. 15–16.
- 37 See, for instance, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, *Faces in a Mirror: Memoirs from Exile* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), pp. 199–200.
- 38 This is a reference to A.K.S. Lambton, 'Quis Custodiet Custodes: Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government', *Studia Islamica* 5 (1955), pp. 125–48, and 6 (1956), pp. 125–46. This article for the first time drew attention to the ambivalent attitude of Shi'ism to worldly authority.
- 39 Abdul Hossein Meftah, 'Iran: Crossroad of Invasions or Polemogen Space', lecture delivered at Imperial College, London, 29 March 1985.
- 40 Isma'īl Ra'in, *Faramushkhanah va Framasuniri dar Iran*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Tahqiqati-yi Ra'in, 1969), pp. 580–636. It is interesting to note that Ra'in's work was a Savak project, and that he was supported in his campaign against Freemasonry by the Shah and Amir Asadallah Alam. For a detailed account see 'Freemasonry iii, Pahlavi Period', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 10, pp. 218–219.
- 41 Mahmud, *Tarikh-i Ravabit-i Siyasi*, Vol. 5, pp. 25–34, and Vol. 7, pp. 2–42; Ibrahim Safa'i, *Rahbaran-i Mashruta*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Ilmi, 1965–7), pp. 4, 15, 41–63, 122–31, and Vol. 2, pp. 227–45; Ibrahim Safa'i, *Asnad-i Mashruta* (Tehran: Rushdiyya, 1973), pp. 95–112.
- 42 For an overview see Firaydun Vahman, 'Iranian Nationalism and Baha'i Globalism in Iranian Polemic Literature', in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalization* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), pp. 107–118; and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran', in Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazel (eds.), *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical studies* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 200–31.
- 43 [Abbas Iqbal], 'Ma va Kh'anandigan', *Majalla-yi Yadigar* 5, 8–9 (1949), p. 148; Ahmad Kasravi, *Baha'igari, Shi'igari, Sufigari* (1944, Cologne: Mihr, 1996), pp. 95–97; Mujtaba Minuvi, 'Sharh-i Zindagi-yi Man', *Rahnama-yi Kitab* 6, 1–2 (1963), pp. 22–6.
- 44 Hon. George N. Curzon, M.P., *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), p. 499.
- 45 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran: Varaqi az Tarikh-i Siyasi-yi Iran*, 2nd printing (Tehran: Bungah-i Azar, 1944), p. 257.
- 46 Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political Problems of Indian Defence* (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 125–6.



- 47 Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran*, pp. 257–8.
- 48 Ibid., p. 238.
- 49 J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan, and Beloochistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 123.
- 50 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Shurish bar Intiyaznamah-yi Rizhi* (Tehran: Payam, 1981), p. 146. The book in question is Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), and the ‘Jewish organization’ referred to was the Guggenheim Foundation.
- 51 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Idi’uluzhi-yi Nihzat-i Mashrutiyyat-i Iran* (Tehran: Payam, 1976), p. 33.
- 52 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Andishah-yi Taraqqi va Hukumat-i Qanun dar Asr-i Sipahsalar* (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahami-yi Intisharat-i Kharazmi, 1973), p. 348 n25.
- 53 Richard Frye, *Greater Iran: A twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2005), p. 100.
- 54 On Fardid and his influence see Muhammad Mansur Hashimi, *Huviyyat Andishan va Miras-i Fikri-yi Ahmad-i Fardid* (Tehran: Kavir, 2004).
- 55 Ahmad Fardid, ‘Sadiq-i Hidayat dar Chalah Harz-i Adabiyat-i Faransah’, *Ittila’at* 21 February 1973, p. 19.
- 56 See, for instance, Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
- 57 Fardid wrote only a few pages in his life and transmitted most of his ideas orally. The essay on Hidayat mentioned in endnote 55 contains a number of his key ideas.
- 58 Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000), pp. 156–70.
- 59 *Nimah-yi Pinhan: Sima-yi Karguzaran-i Farhang va Siyasat*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Kayhan, 1999), pp. 11–12, 16.
- 60 Hassan Ayat, *Chihrah-yi Haqiqi-yi Musaddiq al-Saltana* (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1981), pp. 27 and 45–6.
- 61 Hamid Muhammad Qasimi, *Isra’iliyat va Ta’sir-i an bar Dastanha-yi Anbiya’ dar Tafasir-i Qur’an* (Tehran: Surush, 2001), pp. 1–2. The English summary of the book defines *Isra’iliyat* as ‘the entire untrue tales which have been quoted by the enemies of Islam such as Jewish and the same with malicious purpose and evil – intention to galsify the Islamic belief among gallowers’ (*sententia sic*). Ibid., p. 536.
- 62 Muhammad Hassan Tabataba’i, *Nufuz-i Faramasuniri dar Mudiriyyat-i Nihadha-yi Farhangi* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Markaz-i Asnad-i Inqilab-i Islami, 2001), p. 7.
- 63 Bahram Afrasiabi, *Tarikh-i Jami’-i Baha’iyyat – Nawmasuni* (Tehran: Sukhan, 1989).

- 64 Absurd as these conflations are, they are not unique to Iran. In the United States, for instance, anti-Catholic Masons and anti-Masonic Catholics were sometimes said to be in league not only with each other but also with the Mormons, who were both anti-Masonic and anti-Catholic; see Hofstadter, 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics', p. 15n. In Europe, Jews and Jesuits were often associated with one another; see Poliakov, *La Causalité diabolique*, Vol. 1, pp. 53–85.
- 65 'Abdallah Shahbazi *Zarsalaran-i Yahudi va Parsi, Istîmar-i Britania va Iran* (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at va Pazuhishha-yi Siyasi, 1999–2001).
- 66 For examples see Ashraf, 'The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians', pp. 22–3.
- 67 Huma Natiq, 'Yaran-i Muttahid dar Kudita va Inqilab', *Zaman-i Naw* 8 (1985), pp. 11–22.
- 68 See, for instance, *Tufan* 5, 27 (1972).
- 69 On which see Afshin Matin-asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2001).
- 70 *Danishju* 24, 1 (January 1976), pp. 6–15.
- 71 F. Dana, *Ampirializm va Furupashi-yi Kishavarzi dar Iran* (Tehran: n.p., 1979).
- 72 H. M. Zavush, *Naqsh-i Framasunha dar Ruydadha-yi Ijtima'i* (Tehran: Ayandah, 1982).
- 73 Ibid., pp. 108 and 49.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 206–9; 247–9.
- 75 M.-A. Humayun Katuzian, 'Khalil-i Maliki: Radd-i Ti'uri-yi Tawta'a va Pishburd-i Jami'a-yi Madani', in Muhammad Ibrahim Fattahi (ed.), *Justarha'i Darbarah-yi Ti'uri-yi Tawta'a dar Iran* (Tehran: Ney, 2004), pp. 121–162.
- 76 Books by or inspired by Lyndon Larouche have been translated into Persian and enjoy a considerable readership among Iranian exiles. For two examples of Larouchiana see Robert Dreyfus, *Hostage to Khomeini* (New York: New Benjamin Franklin House Publishing Company, 1980) and Lyndon H. Larouche Jr., *The Final Defeat of Ayatollah Khomeini: A Doctrine of Constitutional Law for the Iranian Renaissance from the Dark Age of Neo-Asharite Irrationalism* (New York: The New Benjamin Franklin House, 1982).
- 77 See, for instance, Daniel Pipes, 'Dealing with Middle Eastern Conspiracy Theories', *Orbis* 36 (Winter 1992), pp. 41–56, which refers to real Western conspiracies in only one paragraph (p. 51), and ignores the 1953 coup against Musaddiq.
- 78 For details see Wm. Roger Louis, 'Musaddiq and the dilemmas of British imperialism', in James A. Bill and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), pp. 233–4.
- 79 'Operational conspiracies seek to prevent or encourage a political outcome promoting or discouraging a significant shift in power among political actors – individuals, groups, or states. They involve a secret combination of political operatives or

- officials pursuing their goals through illegal or covert means (usually both). They seek to hide such outcomes and the means to achieve them from the public view for fear of widespread reproach, defeat in constitutional or democratic arenas, or political (possibly criminal) sanction.' Daniel Hellinger, 'Paranoia, Conspiracy, and Hegemony in American Politics', in West and Sanders (eds.), *Transparency and Conspiracy*, p. 210.
- 80 See for instance Michael Ledeen and William Lewis, *Debate: American Failure in Iran* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981).
- 81 Hofstadter, 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics', p. 29. Emphasis in the original.
- 82 To use the language of sociology of knowledge, those aspects of Iranians' primary socialization that are congruent with the secondary socialization. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966, New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 138–147.
- 83 M.C. Bateson, J.W. Clinton, J.B.M. Kassarian, H. Safavi, and M. Soraya, 'Safa-yi Batin. A Study of the Interrelations of a Set of Iranian Ideal Character Types', in L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz (eds.), *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1977), pp. 257–73.
- 84 For the politics of the Pahlavi era, see Andrew F. Westwood, 'Politics of Distrust in Iran', *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 358 (March 1965), pp. 123–135; Khosrow Fatemi, 'Leadership by Distrust: The Shah's *Modus Operandi*', *The Middle East Journal* 36 (Winter 1982), pp. 48–61; and Marvin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 268–283. For an analysis see Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1993), chapter 5 'The Paranoid Style in Iranian Politics'.
- 85 One wonders whether cultural misunderstanding may not have contributed to the generally negative view Iranians hold of the British.
- 86 The book appeared in 1961. For an English translation see Jalal Al-i Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi (Weststruckness)*, trans. John Green and Ahmad Alizadah (Lexington, KY: Mazda, 1982). For critical studies of Al-i Ahmad see Brad Hanson, 'The Westoxication of Iran: Depiction, and Reaction of Behrangi, Al-i Ahmad, and Shariati', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (1983), pp. 1–23; Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 105–15; Hamid Dabashi *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), chapter 1 'Jalal Al-i Ahmad: The Dawn of 'the Islamic Ideology'', pp. 39–101; and Farzin Vahdat, 'Return to which Self? Jalal Al-i Ahmad and the Discourse of Modernity', *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 16, 2 (November 2000), pp. 55–71.
- 87 Jalal Matini, 'Duktur Muhammad-i Musaddiq dar dawraha-yi panjum va shishum-i majlis-i shawra-yi milli', published in two parts: *Iranshinasi* 13, 4 (Winter 2001–2), pp. 715–56 and *Iranshinasi* 14, 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 1–37.

- 88 Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, pp. 152–6.
- 89 See Afshin Marashi's chapter in this book and Haggai Ram, 'The Immemorial Iranian Nation? School Textbooks, the Pahlavis and Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran', *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (2000), pp. 67–90.
- 90 See Ferdowsi, *The Epic of the Kings: Shāh-Nāma, the National Epic of Persia*, trans. Reuben Levy (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1996), pp. 228–42.
- 91 Having thus removed from Alexander the stigma of having been an enemy of Iran, medieval Persian romances recount the exploits of this hero, the most famous of which is the *Iskandarnamah* of Nizami Ganjavi (1140–1202). For an English translation see [Nizami Ganjavi], *The Sikandar nāma, e barā: or, Book of Alexander the Great*, trans. H. Wilberforce Clarke (London: W.H. Allen, 1881). These Persian romances were based on the Greek Alexander romance: see Minoo Sassoonian Southgate, 'A Study and a Translation of a Persian Romance of Alexander, its Place in the Tradition of Alexander Romance, and its Relation to the English Versions' (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1970). For a discussion of the 'Iranization' of Alexander, see William Hanaway, 'Alexander and the Question of Iranian Identity', in *Iranica Varia: Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), pp. 93–103.
- 92 See Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 93 Sayyid Hassan Taqizadah, *Zindagi-yi Tufani: Khatirat-i Sayyid Hassan-i Taqizadah*, Iraj Afshar (ed.) (Tehran: Muhammad 'Ali Ilmi, 1989), pp. 362–64.
- 94 'Ali Naqi 'Alikhani (ed.), *Yaddashtha-yi Alam*, Vol. 2 (N.p.: New World Ltd., 1993), p. 288.
- 95 'Ali Naqi 'Alikhani (ed.), *Yaddashtha-yi Alam*, Vol. 1 (N.p.: New World Ltd., 1992), p. 342.
- 96 'Alikhani (ed.), *Yaddashtha-yi Alam*, Vol. 2, p. 116.
- 97 Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, *Answer to History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), pp. 71 and 171.
- 98 'Alikhani (ed.), *Yaddashtha-yi Alam*, Vol. 3, p. 166.
- 99 Ibid., p. 37.
- 100 'Alikhani (ed.), *Yaddashtha-yi Alam*, Vol. 2, p. 362.
- 101 Shuja' al-Din Shafa, *Tawzih al-Masā'il: Pasukhha bih Pursishha-yiss Hizar-Salah* (Paris: n.p, 1983), p. 58.
- 102 Hamid Algar (ed.), *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 27.
- 103 *Sahifa-i Nur*, Vol. 11 (Tehran: Vizarat-i Irshad-i Islami, 1983), pp. 12–17.
- 104 Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak: Iran, the Revolution, & Secret Deals with the U.S.* (Washington, DC: Brassey's (US), 1991). Banisadr's story is corroborated

- by Gary Sick in his *October Surprise: America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1992).
- 105 This is of course not a huge semantic leap, to wit the meaning of 'compromise' in English when used as a transitive verb.
- 106 This is not the case outside Iran. See Ralph Kauz, *Politische Parteien und Bevölkerung in Iran: die Hezb-i Demokrat-i Iran und ihr Führer Qavamo s-Saltana* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1995). For a fresh look at Vusuq see Oliver Bast, 'La mission persane à la conférence de Paix et l'accord anglo-persan de 1919: Une nouvelle interprétation', in Oliver Bast (ed.), *La Perse et la Grande Guerre* (Tehran and Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran/Peeters, 2002), pp. 375–425.
- 107 Robert C. Tucker, 'The Theory of Charismatic Leadership', *Daedalus* 97 (Summer 1967), pp. 752–3.
- 108 See Mangol Bayat Philipp, 'Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani: A Nineteenth Century Persian Nationalist', *Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (January 1974), pp. 36–59; and Sorour Soroudi, 'Mirza Aqa Kirmani and the Jewish Question', in Ronald L. Nettle and Suha Taji-Farouki (eds.), *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), pp. 149–70.
- 109 For telling observations see Marvin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 274–76.
- 110 The sources of anti-minority resentment are analysed in Serge Moscovici, 'The Conspiracy Mentality', in Carl F. Graumann and Serge Moscovici (eds.), *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987), pp. 151–168.
- 111 Notable exceptions are Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), passim; and Reza Afshari, 'The discourse and practice of human rights violations of Iranian Baha'is in the Islamic Republic of Iran', in Brookshaw and Fazel (eds.), *The Baha'is of Iran*, pp. 232–77.
- 112 In late 1998 over 500 houses were looted in 14 cities, and an informal university in which Baha'i professors who had been purged from the universities taught Baha'i youth who were barred from universities was closed down, their animators arrested.
- 113 'Shirin Ebady, 'Nobel Laureate: Keynote Speaker at the Fifth Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies', *ISIS News* 33, 1–3 (Winter-Fall 2004), p. 18.
- 114 Unfortunately it has to be admitted that often concessions on issues pertaining to peripheral culture only embolden the 'ethnic entrepreneurs' of the periphery to ask for even more concessions, as the case of the Basque Country in Spain illustrates. But this is not the place to discuss peripheral nationalisms.
- 115 Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East*, pp. 233–52.
- 116 Just as many Iraqis are not reconciled to the independent statehood of Kuwait in 1961.
- 117 It is interesting to note that in his memoirs Jāfar Sharif Imami, who was briefly prime minister on two occasions and speaker of the Iranian Senate for many years

under the Shah, complained about the suspicion many Iranian leaders held against Turkey, which, in his opinion, was acting transparently in its relations with Iran. Habib Lajivardi (ed.), *Khatirat-i Ja'far Sharif Imami, Nakhust Vazir (1339–40 va 1357)* (Bethesda: Ibex, 1999), p. 214. Sharif Imami was also Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Iran, and one can speculate whether his membership in this transnational fraternity may not have predisposed him towards a more serene view of Iran's neighbours.

- 118 The same is of course true for other Middle Eastern states, most of whose elites feel that their country has been the victim of territorial amputation resulting from foreign conspiracies. Nor is this phenomenon unique to the Middle East. For Latin America, see Andrés Cisneros and Carlos Escudé, *Historia General de las Relaciones Exteriores de la República Argentina*, Vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1998), in particular the section 'Los mitos de pérdidas territoriales de los Estados hispanoparlantes de la América meridional', which shows how the perception of Latin American elites that their respective countries' territories are smaller than they should be by right has negatively affected the international relations of the area. See in particular the maps on pp. 76–85.
- 119 This book is available in an excellent English translation: Iraj Pezeshkzad, *My Uncle Napoleon*, trans. Dick Davis (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1996). For an analysis of this novel see M. R. Ghanoonparvar, *In a Persian Mirror: Images of the West and Westerners in Iranian Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), pp. 61–3.
- 120 As cited by Dick Davis in his Introduction to his translation of the novel (see previous endnote), p. 12. See also pp. 193–4.
- 121 Abd al-Karim Surush, *Rawshanfikri va Dindari* (Tehran: Puyah, 1988), pp. 20–5.
- 122 See references in endnotes 11 and 84.
- 123 See, for instance, Sadiq Zibakalam, *Tavahhum-i Tawta'a* (Tehran: Justuju, 1999), pp. 13–20, which analyzes the rumours that followed the murder in Tehran of US consul Robert Imbrie in 1924; Sarvinaz Turbati, *Ti'uri-yi Tawta'a* (Tehran: Nashr-i Guftiman, 1999); and Ghaffari Hishajin, *Ti'uri-yi Tawta'a*. The second study is based on a masters thesis, the third on a doctoral dissertation, which one can take as an indication that conspiracy belief is discussed in academic circles in Iran.
- 124 'Abdallah Shahbazi, *'Nazariyya-yi Tawta'a', Su'ud-i Saltanat-i Pahlavi va Tarikhni-gari-yi Jadid dar Iran* (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at va Pazhuhishha-yi Siyasi, 1998), pp. 9–105.
- 125 See Fariba Adelkhah, *Les Iraniens de Californie: si la République islamique n'existait pas ...* Les Études du CERI, no. 75 (May 2001), pp. 25–29.
- 126 Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 93.
- 127 For a contemporary testimony to the pervasiveness of this idea see Robert Tait, 'Blaming the British', *The Guardian* 1 March 2006. I thank Erik Goldstein for this reference.

## 10 WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MODERN IRAN

- 1 This paper, presented at the conference on 'Historiography and Political Culture in Twentieth Century Iran' (17–18 September 2004), emerged out of sustained conversations in a seminar on critical readings in modern Iranian history in autumn 2003. Our reading list was selective, not exhaustive. Nonetheless, we hope that the analytical points presented here will be pertinent to other works. While our discussions covered many issues that are critical to works on modern Iranian history, for the purpose of the present paper, we have largely focused on issues of gender and sexuality. We thank Amy Young for her skillful editing.
- 2 Edward Ingram, 'Is the dark light enough?' *Historically Speaking* 5, 4 (March 2004): 15–16; quote from p. 15, original emphasis.
- 3 Booth Marilyn, 'New Directions in Middle East Women's and Gender History', (2003), point 10, p. 6, [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_colonialism\\_and\\_colonial\\_history/v004/4.1booth.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v004/4.1booth.html)
- 4 For a critical assessment of the field, largely as far as American history is concerned, see Joan W. Scott, 'Feminism's history' and responses by Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'From supplementarity to parasitism?' and Evelyn M. Hammonds, 'Power and politics in feminism's history – and future', *Journal of Women's History* 16, 2 (2004): 10–39; for colonial and post-colonial histories, see Durba Ghosh, 'Gender and colonialism: Expansion or marginalization?' *The Historical Journal* 47, 3 (2004): 737–55.
- 5 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern studies: Deconstructing historiography', in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 3–32. Quote from pp. 12–13.
- 6 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
- 7 This is an erroneous identification. Muhtaram Iskandari [1895–1925] was daughter of Muhammad 'Ali Mirza Iskandari [Prince 'Alikhan]. She was tutored by and later married 'Ali Muhammad Khan Muhaqqiqi. Sulayman Mirza was a close collaborator with her father in Constitutionalist circles. See Badr al-Muluk Bamdad, *Zan-i Irani az inqilab-i mashrutiyat ta inqilab-i sifid*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Ibn Sina, 1969 and 1970), 1: 46–9.
- 8 In mid-July 1952, the power struggle between premier Musaddiq and the Shah culminated in the Shah's attempt to replace Musaddiq as the Prime Minister, but a series of strikes and mass demonstrations forced him to reinstate Musaddiq on July 21 (Si-i Tir in Iranian calendar, which has remained the memorialization of that date). See Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp. 270–3.
- 9 Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 10 Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah 1921–1941* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

- 11 Janet Afary, *The Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
- 12 An epigraph from Christopher Hill (p. 1) projects from the outset Afary's book as reconstructing the views of 'the underdog'.
- 13 This problem is similarly noted in a review of the book by Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Afary's analysis is unfortunately confined to the 'add women and stir' model of women's history and does not use gender as a 'category of historical analysis'", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999): 476–80; quote from p. 478.
- 14 Some indicative number of pages indexed under women are: Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 17 (out of 537 pages total); Afary (in addition to chapter 7, pp. 177–208, that is 32 pages): (21 pages, total 342 pages); Keddie (most recent edition of *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*): (33 out of 322 pages); Mottahedeh (*The Mantle of the Prophet*): (6 out of 395); Kashani-Sabet (*Frontier Fictions*) (16 out of 226); Tavakoli-Targhi (*Re-Fashioning Iran*): (23 out of 143); Adelpkhah (*Being Modern in Iran*): (30 out of 178).
- 15 Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's, *Re-Fashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).
- 16 Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
- 17 See, for instance, Najmabadi's 'explanatory footnote 4' of Introduction in relation to the problems raised here, despite her challenge of lack of sources earlier in the same Introduction.
- 18 See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), especially Part I, 'Introduction', and Part III, 'The statement and the archive'.
- 19 Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922–1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Struggles for Civil Rights and Recognition by Untouchables in India, 1927–1991* (forthcoming).
- 20 Fariba Adelpkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, trans. Jonathan Derrick (London: Hurst and Co., 1999).
- 21 For the elaboration of the concept of 'changing same', in a different context, see Paul Gilroy, 'Sounds authentic: Black music, ethnicity, and the challenge of a "changing" Same', *Black Music Research Journal* 11, 2 (1991): 111–136.



- 22 Ana Mariá Alonso, 'The effects of truth: Re-presentations of the past and the imagining of community', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, 1 (March 1988): 33–57. Quote from p. 34.
- 23 See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, especially volumes 1 and 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983 and 1988); and Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).
- 24 See Joan W. Scott, 'Women's history', in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writings* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1992), pp. 42–66.
- 25 Scott, 'Feminism's history', p. 18.
- 26 See Judith Butler, 'Against proper objects', *Differences* 6, 2–3 (1994): 1–26. See also Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For a powerfully persuasive argument against privileging a connection between gender and sexuality compared to between gender and other contextually relevant analytical strands, see Robyn Wiegman, 'Object lessons: Men, masculinity, and the sign women', *Signs* 26, 2 (2001): 355–388.
- 27 Elizabeth Weed, 'Introduction: Terms of reference', in Elizabeth Weed (ed.), *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. ix–xxxi.

## 11 MARXISM, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MODERN IRAN:

### A PRELIMINARY STUDY

- 1 S. H. Rigby, *Marxism and History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 301.
- 2 This point often is disputed by orthodox Marxists and their conservative opponents, both of whom insist on 'correct' readings of Marx. The situation should be familiar to historians of intellectual trends (including religions) who deal with interpretations of 'canonical' texts. See Rigby, *Marxism and History*, a work that in part responded to the influential neo-orthodox reading of G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). For a continuation of this debate, including a robust neo-orthodox critique of Stalinism and postmodernism, see Matt Perry, *Marxism and History* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
- 3 One should note, for example, that V. I. Lenin's claim, in *The State and Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1935), that commitment to violent revolution was integral to Marxism came at an exceptional moment of revolutionary agitation. Lenin himself later modified this claim, for example in his '*Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*' (New York: International Publishers, 1934).
- 4 It was not Marx but French revolutionaries and historians who originated concepts such as 'class struggle' and 'bourgeois revolution.' See Marx's letter to Joseph

Weydemeyer in Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), pp. 138–9. See also David McLellan, *Marxism After Marx* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).

- 5 Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.
- 6 The Iranian historian Firaydun Adamiyat noted most of the above points in his *Fekr-e demokrasi-e ejtemai dar nehzat-e mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [The Idea of Social Democracy in Iran's Constitutional Movement] (Tehran: 1975). He relied on Z. A. Jordan, *The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: St. Martin's, 1967), to reconstruct the history of Marxism socialism.
- 7 Abdulhussein Zarrinkub, preface to *Tarikh-e Iran ba'd az Eslām* [Iranian History After Islam] (Tehran: 1984).
- 8 On Islamist historiography, or rather the lack thereof, see *Ta'amolati dar elm-e tarikh va tarikhnegari-e Eslami* [Considerations on the Science of History and Islamic Historiography] (Tehran: 2000) and Gholam-Hussein Mirza-Saleh, *Goftogu ba doctor Abbas Zaryab Kho'i* [A Discussion with Abbas Zaryab Kho'i] (Tehran: 2001). See also the special issue on 'the condition of history and historiography in Iran' of *Daneshgah va enqelab* 112 (Fall 1999). Another good indication is the body of work produced by Rasul Jāfarian. The prolific author of numerous historical studies, Jāfarian is committed to a pro-clerical Muslim position. However, his research methodology is not different from that of the secularist historians with whom he may agree or disagree. See, for example, Rasul Jāfarian, *Barrasi va tahqiq dar jonbesh-e mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [Research and Investigation into Iran's Constitutional Movement] (Tehran: 1990).
- Last but not least, a glance at Iran's leading historical periodicals, for example, *Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran* (1997–2005), shows no trace of anything remotely resembling an Islamic paradigm of historiography.
- 9 Abdulhussein Zarrikkub, preface to *Do qarn sokut* [Two Centuries of Silence] (Tehran: 1989), quoted in 'Ali-Reza Manafzadah, '*Tarikh-e por Eftekhar*' [Glorious History] *Negah-e No* 36 (May 1998), p. 121. This article is a critique of nationalist historiography in Iran, compared to similar trends in Turkey and Iraq.
- 10 Further displaying the typical supra-historical nationalist paradigm, Yarshater went on to explain how 'the Persian psyche' was 'confused and bedeviled' when forced to give up its 'national religion' for Islam. He added: 'The most recent challenge to Persian identity comes from the West... when cultural old age and the lingering burden of a long and eventful history have sapped the vigor of the nation.'
- See Ehsan Yarshater, 'Persian identity in historical perspective', *Iranian Studies* 26, 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1993): 143–4. See *ibid.*, for pieces by 'Ali Banuazizi, Richard Frye, William Hathaway, Muriel Atkin, Ahmad Ashraf and Nasrin Rahimieh. The most sophisticated treatment of the subject is by Ashraf who shows awareness of the various critiques of 'national identity', advanced mostly by Marxists.
- 11 A. J. Arberry (ed.), *The Legacy of Persia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). Editor's preface, 1. First published in 1953, this collection of articles shows also

- the predominance in Iranian historiography of other disciplines such as linguistics, archeology, and art history.
- 12 See the lead article by Abbas Iqbal in *Yadegar* 1, 1 (August–September, 1944): 1–4.
  - 13 According to Vali, the methodology of ‘modern historical discourse on Iran’ is ‘empiricist.’ This, he argues, is a ‘concept of the fact as pre-given and self-explanatory.’ On the contrary, he argues for a conception of history where ‘historical facts’ are no more given than theoretical concepts. ‘The validity of an argument depends on its discursive coherence and logical consistency.’ Abbas Vali, *Pre-Capitalist Iran: A Theoretical History* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. xiii–xiv.  
Vali’s notion of ‘empiricist’ historiography is close to what I have called ‘Positivist.’
  - 14 Another feature of twentieth-century historiography has been the crossing over of Marxism not only with nationalism but also with older metaphysical and religious notions of destiny, fatalism, and divine providence (*jabr, taqdir, falak, and mashiyat-e elahi*). Marxist theories of imperialism and colonialism blended with nationalism and nativism in the powerful discourse of ‘Westoxication.’ But they also were mixed in with paranoid and conspiratorial narratives whereby demonic global actors, like the British ‘invisible hand’ or Satanic America, set in motion historical events as a player would move pieces on a chess board.
  - 15 Two basic types of narratives will be examined: Those written from a Marxist perspective and those in which Marxists or their ideas play a prominent role.
  - 16 Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e mashruteh-e Iran* [History of Iran’s Constitutionalism], (Tehran: 1980), p. 4.
  - 17 Malkum Khan’s (1833–1908) eclectic advocacy of liberal reform, especially his notion of universal humanity (*Adamiyat*), evoked August Comte’s Positivism. The anti-Arab and anti-Islamic trope, however, emerged as a distinct and powerful ideological strand in the historical vision of Fath’ali Akhundzadah (1812–78). Launching Iran’s modern genres of literary and political criticism, he took religious and political authorities to task for their suppression of individual freedom. But Akhundzadah also embraced Positivist ethics and Enlightened Despotism, thus becoming a pioneer of authoritarian nationalism. See Maryam Sanjabi, ‘Akhundzadah and his Voltaire’, *Iranian Studies* 28 (1995): 39–60.
  - 18 The common designation of Kirmani as a ‘Babi,’ i.e., a follower of the mid-nineteenth century messianic figure Seyed ‘Ali-Muhammad, the ‘Bab’ (Gate) to the Twelfth Shi’i Imam, is incorrect on two grounds: First, no organized Babi tradition or religion emerged after the Bab was executed. Instead, by late nineteenth century, ‘Babi’ had become an attack label, used by the authorities to condemn the most heinous and yet ill-defined religious and political crimes, much as the labels ‘anarchist’ or ‘terrorist’ were used elsewhere. For example, Firaydun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e demokrasi-e ejtemai*, p. 8, quotes a contemporary source making the following comparison:

Europe is in Chaos. Anarchists, the enemies of despotic kings of every nation, are powerful all across Europe. Domestically, and especially in Tehran, the Iranian anarchists, meaning Babis, number around 50,000.

The conservative cleric, Fazlallah Nuri, also attacked the Constitutionalists by calling them ‘anarchist, nihilist, socialist, naturalist and Babi.’ See Mansureh Ettehadiieh (Nezam-Ma’afi), *Peydayesh va tahavvol-e ahzab-e siyasi-e mashrutiyyat* [The Genesis and Development of Constitutionalist Political Parties] (Tehran: 2003), p. 189.

Second, while Kirmani certainly went through a Babi phase, his ideas kept changing and evolving. At the time of his death, however, he was a ‘materialist’ and ‘free-thinker.’ Moreover, Firaydun Adamiyat quotes him, in Andisheha-ye Mirza Aqha Khan Kirmani [The Thought of Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani] (Tehran: 1985), pp. 146–7, as making strong statements rejecting the Bab and Babis.

On Babis and Baha’is during the Constitutional revolution see, for example, Edward Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (Washington, DC: Mage, 1995), pp. 424–9. Browne, who was sympathetic to both Babis and Baha’is, is not clear on their role. Basically, he says Baha’is probably stayed aloof, while Azali Babis took part in the revolution.

- 19 Kirmani seems to have been influenced by pre-Marx socialist like Simonde de Sismondi, whose *The New Principles of Political Economy* (1918) was translated into Persian in the 1880s. See Farzin Vahdat, *God And juggernaut: Iran’s Intellectual Encounter with Modernity* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), p. 73.
- 20 Studies of intellectual history pay scant attention to Iran’s century-long Marxist legacy. Farzin Vahdat’s *God and Juggernaut* has a brief section on the early social democracy’s impact on ‘the deepening the discourse of subjectivity.’ However, Vahdat views Social Democracy in a more positive light, in contrast to Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism, all of which are lumped together as representing ‘the sclerosis of Iranian radical thought.’ Ibid., pp. 73–74.
- 21 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e demokrasi-e ejtemai*, p. 62.
- 22 The breakthrough in English was Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). It was followed by major studies of Social Democracy, including Cosroe Chaqueri, (Khosrow Shakeri), *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran: 1920–1921* (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); Janet Afari, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) and Houri Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911* (Boulder: Westview, 2001).

In Persian, apart from the publications of Marxist organizations, there was Khosrow Shakeri (ed.), *Asnad-e tarikhi-e jonbesh-e kargari, sosial demokrasi va komonisti-e Iran* [Historical Documents of Iran’s Working Class, Social Democratic and Communist Movements], Vol. 20 (Tehran: 1985). Shakeri had published most of these documents during the 1970s, via Mazdak Publications, Florence, Italy. At about the same time, Firaydun Adamiyat had acknowledged and partly analyzed the role of Social Democracy in *Fekr-e demokrasi-e ejtemai dar nehzat-e*

- mashrutiyyat-e Iran* (Tehran: 1975). Jamshid Behnam, *Berlaniha* [Berliners] (Tehran: 1990), mentioned the significance of early Social Democracy and its political program of reforms, pp.156–61. Finally, Mansureh Ettehadieh, *Peydayesh va tahavvol-e ahzab-e siasi-e mashrutiyyat* (2003) stated the significance of Social Democracy with more clarity and without Firaydun Adamiyat's heavy-handed commentaries. Also differing from Firaydun Adamiyat, she took seriously the early Marxist critique of the First Majles's conservatism as a major reason for the revolution's failure, p. 277.
- 23 The Social Democratic Party of Iran was formed in 1904 by Azeri intellectuals, closely connected to the Russian Social Democratic movement. Active at first among tens of thousands of workers who had come to work in the Baku oil fields from Iranian Azerbaijan, the party quickly focused its attention on the revolutionary upheaval in Tehran, where some of its members, most famously Sayyid Hassan Taqizadah, emerged as leading deputies in the First Majles. As the most radical wing of the revolution, the Social Democrats then played an increasingly active role in demanding more democratic measures in the Majles as well as in the newly flourishing political press. Even more important was the Social Democratic role in the 1908–9 civil war that defeated Muhammad 'Ali Shah and restored the constitution. See the sources cited in the above note.
  - 24 Social Moderates (*ejtema'iyun E'tedaliyun*) versus Social Democrats (*ejtema'iyun Ammiyun*). Ettehadieh, *Peydayeh-e va tahavvol-e ahzab*, pp. 341–50.
  - 25 Afari, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, chapters 5 and 10.
  - 26 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Ideolozhi-e nehzat-e mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [The Ideology of Iran's Constitutional Movement] (Tehran: 1976), pp. 274–281. Firaydun Adamiyat rejects this opinion, which he thinks Dehkhoda might have tagged along 'tactically.' According to Firaydun Adamiyat, Islam, like all other religions, has justified social inequality. He mentions the Qur'anic reference to 'people having charge over their property.' Ibid., p. 281.  
Dehkhoda, however, repeated his belief in 'the total compatibility of true Islam with the contemporary era' in his 1908 correspondence. See Iraj Afshar (ed.), *Nameha-ye siasi-e Dehkhoda* [Dehkhoda's Political Correspondence] (Tehran: 1980), p. 23.
  - 27 Afari, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, chapters 5, pp. 121–132.
  - 28 Firaydun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Demokrasi-e ejtema'i*, pp. 100, 102.
  - 29 Ibid., pp. 99–100.
  - 30 On the contrary, 'all socialists,' he claimed, 'are internationalists who see religion, culture, and language as the tools of capitalists and land-owners.' Ibid., p. 105.
  - 31 Ibid., p. 104.
  - 32 Almost every single item of this agenda has reappeared on the list of demands by Iran's various leftist and democratic reform movements throughout the Twentieth Century and down to the present.

- 33 Behnam, *Berlaniha*, p. 182.
- 34 In 1921, the ‘Manifesto of the Young Iran Association’ was drafted by a group of European-educated individuals who were to become high-ranking officials under Reza Shah, planning and implementing his modernizing reforms. Their Manifesto called for:  
Ending capitulations; Railroad construction; Independence of Iran’s customs; Sending male and female students to Europe; Freeing women; Juridical reform; Expanding primary and secondary education; Literacy tests for voters; establishment of museums and libraries; Selective acquisition of European Civilization’s positive features. See Shahrokh Meskub, *Dastan-e adabiyat va sargozasht-e ejtema’* [The Story of Literature and Society] (Tehran: 1994), p. 30.
- 35 Soviet ideology and interpretation of history were not universally accepted by all Marxists. Rzasulzadah, for example, was among the early critics who offered an explanation of ‘what had gone wrong’ in the Soviet Union. Firaydun Adamiyat’s 1974 *Fekr-e Demokrasi-e ejtema’i* reintroduced Rzasulzadah’s 1920s critique of the USSR, adding his own long commentary on the history of socialism. Joining these two accounts, Firaydun Adamiyat in effect presented a concise statement of Twentieth-Century Iranian Social Democratic thought. Benefiting by fifty years of hindsight, he went well beyond Rzasulzadah’s critique of Lenin and Marx. However, Firaydun Adamiyat’s analysis suffered from over-reliance on then current theories of ‘totalitarianism.’ Moreover, adhering to a rigid vision of history’s ‘rational movement,’ he explained the Soviet phenomenon simply as an aberration or detour.
- 36 From a speech by Reza Khan, quoted in Muhammad-Taqi Bahar, *Tarikh-e mokhtasar-e ahzab-e siasi-e Iran* [A short History of Iran’s Political Parties] (Tehran: 1978), p. 269.
- 37 Mir-Jāfar Pishevari in *Haqiqat* 49 (29 March 1922), quoted in Rahim Ra’isnia, *Akharin sangar-e azadi: Majmu’eh maqalat-e Mir-Jāfar Pishevari dar ruznameh-e Haqiqat, organ-e ettehadieh-e umumi-e kargaran-e Iran: 1300–1301* [The Last Bastion of Freedom: The Collected Articles of Mir Jāfar Pishevari in Haqiqat Newspaper, Organ of Iranian Workers’ General Union: 1921–22] (Tehran: 1998), pp. 123–4.
- 38 The first complete version of Ahmad Kasravi’s *Tarikh-e mashruteh-e Iran* [History of Iran’s Constitutionalism] had appeared by 1941. See Sohrab Yazdani, *Kasravi va Tarikh-e mashruteh-e Iran* [Kasravi and the History of Iran’s Constitutionalism] (Tehran: 2004), pp. 42–3.
- 39 Hamid Karimipur, ‘Abbas Iqbal Ashtiani va hoviyyat-e Irani,’ *Motale’at-e melli* 4, 2 (2003): 105–27; and Huriyeh Sa’idi, ‘Moqaddamehi bar seyr-e tahavvol-e ketabha-ye tarikh dar madares,’ *Tarikh-e mo’aser-e Iran* 4, 13–14 (Spring–Summer 2000): 25–57.
- 40 Iqbal is Quoted in Karimipur, ‘*Abbas Iqbal*’, p. 117.
- 41 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 113.
- 42 Iqbal may have been influenced by Toynbee’s ideas on the rise and fall of civilizations. He argued, for instance, that pre-Islamic Iran was not worthy of survival’

because its imperial regime was so ‘internally corrupt’ that it had to be destroyed by a superior outside force (Islam). The Arab Muslims, however, were not a superior race and so:

The Iranian spent a hundred years of severe humiliation under the yoke of Arab domination... Yet he did not give up on acquiring knowledge, something that the Arabs then lacked... The efforts of patriotic Iranians and their mixing with the Arab race caused the latter to pay attention to science and belle letters too and to join Iranians and other old nations in spreading ancient knowledge and customs.

Quoted in Karimipur, ‘*Abbas Iqbal*’, pp. 111–113.

- 43 Forughi wrote that Montesquieu was ‘one of the first individuals who have looked at history philosophically.’ Muhammad-‘Ali Forughi, *Seyr-e hekmat dar Orupa* [The Path of Philosophy in Europe], Vol. 1 (Tehran: 2000), p. 161.

Forughi’s father, Muhammad-Hussein Forughi, had begun the translation of Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*, whose complete Persian translation appeared in early Twentieth-Century but was vehemently denounced by some clerics as anti-Islamic. See Reza Bigdelu, *Bastangari dar tarikh-e mo’aser-e Iran* [Archaism in Modern Iranian History] (Tehran: 2001), p. 75.

- 44 Forughi, *Seyr-e hekmat*, Vol. 2, p. 123.

- 45 Forughi, *Seyr-e hekmat*, Vol. 1, p. 186.

- 46 On the Organization of Guidance of Thought see Vida Hamraz, ‘Nahadha-ye farhangi dar hokomat-e Reza Shah,’ *Tarikh-e mo’aser-e Iran* 1, 1 (Spring 1997): 50–63. Nafisi and Bihar are quoted on pp. 56–57. Interestingly, Nafisi’s terminology for the ‘unison and concord of the word/discourse’ (*ettehad va ettefaq-e kalameh*) are almost identical to Ruhollah Khomeini’s famous motto of *ettefaq-e kalameh*.

Nafisi later wrote *Tarikh-e shahriari-e Reza Shah Pahlavi* (Tehran: 1965), a hagiographic work that heaps praise on Reza Shah’s reforms and defines nation in racial terms. It claims, for example: ‘Patriotism today means that everyone must unconditionally love the land of his ancestors and worship whatever relates to it, whether good or bad, with utmost devotion. See Bigdelu, *Bastangari*, pp. 277–78.

- 47 Yazdani, *Ahmad Kasravi*, pp. 42–43.

- 48 Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

- 49 Ibrahim Fakhra’i, *Gilan dar jonbesh-e mashrutiyyat* [Gilan in the Constitutional Movement] (Tehran: 1973); and idem, *Sardar-e jangal* [The Forest Commander] (Tehran: 1972). Esmā’il Ra’in (ed.), *Qiyam-e jangal: Yaddashtha-ye Mirza Esmā’il Jangali* [The Forest Uprising: Notes of Mirza Isma’il Jangali] (Tehran: 1978). Mustafa Shu’aian, *Negahi beh ravabet-e Shuravi va jonbesh-e enqelabi-e jangal* [A Glance at the Relations of the Soviet Union with the Jangal Revolutionary Movement] (Florence: 1976).

- 50 Muhammad-Taqi Bahar, *Tarikh-e mokhtasar-e ahzab-e siyasi-e Iran*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: 1992), p. 27. The two volume set was first published in 1944.
- 51 According to the Fifth Grade Social Studies textbook (Tehran: 1970): 'Lenin, the leader of the Russian Revolution, nullified the oppressive privileges that the tsars had obtained in Iran.' Quoted in Shu'aian, *Negahi beh ravabet*, p. 6.  
 See also Sayyid Hassan Taqizadah, *Tarikh-e ava'el-e enqelab va mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [The Early History of the Revolution and Constitutionalism in Iran] (Tehran: 1959). Here, in a series of lectures delivered in the late 1950s, Taqizadah contends that without the October Revolution, Iran and Turkey could not exist as independent countries. He repeats Bahar's example of Lenin 'letting go of the rope that was strangling Iran.' Moreover, he considers the first twenty years of Soviet rule as highly beneficial to Iran. See *ibid.*, pp. 66–67.  
 Taqizadah's lectures in this book include a general overview of history with particular attention to class struggle from the time of Spartacus, Mazdak, and Manj to the emergence of constitutional governments in Holland and England. He defines constitutionalism as the 'participation in government by the nation or by some of its classes.' *Ibid.*, pp. 15–17. Finally, making minimal references to the socialists in the Second Majles, he claims that without the revolutionary agitation in the city of Tabriz, there would have been no Constitution, 117, pp. 45–46.
- 52 Bahar, *Tarikh-e mokhtasar*, Vol. 1, pp. 247–53.
- 53 *Ibid.*, pp. 119–121; quoted on p. 121.
- 54 Ihsan Tabari, *Jame'eh-e Iran dar doran-e Reza Shah* [Iranian Society under Reza Shah] (n.p.: 1976), pp. 62–3.
- 55 Ra'isnia, *Akharin sangar*, pp. 8–9. Prior to the 1990s, apart from Tudeh Party publications, only the independent historian Khosrow Shakeri had paid serious attention to *Haqiqat*. See Khosrow Shakeri (ed.), *Asnad-e tarikhi-e jonbesh-e kargari, sosial demokrasi va komonisti-e Iran* [Historical Documents of Iran's Working Class, Social Democratic and Communist Movements], Vol.1 (Tehran: n.d.). Shakeri had published most of these documents during the 1970s, via Mazdak Publications, Florence, Italy.
- 56 Javadzadah's poor family had migrated from Iranian Azerbaijan to Baku, where he completed his education while working as a janitor. Later he began teaching in an Iranian school run by Baku social democrats. After 1917, he became an ardent Bolshevik and joined the Iranian Communist Party upon its formation in 1920. Ra'isnia, *Akharin sangar*, pp. 16–17, 35. See also Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan, Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London & New York: 2000), pp.117–119.
- 57 'Some cry out: We need a strong arm and a brave man. This is a great mistake. In this century, a strongman can accomplish nothing.' *Haqiqat*, 5 May 1922, quoted in Ra'isnia, *Akharin sangar*, pp. 219–20.  
 Following the Russian Bolsheviks, *Haqiqat* rejected Social Democracy in favor of communism. However, *Haqiqat*'s political positions were not that different from



those previously articulated by the Social Democrats. Its specific demands were: Ending martial law and military control of government institutions; Freeing all political prisoners; Freedom of the press and assembly; Labor laws; Land distribution among peasant; Income tax and lowering the tax burden on the poor; Judicial oversight of Government employees; Freedom of travel. Apparently, these were the minimum demands of the newly formed Communist Party of Iran. Ra'isnia, *Akharin sangar*, pp. 213–214.

Moreover, *Haqiqat* had a pro-constitutional position and even supported 'national bourgeois' interests vis-à-vis foreign capital in Iran. It argued explicitly that socialists could conditionally defend capitalism. But it had a strong anti-imperialist stance, positing a global struggle between Euro-American (Western) imperialism v. Asia (the East). Ibid., pp. 3, 7, 11, 18.

- 58 Reza Azari-Shahreza'i, *Farukhi-Yazdi: Saranjam-e yek ro'ya-ye siasi* [Farukhi-Yazdi: The End of a Political Dream] (Tehran: 2002), pp. 1–22.

- 59 Only parts of Al-e Ahmad's *Safar-e Rus* were published in the 1960s. See Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Safar-e Rus* (Tehran: 1990), p. 12.

In 1975, Muhammad-'Ali Eslami-Nadushan published *Dar sarzamin-e shuraha* [In the Land of the Soviets], another controversial USSR travelogue because it reported of Soviets successes against poverty and in providing health care and education. Nadushan, however, was careful to explain that in the end the USSR had failed because he had observed widespread deficiencies in the 'humanity' of its people. See the preface to *Dar keshvar-e shuraha: yaddashtha-ye safar-e Shuravi* (Tehran: 1975). Al-e Ahmad had mixed in similar observations in his travelogue. See *Safar-e Rus*, p. 211.

- 60 Azari-Shahreza'i, *Farukhi-Yazdi*, pp. 27–9.

- 61 Ibid., pp. 89–97.

- 62 In 1944, a well-publicized trial of Reza Shah era political crimes convicted a prison warden of the murder of Farukhi. Baqer Aqeli, *Ruzshomar-e tarikh-e Iran* [Calendar of Iranian History], Vol. 1 (Tehran: 1990), p. 257.

- 63 On the Group of Fifty-Three see Hamid Ahmadi, *Tirkhcheh-e ferqeh-e jomhuri-e engelabi-e Iran* [A Short History of the Iranian Revolutionary Republic Group] (Tehran: 2000), pp. 134–9. Anvar Khamseh'i, *Panjah nafar va seh nafar* [Fifty Men and Three Men] (Tehran: 1983). Bozorg Alavi, *Panjah va seh nafar* [Fifty-Three Men] (Tehran: 1978) and *Varaq pareha-ye zendan* (Prison Scrapbooks) (Tehran: 1978).

- 64 Ahmadi, *Tirkhcheh*, pp. 186–7. Ahmadi quotes Kasravi regarding his friendship with Arani and on how, despite differences, they shared 'the same ideals.' Ibid., p. 192.

- 65 Tudeh Party editors of Arani's text claimed he was referring to contemporary trials in Nazi Germany and Hungary. However, Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confession: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1999), noted that the trial of the Group of Fifty-three actually coincided with the 1938 Moscow Trials, to which Arani may have been referring.

- 66 Taqi Arani, *Defā'iat-e dokotor Arani* [Taqi Arani's Defense] (n.p., n.d.), pp. 3–6.
- 67 'Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 70.
- 68 Alavi, *Panjah va seh nafar*, author's preface, p. 1.
- 69 Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals*, chapter 4.
- 70 Social novels included Morteza Moshfeq-Kazemi, *Tehran-e makhuf* (Tehran: 1923), Muhammad Mas'ud, *Tafrihat-e shab* (Tehran: 1930), Muhammad Hejazi, *Ziba* (Tehran: 1931); Behazin, *Dokhtar-e rayat* (Tehran: 1948), Bozorg Alavi, *Cheshm-hayash* (Tehran: 1952); Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Modir-e madreseh* (Tehran: 1959); 'Ali-Muhammad Afghani, *Shohar-e Ahu Khaum* (Tehran: 1962); Simin Daneshvar, *Suvashun* (Tehran: 1969); Ahmad Mahmud, *Hamsayeha* (Tehran: 1974).
- 71 The list of participants and the text of Bahar's lecture is in Mas'ud Noqrehkar, *Bakhshi az tarikh-e jonbesh-e roshanfekri-e Iran* [A Part of the History of Iran's Intellectual Movement], Vol. 1 (Spanga, Sweden: 2002), pp. 278–282. Samples of lectures delivered at this congress are in Nuredin Nuri (ed.), *Nokhostin kongereh-e nevisandegan-e Iran* [The First Congress of Iranian Writers] (Tehran: 2005).
- 72 Muhammad Qazi, *Sargozasht-e tarjomeha-ye man* [The Story of My Translations] (Tehran: 1994). For a list of all of Qazi's translations, including the numbers of their repeated publications into the early 1990s, see pp. 643–48.
- 73 This is from Anatole France's introduction to the 1923 French translation of Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, reproduced in the book's Persian translation. See M. Sobhdam (pseudonym) trans., *Pashneh-e abanin* [The Iron Heel] (Tehran: 1952), p. 9.
- 74 M. Hushiar (pseudonym), trans., *Seh maqaleh dar bareh-e engelab-e mashruteh-e Iran* [Three Essays on Iran's Constitutional Revolution] (Tehran: 1978), pp. 5–6. The translator's introduction gives the original date of this publication as 1952; See *ibid.*, p. 8. For a very similar formulation of the same ideas in another history text published the same year see Morteza Ravandi, *Tarikh-e tahavollat-e ejtema'i* [History of Social Developments] (Tehran: 1952).
- 75 Hushiar, *Seh maqaleh*, pp. 6–7.
- 76 Anonymous translator's introduction to George V. Plekhanov, *Naqsh-e shakhsyat dar tarikh* [The Role of the Individual in History] (Florence: 1969). According to a note on the title page, this Persian translation originally was published in Tehran during the early 1940s.
- 77 Forughi translated from the French, where modern philosophical terms and their meanings were much closer to their English equivalents. See the glossary to *Seyr-e bekmat dar Orupa*, Vol. 1, pp. 269–71, 277, 279.
- 78 'Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of 'Ali Shari'ati* (London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 1998).
- 79 Mahmud Nekuruh, *Nebzat-e khoda-parastan-e sosialist* [The Movement of God-worshipping Socialists] (Tehran: 1998). On the rejection of *jabr* see, pp. 84–85.

- 80 *Los Angeles Times*, 30 December 1973.
- 81 Quoted on p. 91 in Negin Nabavi, 'The Discourse of "Authentic Culture" in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s', in Negin Nabavi (ed.), *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth-century Iran: A Critical Survey* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003).
- 82 For a good study of this period see Nabavi, 'The Discourse of 'Authentic Culture' in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s.'
- 83 A good discussion of these periodicals, including some content analysis, is found in Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals*, pp. 78–82; See especially the author's extensive reference notes to this section. For a list of main leftist periodical titles and their dates of publication see Negin Nabavi, *Intellectuals and the State in Iran* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), pp. 215–216.
- 84 Sadeq Zibakalam, *Moqaddamehi bar enqelab-e Eslami* [A Preface to Islamic Revolution] (Tehran: 1993), was one of the first studies in Iran that noted the major ideological impact of Marxism on the monarchy's last decade.
- 85 Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1993). For the Marxist impact on pre-revolutionary political culture see Sadeq Zibakalam, *Moqaddameh-i bar enqelab-e Eslami* (Tehran: 1993).
- 86 On Tudeh Party positions during the 1960s and 1970s see Matin-asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2002), chapters 5–9.
- 87 On Tudeh Party policies during the 1960s–70s see Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 1999), pp. 74–86.
- 88 M.S. Ivanov, *Tarikh-e novin-e Iran* [The Modern History of Iran], trans. Hushang Tizabi and Hassan Qa'em-Panah, (n.p.: 1976).
- 89 Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut*, pp. 98–104.
- 90 On 'Neo-Marxist scholasticism' see the introduction to Ihsan Tabari, *Shenakht va sanjesh-e Marksizm* [The Knowledge and Evaluation of Marxism] (Tehran: 1990). This is among the works that Tabari wrote after capitulating to the Islamic Republic and officially denouncing Marxism.
- 91 On the participants in the Marxist historiography debates of the 1960s–70s and their various positions and publications see Abbas Vali, *Pre-Capitalist Iran*, chapter 1.  
Enayat's lectures are in Sadeq Zibakalam, *Nahadha va andisheha-ye siyasi dar Iran: Taqrir-e dars-e doctor Hamid Enayat* [Political Ideas and Institutions in Iran: Hamid Enayat's Lesson Plans] (Tehran: 1999).
- 92 Matin-asgari, *Student Opposition*, chapters 2–4.
- 93 On 'Ali Shari'ati, the Mojahedin Organization and their publications see Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), chapters 3–4.

- 94 Bizhan Jazani, *Marksizm-e eslami ya islam-e marksisti* [Islamic Marxism or Marxist Islam] (Koln: 2001), pp. 31–32. This pamphlet's title page gives the date of its writing as 1971. Jazani's more famous work dealing with history is *Tarikh-e si saleh-e Iran* [The Thirty-year History of Iran], Vol. 2 (Tehran: n.d.).
- 95 Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause*, pp. 44, 91–92.
- 96 Mustafa Shu'aian, *Negahi beh ravabet-e shuravi va nehzat-e enqelabi-e jangal* (Florence: 1976).
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 See Jawaharlal Nehru, *Negahi beh tarikh-e jahan* [Glimpses of World History] (Tehran: 1982) seventh printing, trans. Mahmud Tafazzoli.
- 99 Keshavarz also translated Petroshevsky's *Keshavarzi va monasebat-e arzi dar Iran-e abh-e Moghol* [Agriculture and Agrarian Relations in Mongol Iran] (Tehran: 1966) and *Nehzat-e Sarbedaran-e Khorasan* [The Sarbedar Movement in Khorasan] (Tehran: 1972).
- 100 I. P. Petroshevsky, *Eslam dar Iran* [Islam in Iran], trans. Karim Keshavarz (Tehran: 1970), pp. 6, 405, 423.
- 101 Amir-Hussein Aryanpur, *Zamineh-e jame'eh-shenasi* [Foundations of Sociology] (Tehran: 1977), introduction. See also Aryanpur, *Naqdha'i bar Zamineh-e jame'eh-shenasi* [Critiques of The Foundations of Sociology] (Tehran: 1978).
- 102 In 1952, Ravandi published *Tarikh-e tahavvolat-e ejtemai* [A History of Social Developments]. Actually a history of the world up to the Renaissance, this work appears like a first draft to the author's expanded project of Iranian social history.
- 103 A. Pasha'i, *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 2 (July 1979): 73.
- 104 The theme of an overall Marxist 'failure,' due mainly to intellectual inadequacy, is found even in studies sympathetic to the left. See, for example, Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause*.
- 105 The daily press, especially *Ayandegan* and *Paygham-e Emruz*, as well as popular weeklies, like *Ahangar* and *Tehran Mosavvar*, also reflected Marxist trends in 1979. One after another, however, these periodicals were closed down following a major crackdown that began in the summer of 1979.
- 106 Invoking 'the historical mission of intellectuals,' it concluded:

The shrouded army of committed intellectuals has joined an unequal battle. Let its suffering be a forewarning of the impending onslaught on every single civil and cultural achievement of the peoples of this region.

*Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 1, (July 1979): 3. The poetic language and imagery of this piece suggest Shamlu as the author.
- 107 The participants were Baqer Parham, Ahmad Shamlu, Muhammad-'Ali Sepanlu, Khosrow Shakeri, Abbas Samakar, Firaydun Adamiyat, Homa Nateq, Muhammad Qa'ed, Nasser Pakdaman, Sirius Aryanpur, Hushang Keshavarz, Hussein Mahdavi. See *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 4–7 (August–September 1979).

- 108 *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 5 (September 1979): 4–5. Firaydun Adamiyat developed some of these ideas more fully in *Ashoftegi dar fekr-e tarikhi* [Confusion in Historical Thought] (Tehran: 1981).
- 109 *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 4–7 (August–September 1979). Shamlu's arguments are in no. 5 (September 1979): 10–11.
- 110 *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 14 (November 1979).
- 111 *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 18–31 (December 1979–March 1980).
- 112 *Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 2 (July 1979): 72–7, quoted on p. 73.
- 113 *Ibid.*, pp. 73–4.
- 114 *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- 115 Shakeri's work appeared in issues 2–6, 8, 12, 15, 21, 31 and 35. His article on the Pahlavis is in no. 4 (August 1979).
- 116 For an interesting retrospective account of 1979–80 see Shahrokh Meskub, *Ruzha dar rah* [Days on the Road], Vol. 1 (Paris: 2000). A former Tudeh Party member, Meskub records the mixed feelings of elation and confusion during the revolution. He reports on how as the dominant Islamist trend became more conservative he still had some hopes for resistance by the Democratic National Front, 88, 95.
- 117 Fashionism: kabus ya vaqe'iat? Tahlili koli az vaz'iat-e siasi-e keshvar va negahi beh cheshmandaz-e an (Tehran: 1979).
- 118 See Akbar Ganji, *Tallaqi-yi fashisti az din va hukumat* [The Fascist Interpretation of Religion and Government] (Tehran: 1999). On Soroush see Afshin Matin-asgari, 'Abdolkarim Soroush and the Secularization of Islamic Thought', *Iranian Studies* 30, 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1997): 95–115.

## 12 ISLAMIST HISTORIOGRAPHY IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

- 1 Abu al-Fazl Shakuri, *Daramadi bar tarikhnegari va tarikhnegari-e mosalmanan* (Qum: Markaz-e Entesharat-e Daftar-e Tablighat-e Islami-e Howzeh-e Elmiyyeh-e Qum, 2001), pp. 228–229.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 54–7.
- 5 Abu al-Fazl Shakuri, *Jarayanshenasi-e Tarikhnegari-ha dar Iran-e Mo'aser* (Qum: Bonyad-e Enqelab-e Islami-e Iran, 1992), pp. 110–62.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 162–210.
- 7 Abu al-Fazl Shakuri, *Daramadi bar Tarikhnegari va Tarikhnegari-e Mosalmanan* (Qum: Markaz-e Entesharat-e Daftar-e Tablighat-e Islami-e Howzeh-e Elmiyyeh-e Qum, 2001), pp. 66–89.

- 8 Abu al-Fazl Shakuri, *Jarayanshenasi-e Tarikhnegari-ha dar Iran-e Mo'aser* (Qum: Bonyad-e Enqelab-e Islami-e Iran, 1992), pp. 231–449.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 270–89.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 466–511.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 289–92 and 411–514.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 413–44.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 440–41 and 448.
- 14 Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 90–1.
- 15 For a thorough discussion of the debates surrounding the Karbala Paradigm, see Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Kamran Scot Aghaie, 'The Karbala Narrative in Shi'i Political Discourse in Modern Iran in the 1960's–1970s', *The Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 2001): 151–76; and Kamran Scot Aghaie, 'Reinventing Karbala: Revisionist interpretations of the "Karbala Paradigm"', *Jusur: The UCLA Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 10, (1994): 1–30.
- 16 Waqar Shirazi's narrative (d. 1880) is an excellent example of continuity in the tradition. While in his book *Ashareh-i kamileh* (the Complete Ten) he made more liberal use of poetry and less consistent use of the narrative format, his basic themes were not fundamentally different. This relative continuity can be seen in the twentieth century as well. For example, the only significant variations in Abbas Qummi's (d. 1941) *Rumuz al-shuhada* (the Mysteries of the Martyrs) and Sayyid Ibrahim Miyanji's widely circulated Arabic text *al-'Uyun al-'ibra fi Maqatal Sayyid al-Shuhada* (published in 1959), were their exclusion of the experiences of the prophets and reduced focus on the lives of Fatima and 'Ali. The same can be said of Muhammad Yazdi's 1967 text *Biyayid Hussain ibn-i 'Ali ra bihtar Bishnasim* (Come, Let Us Better Understand Hussain), which appeared only one year before the first 'revisionist narrative' appeared. These stories also focused more explicitly upon Hussain as the central character in the narrative. Hence, these narratives followed fairly closely the core themes that Kashifi develops in his narrative *Rawzat al-shuhada*.
- 17 Murtiza Mutahhari, *Hamaseh-i Husaini*, Vol. I–III (Tehran & Qum: Sadra, 1985).
- 18 Murtiza Mutahhari, *Hamaseh-i Husaini*, Vol. II (Tehran & Qum: Sadra, 1985). See also Murtiza Mutahhari, *Hamaseh-e Hussaini*, Vol. I (Tehran & Qum: Sadra, 1985), p. 191.
- 19 Murtiza Mutahhari, *Hamaseh-i Husaini*, Vol. I (Tehran & Qum: Sadra, 1985), p.18.
- 20 Ibid., p. 19.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 76–7.

- 22 Ibid., pp. 85–6.
- 23 Ibid., p. 18.
- 24 Ibid., p. 39.
- 25 Ibid., p. 17.
- 26 Ibid., p. 21.
- 27 David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (San Francisco, Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p. 48.
- 28 Ibid., p. 43.
- 29 Ibid., p. 44.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Haggay Ram, *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran: The Friday Congregational Sermon* (Washington: The American University Press, 1994), p. 197.
- 32 Haggay Ram, 'The immemorial Iranian nation? School textbooks and historical memory in post-revolutionary Iran', *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2000): 68.
- 33 Golnar Mehran, 'The presentations of the "self" and the "other" in postrevolutionary Iranian school textbooks', in Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee (eds.), *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).
- 34 Murtiza Mutahhari, *Khadamat-e Motaqabel-e Iran va Islam*, Vols. 1 and 2, 12th ed. (Tehran, Iran: Entesharat-e Sadra, 1984), pp. 19–21.
- 35 Ibid.
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# Index

## A

- Abbas Mirza, 160  
 Abduh, Muhammad, 243, 254  
 Abdul-Baha (Abd al-Baha), 32, 42, 163  
     *al-Risala al-Madaniyya* (the treatise on civilization), 32  
 Abrahamian, Ervand  
     *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 56, 180  
 Abu Dhar: *khoda-parast-e sosialist*, 223  
 Adam-i ijtimai, 193  
 Adamiyat, Firaydun, 35, 162, 163, 204, 235  
     distrust of Jews and Baha'i historians, 164  
 Adelkhah, Fariba  
     *Being Modern in Iran*, 192  
     *javanmard*, 192, 193  
         masculinist approach to history, 193  
     *javanmardi*, 193  
     *javan-zans*, 193  
 Afghani, Jamal al-Din, (See also Asadabadi, Jamal a-Din) 13, 31, 39, 43, 52, 66, 164, 243, 254  
 Age of the Pahlavi, 117, 118  
 Aghaie, Kamran Scot, 233  
 Ahangar, 230  
 Ahmadzadah, Mas'ud, 224  
 Alam-e Nesvan, 184  
 Alavi, Bozorg  
     *Panjah-va-seh nafar*, 215  
     study and concern for future, 215–216  
     *Varaq pareha-ye zendan*, 215  
 Al-e Ahmad, Jalal, 25, 50, 213, 216, 220, 224, 228, 258  
     *Safar-e Rus*, 213  
     Soviet Marxism, opponent of, 213  
 Alexander of Macedonia, 158  
 Allenby, Lord, 163  
 Allied invasion of Iran (1941), 161  
 Amanat, Abbas, 23, 259  
 Amir Kabir, Mirza Taqi Khan, 51, 52  
     association of religious minorities and foreign powers, 162  
*Amouzesb-e Farhang Mihani*, 118  
*Amradnumas*, 189  
*Amrads*, 189  
*Ancient Iran (Iran Bastan)*, 73  
*The Ancient Tales of Iran (Dastanbay Qadim Iran)*, 74  
 Anglo-Russian convention (1907), 157  
 Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli (The Society for National Monuments), 100, 104  
*Anjoman-i Ma'arif* (education society), 21, 29  
 Anti-Baha'i polemics, 162  
 Anti-Jewish riots of Mashhad, 163  
 Anti-republican campaign, 84, 90  
 Anushirvan 'Dadgar' (the Just), 11  
 Arab-Iranian conflict, 160–161  
 Arani, Taqi, 67  
     *Donya*, 214, 221  
     'scientific materialism,' promotion of, 214  
     Shi'i clerical education, 214  
 Architectural drafting, 134, 135  
 Architectural historiography (1921–42), 121–153  
     background, 122–123  
     building of municipality, 128  
     buildings on Pahlavi Street, one-storey wastes causing chronic disease, 131  
     central power and support for action, 124–125  
     changes in city, 129  
 Construction Committee  
     announcement, 131–132  
     municipality plans and measures, 131

- Architectural historiography (*continued*)  
of first Pahlavi Period  
establishment of organizations and institutions, 132  
European-style architecture, use of, 132  
hybrid buildings, 124  
institutions and structures, 126–127  
neo-classical buildings, 123  
organizations, technocrats and resources, 133–135  
factories and hospitals  
establishments, 133–135  
railway establishment, 133–134  
publications and literature, 133  
rejecting tradition and seeking modernity, 125–126  
social phenomenon, 121  
teaching and training of architectural works  
foreign architects, role of, 134, 135–137  
urban measures, 127–130  
urban planning scheme, 129–130  
Western civilization, 121–123
- Asadabadi, Jamal a–Din (See also Afghani, Jamal al-Din)
- Ashoftegi dar Fekr-e Tarikhi* (Confusion in Historical Thought), 258
- Asnad Darbareh-e Hojum-e Engelis va Rus be Iran* (Documents Relating to the Russian and British Invasion of Iran), 261
- Asr-e Pahlavi* (the Age of Pahlavi), 117
- Assmann, Jan, 59
- Atabaki, Touraj, 1, 69
- Ayandegan*, 230
- Azal, Yahya, 28
- B**
- Babi movement, 29, 31, 35, 40–41, 42, 50, 72, 163
- Babluyan, Khachik, 136
- Baha'is under British political service, 163
- Bahar, Muhammad Taqi, 56, 67  
*A Brief History of Iranian Political Parties*, 210  
*Nobahar*, 211, 212  
Reza Khan, dictatorship, 210–211
- Baladiyyeh*, 133
- Baqir, Muhammad, 43
- Baradaran-i vatan*, 188
- Bartholomae, Christian, 95
- Bast, Oliver, 55
- Bayat, Kaveh, 113
- Bazgasht-i Adabi* (literary return), 15
- Bazigaran-e Asr-e Talayi* (The Actors of the Golden Age), 117
- Bazm-e Ahriman* (The Devil's Banquet), 260
- Bell, Duncan S. A., 60  
*mythscape*, 60
- Bihbahani, Abdullah, 28, 41, 49
- Bihruz, Zabih, 158, 207
- Bihzad, Tahirzadah  
*Iranshahr*, 133
- Binary heteronormativity, 186
- Binesh va Ravesh dar Tarikhnegari-e Mo'aser* (Theory and Practice in Modern Historiography), 257
- 'Biography of Iran' (*sharh hal-i Iran*), 6
- 'Birth moment,' 204
- Bisto-basht Hezar Rooz dar Tarikh-e Iran va Jahan* (Twenty-eight Thousand Days in the History of Iran and the World), 119
- Bolshevism, 210–211, 212
- Bonyad-e Engelab-e Islami-e Iran* (the association of the Islamic Revolution of Iran), 239
- Bonyad-e Shahid* (Martyrs Association), 237
- Booth, Marilyn, 179, 195
- 'Bourgeois Revolution,' 209
- Brecht, Bertolt, 217
- British anti-Iranian conspiracy  
reappearance of, 161
- British machinations to defeat Iran, 158–161
- Browne, Edward, 38

- A Literary History of Persia*, 97  
*Persian Revolution*, 205  
 Buck, Pearl, 217  
*Bunat vs. banin*, 188  
 Buzarjumihri, 133
- C**  
 ‘Centuries of indoctrination,’ 184  
 Chehabi, H. E., 155  
 Chekhov, Anthon, 217  
 Chirol, Valentine, 163  
 Christensen, Arthur, 106  
 Churchill, Winston S.  
     *The Second World War*, 225  
 Colonialist historians (Zionists and Christians/Crusaders), 242  
 Conspiracy belief, 155–157  
     European, 157  
     association of Jews and Freemasons, 157  
 ‘Conspiracy models,’ 156  
     *See also* Conspiracy theories  
 Conspiracy theories  
     delusions of, 157–158  
     ‘elegant’ and ‘parsimonious’ traits, 156  
     falsification of, 156  
     pro-Soviet Tudah party, formation of, 161  
     types of, 157–158  
 Constitutional Era (1900–20), 203–207  
     ‘canonical’ historian of, *see* Kasravi, Ahmad  
     failure of, 206  
     Social Democratic contribution to, 209–210  
 Constitutional Revolution, 3, 5, 23, 79  
     Ahmad Kasravi and Mahdi Malikzadah, role of, 49–51  
     British, role of, 27  
     Browne’s aspirations, 40  
     Nuri’s refutations of, 26  
     Pahlavi state propaganda, 24–25  
     Western perceptive, 25  
 Constitutional Revolution (1905–9), 157, 159, 244  
     and its aftermath (especially 1910), 244  
     consequences of, 159  
 Constitutional Revolution (1906–12), 204  
     Arani’s perception, 214–215  
 Coup d’état, 2, 55, 60, 79, 88, 91, 92, 122, 157, 160, 167, 168  
 ‘Court historiography,’ 234  
 ‘Cross- dressing,’ women, 190  
 Cultural memory, 59–60, 63–65  
     *discourse of disintegration*, 63–65  
     *period of disintegration*, 64–65  
 Curzon, Lord, 162  
 Czarist empire, end of  
     impact on Baha’is, 163
- D**  
*Dad-i Sukhan* (Siraj ‘Ali Khan Arzu), 14  
*Daramadi bar Tarikhnegari va Tarikhnegari-e Mosalmanan* (Introduction to Historical Outlook and Historiography of Muslims), 239  
*Darbare-ie Sevom-e Shahrivar*, 119  
 Darius (522–486 B.C.), 201  
*Dar Ta ‘rif-i Shari‘at-i Bayan*, 34–35  
 Dashti, ‘Ali  
     *Shafaq-e sorkh*, 212, 215  
     works, criticism, 215  
*Dast-i pinhan-i Ingilis*, 158  
*Davam-e Shahanshahi Iran*, 116  
 Davari, Muhammad, 8  
 Dawlatabadi, Mirza ‘Ali Muhammad, 30  
 Dawlatabadi, Mirza Yahya, 30, 37, 51  
     *Hayat-i Yahya* (Life of Yahya), 30  
 Dawlatabadi, Saddiqah, 182  
 Dawlatabadi, Sayyid Hadi, 30  
*Decameron*, 217  
 Dehkhoda, ‘Aliakbar, 16, 21, 205  
 Demarcation of gender line, writings, 190–191  
 Dickens, Charles, 217  
 Dilvari, Ra’is ‘Ali, 62, 63  
 Discourse of disintegration  
     discourses and cultural memory, 59–68  
     genealogy, 59

Discourse of disintegration (*continued*)  
 historiographical deficiency and  
   questions, 55–58  
   staying power, 65–68  
 Divine effulgence, 73  
 Dolgorukov, Dimitri Ivanovich  
   Babi/Baha'i religion, creation, 162  
*Don Quixote*, 217  
*Do Qarn-e Sokut* (Two Centuries of  
   Silence), 257–258  
 Dubrulle, Roland, 136

## E

*Ekhtiar*, 218  
 Engels, Friedrich  
   *The Origin of the Family*, 206  
   *Private Property and the State*, 206  
*Eslamshenasi*, 223  
*Etelâat-e Haftegi* (Journal), 117  
 European-style architecture, 132  
*Evenemental* framework, 56, 58, 60,  
   65, 68

## F

*Farang*, 122–125  
*Farangestan*, 206  
*Farhangistan-i Iran* (The Language  
   Academy of Iran), 21  
*Farsi-yi basit* or *parsi'nigari*, 16  
 Farukhi-Yazdi, Muhammad  
   (1887–1939), 212  
   as prisoner, 213  
   struggle to death and opposition to  
     Reza Shah, 213  
   *Tufan*, 212  
*Farzandan*, 188  
 Feda'i movement, 223–224  
   *See also* Marxism  
*Fekr-e Demokrasi-e Ejtema'i dar Nehzat-e*  
*Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* (The Ideals  
   of Social Democracy in the  
   Constitutional Revolution), 258  
 Feminist scholarship  
   importance of, 179  
 Ferdowsi

as cultural icon, 93  
 fixing of image, 106–110  
*Kaveh* (journal), role of, 94–95  
 mausoleum for, 100  
   monument and national  
     pilgrimage, 94  
 memorial site, 100–105  
   national project, 106  
 millennium celebration and  
   conference, 94, 100, 105–111  
   Reza Shah's comments, 108–110  
 as national icon, 101  
 national poet, 94  
 origins, 94  
 poetry as milestone, 93  
 revival, 100  
   origins of, 94–99  
   political and cultural canonization,  
     94–99  
   *Shahnamah*, 93  
   as spokesman, 99  
 Ferrier, J. P., 163  
 First World War  
   devastation of Iran, 206  
 Fischer, David Hackett, 156–157  
   'fallacy of conspiratorial causal  
     attribution,' 156–157  
 Flaubert, Gustav, 217  
 Foreign interventions, succession of,  
   157, 158  
   Iranian approach to enhance political  
     power, 157–158  
 Foucault, Michel, 59  
 France, Anatole, 217  
   wage labor, end of, 217  
 Freemasons  
   founder of Pahlavi dynasty,  
     role, 162  
 Furughi, Muhammad 'Ali, 100, 106,  
   107, 109–110, 207, 208  
   'Determinism,' Persian Phrase,  
     218–219  
   *Path of Philosophy in Europe*, 208  
 Furughi, Muhsin, 136, 137, 145, 147, 150  
 Furughi, Zuka al-Mulk, 150

**G**

- Garmrudi, Mirza Fattah, 188  
 Geiger, Wilhelm, 95  
 Ghaznavi, Mahmud, 110  
 Gheissari, A., 215  
*Ghoshun* or *Pahlavi*, 114  
 Gide, Andre  
     *Return from the USSR*, 213  
 Gilan-based Jangali Rebellion  
     (1915–21), 244  
 Gilan rebellion, 210  
 Godard, André, 105  
     art and architecture of Iran, works on,  
     133, 136  
 Gorky, Maxim, 217  
*Governing myth*, 60  
 Gray, Edward, 27  
 Great Oriental Monarchies, 96  
 Griboedov, Aleksandr, 159  
 ‘Group of Fifty-Three’  
     imprisonment, 214  
*Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie*, 96  
 Guerilla movement, 222, 224

**H**

- Halbwachs, Maurice, 59  
 Hamadan, 129, 130  
*Haqiqat*  
     global developments, 212  
     new Marxist paradigm, emergence  
     of, 211–212  
     success of, 212  
 Hashimi, Fa’izeh, 193  
 Hejazi, Muhammad  
     *Mihan-e Ma*, 117  
 Hertzfeld, Ernst, 105  
 Hidayat, Sadiq  
     French into Persian, translational  
     works, 136  
 ‘Hidden British hand,’ 160  
 ‘The Hidden Hand of British Policy in  
   Iran,’ 158–159  
*Hijab*, 184  
 Hikmat, ‘Aliasghar, 106  
 Historical writings, significance, 191

- logical analysis of events, 191, 218  
 Historiography of Constitutional Revolution  
     Babi-Azali connection, 27–36  
     and Babi-Baha’i, 29, 30, 33–34  
     Regie protest, 31  
     treatises, 32  
     constructing millennial narrative, 36–49  
     Bagh Shah executions, 37–38  
     Islamic identity, 36  
     monolithic narration, 23  
     nationalist historiography and  
     heretic cleansing, 49–54  
     rereading pious past, 24–27  
     myth of failure, 25  
 Historiography of modern Iran  
     contributions of Marxism, 205  
     critical assessment, levels, 179–180  
     masculinist historiography, main  
     focus, 181  
     women, gender, and sexuality in,  
     177–197  
 Historiography of twentieth century, 1–4  
     historical research, 3  
     restylization of Persian language, 13  
 ‘A history of Anglo-Iranian Political  
   Relations in the nineteenth  
   Century,’ 159  
 Hofstadter, Richard, 156  
 Hojjat al-Islam Hamid Rowhani  
     (Ziyarati), 236–237  
 Hugo, Victor, 216–217  
 Hussain-‘Ali, Mirza, 163  
     Baha’i faith, founder, 163  
 Hussain’s martyrdom at Karbala  
     (680 AD), 234

**I**

- Ibrahim Safa’i, 87–89  
*Ikaria*, 217  
 ‘Indian School’ (*Sabk-i Hindi*), 14  
 Invasions, *see* Manichaean societies  
 Iqbal, Abbas, 109, 207  
     contributions to learning and  
     education, 207–208  
*Yadegar*, 202

- 'Iranian Cultural Identity,' 201–202
- Iranian historiography
- architectural historiography (1921–42), 121–153
  - architectural works, enhance, 133
  - Bolshevism, effect of, 210–212
  - contributions of Marxism, 203
  - 'criminal' beliefs
    - 'Group of Fifty-Three,' imprisonment, 214
  - Haqiqat*, contributions to, 211–212
  - Lenin's contribution, freedom of, 210
  - paranoid style in, 155–176
  - pre-modern history, conceptualization, 221
  - Reza Shah's reign (1926–41), impact on, 202–207
  - Russian Revolution, impact on, 210
  - Tabari, contributions to, 222
- Iran-i Imruz*, 133
- Iranshahr* (journal), 101, 133
- plans for funding project, 103–104
- Iran-Soviet Cultural Relations Society, 216
- Iskandari, Muhtaram, 181
- Iskandari, Sulayman, 181
- Islam, history/Iranian national identity, 248–253
- interpretations of Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 251–252
- Jangali rebellion, Islamist portrayal of, 252
- Mutahhari, views of, 250
- Musaddiq era, 253
- rise of Reza Shah (1921–5), 252
- See also* Post-revolutionary Iran
- Islamic political system, 4
- Islamic Republic of Iran, 63
- Islamic Revolution, 3, 24–25, 52–53, 63, 92
- Islamist historians, 234
- Islamist historiography
- post revolutionary Iran
    - decline in Muslim historical scholarship, 241
  - Khomeini, letters of, 236–237
  - Khomeini, vision of the history of the Islamic Revolution, 238
  - major traditions of historiography, 240
  - Royal or court histories, Shakuri's estimation, 240
  - Shakuri, on, 239–243
  - uses of *isnads* and the science of *hadith*, 241
  - See also* Post-revolutionary Iran
  - in school textbooks
  - Iranians, portrayal of, 253
  - Reza Shah earlier protests, 254–255
  - See also* Post-revolutionary Iran
- Ivanov, M.S.
- The Modern History of Iran*, 221–222
- J**
- Jabr*, 218, 219
- fatalisme*, similarity, 218–219
- Jabr-e tarikh*, 223
- Jacque the Fatalist*, 217
- Jahanbani General, 104, 117
- Jahan-e no*, 225
- Jahatgiri-e tabaqati-e Eslam*, 223
- Jalal al-Din Mirza
- Namah-'i Khusravan*, 10
- Jamalzadah, Muhammad 'Ali, 52, 95
- Jandaqi, Yaghma, 16
- Jarayanha-e Asli-e Tarikhnegari dar Dowreh-e Pahlavi* (Fundamental Trends in Historiography During the Pahlavi Era), 257
- Jarayanshenasi-e Tarikhnegari-ha dar Iran-e Mo'aser*, (Studying The Trends in Historiography in Modern Iran), 238–239
- Javanmard*, 192–193
- Javanmardi*, 193
- Javan-zans*, 193
- Jazani, Bizhan, 223
- Judaism in Iranian history, importance of, 242

**K**

- Kamal al-Mulk  
 School of Fine Arts, 135  
 'Karbala Paradigm,' 244–245  
   Mutahhari's reconstruction of the history  
     of Battle of Karbala, 246–248  
   Najafabadi's revision, 245  
*Karnamah-i Munir* (Munir Lahuri), 14  
 Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh  
   'motherland' to 'fatherland,' 187  
   *Shaping the Iranian Nation*, 186  
 Kasravi, Ahmad, 16, 25, 37, 49–50, 56,  
   203, 207, 209  
   comparison with other historians, 207  
   *History of Iran's Constitutionalism*, 207  
   *Tarikh-i Mashruta-yi Iran*, 24  
 Katouzian, Homa, 61  
*Kaveh*  
   locating site of Ferdowsi's grave,  
     100–101  
   Taqizadah's writing on Ferdowsi, 95–96  
*Kawkab-i Durri*, 29  
 Kazantzakis, Nikos, 217  
 Kazimzadah, Firuz, 164  
 Kazimzadah, Hussain, 101  
 Keddie, Nikki R., 164  
   *Roots of Revolution*, 56  
 Kennan, George F.  
   *Russia and the West: Under Lenin and  
     Stalin*, 225  
*Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 227, 228  
*Khadamat-e Motaqabel-e Islam va Iran*,  
   (the Mutual Contributions  
     of Islam and Iran to Each  
     Other), 249–250  
 Khan-Malik Sasani, Ahmad, 159  
 Khiyabani, Muhammad, 63, 67  
 Khomeini, 233  
 Khouzestan, 27, 71, 174  
 Kia, Mana, 177  
 Kirmani, Mirza Aqa Khan, 8, 11, 28, 31,  
   32–33, 40–41, 51, 52, 56, 71  
   iconic death of, 204  
   *Namah-i Bastan*, 9  
   nationalism to socialism, 204

- 'social' historiography, pioneer of, 204  
 Kirmani, Nazim al-Islam, 28, 29, 36, 39,  
   43, 46, 47, 48, 49  
*Kawkab-i Durri*, 44  
   narrative, 43  
*Sur Israfil, Ruh al-Quds*, 46  
*Tarikh-e Bidari-yi Iranian*, 39, 42  
 Kuchik Khan, Mirza, 63, 64, 67  
 Kuhn, Ernst, 95

**L**

- Lambton, Ann, 161  
 Late Qajar period  
   British documentary evidence, 57  
   *discourse of disintegration*, 60–63  
   *evenemental* framework, 56, 58, 60,  
     65, 68  
   history of, 55  
   modern Iranian nation-state,  
     emergence of, 61  
   quasi memoirs, 57–58  
 Leninism, 206–207  
 Lewis, Bernard, 161  
 Leyla and Majnun (fictional story), 246  
 'Line of the Imam,' 233  
 London, Jack, 217  
   *The Iron Heel*, 217

**M**

- Mahabad/Kayumars, 5  
 Mahdavi, Shirin, 184  
 Mahmud, Mahmud, 27, 75–78, 159  
   'A history of Anglo-Iranian Political  
     Relations in the nineteenth  
     Century,' 159  
*Majlis-i Akadimi*, 21  
 Makki, Hussain, 89–90, 160  
   *Tarikh Bist Salah Iran*, 89  
 Male citizenship dominated over female  
   participation, 189  
 Malik al-Mutikalimin, 37  
 Malikzadah, Mahdi, 25, 29, 49, 51, 225  
 Malkum Khan, Mirza, 8, 19–20, 31,  
   39, 67  
   phallic image of masculinity, 187



- Ma'moriat Baraye Vatanam*, 116  
 Manichaean societies, 158  
*Maqatal Nur al-'Aimmeh* (al-Khwarazmi), 245  
 Maragha'i, Zayn al-Abidin  
     *Siyahatnama-yi Ibrahim Bayg*, 42–43  
 Marashi, Afshin, 93  
*Markaz-e Asnad va Amar*, 118  
*Markaz-e Entesharat-e Daftiar-e*  
     *Tablighat-e Islami-e Howzeh-e*  
     *Elmiyyeh-e Qum* (the Publication  
     Center of the Office of Islamic  
     Propagation of the Religious  
     Seminary of Qum), 239  
*Markaz-e Pazhouhesh va Nashre*  
     *Farhang-e Siyasi-e Douran-e*  
     *Pahlavi*, 119  
 Markers of Iran's history, 179  
 Matin-asgari, Afshin, 199  
 Marx, Karl, 205–206  
 Marxism, 207, 214  
     Aryans  
         origin and role of, 202  
         'Bourgeois Revolution,' 209  
         contributions of Kirmani, 204  
         contributions of Tudeh Party  
             translation movement, 216–217  
         contribution to mid-century  
             historiography (1940–50),  
             215–219  
         Farukhi's death, impact on, 213  
         Feda'i movement, racial groups  
             of, 223–224  
         Ideological hybridity, 204  
         Iranian identity, 201  
         Islamicized revolution, 226–230  
         'Islamic Marxism,' 219  
         Islamic-Marxists, role, 209–210,  
             222–223  
         preservation of Iran's heritage  
             Persian language, 202  
         proto-modernist approach, 204  
         Shift to Leninism, 206–207  
             Jazani Bizhan, works of, 223–224  
             Pahlavi nationalism and, 207–215  
         Soviet socialism, 207  
         suppression of, 203  
         *See also* Constitutional Revolution  
             (1906–12)  
 Marxist historical texts  
     example, 218, 230  
 Marxist historiography  
     impact on Iran, 199–200  
     Iranian 'historical consciousness,'  
         foundation for, 203  
     modern political journalism  
         *Iran-e no*, 205  
         *Sur-e Esrafil*, 205  
     modern schools of, 200  
     origin of democrat and political  
         party, 205  
     success, reason for, 202  
     trademark of, 204  
 Marxists (Iranian), Tabari's writings,  
     example of, 222  
 Marxist structuralist framework  
     absence of females, impact on,  
         180–181  
 Matriotic *vs.* patriotic nationalism, 188  
 Mazandaran (Switzerland of Iran), 130  
*Mazhab alaih-e mazhab*, 223  
*Miftah al-Zafar*, 20  
*Millat*, 10, 18, 187  
 Mir'at, Isma'il  
     teaching of architecture ,  
         contributions, 135–136  
 Mir-Jafar Javadzadah (1893–1947), 211  
 Modern Iranian historiography  
     influence of Marxism on, 200  
     Marxism over nationalism, 201  
 Modern Iranian History, 66–67  
 Modernization, 206  
     cultural uniformity via media, 208  
     effect of French Revolution, 152  
     establishing teacher-training  
         college, 127  
     forced capital accumulation, 206  
     government of Reza Shah *vs.* Qajar  
         system, 125–126  
     industrialization, 206

- Kasravi's contributions, 209  
 of lower classes, 184  
 male homoeroticism and  
     homosexuality, role in, 188  
 post-War intellectuals, goals for, 206  
 Reza Shah, 113–120  
 throne to Reza Khan, aid for  
     reforms as Shah, 206  
 Mojahedin Organization, 219  
     *Cheguneh Qur'an biamuzim*, 223  
     *Jonbesh-e Hussein*, 223  
     *Masa'el-e hadd-e jonbesh-e ma*, 223  
     *Shenakht*, 223  
     *Takamol*, 223  
     *Tarikhcheh-e sazman-e Mojahedin-e*  
         *Khalq-e Iran*, 223  
 Moser, Alexandre, 136  
 Mushir al-Dawlah, 51, 52  
 Mussadiq, Muhammad, 160, 161, 166,  
     168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 177,  
     182, 253  
 Mutahhari, Murtiza, 235  
 Mudarris, Hassan, 63, 66  
 Muhammad 'Ali Shah, 26, 27, 37, 159  
 Muhammad Reza Shah, 91, 115, 116,  
     149, 161, 171, 220, 252, 260  
 The Musaddiq era (1951–3), 244  
 Musaddiqists' view of Pahlavis, 160  
 Muzaffar al-Din Shah, 34, 67
- N**
- Nafisi, Sa'id, 87, 109, 207  
     *Pishrafthaie Iran*, 118  
     *Pishrafthay-e Iran Dar Doreieh*  
         *Pahlavi*, 114  
 Najmabadi, Afsaneh, 65, 177, 189,  
     190, 191  
     *Daughters of Quchan*, 65  
     *Women with Mustaches and Men*  
         *without Beards*, 189  
 Najmabadi, Shaykh Hadi, 28  
*Namah-i Khusravan* (Jalal al-Din  
     Mirza), 10  
*Nasr-e Tarikh* Press, 262  
 Nasir al-Mulk, 67  
 Nasrullah Bihishti, Sayyid, 28, 33  
 National character (Iran), 234  
 National historiography  
     agency in, 69–70, 72, 75, 78,  
         82, 87  
     divine effulgence, 73  
     Mahmud, Mahmud, 75–78  
     Makki, Hussain, 89–90  
     memory and amnesia, 78–79  
     Nafisi, Said, 87  
     narrating inauguration of republic in  
         Iran, 79–86  
     nation's past, 70–73  
     Pahlavi era, 70–73, 75, 78–79,  
         86, 87  
     Pirnia, Hassan, 73–75  
     republican campaigning as  
         remembered, 86–87  
     Safa'i, Ibrahim, 87–89  
     territorial nationalism *vs.* linguistic  
         nationalism, 71–72  
     writing, 69  
 National identity  
     ancient names, popularity of, 7–8  
     development of Persian print culture,  
         14, 15  
     European manners and cultures from  
         Iranian, 12–13  
     French and Persian, 12  
     Muslim conquest, 11  
     Persian language, 13  
         simplification and purification, 18  
     reverse progress, 5, 6, 12  
     *Shahnamah*, 7–9  
 Nationalist and conservative forces,  
     158–164  
     association of religious minorities and  
         foreign powers, 162–163  
     Freemasonry, Jews, and Baha'is, focus  
         on, 162  
 Nationalist historiography  
     criticism, 202  
     as a mainstream facing challenges,  
         203  
     *versus* Marxism, 203

National jihad, 187  
 Nation's poet  
     Ferdowsi, Hezareh-ye, 105–110  
     Ferdowsi as, 94  
     location and design of memorial,  
         100–105  
     between orientalism and nationalism,  
         94–99  
 Natiq-Nuri, 'Aliakbar, 63  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal  
     *Glimpses of World history*, 225  
 Nejdi Arabs' attack over Iranians, 160  
 'Neo-Muhammedanism,' 212  
 New Iranian identity, 69, 72  
 Nicolas, A.L.M., 31  
 Ni'matullah Sufis, 28–29  
 1907 Treaty  
     British dominance over Iran  
         through, 159  
     division of Iran, 159  
 The 1919 agreement, 157–158  
 Nobakht, Habibullah  
     *Sardar-e Pahlavi*, 114  
 Nöldeke, Theodore, 96  
     contribution to Ferdowsi  
         revival and Indo-Iranian  
         studies, 96  
     *Das Iranischen Nationalepos*, 96, 97  
     *Nationalepos*, 98  
     *Persischen Studien II*, 96  
     writing on *Shahnamah*, 96  
 Nora, Pierre  
     *Lieux de mémoire*, 59–60  
 Nuri, Shaykh Fazullah, 25, 38, 67  
     outlook of women prostitutes and  
         binarism, 190–191  
     refutations of Constitutionalism, 26  
     *Ruznama-yi Shaykh Fazlullah*  
         or *al-Dawat al-Islamiyya*,  
         (*Lawayih*), 38  
 Nusrat al-Dawlah, 64

## O

'Order of Illuminati,' 156  
 Orientalist scholarship, 97

## P

Pahlavi era, 70–73, 75, 78–79, 86–87,  
     89–91  
     Bolshevism, published in text books, 210  
     design and implementation of  
         architecture, contributions to,  
         134–135  
     Farukhi -Yazdi, Muhammad  
         (1887–1939), writings of, 212  
     historians, 70, 75, 87  
         Mahmud, Mahmud, 75–78  
         Makki, Hussain, 89–90  
         Nafisi, Said, 87  
         Pirnia, Hassan, 73–75  
         Safa'i, Ibrahim, 87–89  
     linguistic nationalism, 72  
     national historiography, 79, 86, 87  
     rise of, reasons for, 210  
 Pahlavi school of historiography  
     Nafisi, Sa'id, 114  
     Reza Shah, 113–120  
 Pahlavi Shahs, reign of, 160  
 Paidar, Parvin  
     centrality of gender, historical  
         analysis, 183  
     *Women and the Political Process in  
         Twentieth-Century Iran*, 183  
 'The Paranoid Style in American  
     Politics,' 156  
 Particularistic theories  
     competence of Western powers, 157  
 Paternalistic machismo, 193  
 Patriotic Women's Society (PWS), 181  
*Payandih bad mashruta-yi Iran*, 40  
*Paygham-e emruz*, 230  
 Persian culture, 23  
 Persian grammar, books on, 18–19  
 Persian language, 13, 202  
 'Persian revolt' (*shurish-i Iran*), 42  
*Persian Revolution*, 24, 38, 40, 41  
 Persian language  
     Iqbal, contributions to, 207–208  
 Pirnia, Hassan, 73–75, 207  
     perception of ethnicity and locality, 75  
     writing pre-Islamic Iran, 74

- Pishraftba' Iran dar Asr Pahlavi*  
 (Development in Iran during the Pahlavi Era), 87
- Pishraftbāye Iran*, 114, 115, 116
- Plekhanov, George V.  
*The Role of the Individual in History*, 218
- Political culture, 63, 70, 71, 73, 91
- Political discourse  
*authorities of delimitation*, 60  
 emergence of Iran as modern nation-state, 61  
*grids of specification*, 61  
*period of disintegration*, 60–63
- Political elites, 67–68
- Political Framework, *see Evenemental framework*
- Political process, 183
- Post-revolutionary Iran  
 Adamiyat, views of, 259  
 history of Islam and Iranian national identity, 248–253  
 interpretations of Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 251–252  
 Jangali rebellion, Islamist portrayal of, 252  
 Mutahhari, views of, 249–251  
 Musaddiq era, 253  
 rise of Reza Shah (1921–5), 252
- Islamist historiography, 233–244  
 decline in Muslim historical scholarship, 241  
 four major traditions of historiography, 240  
 Khomeini, letters of, 236–237  
 Khomeini, vision of the history of the Islamic Revolution, 238  
 Royal or court histories, Shakuri's estimation, 240  
 in school textbooks, 253–256  
 Shakuri, on, 238–244  
 uses of *isnads* and the science of *hadith*, 241  
 publication of collections of primary documents, 259–262  
 selected themes in Iranian history, 236–244  
 shi'ism and ashura, 244–248  
 trends, other, 256–259
- Pre-Islamic Iran, 5–9, 11–12
- Press*  
 media for promoting women historians, 190–191
- Prophet Muhammad and Islam, disrespect to, 242
- Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, 162
- Publication of collections of primary documents, 259–262
- Purdavud, Ibrahim, 16, 95
- Puyan, Amir-Parviz (1946–71), 224
- Q**
- Qajar, Mahmud Mirza, 9
- Qajar rule, 187
- Qavam, Ahmad, 216
- Qaymumat*, 190
- Qazi, Muhammad, translation  
*Decameron*, 217  
*Don Quixote*, 217  
*Ikaria*, 217  
*Jacque the Fatalist*, 217  
*Telemaque*, 217
- Qazvin, 129, 130
- Qazvini, Mirza Muhammad, 41
- Quasi memoirs, 57–58
- Qum, 86, 129, 166, 214, 239
- Qum theological centre  
 establishment by British with support of Reza Khan, 161
- Qur'an, 33, 37, 45, 191, 223
- R**
- Ra'in, Isma'il, 162
- Ram, Haggay, 249
- Rasht, 39, 129, 130
- Rzasulzadah, Muhammad-Amin  
*Critique of the Moderate Party*, 205  
 emergence of 'socialist revolution,' 206

Rzasulzadah (*continued*)  
 equality among men and women, 206  
 'iron law' of history, 205–206  
*Rauh al-Quds*, 45  
 Ravandi, Morteza, 235  
*Raz-e Payandegi*, 119  
 Red Revolution, 220  
 Reed, John  
*Ten Days that Shook the World*, 213  
 Religious conservatives and  
     fundamentalists, 164–167  
 Reverse progress' (*tarraqi-i ma'kus*),  
     6, 12  
 'Revolutionary historiography,' 244  
 Reza Khan/Shah, 25, 55, 113–120, 160  
     accession to power, 70, 86–87  
     first king of Pahlavi dynasty, 79,  
         86, 91  
     grant of oil concessions, 161  
     neo-classical buildings examples, 149  
     as patriarchic nationalist, 152  
     pre-modern architecture, 149  
     as Prime Minister, 80  
     reign (1926–41), 55, 61–62, 67–68  
         accounts of Arani, 215  
         controversies by Kasravi, 207  
         evenemental framework, 60, 68  
         Gilan rebellion, 210  
         'Group of Fifty-Three', 214  
         shifting to Marxism, 206–207  
     rise, (1921–5), 244  
     *Safarname-ie Khouzesan* or  
         *Safarname-ie Mazandaran*, 119  
     Tudeh party, aid to rise of, 211  
     *Tufan*, criticism of, 212  
     White Revolution, criticism,  
         220–221  
 Rolland, Romain, 217  
 Rostam-Kolayi, 184  
*Rowzat al-Islam* (Sa'id al-Din's), 245  
*Rowzat al-Shohada*, 244–245  
*Rowzeh khans* (givers of the ritual sermons  
     commemorating Karbala), 247  
 'Royal historiography,' 234  
 Ruhi, Shaykh Ahmad, 28, 31, 33, 41

Ruknzadah-Adamiyat, Hassan, 64  
 Rustam al Hukama, 6  
*Rustam al-tavarikh*, 6

**S**  
 Sadiq, Isa, 100, 104  
 Safa'i, Ibrahim, 87–89  
     *Kudita Sivvum Isfand va Asar an*, 88  
 Safamanesh, Kamran, 121  
*Safarname-ie Khouzesan*, 114  
     *Abu Dhar: khoda-parast-e sosialist*, 223  
     *Eslamshenasi*, 223  
     *Jabr-e tarikh*, 223  
     *Jahatgiri-e tabaqati-e Eslam*, 223  
     *Mazhab alai-h-e mazhab*, 223  
*Salnameye Donya*, 117  
 Satanic conspirators, 157  
*Sazman-e Parvareshe Afkar*, 114, 208  
 School textbooks, 249  
     Islamist historiography in, 253–256  
 Schumpeter, Joseph, 156  
 Secret Society (*Anjuman-i Makhfi*),  
     29–30  
 Self-awareness of history (Shakuri), 240  
 Sepanta, Abdulhussain, 100, 110  
*Sepid-va-Siah*, (Journal) 117  
 Shah, Ahmad, 159  
 Shah, Muzaffar al-Din, 159  
 Shah, Nasir al-Din, 28, 31, 34, 47, 159  
*Shahanshahi A'lahazrat Reza Shah*  
     *Pahlavi*, 114  
*Shahnamah*, 7–9, 93  
     importance, 7–8  
     Iran and Islam, 7  
     national epic, 94, 96  
 Shahrokh, Kaikhosrow, 100, 104  
 Shah's reforms  
     'feudalism,' abolition, 220–221  
     progress of Iran, 221  
 Shakhshari, Sima, 177  
 Shakuri, Abu al-Fazl, 235  
 Shamim, 'Aliasghar  
     *Iran dar Doreye Saltanat-e A'lahazrat*  
         *Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi*, 116  
 Sharaf al-Dawlah, 37–38

- Shari'ati, 'Ali (1933–77), 222, 223, 228, 257, 261
- Sharif Imami, Jāfar, 302, 303
- Sharif Kashani, Muhammad Mahdi, 36, 48  
*Tarikh-i Sharif*, 29
- Shaykhis, 28–29
- Shi'ism and ashura, 244–248
- Shirazi, Jahangir Khan  
*Sur-i Israfil*, 44
- Shirazi, Mirza Hassan, 31
- Shu'aian, Mustafa (1934–75)  
anti-Leninist, 224  
*Sardar-e jangal*, 225
- Shoraie 'Ali-e Farhang va Honar, 118
- A Short History of Ancient Iran (Tarikh Mukhtasar Iran Qadim)*, 73
- Si-i Tir*, 182
- Silone, Ignazio, 217
- Siroux, Maxime, 136
- Siyahatnama-yi Ibrahim Bag*, 47
- Social Democrat Party (*Ejtema'iyyun Ammiyun*), 205
- Spiegel, Friedrich von  
*Iranische Alterthumskunde*, 96
- Spivak, Gayatri  
'subject-restoration,' 180
- Studies, Iranian, 95, 174, 201–202
- Styles of architecture, 137–146  
building illustrations, 139–146  
destruction of Qajar buildings, 136–137  
European, 137  
impact of Renaissance, 151  
Muhsin Furughi, role of, 147  
urban planning designs, 138  
*See also* Architectural historiography (1921–42)
- Subaltern social history, 180
- Subh-i Azal, Mirza Yahya, 30–32, 162
- Switzerland of Iran, *see* Mazandaran (Switzerland of Iran)
- T**
- Tabari, Ihsan, 211, 222  
de-Stalinization, 222  
*Jostarha'i dar jahanbiniha va jonbeshha-ye ejtema'i dar Iran*, 222
- Tudeh Party, 211, 221
- Tabataba'i, Ayatollah  
Muhammad-Hussein, 49, 67, 214  
*Osul-e falsafeh va raveshe-realism*, 214
- Tabayi' al-Istibdad*, 47
- Tabriz, 15, 17, 39, 49, 129
- Tahirzadah, Karim, 102  
building of Ferdowsi memorial, 101–103
- Tahmasbi  
*Tarikh-e Shahanshahi A'lahazrat Reza Shah Pahlavi*, 118–119
- Tahrir al-'Uqala*, 33
- Talibuf, 52
- Taqiyyeh*, 241
- Taqizadah, Sayyid Hassan, 41, 95, 207  
articles on Ferdowsi in *Kaveh*, 96–97, 99, 101  
importance of European orientalist scholarship, 95–98  
understanding literary genealogy of *Shahnamah*, 98
- Tarikh dar Tarazu* (History in the Balance), 257–258
- Tarikh-e Iran ba'd az Eslām* (the History of Iran after Islam), 258
- Tarikh-i Bidari-yi Iranian*, 43
- Tarikh-i Mashruta-yi Iran*, 49
- Tarikh-i Salatin-i Sasani* (Furughi ), 10
- Tarikhnegari dar Islam* (Islamic Historiography), 257
- Tarikh va Tarikhnegari* (History and Historiography), 257
- Tarz-i Naw*, 14
- Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad, 5, 186, 187  
*abna'-i vatan*, 188  
binarism, 188–189  
gender asymmetries, 188
- Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad  
*Re-Fashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography*, 186
- Tazah ravish-i naw didar*, 16

Tehran, 21, 27, 28, 30, 37, 38, 39, 51,  
52, 58, 64, 70, 71, 81, 83, 84,  
85, 86, 88, 100, 101, 105, 109,  
116, 118, 126, 129, 130, 132,  
134, 135, 137, 142, 145, 146,  
147, 148, 149, 159, 163, 166,  
177, 184, 190, 202, 205, 210,  
213, 220, 225, 226, 260, 262  
Cossack Brigade, 210  
*Tehran Mossavar* (Journal), 117  
*Telemaque*, 217  
Teymurtash, Abdulhussein, 100,  
212, 213  
‘Neo-Muhammedanism,’ 212  
“Tobacco Protest,” 259  
Tobacco Rebellion (1890–1), 159  
Tobacco Regie (1890–2), 164  
Todorov, Tzvetan, 68  
Tolstoi, Leo, 217  
Toumanky (Captain), 163  
Trans-Iranian railway (1933–8), 160  
Tudeh-affiliated Society of Democratic  
Women, 181  
Tudeh Party, 215, 216, 220, 221, 222,  
224, 227, 228, 229, 230, 253  
Turkmanchay Treaty (1828)  
succession of Qajar monarchs by  
Russians, 160  
Twentieth century Iran, historical events  
heroes and anti-heroes of, 177

## U

Umayyad dynasty, 246  
Universalistic theories, 157  
Usulis, 28

## V

*Vatan*  
change in meaning, 186–187

Violation of *namus*, 190  
Vusuq al-Dawlah, 64, 67

## W

Western civilization and Iranian society  
cultural intermediaries between, 158  
White Revolution (1963–70)  
role of Marxism, 220–221  
Wolf, Fritz, 106  
Women  
as *additional* characters to Iranian history  
problem of, 185–189  
deprived of political activities, 181  
practices of openhandedness  
lack of recognition in Iranian  
history, 193  
subservient, 183–185  
Women’s history  
to ‘gendering history’  
transform of, 179  
of the Middle East, 179  
Women’s indexibility over men, 186  
Women’s movement  
extension of, 182  
Women’s *nikukari* and *futuwwat*, 193  
Writing history, scope of, 177–179

## Y

Yarshater, Ehsan  
*Encyclopedia Iranica*, 201

## Z

Zand, Karim Khan, 6  
Zarrinkub, Abdulhussein,  
201, 235  
*Two Centuries of Silence*, 201  
Zill al-Sultan, 34  
Zughlul, 254  
Zuka al-Mulk, 96





