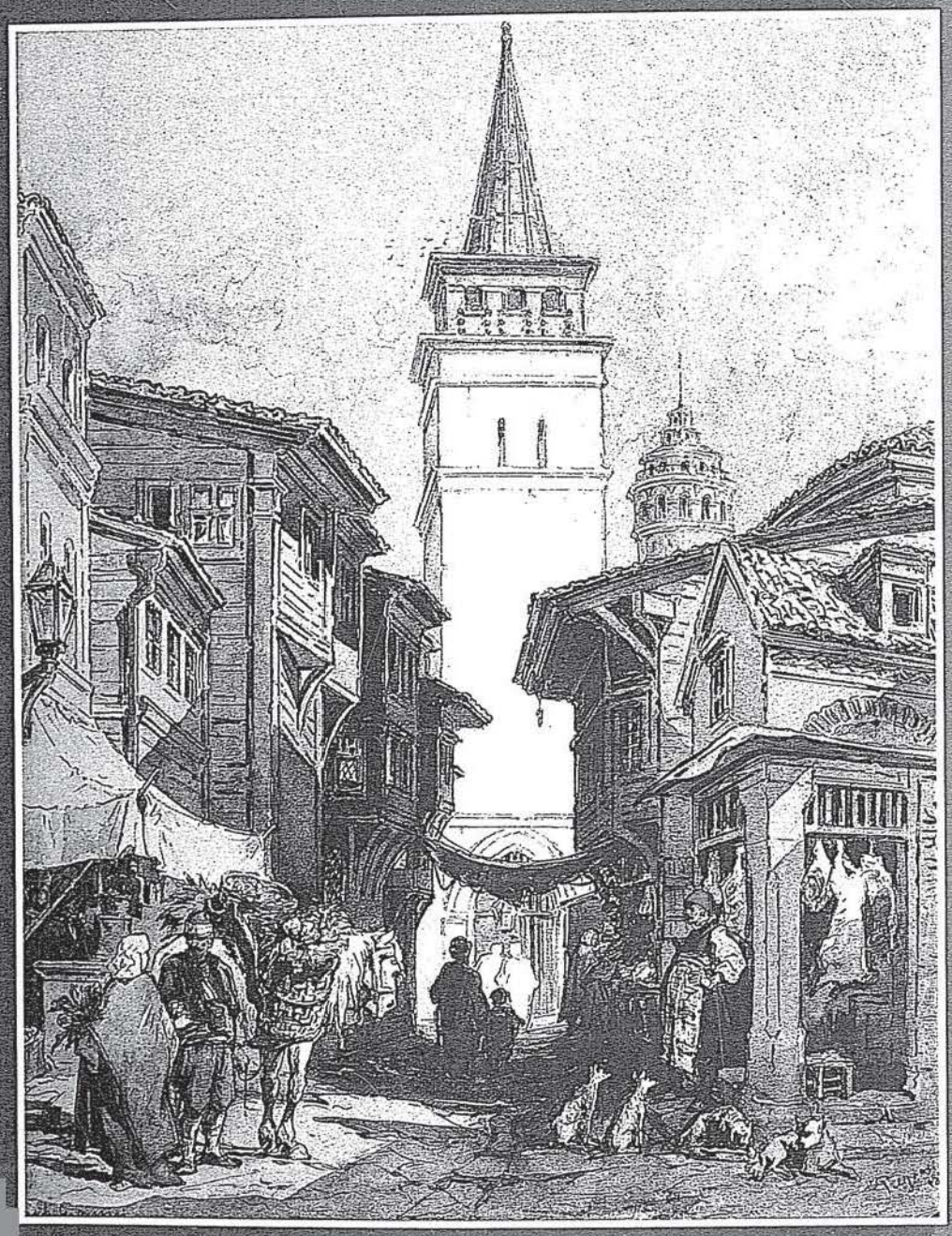
ISTANBUL AS SEEN FROM A DISTANCE

Centre and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire



Edited by
Elisabeth Özdalga, M. Sait Özervarlı, Feryal Tansuğ

SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL

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Istanbul's Intellectual Environment and Iranian Scholars of the Early Modern Period

MOHAMMAD FAZLHASHEMI

In studies of the history of Persian/Iranian ideas we can readily notice the significant role Europe (or rather the image of Europe) has played in the political and cultural life of Persia/Iran. Europe has been either an exemplary model or warning and has served as justification for Persians to pursue particular policies or cultural movements. Europe has been synonymous with "modernisation", when phenomena such as secularisation, democratisation and pluralism are emphasised. The image of Europe has also been freighted with different meanings depending on what one wishes to focus on.

One interesting point for me has been studying the interplay between the image of Europe and different special interest groups in Iran. Another has been investigating how the dominant image of Europe has developed. To this end, the intermediaries or mediators of the image, and what they have mediated, have been examined. It is the Ottoman empire's, and especially Istanbul's, role in the evolution of the image of Europe in Persia/Iran that is touched on in this chapter. The narrative begins with a short historical introduction before focusing on three different categories of intermediaries who, through their contact with Europe, mediated an image of Europe to Persia/Iran. These intermediaries had different points of departure and different motives for doing what they did, but they have one thing in common: all of them obtained various images of Europe through contact with Ottoman intellectuals in 19th century Istanbul. It was through their voluntary or involuntary sojourns in Istanbul that they came into contact with European-influenced constitutional movements and mediated images of Europe, which on the whole were congruent with one another.

Historical Background

The fall of Constantinople and the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean had great significance for Iran's contacts with Europe, primarily in that connections between Iran and Europe were cut. Businessmen from France, England and Italy who had previously traded in silk with Iran, for example, were forced to turn to Istanbul, Bagdad and Aleppo, all of them now under Ottoman rule. The Ottomans profited from this trade partly by selling their wares to the Europeans and partly by being able to gain access to the technical advances

of Europe, military technology in particular. Access to so-called "hot weapons" (firearms) bought from Europeans was one reason the Ottomans achieved such momentous victories in their wars against Persia, Egypt and other Arab forces.

The battlefield successes of the Ottoman empire were a great threat and major obstacle to European countries. Ten years after the fall of Constantinople, the Venetian state decided to initiate political relations with the Persian ruler Hassan Bey Akkoyunlu and form an alliance with him against the Ottomans. Accordingly, political and financial representatives from Venice arrived in Persia, bringing with them symbols of the new civilisation in the form of gifts or commodities, for example various types of rifle, artillery, mortar, and so on. Thus, weaponry was among the first products of the new civilisation brought to Persia.[1] Nothing came of the Venetian plans, for the Ottomans proved to be more powerful than both the Venetians and the Persian ruler, who, moreover, had to fight internal battles and meet the Uzbek threat from the east. The Venetians made their peace with the Ottomans and a new dynasty, the Safavids, took over from Hassan Bey. This dynasty promoted the unification of Iran and normalised relations with Constantinople. However, the great influence enjoyed by the Safavids in Anatolia resulted in Sultan Selim declaring war on the Safavidian king, Shah Ismail, a war that he won primarily through armed superiority. As an aside, it may be mentioned that the so-called Qizilbash troops of Iran considered the use of rifles and artillery in battle unworthy of their bravery.[2]

This defeat led the Persians to turn to Europeans to secure new weapons in order to be better placed to face the Ottomans. New weapons were procured and European experts hired to school the shah's army in the use of the new technology. Some of these experts were recruited from Europeans dissatisfied with the Sublime Porte. During the era of the Safavid shah Abbas, European discipline and battle strategies were instilled in the Persian army with the help of two British brothers, the Scherleys, who had been given the task of encouraging the Persian king to commence a war against the Ottomans and create conditions in Iran advantageous to British businessmen. They succeeded in their mission and equipped the Persian army with an enormous arsenal. When the shah next fought the Ottomans, he won.[3]

During the Safavid era (1504-1722), Europe's connections with Persia were of the highest priority, since the Ottomans represented a major threat to Europe. For the Europeans, it would be highly advantageous if the Ottomans in turn felt threatened by Persia. Throughout the era of the Safavid dynasty, many European emissaries, businessmen, missionaries and travellers visited Persia. During the second half of the 18th century, some 52 books on Iran were published in France alone.[4]

The rivalry between Persia and the Ottoman empire predisposed Persian governments towards the Europeans. However, apart from the progress in military technology, this interest led to no significant changes in the social or political

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1 Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *The Early Encounters of the Persian Thinkers with the Two-Sides Civilization of Western Bourgeoisie* (Teheran: Amir Kabir, 1988), 140-1.

2 Pietro Della Valle, *Safar Name-ye Pietro Della Valle*, trans. Shuj' al-dîn Shafa (Teheran: Khwarazmi, 1969) , 348.

3 Hussein Mahboubi Ardakani, *Tarikh-e mu'assesat-e tamadduni-ye jadid dar Iran*, vol. 1 (Teheran; Teheran University Press, 1978), 14.

4 Hairi, 1988. *Early Encounters,* 141-56.

structure of Persia. A general lack of interest in the wider world prevailed within Persia's borders, and there was a concomitant lack of knowledge about these Europeans, their customs, traditions and, most importantly, their intentions and ambitions in courting the Islamic world. The hallmark of these contacts between Persia and Europe was that Persian rulers turned to the Europeans mainly for military help when they found themselves hard-pressed. There was no matching interest in rational, so-called "worldly" knowledge among the Persian authorities. Furthermore, the efforts of the Persian kings to modernise their armies proved to be only temporary in nature.[5] The fact that Persia was going through an unstable period with four different dynasties replacing one another and with intervening periods of total chaos didn't make matters easier. The British historian Ann Lambton refers to "political shrinkage and economic decline" as the foremost characteristics of this period.[6]

The Intermediaries

At the beginning of the 19th century, all this changed as a result of the Persian setbacks in the wars against Russia. Interest in modernisation increased. Once again, modernisation of the army was the main focus, but eventually modernisation also spread to other areas. The period between 1850 and 1900 was a formative one in Persian history, during which debates on Europeanisation were common. Among the leaders of the Europeanisation efforts was Crown Prince Abbas Mirza. He saw to it that European books were translated into Persian and that students went to study in Europe. A debate began in earnest as to the degree to which Europe could be a model for the reformation of society and government in Iran. In time, the number of groups mediating the image of Europe in Persia increased. These included Persian travellers to Europe, students sent to Europe, traders who travelled to Istanbul or other cities with close contacts with Europe, diplomats and exiled intellectuals seeking a safe foreign haven. There were also many people whose very first contact with Europe was through Istanbul. Through their contacts with Ottoman intellectuals or by having seen firsthand the reforms introduced into the Ottoman empire, these people began to convey an image of Europe to the Persian public.

Istanbul became a meeting place for the Islamic world and Europe. Despite the long periods of warfare between the Ottomans and Europe, there were also intervals of peace. And with peace, came commerce: European diplomats resided in Istanbul, and European merchants and scholars travelled in the Ottoman realms. Many came to stay, refugees from political or religious persecution seeking shelter under Ottoman power.

Initially, the Turks were chiefly prepared to turn to Europe to learn the latest arts of war. The first deliberate attempt at a Europeanisation policy, that is the first conscious step towards imitating and adopting selected elements of European civilisation occurred in the early 18th century. The treaties of Carlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718) had given formal expression and recognition to two

5 Ibid., 160-4.

6 Ann Lambton, "The Tribal Resurgence and the Decline of Bureaucracy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 108-9.

humiliating defeats of the Ottoman empire at the hands of the Austrians and their allies. On the other hand, the example of Peter the Great suggested that a vigorous programme of Europeanisation might enable the empire to shrug off its weakness and once again become a major power.

Journalism

One of the modern inventions brought to the Ottoman empire from Europe was the art of printing, introduced successively by Jews (1493-94), Armenians (1567) and Greeks (1627). However, nothing written in Turkish or Arabic was allowed to be printed. This trend ended in 1727, thanks to the efforts of Said Çelebi and Ibrahim Mütefferrika. Apart from the reforms introduced into the Ottoman empire, the new literature and the press had the most significance outside the empire's borders. Liberal forces within the empire intended to use the press to constitute a form of "public opinion", which they hoped would play the same role in the Ottoman empire as it had in Paris and London. They claimed that progress was dependent on free institutions and free institutions were maintained by public opinion.

The growth of journalism and the press in Europe had great significance in the meditation of the image of Europe in the Islamic world. The first non-government newspaper in the Ottoman empire was founded in 1840 by an Englishman, William Churchill. The weekly *Ceride-i Havadis* (Journal of News) devoted some of its attention to news from both at home and abroad. However, this was not the very first Turkish newspaper. Between 1796 and 1798, the French embassy in Istanbul had published a newspaper in French for distribution to the French colony and others who knew the French language. In 1831, the first newspaper in Turkish appeared, *Takvim-i Vekayi*, the official Ottoman gazette.[7] The advent of the press in the Islamic lands created a new perception and a new awareness of events taking place at that time. The need to discuss and explain these events led to the creation of new languages, from which modern Arabic, Persian and Turkish have evolved. It also led to the emergence of a portentous new figure, the journalist, whose role in the mediation of the image of Europe was profound. In 1860, the monopoly of *Ceride-i Havadis* was broken. In that year, Çapanzade Agah Efendi took the initiative to found a new weekly, *Tercûman-i Ahval* (Interpreter of Conditions). Associated with him as editor and writer was Ibrahim Şinasi, the poet and modernist.

European-influenced journalism in Istanbul played a significant role in the mediation of the image of Europe in Persia. For many Persian intellectuals, this journalistic tradition opened a window on a new culture and a new civilisation. Through newspapers and the image they provided of Europe, Persians became acquainted with that continent. In many ways, these images had a rhetorical, somewhat utopian character. One problem that emerged rather early on was that the Persian intellectuals and their audience were completely unprepared for the message being mediated by the press. The image of Europe and the solutions to various problems related to that image became the only way out of the tribulations suffered by the country. The mediation of the image of Europe by Persian

7 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 95.

Mirza Malkum Khan (1833-1908)
Muhit Tabatabai, *Majmo'e athare Mirza Malkum Khan* (Tehran: Entesharate Elmi, 1948), 1.

intellectuals took on the character of one-way communication. No real dialogue emerged, and no one ever reflected on how these contacts and new impressions should be received. Instead, there was constant praise. This narrow view, primarily based on a lack of knowledge of the new world, led to an "either-or" situation: one either wholeheartedly embraced the new impressions or rejected them out of hand. In sum, Persian newspapers, through the prism of European journalism and the newspapers of the so-called "front states", were the windows through which Persian intellectuals viewed the new world.

One of the foremost figures of modern Persian journalism was the secularised Armenian diplomat Mirza Malkum Khan (1833-1908). In 1858, he founded the so-called *Faramushkhana*, a counterpart of the Order of the

Freemasons in Europe. Deported to Istanbul in 1863, he remained there until 1871, first as an exile and later as a diplomat. In Istanbul, he also married an Armenian woman.[8]

Malkum Khan's sojourn in Istanbul coincided with the second phase of the constitutional movement in the Ottoman empire. In 1867, Mustafa Fazıl Pasha joined the Young Ottomans in Paris. The same year, he wrote an open letter to the sultan, Abdülaziz, demanding the creation of a constitutional government. During his time in Istanbul, Malkum also made contact with many Turkish intellectuals, among them Kemal Pasha, Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha. In his work, Malkum emphasised the significance of modernisation and the new values of Europe. He advocated total submission to European civilisation. His general feeling about Europe was that the ancient institutions and structures of Persia were barbarous and irredeemably corrupt and that only the rapid adoption of a European form of government and way of life would admit Persia into the rank and privileges of a civilised state. Malkum wrote:

> I myself will not introduce any innovations. I wish that our government would to a decreasing degree depend upon its own faculties of reason and make fewer changes in the principles we have learned from Europe. Their experiences are the result of knowledge and experience. These principles should be accepted in their entirety or rejected in their entirety ... As far as questions of form of government are concerned, we neither can nor ought to present our own initiatives. We must either have the knowledge and experience of Europe before us or continue going around in our own barbaric circles.[9]

The books of Malkum Khan bear the distinct stamp of John Stuart Mill. He himself had translated parts of Mill's *On Liberty*, and in his books he discussed a wide range of political, social and economic matters. Among these were the systems of taxation, banking and education; monarchy, republic, equality and despotism; the courts, a new penal code and freedom of speech; the role of people in politics and elections; forming a government on the European model, the bicameral parliament and the responsibilities of ministers before the parliament; national unity and changes to the Arabic alphabet; and industrialisation, new technology and the new civilisation in Europe.

From his experiences in Istanbul, Malkum recognised that religion and the constitutional government along European lines that he advocated were incompatible. However, he sought to effect some sort of formal reconciliation between the two. On the one hand, he stressed the significance of language as a unifying factor for the nation, and that the ulama should follow the directives of the ministry of education and not vice versa. On the other, he wrote that the constitutional system did not contradict Islam and that the laws of Islam were the most consummate laws known to man. According to Malkum, the Europeans had not properly understood the Qur'an. Furthermore, the ulama should play an active role in a parliament. The laws of the constitutional system were so fully consistent with Islam that one might believe that they were lifted directly from Islam.

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8 Esamail Ra'in, *Mirza Malkum Khan: Zendegi va kousheshhaye siyasi-ye ou* (Teheran: Safialishah, 1974), 21-4.

9 Mohammad Muhit Tabataba'i, *Majmoe-ye athar-e Mirza Malkum Khan*, vol. 1, *Nazm-e jaded* (Teheran: Elmi, 1948), 24-5.

This idea was later to play a very large role in the relationship between Islam and Europe in Iran.[10]

In 1889, Malkum came into conflict with the Persian king, Naser al Din Shah, and was removed from his post as Persian ambassador in London. He then joined the ranks of the opposition in exile and published a newspaper, entitled characteristically for the time *Qanun* (Law). The first issue of this paper was published in 1890. It was sent via messenger and the mails to Iran. Distribution in Iran was stopped after seven issues, after which it was smuggled into Iran by businessmen and other travellers to Istanbul, Iraq or the Caucasus. The expressed intent of the paper, with its motto of "Unity, development and justice", was to fight the despotism of the Persian court and the absence of the rule of law in the land. In his paper, Malkum argued for the establishment of a constitutional government. His agitation for a constitution expressed itself in the demand for the rule of law to replace the outmoded and centuries-old tradition of rule based on the whim of an autocrat.

The newspaper *Qanun* was neither the first nor the only Persian-language paper printed outside Iran. A number of other journals were also active. The first of the Persian-language papers in the Ottoman empire was *Akhtar*, published in Istanbul in 1870. This paper refused to toe the government line (as was the usual case among the press in Iran) and served to inspire Malkum Khan's *Qanun*. The founder and editor-in-chief of *Akhtar* was Aqa Muhammad Taher Tabrizi, aided by the then-Persian ambassador to Istanbul, Mirza Muhsen Khan Mu'in ul-Mamalek. A number of exiled opposition intellectuals wrote for his paper, and very soon its distribution was forbidden in Iran. However, it was smuggled into the country and before long served as the foremost window on to the West for Persian intellectuals. *Akhtar* was very critical of the Persian royal house and the state of the nation, and played a significant role in the burgeoning constitutional movement in Iran. After some 20 years of publication, it was finally banned by the Ottoman authorities in 1891. *Akhtar* was the first newspaper to write of the necessity of the rule of law in Iran. Its publication in Istanbul also meant that both the publisher and the intellectuals who wrote for it betrayed the influence of intellectual life of Istanbul. For example, this newspaper was the first to translate and publish Midhat Pasha's draft of a constitution for a Persian public. The newspaper also served as a meeting place for many exiled intellectuals in Istanbul.

Constitutional Movement

The movement that culminated in the constitutional revolution in Persia in 1906 had begun at the outset of the 19th century. A number of different factors contributed to the widespread appeal of this movement in Persia. One of the most significant was the increased contacts between Iran and Europe. The Ottoman empire was the first of Persia's neighbours to come into contact with the constitutional movement in Europe. Political developments in the Ottoman empire during the period 1839-76 produced a number of reforms in the country's political system. The 19th century constitutional movement in Western Europe encouraged liberal-minded elements in the Ottoman empire to press the sultan not only

10 Malkum, *Qanun*, No. 3-4.

Naser al Din Shah (1831-96). Oil painting on canvas by Fazl-ulla b. Mirza Muhammad 1881/82.
Hermitage Museum.
Cengiz Kahraman Archive

for reforms, but also for some form of constitutional government to protect these reforms once they were granted.

In the Ottoman empire, the *Tanzimat-i-Hayriye*, a programme of reform that took effect in 1839, opened up an era of progress and liberty in both thought and

action. The movement experienced many vicissitudes, but its ultimate success seemed assured when, through the influence of Midhat Pasha, the Sultan Abdulhamid was induced to establish a constitutional administration in 1876.

Developments in the Ottoman empire, including new legislation and a number of reforms to the educational system, had great significance for Persia. In other ways as well the technology of the new world reached the Ottoman empire before it did Persia. New roads were built, the telegraph arrived in 1855 and a railway was built in 1866, all of which facilitated communication between the Ottoman empire and Europe.

Istanbul came to be the first stop for many of the Persian intellectuals who eventually played significant roles in the cultural and political life of Iran. At the end of the 19th century, a number of Persian intellectuals, influenced by events in Persia's neighbouring states (including the Ottoman empire and Russia), began writing a new type of literature. In these publications, the constitution and constitutional monarchy were discussed. Persian intellectuals who had studied in Europe or had by some means come into contact with Europe were determined that European civilisation and European technological advances be disseminated in Iran. They also felt that the Persian form of government needed to be based on legislation. In 1811, the first students were sent to Europe with the task of learning these new ideas. These students would later comprise the core of the intellectual elite in Iran, eventually securing distinguished posts in the country. Mirza Saleh Shirazi was one of them. While training as an engineer, he not only imbibed the new knowledge but was also influenced by European culture. He wrote a book in which he advocated parliamentarianism and the importance of legislation for the country.[11]

His foremost successor was Mirza Seyyed Jafar Khan Mushir al-Daula, who served as ambassador to England, Germany and the Ottoman empire. He too wrote a book for the Persian king, in which he compared Persian government with that of European states, suggesting, among other things, the establishment of government ministries. Eventually, he was appointed head of an advisory council, established on the European model. His intention was to effect reforms to the administration similar to those which he had firsthand experience of in Istanbul.

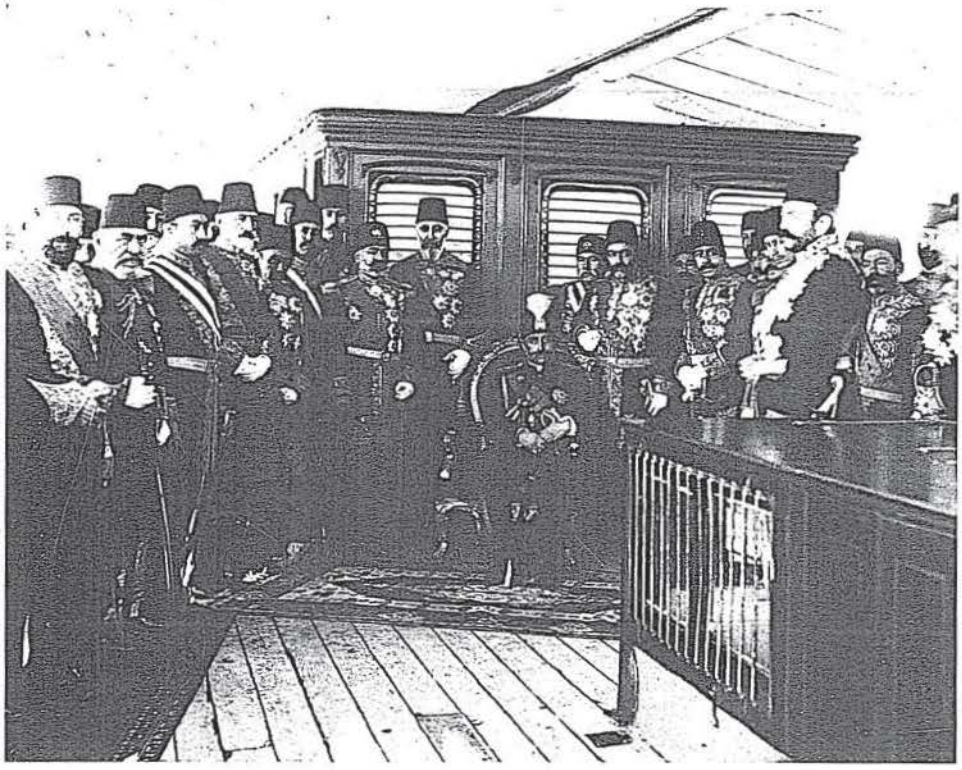
Taking over the initiative from Mushir al-Daula was Mirza Hussein Khan Sipahsalar (1826-81), who had studied in France and served as a diplomat in India and the Caucasus. During his 12-year term as ambassador to Istanbul, Sipahsalar proposed that Persia take measures similar to those in the Ottoman empire, including railway construction, establishing new schools and creating an advisory council, which would act as the nation's legislative organ. In 1871, he was appointed chancellor and returned to Persia. During his sojourn in Istanbul he had made contact with a number of Ottoman intellectuals and been influenced by their ideas. He devoted much attention to the legal system, using Europe as his model. In his letters to the royal court and the Persian department of foreign affairs, Sipahsalar described the successes of the Turks in their modernisation efforts. He also commented on Mustafa Fazıl Pasha's famed letter on the creation of a parliament. He had been influenced by the new laws in the Ottoman empire and praised legislation that ensured the equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law.

11 Fereydoun Adamiyyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran* (Teheran: Khwarazmi, 1983), 369.

Sipahsalar had also been in contact with Turkish thinkers such as Ali Pasha, Fuad Pasha and Midhat Pasha and been swayed by their quest for liberty. His letters to various authorities in Persia deal mainly with new political movements in Europe, the creation of parliaments and the constitutional movement in the Ottoman empire, whose example he wanted Persia to follow. According to Sipahsalar, introducing a parliamentary system into the country, banning religious discrimination and protecting the rights of citizens and their equality before the law were all prerequisites for Persia's joining the new epoch and the new civilisation. By providing a positive image of conditions in the Ottoman empire and its political reforms, Sipahsalar wanted to induce Persian officials to take similar steps. He likened the king to a physician who must cure new diseases with new drugs. In one of his letters, he writes: "The political reforms made by the Ottomans after European models are made for their own best [interests]. Even if these changes can seem somewhat unpleasant at the outset, in the end they will lead to success and the progress of the country". Of the educational system and establishment of new schools in the Ottoman empire, he writes: "These schools raise the educational level of the population and new and competent men are educated who can lead their country toward the new civilisation". He also described the building of railways in the empire, undertaken by a British company, as a new lifeline.

However, most of what he writes addresses political reforms in the Ottoman empire. The key to changes in the Ottoman empire, he remarks, lies in the creation of a parliament with popularly elected members. Referring to a letter written by Mustafa Pasha, he says that it should be carefully translated and studied. Concerning the establishment of a parliament, he feels that this should happen only after a number of democratic rights are first established, for example, legal equality for all. This, according to him, made it possible for representatives of all the empire's ethnic groups to take their place in the Ottoman parliament. As regards constitutional reform, he emphasises a key point for the Persian king, namely the esteem in which the nation is held in the world's eyes. He considers the Ottoman empire's recently introduced constitutional system, along the lines of the European model, to have significantly increased the empire's stature in Europe. He sent the Ottoman sultan's speech to his parliament to the Persian minister of foreign Affairs, insisting that he study it carefully as it would yield new insights. In one letter to the Persian king, Sipahsalar compares the Ottoman empire's economic successes with Persia's decline and cites this as yet more proof that Persia must strive to imitate its neighbour to the west.

He considered the press and its freedom to write about occurrences inside and outside the country as important to the success of a nation. According to him, the press in the Ottoman empire was outspoken in writing about the necessity of the parliamentary system and in criticising those authorities who mismanaged their offices. The press, in his view, was an important factor in rousing the people. In contrasting the Turkish press and official Persian government newspapers, he concludes the latter have failed to convey news of the great progress and transformations happening in Europe, choosing instead to report on trivial matters of no interest to the general public. For instance, in one issue of the government organ *Ruzname-ye-Daulat-e 'Alliya-yi Persia* a report appeared under the heading of "Foreign News" that a Frenchwoman of birth had been deceived into pur-



The Shah at sea. Naser al Din Shah with his officers (*pashas*) in 1901.
Photo: Ali Sami
Cengiz Kahraman Archive

chasing a depilatory that turned out to be a fake! Sipahsalar also published a bilingual paper in Persian and French with the intention of rousing popular opinion. He hired a Belgian as his editor-in-chief. However, the paper was banned after its first issue, since it contained articles on equality and justice and was considered too outspoken.

In 1871, Sipahsalar was tasked with forming a cabinet, consisting of nine ministers and an advisory council. The latter was short-lived, but it was a first step on the long road towards constitutional revolution in Persia. His modernisation aspirations led him into making one of the gravest errors of his political life. In 1872, he persuaded the king to grant the Englishman Julius de Reuter the concession to Persia's mineral assets and for the construction of its railroads, canals and irrigation systems, along with the lease on all customs income. This concession was supposed to last 70 years, but the government was forced to annul it in the face of Russian protests and massive popular unrest, during which the government was accused of selling out the nation's natural resources to a single foreign businessman.

The positive image these advocates of modernisation conveyed of the Ottoman empire was not necessarily accurate. Their uncritical depictions were in some cases built on naive and unrealistic assumptions about constitutional government in the Ottoman empire. The most important objective for these intellectuals was persuading the Persian government to implement constitutional reforms by following the supposedly good example of the Ottoman empire. The image of Europe mediated by Persian diplomats working for the Persian court

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1837-97)

eventually resulted in the Persian king, Naser al-Din Shah (who had heard of the successes of Europe and even seen some of them during his travels in Europe – at the suggestion of Sipahsalar), conceding a number of cautious reforms intended to transform Persia's old-fashioned system of government into a modern, European type of monarchy and to solve Persia's problems. The king agreed, for instance, to establish an advisory council, create a ministry and establish a legislative organ. A number of social initiatives were also set in motion. These included opening new schools, a telegraph bureau and a short railway line, as well as building town squares where statues could be raised. Gaslight and horse-drawn streetcars were introduced into the capital, a modern police corps was instituted and a limited number of European novels were translated. In addition, there was a change in the dress codes for men and women, and marching music could be played during military parades.

The problem with these reforms was that they were executed so that Persia would resemble Europe outwardly. The resolution of the serious internal political and economic crises of the country was not addressed.

Religious Authorities

The Persian constitutional movement was by no means limited to intellectuals. It was also strongly supported by the merchant class as well as many enlightened ulama, religious authorities whose great influence among the masses contributed in no small measure to the movement's ultimate success. The attitude of

these spiritual leaders was all the more remarkable and praiseworthy given that it must have been obvious to them that the establishment of a democratic regime would inevitably result in the curtailment of their power and influence. There were, however, other members of the ulama who at first supported the popular movement, because they imagined it could result in a theocracy such as existed for a time in Persia some four centuries earlier. When they realised this aim could not be achieved, some of them withdrew their support and joined the opposition.

Among the members of the religious establishment who were influenced by European-type reforms and new ideas received through contacts with Turkish intellectuals was the highly unusual *alim* Jamal al-Din Asad Abadi [al-Afghani] (1837-97). He came to Istanbul in 1869, at the end of the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, when the constitutional movement had begun to gather momentum in the Ottoman empire. His stay in Istanbul coincided with the last stages of the Tanzimat reform period. In these years, major educational and legal reforms were launched. By 1869, the two leading reform ministers were reaching the end of their lives – Fuad Pasha in 1869 and Ali Pasha two years later. al-Afghani was a member of the official Council of Education, a leading modernising organ, and he had contacts with its president, Münif Efendi. He also had ties to Tahsin Efendi, the director of the new Darülfünun university. After his religious studies, Tahsin had spent many years in Europe, becoming a scientist and freethinker. al-Afghani also made serious efforts to promote modernised education as a means of self-improvement. One might conclude from the reformist and modernising tone of al-Afghani's talks and actions during this period that he was impressed by Istanbul as a centre of strength and modernisation in the Islamic world. He was also impressed by the power of Europe, which he saw as largely due to European scientific and educational advances. He now thought the Muslim world, if it were ever to recover, must revive its former openness to intellectual innovation, including borrowing from non-Muslims. With his own knowledge of philosophy and of heterodox ideas it was easier for him to make the transition to supporting science and reason as man's best guides than it would be for those with a more traditionally orthodox background.

al-Afghani advocated liberal constitutional reforms that would protect the rights of the citizenry and set lawful bounds on the power the state, which would not pry into the private lives of its citizens. al-Afghani even attempted to show that these European ideas and reforms were not only fully commensurate with Islam but were part of its very nature. For example, he related the demand for popular government to divine providence and tried to show that Islam was a religion of choice.

al-Afghani was a so-called neo-traditionalist. He rejected pure traditionalism and also uncritical mimicry of Europe. He was undoubtedly influenced and attracted by the new socio-political reforms and values of Europe, but he sought their analogue within Islamic tradition instead of openly borrowing them from Europe. His approach enabled him to achieve an influence among religious authorities not feasible for those who simply appropriated European ideas.

al-Afghani was best-known for his pan-Islamic ideas, but after his first visit to Istanbul he began to advocate constitutional government in Persia. He was influenced by currents in European thought both through his contacts with Turkish intellectuals and through political literature and the press in Istanbul.

The influence of Europe was strengthened by his travels to London and Paris. He considered freedom of the press to be a significant reason for the success of the Europeans. During his 30-year long political career, al-Afghani showed great interest in the role of the press. He encouraged its development and participated in the publication of numerous newspapers and journals in Persian, Arabic and Urdu.

al-Afghani's greatest contribution to the constitutional revolution lay in the fact that while the Europeanised secular intellectuals favouring constitutional government in Persia were unable to entice the masses to support them, the religious establishment to which he belonged could. Through their traditional channels, they could reach many more people than could the intellectuals, who generally lacked all contact with the populace and, furthermore, struggled to make themselves understood by them. al-Afghani, under the influence of constitutional ideas, served as a bridge between the two groups. However, the popular rebellion that accompanied the repeal of the tobacco concession in 1891-92 confirmed that the most effective channel through which to inform the public of new ideas was the ulama.

Such an alliance was created by al-Afghani. He had close contacts with both ulama and intellectuals. The ulama's foremost goal was toppling the despotic king. In their speeches, writings and pronouncements they supported the idea of a parliamentary system. They interpreted the constitutional system with the aid of the writings produced by Persian and other Islamic intellectuals.[12] One leading ulama, Seyyed Muhammad Tabatabai, expressed himself thus:

> We ourselves have not seen the lands which are ruled by constitutional governments. But that which we have heard and that which those who have been to these lands have told us implies that a constitutional government leads to security and development. On the strength of this we wish to undertake measures for the establishment of constitutional government in this country.[13]

Influences from Persia's neighbour to the west continued even after the constitutional movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was not only the intellectuals and the religious authorities who were inspired by the Ottoman empire: there were also statesmen who followed in that empire's footsteps.

The best-known example in modern Persian history was the dictator Reza Shah, who imitated the Turkish model. He undertook an extensive state-sanctioned modernisation and secularisation campaign during the 1920s and 1930s with the aim of accomplishing the reforms in his country that Kemal Atatürk had implemented in Turkey. Reza Shah changed the name of the country from Persia to Iran to emphasise his and the country's Aryan origins. He also initiated a brutal and relentless campaign with the aim of pushing religious leaders from Iran's socio-political stage. The modernisation and occidentalisation policy was continued by the pro-West regime in Iran from 1953 until the late 1970s, a policy that ultimately failed and resulted in the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

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12 Nazem al-Eslam Kermani, *Tarikh-e bidari-ye iranian*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Teheran: Amir Kabir, 1992), 48-50, 161.

13 Ibid., 339; Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e mashroute-ye Iran*, 14th ed., vol.1 (Teheran: Amir Kabir, 1977), 85-6.

Three decades after that revolution, the Turkish model is once again of interest to Iran. State and religion have been separated in modern Turkey since the 1920s. Secularist and modernist intellectuals have discussed the relationship between state and religion and a separation between them since a theocratic state was established in Iran in 1979. Today, this question is of immediate interest among those who once were faithful to the ideals of the Islamic Revolution and the idea of the inseparability of state and religion. The model that many Islamic intellectuals now look to for inspiration is the Turkish secular state, run by a government in which the Islamic Justice and Development (AK) party is the leading party.