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THE IRANIAN INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION (1906-1911)

This article discusses the origins and distinctive qualities of the first-generation of the Persian intelligentsia. For our research tool we have chosen the socio-historical method as being the most appropriate to describe such a complex and multi-dimensional construct as an intellectual elite. The society's character and historical events initiated a secularization of culture and determined the rise of the intelligentsia, a class distinct from the traditional court elite and clergy, both of which were integral to the native culture.

The problem of contemporary Iranian intellectual elites, their contribution to the making of the state, society, and culture – especially in the context of dialogue between civilizations – is among the most broadly discussed issues in the international arena. The description of 'intellectual' itself tends to be used in combination with political-science terminology such as 'rightist,' 'nationalist,' 'moderate,' etc.; it is frequently forgotten that these terms developed by Western thought do not apply to Iranian realities. Discussions on Iranian intellectual elites are burdened with a European bias which ignores cultural context. Poor knowledge of the peculiarities of the first-generation Persian intelligentsia, its origins, the challenges it faced, and the ways in which that generation managed, or failed to manage new problems set the stage for subsequent generations. For that reason, no treatment of the contemporary intelligentsia is complete without considering the period of struggle for the first Iranian constitution.

1. ORIGIN OF THE TERMS AND ITS SEMANTIC SCOPE

In Persian, *roushanfekr* is now the equivalent of 'intellectual,' a member of the 'intelligentsia' used in the same way as in European scholarship. *Roushanfekr* is a compound of *roushan*, 'bright,' and *fekr*, 'thought.' Lexically similar was the Arabic notion

of *monāwwar al-fekr*, also a compound meaning a man of a 'shining mind.' It applied to the educated elite in Iran before the 1930's.¹

The Iranian thinker Jalal Al-e Ahmad in his study on Persian intellectual elites *Dar khedmat va khiyānat-e roushanfekrān* (On the Loyalty and Treason of the Intelligentsia) pointed out that the use of the Persian *roushanfekr* as a direct equivalent of the European *intellectual* was erroneous² as it suggests identification of equating phenomena that belong to two different cultural circles: Iran and the West. Al-e Ahmad said that, considering the social aspect of the phenomenon (that is, the fact that educated elites claimed leadership roles in fostering new ideas), they should rather be called 'bargozide' (chosen) or 'pizāhang' (pioneer, precursor).³

The European terms 'intellectual' or member of the 'intelligentsia' carry dictionary meanings of 'one who understands,' 'explains (a problem).'⁴ The Persian equivalents closest in meaning are 'hushmand' (reasonable, sagacious, wise) and 'fahmide' (one who has understood).⁵

An intellectual elite's major social roles include 'generating values, enriching and sustaining the continuity of society's mental culture'⁶ and co-participating in the dissemination of cultural goods via educational establishments, magazines, informal organizations like clubs and associations, and also participating in the state's administrative system. As can be seen, a sociological approach indirectly points to intellectuals as a cultural category. The intelligentsia in economically backward countries occupies a special status as it 'links a given country with the world and sets patterns for external influences and native elements alike.'⁷ In a historical perspective, a not unimportant factor is a clash of cultures⁸ which forces the rise of a new group capable of transforming culturally alien values and integrating them into native practice. Cultural confrontation which results in the rise of the intelligentsia is a consequence of stagnating social norms and patterns of action which are no longer appropriate to the situation. As Denis Martindale observed, 'The intelligentsia ap-

¹ In the 1930's the Persian Academy, in an effort to purify the Persian language of foreign borrowings, replaced the Arabic word *monāwar al-fekr* with its Persian equivalent *roushanfekr*. Cf. F. Jahanbakhsh, 'The Emergence and Development of Religious Intellectualism in Iran', *Historical Reflections*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 469-490, at <http://www.drstorosz.com/PDF/E-CMO-20040000-Religios_Intellectualism_in_Iran.pdf>.

² J. Al-e Ahmad, *Dar khedmat va khiyānat-e roushanfekran*, Tehrān 1347 (1969), p. 20.

³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴ Latin *intellectualis* – 'perceptive', from *intellectus*, p.p. of *intellegerē* – 'perceive', 'discern', 'understand'. Cf. 'intelektualista' in W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, at <<http://www.slownik-online.pl/index.php>>.

⁵ Cf. Al-e Ahmad, *Dar khedmat...*, p. 20.

⁶ Z. Bokszański (ed.), *Encyklopedia socjologii*, Warszawa 1998, p. 335.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁸ A clash of cultures is a confrontation between individuals and groups and between their products like tradition, actions and their meanings, material artefacts, etc. on a plane of their mutual differences (different cultural distinctions) as part of specific, different cultural identities. Cf. K. Olechnicki, P. Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny*, Toruń 1997, p. 257.

pears where society perceives stagnation in norms and patterns of action which need alteration.⁹

The intelligentsia can also be a political category if we consider its attitude towards the official ruling class and its involvement in building ideologies and social-political programmes. Czepulis-Rastenis stressed that the intelligentsia was that group which actively fought for the democratization of social relations and defended independence.¹⁰

Our subject here is a contemporary phenomenon whose birth is connected with the nineteenth century history of Persia. The rise of national awareness, the concepts of nation and nationality, governance and civil society are issues linked with the eighteenth century and the French Revolution in Western Europe, with the nineteenth century in Poland and Russia, and at the turn of the twentieth century in Iran.¹¹ The intelligentsia is a group of people engaged with contemporary issues and modernization, so we can quote Zbigniew Bokszański as saying that 'although from the beginning of human civilization there existed communities pursuing intellectual activities, we reserve the term for a group characteristic for contemporary developed societies, recognized and named only at the outset of the twentieth century.'¹²

2. BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BRITAIN. THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION OF PERSIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the nineteenth century, Persia became a subject of interest for several European powers, namely Britain, France, and Russia. It lay in a strategically important location, on the way to British India, which Napoleon Bonaparte was planning to conquer. In 1801, Persia was visited by Captain John Malcolm, who concluded with Fath Ali Shah a treaty whereby Britain would deliver military materiel and technical support in return for Persia's assistance if Napoleon attacked India.¹³ Alliances were short-lived and fluctuated with changing political interests.

Persia's dependence on Russia and the nature of the pressures exerted by it were sealed by two wars that Persia lost and the subsequent treaties signed at Guliston (1814) and Turkmenchai (1828).¹⁴ Following both acts of surrender, the then ruling

⁹ D. Martindale, 'The Sociology of Intellectual Creativity' in R. Mohan (ed.), *The Mythmakers. Intellectuals and the Intelligentsia in Perspective*, New York 1987, p. 69.

¹⁰ R. Czepulis-Rastenis, 'Klasa umysłowa'. *Inteligencja Królestwa Polskiego 1832-1862*, Warszawa 1973, p. 395.

¹¹ On the construction of the notion of the nation and a sense of nationality in Iran, see Szāhroch-e Meskub, *Hoviyat-e irāni va zabān-e fārsi* (Iranian Identity and the Persian Language), Teheran 1383 (2005).

¹² Z. Bokszański (ed.), *Encyklopedia...*, p. 334.

¹³ N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran. Źródła i konsekwencje rewolucji*, trans. by I. Nowicka, Kraków 2007, p. 36.

¹⁴ E. Abrahamian, *Irān bein-e do engelāb. Az mashrute tā engelāb-e eslāmi* (Iran between the Two Revolutions. From Constitutional Revolution to Islamic Revolution), trans. by K. Firuzmand, H. Shamsāwari, M. Modirshānechi, Tehrān 1377 (1998), p. 67.

Qajar dynasty lost Georgia, Armenia, and part of Azerbaijan,¹⁵ and further pledged not to maintain a fleet in the Caspian Sea. Moreover, it renounced any claims to Afghanistan and paid to Czar Alexander I a tribute of three million pounds.¹⁶ Both instruments of surrender also contained provisions concerning trade which allowed Russia to establish its trade representative offices anywhere in Iran, and Russian merchants were only charged minimum customs duties and were given the freedom to travel throughout the country without hindrance.¹⁷

To counteract Russian influence in Persia, Britain also joined in the game, resulting in two treaties concluded in 1836 and 1841 which afforded Britain the same privileges that Russia enjoyed.¹⁸ Moreover: 'The document of 1841 contained the famous 'Most Favored State Clause' which was subsequently extended to apply to treaties with other countries, which meant that all foreign powers presented a united front in their desires to extend any privileges granted by treaty to one of them, so that all new entitlements obtained by one state were automatically accorded to all.'¹⁹

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russians and the British began to expand their economic influence in Persia by obtaining licenses for specific business pursuits. In 1872, British Baron Reuter won a license that was unprecedented in the history of international relations of any state. In the words of Lord Curzon, it was 'the most complete and astonishing transfer of all industrial assets of any kingdom into foreign hands that could be dreamt of.'²⁰ The deal was subsequently rescinded due to Russian pressure and the displeasure of the British government itself, which, it turned out, did not fully support its subject's actions, but it still cost Persia more concessions to Britain.

Russia made an important move and obtained another tool for political manipulation by opening a Russian Bank in Teheran (1891). It lent money to Persian princes, high-ranking officials, and clergymen, which led to the economic dependence of the Persian ruling elite.²¹ It was at the same time a response to Reuter's Imperial Bank of Persia which had been established slightly earlier (known as the British Bank) in Teheran, which was one of the consequences of the cancellation of Reuter's license of 1872.

In 1890, an indebted Shah Naser ad-Din granted to a British company a monopoly for the production, sale, and export of tobacco. Iranians and Russians joined

¹⁵ For detailed provisions of the treaties, cf. B.P. Balayan, *Mezhdunarodniye otnosheniya Irana v 1813-1828*, Erevan 1967, p. 30.

¹⁶ The clauses were already present in the treaty of Gulistan, while the act of surrender of Turkmenchai confirmed the provisions of the previous document.

¹⁷ E. Abrahamian, *Irān bein-e...*, p. 67.

¹⁸ Cf. N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁰ G. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, London 1892, Vol. 2, pp. 470-471, quoted by N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 51.

²¹ P. Szlanta, *Persja w polityce Niemiec w latach 1906-1914 na tle rywalizacji rosyjsko-brytyjskiej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 22.

hands in protesting against this measure. The former were hit economically by the Shah's decision, the latter demanded that equal privileges for European powers to be respected. Joining the fray were the Shiite clergy who issued a *fatwa*.²² This was the first mobilization of Persian society against foreign economic exploitation and their country's indolent rulers. It created a precedent which would be used as proof that successful opposition to the rulers was possible. It was also at that moment that the clergy first made their influence on political issues apparent.

3. THE FIRST MEMBERS OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA: MIRZĀ MALKOM-KHAN, MIRZĀ TAQI-KHAN FARĀHANI AMIR KABIR, JAMAL AD-DIN ('AFQANI')

Malkom-khan, an Iranian Armenian, was born in 1833 in a Christian district of Isfahan.²³ The young future reformer and advocate of change in Iran's political and social life was from the beginning educated in secular, Western settings. Abrahamian reported: 'His father, a graduate of a British school in India, taught English and French first in Isfahan, and later at the royal court in Teheran. An avid advocate of Western civilization, he sent Malkom-khan to a French Catholic school in Isfahan, and later obtained for him a government scholarship to study engineering in France.'²⁴ Malkom-khan began studies at a technical college in Paris in 1850, and returned home five years later as one of the most highly educated people in his country. His stay in France not only gave him concrete knowledge and professional skills, but it also helped form his worldview, enabling him to set his future objective which was to bring about reforms in the spirit of the European Enlightenment. During his European stay, Malkom-khan became acquainted with the theories of the French socialist Saint-Simon and with Comte's 'controversial religion of humanism.'²⁵ He also made contacts with Masonic organizations.

On returning to Teheran, Malkom-khan began work as a lecturer and translator in Dār al-Fonun.²⁶ He started to use the achievements of European science and

²² *Fatwa* – a religious opinion issued by a *mujtahid*, a Shiite clergyman engaged in *ejtehad*, i.e., an effort to assess problems from a religious point of view. The *fatwa* stated that the Shah's action was incompatible with sharia.

²³ Biographical details for Malkom-khan vary depending upon the source: Abrahamian gives his year of birth as 1833 (cf. E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 35), while Hāshemiān as 1831 (cf. A. Hāshemiān, *Tahavolāt-e farhangi-ye Irān dar doue-ye Qājāriye va madrese-ye Dār al-Fonun* (Cultural Changes in Iran in the Qajar Period and the Dār al-Fonun School), Tehrān 1379 (2001), p. 332). Similar discrepancies appear for other dates.

²⁴ E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 65.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Dār al-Fonun was Iran's first Western-style school. Founded by Mirza Taqi-khan Farāhani Amir Kabir and opened officially on 28 January 1852, it taught military subjects, foreign languages, and medicine. In its more than 30-year existence, it was the only modern educational establishment. Not until the end of the nineteenth century did it see competition from the Military School

technology for the good of Persia. His endeavours had a practical side to them, such as his active part in the building of a telegraph network or designing changes to the Arab alphabet in order to facilitate study and printing. His ideological involvement included his demands for respect for the rights of the individual and regulating the relations between individuals and the state by means of a constitution. Mirzā Malkom-khan was the first Persian reformer to possess knowledge of liberal institutions in France and England. In his booklet entitled *Katabche-ye jibi jā daftar-e tanzimāt* (A Pocket Book for a Proposed Reform),²⁷ he first introduced in Persia such new terms as: *qānun* (codified law), *eslāhāt* (reforms), *majles-e shourā* (assembly), *mellat* (nation), *melli* (national), *hoquq-e mellat* (rights of nation).²⁸ The chief postulate which embraced all reforms was rationalization (*entezām*) of the existing system by ordering, that is, codifying, the law, and separating the three branches of government: the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary.²⁹

In 1859, Malkom-khan established Farāmushkhāne (the House of Forgetfulness), an organization created in the mould of the European Masonic lodges. It gathered educated elites: graduates of Dār al-Fonun, representatives of the aristocracy, and members of the royal family. Since Malkom-khan believed that no ruler could govern effectively without broad social participation, he treated Farāmushkhāne as a tool towards promoting broader participation in Iran's political life.³⁰

Malkom-khan's social and political activism may be divided into two periods, both directly relevant to the thinker's attitude towards the reigning Shah. Until the 1890's, he was not immune to the 'liberal delusion,' believing that it was possible for an enlightened monarch to introduce top-down reforms. He wrote, 'I will prove to the world of what great works a just Shah is capable of if he is minded to restore his nation.'³¹

The Shah was initially enthusiastic about Malkom-khan's reformist plans and supported him, but he soon yielded to pressure from Shiite clergy who accused the founder of Farāmushkhāne of spreading heresy. The failure of Malkom-khan's designs for reform by an enlightened Shah was summed up by Abrahamian: 'Naser ad-Din banned the association, shelved *Daftar-e tanzimat*, and sentenced Malkom-khan to exile in Turkey.'³²

(*madrāse-ye nezāmi*) and the School of Political Science (*madrāse-ye olum-e siyāsi*). For more on the school, cf. A. Hāshemiān, *Tahavolāt-e...*

²⁷ 'Tanzimat' – a term borrowed from Turkey referring to the period of social and political changes which transformed the Ottoman Empire through the establishment of institutions modelled on Western European practice. Cf. 'Tanzimat' in J.F. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York 2001, Vol. 4, p. 183.

²⁸ Ali Akbar Sa'idi Sirjāni, 'Constitutional Revolution' in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, New York 2002, Vol. 6, p. 163.

²⁹ J. Gurney, N. Nabavi, 'Dār al-Fonun' in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. 6, p. 663.

³⁰ N.A. Talibov, *Obshchestvennaya mysl' v Iranie b XIX – nachale XX v.*, Moskva 1988, p. 53.

³¹ Quoted in N.A. Talibov, *Obshchestvennaya mysl'...*, p. 58.

³² E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 66.

The ban on Farāmushkhāne opened a second period in Malkom-khan's ideological evolution which led him to develop a radical attitude towards the court and the adoption of the stance of a lone advocate of reform. In this period, he became highly critical of court elites and Shiite clergy. Already on his way to Turkey, Malkom-khan wrote *Sayyāhi guyad* (The Traveler's Tale) – a satire on the trivial, euphemistic, mendacious, vague language of officials, court poets, and scribes, their lavish lifestyle, their intoxication with all the trappings of power. He similarly lambasted the Shiite clergy, whom he depicted as being intolerant, ignorant, distrustful of modern science, using the unintelligible Arabic language, and exploiting Muslim believers for a living. Apart from its social and political message, the satire was of considerable literary value; it was the first such clearly written work in the Persian language.³³

Malkom-khan's ten-year exile ended in his return to Teheran in 1871, when Naser ad-Din felt a need to reprise the reform and made Malkom-khan a special advisor to the then minister Mirza Hoseyn-khan Sepahsalār.³⁴ Yet barely two years later Malkom-khan was appointed Persian minister to the government of Great Britain and remained in this position until 1889.³⁵ He kept voicing his proposals in the *Qānun* (Law) newspaper he had established. At that time, the London-based *Qānun* was the only independent Iranian paper apart from the *Achtar* (Star) appearing in Stamboul.³⁶ His articles proclaimed the need for and superiority of a codified legal system to the then existing laws exercised by ulema and a corrupt government headed by Min as-Soltan.³⁷ The first issue of the *Qānun* was printed in 1890. In the editorial, Malkom-khan wrote, 'God blessed Iran. Unfortunately, his blessing has been negated by a lack of law.'³⁸ Subsequent issues described laws that would assure social progress and the security of citizens.³⁹

Malkom-khan left behind many works of literature and journalism which addressed the problems of power and human rights [*Osul-e ādamiyat* (Principles of Humanism), *Nedā-je adālat* (Voice of Justice)]; proffered detailed proposals of reforms [*Tanzim-e lashkar va majles-e edāre* (Military Reform and Administrative Assembly),

³³ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁴ Hajji Mirzā Hoseyn Qazvini – known as *sepahsalār*, military commander-in-chief, also called *moshir ad-doule*, councilor of state. Cf. 'Sepahsalār', *Loqatnāme-ye Dehchodā*, at <<http://loghatnaameh.com>>.

³⁵ N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 55.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

³⁷ Amin as-Soltan – the last of the highest viziers of Naser ad-Din shah, remained in office for the first few months of the reign of Mozaffar ad-Din shah. Later, when he was abroad, he became close to Malkom-khan, cf. P. Afshari, *Sadr-e ā'zambā-ye selsele-ye Qājāriye* (The Grand Viziers of the Qajar Dynasty), Tehrān 1372 (1993), p. 241.

³⁸ S. Malkom-khan, 'God Has Blessed Iran', *Qānun*, No. 1 (February 1890), quoted in E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 68.

³⁹ Banned in Persia, it was published in London over a period of two years which amounted to 41 issues. Chaikin stressed its impact on the constitutional movement: 'The paper's success and its importance in the pre-revolutionary period were such that after the constitution was adopted it was reprinted.' K. Chaikin, *Kratki ocherk noveishei persidskoi literatury*, Moskva 1928, p. 24.

Dastgāh-e divān (Administrative Court), *Rafiq va vazir* (Friend and Vizier)]; discussed at length mutual relations between Iran and Europe and ways of inculcating in Iran the achievements of European civilization [*Daftār-e qānun* (Book of Laws), *Mabdā-ye tarraqi* (Sources of Progress), *Ijād-e bānk* (Starting a Bank), *Qānun-e asāsi-ye doulat* (State Constitution)]; criticized the ruling elite and called for struggle against the ruler's autocracy and despotism [*Osul-e mazhab-e divāniyān* (Religious Principles of Officials), *Chahārchashmān* (Amazement), *Harf-e qarib* (Foreign Words)]; exposed the backwardness and fanaticism of the clergy and stressed the need to reform the alphabet [*Enshallāh māshallāh* (It Will Be as God Wills), *Roushani* (Brightness), *Sheikh va vazir* (Sheikh and Vizier), *Ferq-e kajbinān* (The Sect of Dissenters), and the already mentioned satire *Sayyāhi guyad* (Traveler's Tale)].

One can repeat Talipov and say that the central issue in all writings by Malkom-khan is a 'turn to the West,'⁴⁰ understood as a reflection upon Western civilization in the context of Iran's problems at the time: the political and economic supremacy of foreign powers, weak and corrupt authority, economic backwardness, and the poverty of the vast majority of society. Given the absence of effective central government and of an extensive system of secular education, it was practically impossible to stir society at large to renewed activity. Malkom-khan was well aware that without broad mobilization and determined action, progress would be a hollow word. His calls for the brotherhood of men united by shared ideals resounded to the belief that men might shape their environment by work and study. Typical for the Enlightenment, this faith formed Malkom-khan's attitude towards Islam: he tried to understand the nature of Islam, and compared it to Christianity, and draw conclusions about the fundamental differences between European civilization and native Iranian culture. To him, falsehoods about facts were one obstacle in absorbing the attainments of European civilization. He said, 'I assure you that the little progress made in Iran and Ottoman Turkey (primarily in Iran) results from the truth that some people have adopted Western views and attitudes and instead of admitting that they have sprung from Europe, England or Germany, they claimed that we have nothing in common with Europeans, and those thoughts and principles were indeed the true thoughts and principles of Islam which foreigners borrowed from us.'⁴¹

To sum up the contribution of Malkom-khan, we may say that he represented a Western-style intellectual, a new phenomenon in the Persian world. This new-type mental framework was founded on secular education in the Western spirit, ideals of liberalism, humanism, and socialism, and an impulse for action stemming from reason and critical assessment. Uppermost in Malkom-khan's mind was the mutual relationship between the West and Iran in all its aspects: economic, social, political, and cultural. He saw new challenges in questions about the nature of authority, the making of a modern nation and civil society, the role of religion in social transfor-

⁴⁰ N.A. Talibov, *Obshchestvennaya mysl*..., p. 63.

⁴¹ Quoted in J. Tabātabāi, *Maktab-e Tabriz va mabāni-ye tajaddodxābi* (The Tabriz School and the Foundations of Modernization), Tabriz 1385 (2007), p. 105.

mation, a need to institute a system of public education and development of social awareness, and many others as well. He faced those challenges, giving each an answer in the form of concrete proposals. As he moved from faith in 'enlightened absolutism' to staunch criticism of despotism and the corrupt ruling elites, he expressed his belief in the ideals of action for the common good rather than for special interests. This attitude brought him close to that of a typical Russian intellectual: determinedly opposed to authority, at once a product of the system and its fiercest opponent.⁴²

A thinker of an equal calibre was Mirzā Taqi-khan Farāhani, later known as Amir Kabir. He differed from Malkom-khan in his basic worldview and the vision of the ulterior purpose he wanted to serve: first of all he wanted to strengthen the central authority within Iran. While Malkom-khan envisioned a modernized Iran which emphasized man and his rights to liberty and happiness, Mirzā Taqi-khan Farāhani wanted the state to be at the heart of his reformist agenda. He was brought up in a courtly environment in Tabriz as a servant in the family of Qā'em Maqāma Abdul al-Qāsema Farāhani.⁴³ As the Russian scholar Kuznetsova noted, Taqi-khan – 'Lived among the most enlightened and free-thinking representatives of the ruling class of his time: the successor of Abbas Mirza, the great Qā'em Maqāma Abdul al-Qāsema Farāhani and his entourage, who could freely dispute the chief problems of Iran's domestic and international policies, trying to find ways to military and economically strengthen the country, improve its international prestige and cultural advancement. This kind of an environment could, and did, produce ideas of enlightened absolutism which then Taqi-khan tried to implement.'⁴⁴

When Taqi-khan came of age, he joined the civil service first for his protector and then as a secretary of the army.⁴⁵ His views on matters of government and the state were influenced by his participation in diplomatic missions, first to Russia with the embassy of Khosrou-mirza which had to explain to Czar Nicholas I the circumstances of the death of Alexander Griboyedov⁴⁶ to prevent any aggravation of dip-

⁴² A. Lipatow, 'Rosyjska inteligencja wobec władzy: Od samostanowienia do samozagłady' (The Russian Intelligentsia vs. the Authorities: From Self-determination to Self-destruction) in H. Kowalska (ed.) *Inteligencja. Tradycja i nowe czasy*, Kraków 2001, p. 220.

⁴³ Qā'em Maqām Mirzā Abdul al-Qāsem Farāhani Tehrāni (1189-1251 lunar hijra) nicknamed *qā'em maqām*, 'governor' in 1237 (lunar dating). He was widely educated and erudite. Apart from possessing strong organisational skills which he used in the military and as a secretary (as reflected in his title of mirzā), he was also a poet. Cf. '*qā'em maqām*', *Loqatnāme-ye Dehkhodā*, at <<http://loghat-naameh.com>>.

⁴⁴ N.A. Kuznetsova, 'Politicheskoye i sotsialno-ekonomicheskoye polozhenie Irana v kontse XVIII – piervoioi polovinie XIX v.' in L.N. Kalugina (ed.), *Ocherki novoi istorii Irana (XIX – nachalo XX veka)*, Moskva 1978, p. 102.

⁴⁵ E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 53.

⁴⁶ He was one of the czar's subjects, known in Russia as the author of the first political comedy *Woe from Wit*, which ridiculed the mentality of the Russian nobility in the early nineteenth century. He died while in Persia in 1829, murdered by a mob incited by the ulema. Nikki Keddie has located the causes of the incident in Griboyedov's anti-Iranian stance and his disregard for 'the fundamental rules of Persian propriety and honour'; cf. N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 40.

lomatic relations, and later to Turkey, to a conference in Erzerum, which was to resolve Persian-Turkish border disputes. His participation in these difficult talks, in the presence of Russian and British representatives as guarantors of any settlement that was reached, gave Taqi-khan the political experience he needed. It was then that he became acquainted with the Turkish reform programme, *Tanzimat*, and conceived the thought of introducing similar changes in Iran. During his four-year stay in the Ottoman state, he perfected his Turkish which he had studied when he served in Azerbaijan.⁴⁷

In June 1848, Tabriz witnessed an eruption of unrest caused by conflicts between Muslims and Armenians. Taqi-khan was dispatched to put an end to hostilities which led to the capture by troops of Naser ad-Din himself. From then on 'he became a close aide to the young successor, and, after the latter became Shah, the most likely candidate for the first vizier.'⁴⁸ Taqi-khan's appointment to grand vizier led to strong opposition from the courtly circle and Shiite ulema. The former believed him to be a commoner and revolted at seeing him ascend to such an elevated position. He had indeed been given a huge amount of responsibility, for Naser ad-Din placed in him his entire trust in awarding him unlimited authority to act. In a personally written letter, the Shah declared, 'We have placed in your hands all matters relating to Iran and hold you responsible for all good and evil that will follow. At the same time we have made you the first person in Iran and in your just and skilful behaviour towards the people we place in you our complete confidence. In no one else do we invest such trust, which is why we have written this letter.'⁴⁹ The unlimited prerogatives received from the Shah were confirmed by Amir Kabir himself in conversation with prince Dolgoruki: 'I accepted the position on the condition that my advice would be heard and the Shah would consider my proposals. Otherwise I would have become his subject rather than serve him.'⁵⁰ Taqi-khan's broad powers were the chief argument of the court party headed by Naser ad-Din's mother which they used to thwart the prime minister. The Shah's mother said, 'But you cannot give one vizier such unlimited power and privilege.'⁵¹ Naser ad-Dina was warned that his trusted reformer might decide to use his broad entitlements to seize full power for himself.⁵²

Once made the grand vizier, Amir Kabir proceeded to prepare the ground for reforms which were to extend to three main areas: administration, the military, and education. Establishing the Dār al-Fonun school which Amir Kabir planned as part of his reform gave an opportunity to import cultural influences from the West and offered an example how to start and run educational and cultural establishments dif-

⁴⁷ D.M. Anarkulova, *Sotsialno-politicheskaya borba v Iranie v seredine XIX v.*, Moskva 1983, p. 41.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ P. Afshari, *Sadr-e a'zamhā-ye...*, p. 147.

⁵⁰ D.M. Anarkulova, *Sotsialno-politicheskaya...*, p. 42.

⁵¹ P. Afshari, *Sadr-e a'zamhā-ye...*, p. 153.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

ferent from traditional religious schools. Ahmad Hāshemiyān wrote about the importance of Dār al-Fonun:

‘The idea to open Dār al-Fonun at the time brought about deep changes in the future of culture, learning, and the military in Iran. The school not only opened doors to new knowledge, but it also became a pillar and foundation for scholarly and cultural institutions being systematically created according to models used in developed European societies. In Iran, it brought victory to the conviction that the appearance of schools and regulated administrative, scholarly, cultural, military structures make for fertile soil for progress and for the incipient enlivening of society. The building of social order should also utilize the knowledge and skills of experts and specialists.’⁵³

All the endeavours which would eventually make up the monumental reform programme of the grand vizier were interdependent. Amir Kabir showed farsightedness and exceptional talent to see any change in a wider context. A military reform would not be possible without a reorganized administration while progress in implementing Western scientific and technological advances could not be achieved without a thorough transformation of the education system. Establishing Dār al-Fonun, creating the conditions for translation and publication of foreign textbooks, starting the first Persian newspaper, *Ruznāme-ye vaqāye-ye ettefāqiye* (Gazette of Current Events)⁵⁴ – all gradually constituted the foundations for the future development of a secular system of education.

If the greatness of a man is to be measured by the number of his enemies, then Amir Kabir stood at the forefront of the thinker-reformers of his day: he was opposed by the court party, Shiite clergy, landowners stripped of some of their income, tribal chieftains, and also the representatives of Britain and Russia – who feared that Iran might become strengthened by Amir Kabir’s attempts to centralize the state’s authority.

A picture of the emergent Persian intelligentsia would be incomplete without considering the thinker Jamal ad-Din (‘Afqāni’) from a family of Shiite clergy. He received a traditional education such as was then offered by religious schools and continued his studies at the prestigious madrasah in Najaf, Iraq. Jamal ad-Din’s intellectual pursuits were described by Abrahamian: ‘Jamal ad-Din’s inquisitive mind led him to unconventional interests: first to Shaykhism,⁵⁵ then to Babism, and finally to India in search of modern sciences. Later Jamal ad-Din said that he took interest in modern science because ‘traditional teaching gave him nothing.’⁵⁶

The worldview of Jamal ad-Din Afqāni is notable for tending to combine religious and nationalist elements when developing tools to mobilize society in order

⁵³ A. Hāshemiyān, *Tabavolāt-e...*, p. 91.

⁵⁴ Cf. J. Rypka (ed.), *Historia literatury perskiej i tadżyckiej*, trans. by B. Majewska, D. Reychmanowa, Warszawa 1970, p. 210.

⁵⁵ Shaykhism – an Islamic movement within Shia Islam founded by sheikh Ahmad Ahsai (1754-1826). It contained philosophical and mystical elements and a belief that there always exists a man in the world who can interpret the will of a hidden imam and communicate with him as the ‘fourth pillar’. Cf. N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 42.

⁵⁶ E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 62.

to fight imperialism. As Abrahamian remarked, Afqāni 'stressed not the spiritual but the social aspects of religion; he argued that religion was a useful tool uniting individuals, by nature lazy, greedy, and treacherous men, into a community capable of resisting the West.'⁵⁷ He favoured pan-Islamism, an idea of uniting Muslims in Islamic religion and opposing Western expansion. His view that religion was a tool to build bonds between members of society helped him believe it would be possible to unite religious and non-religious opponents of foreign intervention in Iran. While one-sided, it cannot be denied that this notion has some merit: just like Malkomkhan and Amir Kabir, Afqāni believed that it was obvious that the first step towards changing Iran was to free the country from foreign domination.

As for other members of the intellectual elite, it is interesting to note Afqāni's attitude towards authority as represented by the Shah. At first it was not unfavourable. Jamal ad-Din wished to see himself as an advisor to the ruler, an aspiration that Naser ad-Din himself had first encouraged: while travelling in Europe in 1889, the Shah met Afqāni in Munich and invited him to Teheran.⁵⁸ The Shah's favour soon ran out, however: Naser ad-Din became concerned over Jamal ad-Din's popularity and his persistent calls for struggle against Britain. Unable to persuade the Shah, Afqāni turned to the reform-minded intelligentsia and the conservative clergy, using arguments which resonated with each group in question. Speaking to intellectuals, he emphasized the need for reform in politics and education, while to the clergy he advised undertaking a war against the hated West.⁵⁹ Nikki Keddie called Afqāni 'one of the architects (...) of an uncommon alliance of religious circles with radicals.'⁶⁰ In reality, the thinker pointed to the common enemy of them both – Britain. He did not try to capture and verbalize a shared ideological platform for both groups – perhaps because such common ground did not exist. Afqāni used logical arguments to explain the distinct status and social role of Islam and to acquire an instrument helpful in political action; he sidestepped the purely spiritual aspect of religion and we may surmise that it did not play a fundamental role in his own spirituality where traditional Shiite education mingled with Sufi elements and the idiosyncrasies of his own temperament.⁶¹ Jamal ad-Din's idea to fuse secular circles of radical intellectuals with the conservative clergy suggests that he anticipated the appearance of a new-type of intellectual who uses a syncretism of various religious and philosophical currents in order to choose a par-

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

⁵⁸ K.S. Lambton, *Irān dar asr-e Qājār* (Iran in the Qajar period), trans. by S. Fasihi, Tehrān 1375 (1997), p. 73.

⁵⁹ Cf. E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions...*, p. 64.

⁶⁰ N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 56.

⁶¹ 'The depth of Jamal ad-Din's religious feeling is dubious; he never married, but sought the company of women without any religious scruple. But such absence of scruple does not mean that his earlier instruction [in a Shiite school – M.A.] was forgotten: his carefree manner and reluctance to consider the price of his own behavior had its roots in his Sufi learning as well as in his own temperament.' Cf. R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet. Religion and Politics in Iran*, New York 1985, p. 184.

ticular interpretation of a religion. Afqāni, like the intellectual he prefigured, departed from his religious upbringing and did not use the intellectual tools given to him by the traditional madrasah where he studied because they were incapable of meeting contemporary challenges, like the social and political problems that Iran faced. He was a harbinger of a budding radicalism, an outgrowth of religious sentiment, but drew strength from denying the existing order perpetuated by conservative Shiite clergy. When thinkers like Jamal ad-Din considered Islam, they did not discover the sources of religion but rather formulated arguments to use against the existing political and social structure. Afqāni did not stand up in defence of Islam's values in the way that the mullahs did⁶² (although, of course, the Shiite clergy may be accused of simultaneously defending their own interests; after all they owned landed estates and exerted considerable political influence and used for their own ends the misery and discontent of bazaar merchants who suffered from British and Russian domination), but rather he saw Islam as a useful tool. Jamal ad-Din Afqāni's thought exerted a great deal of influence over his contemporaries and on later intellectual elites. In 1895, exiled in Istanbul, he met with his devoted disciple Mirzā Rezā Kermani and suggested the idea of assassinating the Shah. Naser ad-Din died at the hands of an assassin on 1 May 1896, when he was about to celebrate the half-century of his reign (calculated according to the lunar calendar) in the mausoleum of Shahzāde Abdolazim in Rey.⁶³

4. MASHRUTE – FROM THE EARLIEST PROTESTS TO THE PASSAGE OF THE CONSTITUTION

The reformist aspirations of the intelligentsia found their full expression in the events which historians call the Constitutional Revolution, *enqelāb-e mashrute*. As it unfolded, the Persian intelligentsia acquired its intellectual maturity and defined its own place in the social and political structure of Iran at the turn of the twentieth century. It then attempted to resolve the most disputed questions of the preceding century: attitudes towards religious tradition, the Shah's despotic rule, and liberation from foreign domination by Britain and Russia.

An important part in preparing the ground for change was played by the Shiite clergy, of whom the most influential in society and in the proceedings of the Ist Majlis⁶⁴ were seyyed Mohammad Tabātabāi, seyyed Abdallāh Behbahani, and sheikh al-eslām Fazlullāh Nuri.⁶⁵ These men may be thought of as being representative of

⁶² 'They [the mullahs – M.A.] also spoke in large part as guardians of certain values: they feared for islam.' Cf. R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle...*, p. 216.

⁶³ Cf. N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 59.

⁶⁴ The Ist Majlis inaugurated in October 1906 and continued until June 1908. See N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, pp. 64-65.

⁶⁵ Fazlullāh Nuri (1259-1321/1843-1909) studied Shiite law in Nadjafa along with Mirza Mohammad Shirāzi. After he completed his studies, he returned to Teheran to become *mardja'e taqlid*. In the constitutional movement he played an active, if controversial role. Most historians of the consti-

the school that might be called – after Foruqe Jahanbakhsh – ‘spiritual intellectuals.’⁶⁶ Its leading figures focused their attention on the possibility of reconciling Islam with the spirit of modernization, rationalization, and scientific progress. At an early stage in the Constitutional Revolution, Shiite clergy argued that Islam was not inconsistent with the issues of liberty, equality, and democracy. They strove to anchor any social and political changes in religion.⁶⁷ Only a later radical tendency towards secularization in the IInd Majlis forced a split among the clergy into supporters and opponents of the constitution. Polarisation among the clergy and the Persian intelligentsia as a group was emphasized following the execution of sheikh Fazlallāh Nuri.⁶⁸ The events which made up the Constitutional Revolution may briefly be described as follows. Widespread demonstrations and *basts*⁶⁹ in 1905-1906, the opening in October 1906 of Iran’s first majlis,⁷⁰ work on the constitution and its adoption in December that year, passage of a Supplementary Act which was the major part of the Persian constitution, the bombing and defeat of the majlis by a Cossack Brigade under the Russian colonel Liakhov in June 1908, the 1908-1909 Tabriz Uprising (the most significant event of the Iranian Revolution), the deposition of Mohammad Shah and the ascent to the throne of his son Ahmed in July 1909 (as a consequence of revolutionaries arriving in Teheran from the northern province Gilan joined by Bakhtiar tribes from the south), the opening of the IInd Majlis in November 1909, the failed attempt to capture the throne by Mohammad in July 1911, military intervention by Russia in the north and Britain in the south, the disarmament of revolutionary forces and a counterrevolutionary coup in December 1911.⁷¹

tutional period are sceptical about his anti-constitutional attitude. Some, like Ahmad Kasravi and Feridune Adamiyat, present a moderate view, while others, like Nāzem al-eslām Kermāni accuse Nuri of greed. At first an advocate of constitution, he gradually moved into the anti-constitutional camp. To him is attributed the motto, *mashrute-ye mashru’e* – constitutional government compatible with Islamic law. He was executed in July 1909. Cf. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of The Modern Islamic World*, New York 2001, Vol. 3, p. 256.

⁶⁶ F. Jahanbakhsh, ‘The emergence and development of religious intellectualism in Iran’, *Historical Reflections*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 469-490, at <http://www.drstorosz.com/PDF/E-CMO-20040000-Religious_Intellectualism_in_Iran.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ He was hung in July 1908. Just before his death, which he accepted with dignity, he stated that his execution resulted from the struggle for influence among the clergy, and was not a reflection of its political views. Cf. R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle...*, p. 222.

⁶⁹ Bast – ‘refuge’, ‘asylum’; cf. ‘Bast’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, Leiden 1973, Vol. 1, p. 1088. Bast areas for individuals and groups fearing persecution by the Shah were mosques and tombs, as well as the diplomatic missions of foreign countries.

⁷⁰ Majlis was a term already used in pre-Islamic times, in the sense of a tribal council. After the birth of Islam and the establishment of the caliphate, ‘majlis’ denoted an audience room or an assembly in the presence of important personages such as leaders, religious authorities, or poets. In contemporary usage, a majlis is an assembly for disputing public matters. Cf. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, Vol. 3, p. 26.

⁷¹ Cf. S.I. Agaev, *Iran v proshlom i nastoyashchem. Puti i formy revoliutsionnogo protsesssa*, Moskva 1981, pp. 39-40.

The period of struggles for the constitution produced a flowering of associations, *anjomans*, and the press. *Anjoman*⁷² was a Persian name for one of the various groups that focused on the economy, literature, education, or politics. Often such distinctions were blurred with different preoccupations present in one association and the outlook of most groups evolved over time. While associations, especially those that were politically-driven, flourished during the constitutional movement, secret societies had long existed in Iran.⁷³ In the first years of the twentieth century, Iranian translators of Russian works used the word *anjoman* to describe Russian political parties in an effort to underscore their similarity to Persian associations.⁷⁴

The evolution of the intelligentsia at the time of the Constitutional Revolution may be divided into two stages concurrent with the first and second Majlis. In phase one, all intelligentsia groups were united in an effort to achieve their shared objectives which included the struggle against the Shah's despotism, freeing Iran from the political supremacy of Russia and Britain, and the adoption of a constitution. Two camps were clearly discernible, one progressive, gathering supporters of Western-style reforms of ideology (with consequent changes in other spheres: political, social, economic, etc.), the other conservative with the central belief that the sharia law and a strong central authority should be the basis of the social-political system. Disputes at the 1st Majlis reflected the struggle for leadership in society between the intelligentsia and clergy: 'The gravest and longest conflict between the proponents of parliamentarianism and religious authorities concerned (...) the judiciary (articles 71-89 of the Supplementary Act). (...) Despite a letter from Ākhund Qāsem Khorasāni, who demanded that investigation and administration of justice be unchanged and subject to sharia, most deputies insisted that the judicial system be established by the parliament and subordinated to a Ministry of Justice.'⁷⁵ Groups of the intelligentsia in the *majlis* engaged in disputes about constitutional principles, unaware that Persia's fate had been sealed: on 31 August 1907, a Russo-British agreement was signed whereby Iran was divided into spheres of influence: a northern area that would include Teheran and Isfahan would be controlled by Russia, and the south-east would be minded by Britain, with a neutral area in between.⁷⁶ In effect, it was a secret partition of Persia: its clauses and terms were known to Britain and Russia but not to the Iranians.

⁷² Scholars say that Persian *anjomans* which appeared in different places across Iran on the eve of the constitutional revolution were modelled after Russian soviets in cities and villages created there during the coup of 1905. Cf. Z. Āfāri, *Enqelāb-e mashrute-ye Irān 1906-1911* (Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911), trans. by Rezā Rezāji, Tehrān 1379 (1981), p. 61.

⁷³ 'Countries of the East had from antiquity seen the rise of various secret societies which exerted influence on developments or appeared for that purpose, and Islamic Iran was no exception from this general rule.' Cf. K.S. Lambton, *Irān asr-e Qādžār*, p. 386.

⁷⁴ M. Bayat, 'Anjoman' in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopædia Iranica*, New York 2002, Vol. 2, p. 77.

⁷⁵ M. Bayat, 'The cultural implications of the Constitutional Revolution' in E. Bosworth, C. Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran. Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800-1825*, Costa Mesa (Calif.) 1992, p. 55.

⁷⁶ Cf. N. Keddie, *Współczesny Iran...*, p. 65.

After the majlis was bombed by the Shah in June 1908, the fate of the first Persian constitution was decided in Tabriz with its active anjomans like Eġtemā'iyun-e Āmiyun (Social-Democratic Party) and Anjoman-e Tabriz (Tabriz Society) which enjoyed the support of Russian revolutionaries in the Caucasus.

After work on the constitution resumed on 5 August 1909, a second stage followed in the evolution of the Persian intelligentsia. As the work of the second Majlis progressed, two parties were already in official existence: *Demokrāt-e Āmiyun* (the Social-Democrats) which sprang from a revolutionary current, and *Eġtemā'iyun-e E'ředāliyun* (the Moderate Party) with roots in a moderate political movement.⁷⁷ Malek ash-Sho'arā-ye Bahār has noted that there were also other parties, but it was these two that played a crucial role in majlis disputes and in the forming of Iran's political and intellectual outlook. The Second Majlis differed from the first. Opposing camps had become entrenched and the initial joy at a victory over the Shah and his vision of government was replaced by internal strife. Ideological struggles between the democratic party (*ferqe-ye demokrāt*) and the moderate faction (*ferqe-ye e'ředāl*) began with a dispute over secularization and intensified as a result of conflict over the appointment of the prime minister. Although one party called itself moderate, it may be argued that the split in the second Majlis was between two major tendencies: one towards radicalism, the other towards conservatism. The bone of contention was secularization and modernization. Both areas encompassed a broad spectrum of issues.

Between the democratic and moderate factions differences appeared not only in ideology or social concerns. The two groups differed in education and wealth. Another distinction was the differing visions of change: either gradual, based on understanding the problem, or rapid, calling for immediate action. On a practical level, both displayed varied interests, even though they pressed for similar changes. The moderate group tended to advocate guaranteeing liberty under a constitutional monarchy, while the social democrats desired first an improvement in living conditions of the emerging middle (working) class.

Bagley has posed the question: Would the intelligentsia have developed if it had succeeded in introducing a lasting constitutional form of government? Citing Adamiyat, he concluded that there was a chance for modernization to spread, but it is possible that further rational reforms, especially in the economy and education, would have caused resistance from society that might regard them as foreign.⁷⁸

Adamiyat believes that the First Majlis could perhaps have been able to guide Iran onto a more generally accepted path of modernization. On the other hand, it is possible that when implemented, further rational reforms, especially in the economy and education as affecting daily life, could seem foreign and unacceptable to a great

⁷⁷ Malek ash-Sho'arā-ye Bahār, *Tāriġh-e mokhtasar-e ahzāb-e siyāsi-ye enġerāz-e Qājāriye* (Outline of the History of Political Parties after the Fall of the Qajars), Tehrān 1323 (1945), pp. 8-9.

⁷⁸ R.F.C., 'New Light on the Iranian Constitutional Movement' in E. Bosworth, C. Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran...*, p. 57.

many people. Even if all intellectuals had been paragons of virtue and common sense, they could have aroused distrust, a Europeanized (*farangi ma'āb*) minority indifferent to Iranian culture and Islamic custom.⁷⁹

As the above quotation implies, winning the tool that was the constitution was no guarantee for the intelligentsia to achieve its purpose. It might well have been, Bagley pointed out, that the advocates of society's interest could emerge as being not the intelligentsia, but the conservative clergy like the pupils of sheikh Fazlallāh Nuri who used commonly understood ideas and relied on familiar concepts.⁸⁰

Nāzem al-Eslām Kermāni wrote in *Tārik-e bidāri-ye Irān* (A History of the Iranian Awakening), 'simple people during the Shah's coup against the parliament tended to sympathize with the court.'⁸¹ Malekzāde reluctantly admitted that sheikh Fazlallāh Nuri held much sway with the uneducated masses. Malek ash-Sho'arā-ye Bahār, a leading poet and participant in the revolution, wrote many years ago, 'During the turmoil, the upper and lower classes supported despotism, only the middle class remained faithful to constitutionalism.'⁸²

CONCLUSION

Naser ad-Din, the fourth Shah in the Qajar dynasty, was at the peak of his power when a new group of thinkers appeared in Iran. They were educated men who transcended the mental boundaries established by the religious schools. The intelligentsia, at first represented by single thinkers like Malkom-khan, Amir Kabir, and Jamal ad-Din Afqāni, developed into a new social group at the turn of the twentieth century, and splintered into many subgroups, representing different schools of thought, and factions which engaged in polemics. During the disputes over a proposed constitutional order, the Persian intelligentsia reached its ideological maturity.

The first representatives of the intelligentsia came from the circles of the rich military and clerical aristocracy. They had the financial means to enable them to expand their intellectual scope, they lived in an environment open to new ideas, affording them an awareness of the necessity of change and an ability to pass political and social judgments. It can also be said that they displayed a sense of moral imperative to initiate needed measures to improve the circumstances in Persia. Pioneering intellectuals were involved with the official state policy, remaining at the Shah's service, and their contribution to the formation of the first, 'constitutional' generation of the intelligentsia must be seen through the lens of the new ideas they introduced

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ 'The spokesmen of popular cultural and religious nationalism might well have been fundamentalist ulema of Shaykh Fazlallāh Nuri's school.' Cf. R.F.C., 'New Light...', p. 57.

⁸¹ Nāzem al-Eslām Kermāni, *Tārikh-e bidāri-je Irān* (History of the Awakening of Iranians), Tehrān 1967, Vol. 1, p. 363.

⁸² Cf. Malek ash-Sho'arā-ye Bahār, *Tārikh-e mokhtasar-e...*, p. 2.

into Persian culture. The question of the origins and distinctiveness of the Persian intelligentsia is a question about how its political awareness was formed, a process heavily influenced by Western thought. Javād-e Tabātabāi declared it to be the end of textbooks composed for rulers.⁸³ We might add that soon 'textbooks' began to be written for society – pamphlets, fliers, and magazines, whether produced officially or by the underground. In political thought, concepts furthered by the pro-Western intelligentsia clashed with traditionalist terminology: some clergy like Tabātabāi or Behbahāni tried to develop a new set of notions to describe the political process, but did so from the traditional standpoint of sharia.

Attitudes towards tradition helped to identify differences between the European intelligentsia and its Persian equivalent. In Europe, intellectuals emerged from Enlightenment traditions. Their appearance was a natural consequence of social and political transformation,⁸⁴ the next stage in an evolving culture. Not so in Iran. Javād-e Tabātabāi noted that while the Persian intelligentsia reflected on its own tradition, it did so from, as it were, the outside; that is, its starting point in deliberations about Iran's historical past was a set of notions borrowed from the West. The reasoning of a Western intellectual sat comfortably within his native tradition; for Iranian intellectuals, it did not.⁸⁵

The nineteenth-century intelligentsia along with its precursors, Malkom-khan, Amir Kabir, Jamal ad-Din 'Afqāni' and the foremost representatives of various groups during the *mashrute*, brought about an awakening of the national consciousness and made first attempts to implant in Iranian the cultural realities and attainments of Western civilization. The first generation asked the question and named the problems which would face subsequent generations of Persian intellectuals.

Translated by Tadeusz Stanek

⁸³ Texts were often written by the Shah's viziers, men involved in political affairs. The first such treaty, entitled *Siyāsāt nāme*, was composed by Nezām al-Molk (11th century A.D.).

⁸⁴ J. Tabātabāi, *Ta'ammoli dar bāre-ye Irān. Maktab-e Tabriz va mabāni-ye tajaddodkhāhi* (Thoughts about Iran. The Tabriz School and the Foundations of Modernization), Tabriz 1385 (2007), p. 43.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

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