

NATIONALISM AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN IRAN, 1848-1906

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: NATIONALISM AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

In the summer of 1883, the first American minister to the Persian court, Benjamin traveled to Persia via Bordeaux, Constantinople, and Baku. In his correspondence with the Secretary of State Frelinghuysen, Benjamin discussed his impressions of the capital city of Tehran:

No city in the east after Canton, Bombay, Calcutta, and Constantinople surpasses it in appearance of vitality. The number of carriages owned by Persian and European gentlemen is nearly 500, all imported. Teheran also contains a European bakery, a European carriage maker, a European cabinet maker and upholsterer, a corps of foreign instructors of the army, a steam engine at the arsenal, a mint formed on [a] European system, several town clocks, a hose in the public garden imported from the United States, gas in the grounds surrounding the palace, and public squares besides other evidences of a progressive tendency.¹

Being the first minister to Persia held many challenges for Benjamin. He was faced with an entrenched power structure which benefited the Russian and British representatives over all other foreign diplomats. In order to further American interests in Iran, which at the time were primarily focused on trade, he had to study the diplomatic situation, learn about Iran and its customs, and communicate this knowledge back to the Department of State. Ten days after arriving in Tehran, he reported:

To acquire influence and importance here which we undoubtedly can, we must begin by partially adapting our action to the status and customs established by a people whose ideas have changed but little for 3000 years.²

The two statements warrant some consideration. On the one hand, the presence of things European such as clocks, carriages, hoses, and steam engines are offered as

“evidence of a progressive tendency.” Progress, it would seem, was connected to material objects that were either European in origin or resembled European forms. And the prevalence of European objects throughout Tehran held a certain promise of progressive change. His second statement, however, stands in sharp contrast. In the realm of ideas, it would seem, Iran had remained unchanging and static for over 3000 years. One imagines that the Persian of the nineteenth century was an odd creature: riding in European-made carriages through a city rivaling Bombay in its vitality while still somehow thinking dusty, aged Achaemenid thoughts. This propensity to separate the material and cultural manifestations of progress remains prevalent in much of the writing on Iran. There has been a tendency to dismiss the cultural history of Iran in the nineteenth century as a tired story of decline, decay, and decadence. The century produced no Sa`di, no Hafiz, no Mawlana. Enough said.

The fact remains, however, that by the first decade of the twentieth century, Iran was in the midst of a Constitutional Revolution. The intellectual and cultural developments that led to that event have yet to be fleshed out by historians. A study of the cultural production of the decades leading up to that revolution, which analyzes the cultural forms that were developed and reshaped and the ideas set forth therein, will show that much intellectual and cultural activity was indeed taking place in Iran at the time of Benjamin’s visit. Such an analysis will surely shatter the image of a passive, static realm of ideas which he described in his letters to the U. S. Secretary of State. Indeed in the late nineteenth century, the boundaries of knowledge in Iran were greatly contested. As Emile Durkheim argued, changes in ideas of knowledge and the means by which such ideas are transmitted result from continued struggles among competing groups seeking influence.³ The development of the infrastructure of the Qajar state, the expansion of colonial power, and the formation of resistance to both internal autocracy and the external colonizers were all coterminous and interconnected processes. Cultural formations were a domain in which these groups constructed, legitimated, and deployed power. So the

study of Iranian cultural history in the late Qajar era has much to do with examining the complex relationship between knowledge and power.

In this dissertation, I study Iranian nationalism at a critical stage of its development, from the beginning of the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah in 1848 until the onset of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. By fusing cultural and social history, I explore the impetus, contours, and strategies of nationalism which shaped Iran as it entered the twentieth century. In this chapter, I will set the stage for my study. First, I will review some of the key theoretical literature on nationalism, underlining certain debates which are helpful for the study of Iranian nationalism in particular, pointing to the limits of discussing “the nation” as though it were a strictly European phenomenon that was exported in wholesale fashion to the “Third World” in the post-colonial era. In fact, the study of modern Iranian nationalism reveals that socio-cultural and political borrowing was in no way wholesale or universal. Moreover, as Edward Said and others have shown, the Europeans’ sense of their own nationness was intimately linked with the construction of the Oriental Other.⁴ Nineteenth century European nation-states were configured as mirrored reflections of the colonial other. This perpetually juxtaposing quality of colonialism colored nationalism in the colonized regions to some degree. Yet, I will show that the configuration that emerged from the nineteenth century as “Iran” was not simply an aftermath of the imperial contest of the British and the Russians; Iran’s intellectuals made concerted efforts to map its cultural, social, and political dimensions as well. This study of nationalism in a “semi-colonial state” offers an opportunity to step out of the sometimes confining binary of the colonized-colonizer and examine socio-cultural processes at the fissures of colonialism. How were the contours of colonial hegemony manifested in a state that was not directly subject to the colonial machinations of domination, such as taxation and military occupation? By studying the more indirect manifestations of colonial power in a semi-colonial state, we may come to a better understanding of the diverse ways in which colonial power and domination were

constructed and deployed. How did national resistance take shape in Iran? The maps, colored pencils, and rulers of the colonial officials were used to draw some of the external boundaries of Iran, but how were the internal frontiers of the nation-state constructed? And by whom? By examining the motivations and methods of nationalists as manifested in and through their cultural production, we might begin to see resistance to colonial power where we had not recognized or acknowledged it previously.

The study of Iranian nationalism through the cultural production of the late nineteenth century can help to elucidate these complex questions. This approach can reveal the sometimes oblique underpinnings of larger economic and political processes in a manner which gives greater agency to Iranians themselves. Histories of the colonized are sometimes written in a fashion that show them as passive and/or ineffectual subjects of colonial control. Much of the political resistance to colonialism and autocratic despotism manifested itself in the process of constructing new cultural forms and reconstructing already familiar ones. A study of the cultural history of Qajar Iran in terms of the development of nationalism will help shed light on an important era of Iranian history and may call into question some of the assumptions about nationalism at large.

In March 1882, Ernest Renan delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne entitled, “Qu’est que c’est un nation?” in which he stated, “France can claim the glory of having, through the French Revolution, proclaimed that a nation exists of itself. We should not be displeased if others imitate us in this. It was we who founded the principality of nationality.”⁵ During the French Revolution, the French came together because of their collective will to be united as citizens of the state. All subsequent forms of nationalism were replications of the French form. Renan’s assertions have become a basic premise in much of the literature on nationalism. However, as Eric Hobsbawm has claimed, all nations are not simply replications or imitations of the citizen-state of the French Revolution.⁶

What, then, is a nation? Renan's question was uttered over a century ago, but the search for its answer seems to remain problematic. Indeed in many of the studies of nationalism that were written through the mid-twentieth century, the notion of a nation was seen as intrinsic and natural. As Anthony Smith stated, ". . . there was a very widespread assumption in the public mind, echoed in much of the scholarly community, that the nation was something as 'natural' as the family, speech or the human body itself."⁷ More recent studies on nationalism have problematized the idea of nationalism on various levels, but have not necessarily offered a more apt definition of the term. As Benedict Anderson has explained, "Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time. But if the facts are clear, their explanation remains a matter of longstanding dispute. Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone analyse."⁸ Hugh Seton-Watson skirted the problem by claiming that a scientific definition of a nation was unattainable, though the phenomenon existed.⁹

Many scholars have argued that while explaining the phenomenon of nationalism may be difficult, pointing to its various components may offer some clarification. Elie Kedourie offers a clear discussion of the origins of nationalism, arguing that it is "a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century." Nonetheless, in attempting to define the phenomenon, he cautioned that "what seems simple and transparent is really obscure and contrived." Explaining the doctrine further he wrote, "In nationalist doctrine, language, race, culture and sometimes even religion constitute different aspects of the same primordial entity."¹⁰

Joseph Stalin argued that the characteristic features of a nation were quite clear. "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture," he noted.¹¹ The propensity to define a nation as the sum of its parts is a common practice. Various writers have added to the list of criteria, which usually

contains a combination of shared national language, territorial unity, shared historical experience, common religion, ethnic homogeneity, economic viability, and the will of a group of people to organize as a national entity.

Another approach to the study of nationalism seeks to explain why nation-states first emerged in Europe. Focusing primarily on the historical landscape of Western Europe, these scholars examine the preconditions necessary for the formation of a nation-state. One of the most cogent examples of this approach is offered by Charles Tilly. He lists the conditions favoring a nation-state as homogeneity, the existence of a peasant base, the weakness of corporate structure, the lack of centers of power, the availability of territories for expansion, and the growth of the ability of the state to divert resources to itself.¹² As instructive and illuminating as these ideas may be for historians working primarily in the European context, they are less useful for others. Are we to define non-European nationalisms as what they are not? Furthermore, such discussion of the nation do not sufficiently address the issue of agency in nation-building. Such studies either implicitly or explicitly retain Renan's notion that the origins of nationalism were embodied in the French Revolution's citizen-state, and maintaining that as the original model only allows a historian to see other nationalisms as being primarily imitative or derivative.

John Breuilly offers a different approach to understanding nationalism. In his view, the impetus of nationalism serves as a marker, as a way to define and distinguish nations. He suggests four types of nationalism which emerged in the nineteenth century: unification nationalism (as in Germany and Italy), separatist nationalism (as in Eastern Europe), anti-colonial nationalism (as in India and East Africa), and reform nationalism (as in Turkey, China, and Japan). In his critique of Breuilly, Geoff Eley has shown the limits of viewing nationalism as primarily a function of politics.¹³ Again, we are left with an inadequate explanation of the nation and nationalism, one that limits itself to the political level and leaves Renan's famous question unanswered still.

One of the critical debates in the theoretical literature on nationalism centers on the issue of whether it is primordialist phenomenon or a modern one. Among the scholars who view nationalism as primordialist is Armstrong, who sees nationalism as the latest historical stage in cycles of ethnic consciousness dating to ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Gellner, on the other hand, views nationalism as a purely modern phenomenon necessitated by industrialization which has caused the rise of nations where none had existed before. “Nationalism,” Gellner wrote, “is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”¹⁴ Anthony Smith has argued that whether one views nationalism as primordialist or a modern concept, the central feature of any useful explanation of nationalism is that it is, by nature, instrumentalist. By finding a common ground, Smith has given the necessary space to agency in theories of the nation and nationalism.¹⁵

Smith also addresses another problematic aspect of many theories of nationalism. If the nation in its form is linked to the French Revolution, he asks, how can one explain the existence of nationalisms that preceded 1789? Such a question seems particularly important to ask in regards to Middle Eastern history, as Egypt and Iran have been continuous entities in some form or another for centuries. In Smith’s view, ethnicity is the key to understanding nationalism; the distinguishing quality of nations often lies in the myths, memories, symbols and values that define and differentiate them. “The ‘roots’ of these nations are to be found, both in the general way and in many specific cases, in the model of the ethnic community prevalent in much recorded history across the globe.”¹⁶ Whether one accepts the prominence of ethnicity as a factor in nationalism or not, Smith’s views are helpful. By offering an explanation of the historicity of nations, he provides a useful way for historians of Thailand, Ethiopia, China, Egypt, and Iran to enter the larger debates on nationalism. Explaining the problem with definition that plagues much of the studies of the nation, Smith wrote, “In many ways, it is easier to ‘grasp’ nationalism, the ideological movement, than nations, the organized cultures.” Smith

agrees that certain “objective factors” such as population size, economic resources, communication systems, and centralization are necessary for the establishment of a nation. These, however, do not determine the character of the nation which is created by a set of “subject factors” such as collective will, attitude/sentiment, memory, value, myth, and symbolism.¹⁷

Eley also suggests that a “fixed, objective definition of the nation should not be exchanged for an equally reified conception of ethnicity or ‘primordial sentiments’”. In both cases, the imputed cultural collectivity is far more artificial, indeterminate, and susceptible to change than most common sense and some academic usages of these terms might suggest.”¹⁸ But the strength of nationalism, Eley argues, is in its ability to mobilize older forms of community into modern political formations. It is this very ability, Eley points out, that can not be assumed.

The notion that nationalism is a constructed and produced entity is a most useful element in the study of nationalism. In this respect, the work of Gellner is useful. Indeed, he draws attention to the very contingency of nationalism which perhaps makes it such a slippery subject to discuss. Perhaps more than any other work on nationalism, though, Benedict Anderson’s study, Imagined Communities underlined the constitutive and constructed quality of nationalism. Anderson defined a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”¹⁹ He also offered a way around the primordialist/modernist debate on nationalism. Rather than focusing on the falsity or genuineness of nations and nationalism, he argued that one should study the style through which they are imagined. Capitalism not only necessitated the reorganization of the global community into nations tied to a territorial base, but it also offered the instruments through which a national consciousness could be produced. The reconstruction of popular cultural identity facilitated new forms of collective consciousness. Chief among these was the advent of print capitalism which made it

possible to invent nationalism and to make a nation of people who previously lacked unified community connections.

In his study of Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee drew attention to some of the paradoxes that are intrinsic in much of the nationalist movements of non-Western societies. Indeed, he pointed out that both the conservative and liberal approaches to nationalism overlook a basic problem when it comes to the study of nationalism in colonial societies. In these cases, Chatterjee argued, “nationalism sets out to assert its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its project, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashion.”²⁰ Which is to say that though nationalist discourse was central to most movements of resistance, this discourse often took its shape within the structures of European colonial domination. It is clear that any study of non-Western nationalism must bear in mind this essential paradox. Chatterjee explained, “Nationalist texts were addressed both to ‘the people’ who were said to constitute the nation and the colonial masters whose claim to rule nationalism questioned. To both, nationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world.” Chatterjee underlined the relationship between domination and nationalism; he wrote, “Nationalism . . . thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the intellectual premises of ‘modernity’ on which colonial domination was based.”²¹

While Chatterjee emphasized the importance of colonialism in shaping the nationalist discourse, Timothy Mitchell showed that anti-colonial resistance was rendered from spaces within the very structures that were erected to construct and deploy the technologies of colonial power. Mitchell questioned both the image of the colonial power as a coercive central authority and that of colonial resistance as a separate subject functioning from without this system of authority. “Colonial subjects and their modes of

resistance are formed within the organisational terrain of the colonial state, rather than some wholly exterior social space.”²²

What approach, then, should one take to the study of Iranian nationalism? We have seen that attempting a definition of the nation, even within the context of Europe, is anything but simple. It is essential to understand the interactive nature of colonial power and nationalist resistance and to see both as dispersed rather than monolithic processes. Furthermore, rather than attempting generalized and overly simplistic definitions, we should understand the terms nation and nationalism to be changing and flexible. It is necessary to emphasize the constitutive and contingent nature of nationalism, which can take different forms but which ultimately seeks to bring together disparate groups of people into a unified community, linked spatially to an idea of a nation. For much of the non-Western world, nationalism was necessitated by colonialism; as such, it entailed a process of constructing images of a nation that could be freed from colonial authority. As Albert Memmi wrote, “For a number of historical, sociological and psychological reasons, the struggle for liberation by colonized peoples has taken a marked national and nationalistic look.”²³

Furthermore, colonialism and nationalism were intimately linked with the rise of capitalism, with its systems of production and communication that linked the globe and altered the course of history fundamentally. The rise of nationalism in its nineteenth century mode, then, was intrinsically connected to industrialization and colonization. Anderson argued, “The ‘last wave’ of nationalisms, most of them in the colonial territories of Asia and Africa, was in its origins a response to the new-style global imperialism made possible by the achievements of industrial capital.”²⁴ The pressures of colonization and the rise of capitalism transformed the organization of communities into nations linked through systems of culture and ideology that were constructed through an increasingly centralized, homogenized and bureaucratic state. It was in the nineteenth century that the two parts of the term nation-state came together as a unique formation,

tied closely to capitalism and colonization.²⁵ This study of Iranian nationalism will take this precarious historical juncture as its point of departure.

Hobsbawm has suggested that nationalism is “situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology, and social transformation.”²⁶ I examine this historical convergence in Iran through the cultural production of the second half of the nineteenth century. Industrialization, colonization, and nationalism were interdependent processes that had important cultural manifestations. As Raymond Williams postulated, cultural forms created with new technologies “are a means of production, developed in direct if complex relations with profoundly changing and extending social and cultural relationships, changes elsewhere recognizable as deep political and economic transformations.”²⁷ The attempt to create a sense of nationness relies heavily on cultural devices. Nation-building naturally involves a process of institutionalization, largely geared towards unifying economic and political power into the machinations of the state and then deploying that power throughout the nation-state. Through institutionalization, made more fluid with industrialization, the nation becomes linked with the state. But this complex process can not be understood simply as a political and economic concept. Clifford Geertz has suggested the importance of “the interplay between institutional change and cultural reconstruction.”²⁸ And as Eley reminds us, while it is important to understand nationalism as “a transition from ethnicity to a more politicized mode of bounded cultural identity, or from pre-nationalist to nationalist form of consciousness and cultural identification,” this process must be studied within the backdrop of larger social, economic, and political transformations.²⁹

In this respect, Miroslav Hroch’s study of East European nationalism is instructive. He identifies three phases of nationalism. In Phase A, nationalism operates in the cultural, literary, and folkloric spheres. Only then does it move onto Phase B which belongs to the militants of the national idea who begin political campaigning for these ideas. By Phase C, national programmes are engendering mass support.³⁰ One of

my basic arguments is that the long process of cultural construction that preceded the political expression of nationalist sentiment was germane to the particular expression of Iranian nationalism. Without a better understanding of that process, I argue, our knowledge of modern Iranian nationalism is incomplete and lacking in serious ways.

Culture became an instrument of nationalism, a tool through which national sentiment was created, coalesced into political forms, and disseminated. Still, culture itself is contingent and constructed. In his recent study on nationalism, Eley points to a “dialectic between actually existing cultures and nationalist political creativity” which may reinvent cultural formations for specific political purposes. Eley’s discussion of the appropriation of ancient Greek cultural motifs by modern Greek nationalists seems especially relevant for the study of Iranian nationalism. As Eley shows, there was a particular historical conjuncture which made possible a characterization of the past and the appropriation of certain aspects of the Greek cultural heritage. Modern nationalism, then, reifies and filters the cultural heritage which it claims as its foundation. The two trends of Iranian nationalism in the nineteenth century which claimed to draw on indigenous cultural forms in order to self-strengthen Iran (the Islamic and the monarchic) were actually creating a new cultural identity through which to construct their nationalism. In discussing culture and cultural appropriation by nationalists, it is essential to bear in mind, as Eley cautions, the difference between actual and idealized history.³¹

Several scholars have helped clarify the crucial role of culture in the colonial and national enterprises. Nick Dirks’ study of British India revealed the connections between culture and colonialism: “Although colonial conquest was predicated on the power of superior arms, military organization, political power, and economic wealth, it was also based on a complexly related variety of cultural technologies.”³² In his suggestive analysis of the interchange between culture and colonial power, Dirks argued that colonialism can be studied “as a metaphor for the subtle relationship between power and

knowledge, between culture and control.” Culture in the colonial theater became a marker of difference and a project of control.³³

Of course, it was Edward Said’s critical study, Orientalism, that brought the relationship between culture and colonialism to the forefront of many academic debates. In subsequent studies, Said has elaborated on the role of culture in forming and deploying colonial power. “At the heart of European culture during the many decades of imperial expansion lay an undeterred and unrelenting Eurocentrism. This accumulated experiences, territories, peoples, histories, it studied them, classified them, it verified them ... but above all, it subordinated them.” Said went on to argue, “This cultural process has to be seen as a vital, informing, and invigorating counterpoint to the economic and political material at the centre of imperialism.”³⁴ The propensity to use cultural representation as an instrument of power is not limited, of course, to imperial Europe. The distinction, however, is the particular linking of power and culture in the Age of Empire, the coming together of academicians, industrialists, and colonial officials (often one and the same). Cultural studies in the nineteenth century “developed and accentuated the essentialist positions in European culture proclaiming that Europeans should rule, non-Europeans should be ruled.”³⁵

Many studies are now available that offer further insight into the connections between colonial power and cultural production from a variety of perspectives. However, few studies have undertaken a historical study and analysis of the role of resistance in that equation. However central culture was to the creation, legitimation, and manifestation of colonial power, it also played an essential part in the resistance to that power. As Said has argued, “...in the overseas *imperium* the massive political, economic, and military resistance was carried forward and informed by an actively proactive and challenging culture of resistance.”³⁶

In this dissertation, I study the importance of culture to the articulation of colonial power and its importance to the construction of nationalist resistance. I hope to shed light

on the complex intermingling of cultural production and the quest for power in the colonial period. Iranian intellectuals sought to employ cultural production as a means of producing and constructing a sense of nationness in order to 'regenerate' Iran and strengthen her will to withstand colonial incursions, while some Europeans used their studies of culture in order to reconstruct the native as the 'other' who was different and controllable. These intertwined processes should be studied alongside one another. The nationalist and the Orientalist constructions of Iran were concurrent and deeply linked phenomena, that in some ways necessitated and reinforced one another. In order to truly understand Orientalism and its construction of the other, as Said has suggested, the texts of imperialism and of resistance must be read contrapuntally. Indeed, one of Said's major contributions to the study of the cultural history of colonialism has been to draw our attention to the consequences of denying the essential hybridity of cultural formations.

As Said suggests, it is important to understand the interchange between imperialist expansion and national resistance which contributed to this cultural hybridity, to study cultural formations against the backdrop of economic and political activity which marked the history of the nineteenth century. The history of nationalism and imperialism can only be understood by rejoining the domains of realpolitik and cultural history. The significance of this approach became clear in the work of Antonio Gramsci.³⁷ For Gramsci, cultural change was relational to economic and political change; in order to study cultural formations, one must tease out the political and socio-economic preconditions that allowed and necessitated the new culture's construction. Gramsci's cultural writings also remind us not to view culture as homogenous, but rather to view societies as "culturally stratified in a complex way."³⁸

In the following chapters, I hope to flesh out some of these debates in the Iranian context, while also using some of these studies of the relationship between cultural production and nationalism to better understand a critical period of Iranian history. In

the second chapter, I will discuss the semi-colonial status of Iran in the nineteenth century. Drawing on published studies by contemporary scholars, nineteenth century studies on the political contest for power over Iran, and archival records, I hope to elucidate the particular nature of colonial power that was constructed and deployed. This analysis which will help us to better understand the indirect manifestations of colonial power. I will argue, however, that a strictly political analysis of Iran's status in the Age of Empire offers only a limited view of the complex power relations that were at play.

The third chapter focuses on education, examining the development of Orientalist scholarship on Iran as well as the development of a secular, state-sponsored educational system within Iran itself. Two men who had a formative role in the formation of Orientalist scholarship on Iran in the nineteenth century were Edward Granville Browne and George N. Curzon. Through close scrutiny of their personal papers and publications, I trace the development of the ideas and institutions of British Orientalism vis-à-vis Iran in the late nineteenth century. I then turn my attention to a study of the bureaucratization of the educational system in late Qajar Iran. My discussion turns to the "caravans of knowledge," the Dar al-Fanun, and the Dar al-Tarjumah. Rather than dismissing attempts at developing a modern and secular educational system under the late Qajars as an unmitigated failure or a weak imitation of European models, I focus on the history of the process and the impediments that hampered the development of an enduring educational system in Iran during this period.

I then turn my attention to the nature of print culture in Iran during the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar. The development of print culture in Iran at this time became deeply embedded into the larger debates on civilization and progress. Print culture became a medium that served the causes of nationalist resistance, state building, and colonial interests alike. I devote a good deal of attention to treating the history of the printed book and the advent of newspaper publishing within the context of the evolution of Persian nationalism in this period.

In the following chapter, I examine the rise of a new cultural form in nineteenth century Iran, the secular, satirical theater. Through a historical analysis of the plays of Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi, I argue that theater was used by some indigenous intellectuals to articulate and propagate particular notions of nationalism. I trace the audience of these plays by contemporary Iranian intellectuals and Europeans alike, showing the blending of colonial and nationalist interests in the cultural production of this period.

It is my nature to question givens. Perhaps this is a result of having witnessed the Iranian Revolution at the very impressionable age of fourteen. The world as I knew it was indeed turned upside down. More than anything else, that experience has taught me to challenge simple answers and simplistic assertions. The value of history, it seems to me, is in finding the stratified grey areas of human existence, rather than painting lived experiences into easily discernible spheres of black and white. In this dissertation, I am not attempting to present a coherent view of nineteenth century Iranian history. Perhaps all I will manage to do is to reveal some of the cracks in its veneer.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 1

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- ²⁹ Eley, unpublished manuscript.
- ³⁰ Miroslav Hroch, Social Precondition of National Revival in Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- ³¹ Eley, unpublished manuscript.
- ³² Nicholas Dirks, Colonialism and Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 3.
- ³³ Ibid, pp. 11-15.

³⁴ Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), pp. 267-8.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 120.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 268.

³⁷ Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Cultural Writings, ed. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

³⁸ Gramsci as quoted in Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978), p. 29.

CHAPTER 2
“BETWEEN TWO FIERCE LIONS”:
IRAN AND COLONIALISM IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the previous chapter’s discussion on nationalism and cultural production, I referred to the colonized and the colonizers, but in the nineteenth century, Iran was neither a colony nor a protectorate. What place then does Iran have in this discussion of nationalism and colonialism? For much of the nineteenth century and especially in the latter years, Russian and British imperialism became increasingly focused on Iran. Indeed, as Ahmad Ashraf has written, one might best describe Iran’s condition as semi-colonial for much of the century.¹ Nikki Keddie and Mehrdad Amanat concur: “. . . it seems legitimate to call Iran a semicolony in which the independence of both people and government were strictly limited.”²

In many cases, nationalism was a response to colonial power. Partha Chatterjee and Timothy Mitchell have shown that in India and Egypt, nationalist resistance arose within the power structures of the colonizing projects. Michel Foucault postured that resistance is never truly in a position of exteriority to power. He argued, “In effect, between a relationship of power and strategy of struggle there is a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal.”³ Domination and resistance, then, should be studied as relational. Although by their very nature, they can never be equal, “they refer to the same historical fabric and each of the two analyses must have reference to the other.”⁴ In order to undertake a comprehensive study of Iranian nationalism, then, one must study the forms of power against which it arose. And the manner in which colonial

domination came to be expressed in Iran can reveal some of the more oblique ways in which power was constructed, justified, and legitimated in the nineteenth century.

As Firuz Kazemzadeh wrote, “Unkind fate placed Persia between the Russian hammer and the British anvil. The struggles of the two giant empires, whether for Constantinople, Central Asia, or the Far East, were instantly reflected and echoed at Tehran. . . . Neither Russia nor Britain could leave Iran alone.”⁵ Kazemzadeh noted that this diplomatic struggle between the two powers would be “. . . the determining factor in Central Asiatic and Middle Eastern affairs until British power waned after the Second World War.”⁶ In this chapter, I will explore the nature of and consequences of the colonial pressures on Iran in the late nineteenth century. This is not meant to be a comprehensive diplomatic study of the time, but rather an investigation into why Iran was so important in the Anglo-Russian rivalry. I am interested in exploring the ways in which colonial power was constructed and deployed in Iran in order to better understand the context against which nationalist resistance developed.

In the nineteenth century, as colonial power was mapped out, Iran became the prize in the game between Russia and England. In 1886, the American Consul, Winston complained to the American Secretary of State Bayard of the seemingly ominous influence of the Russians and the British in Iran. “The Representatives of the other Powers, including your own are merely lookers on and watchers of the game which the great Powers above named, are playing, not taking sides of course but well wishers of Persia and anxious that her honor and autonomy shall be preserved.”⁷ Though none of the colonial powers ever seemed to feel they could or should completely colonize Iran, the balance of power between various imperialists was seen to some extent as being determined in Iran. And the Persian Question for much of the nineteenth century revolved around this issue of the game between Russia and England. As one British observer of the Anglo-Russian rivalry over Persia noted, “. . . I see no necessity for

giving away a strong piece in the game without the slightest necessity or without any kind of tangible *quid pro quo*.”⁸

Iran’s main interest for both Russia and England was geopolitical. Edged alongside India, it became increasingly important to England. Furthermore, England’s naval presence in the Persian Gulf remained of crucial significance throughout the period; British trade relations with the Gulf States and its dominion over Arabia were directly linked to British naval power in the Persian Gulf. As the telegraph became increasingly important in linking the widespread colonial territories of the British Empire, Iran was a central link in the ability to communicate with India and Australasia. Though Iran was never considered a big enough prize in and of itself to warrant formal colonization, which would surely mean a costly war with Russia, it was seen as a crucial link in the maintenance of British hegemony over its colonial dominions.

Iran also held a geopolitical importance for Russia. As one Persian prince, the Na’ib al-Sultan explained to the American representative Benjamin in 1883, “The Russians are constantly looking over the border . . . with envious eyes.”⁹ As it expanded its empire, Russia absorbed much of Iran’s territories in the Caucuses and Central Asia. Russia’s quest for warm water ports, in particular its desire to access the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean had been an expressed military and political ambition since the time of Peter the Great.¹⁰ For Russia, a war with England was also considered to be too costly; this set certain limits on its actions in Iran. A review of the relations of Russia and England with Iran in the nineteenth century underlines their different strategies of imperialism and the divergent techniques of colonial power which each used. Though Russia and England were clearly engaged in the colonial ‘game,’ the rules which applied to Iran were unique and often changing.

The Anglo-Russia rivalry over Persia reflects significant changes in the imperial contest in the mid- to late- nineteenth century. Russia’s role in the rivalry came to fore with its two wars against Iran in the early part of the nineteenth century which led to the

damaging Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmanchai (1827).¹¹ The Treaty of Gulistan ended a war that lasted over a decade; Iran conceded Karabagh, Georgia, Shaki, Shiravan, Derbend, Kobeh, Daghistan, Abtichar, and part of Talish.¹² The Qajars, however, were unwilling to permanently relinquish their Caucasian territories and a second war ensued in 1826, which led to an even more damaging treaty. With the signing of the Treaty of Turkmanchai, Iran conceded Erivan and Nakhichevan and agreed to pay Russia twenty thousand silver rubles. In addition, “No Iranian official was allowed to enter the premises owned by Russian subjects residing in Iran without prior authorization by Russia. All litigations involving the subjects of Russia came under the exclusive jurisdiction of Russian authorities in Iran.”¹³ Iran not only lost important territories but it had to pay reparations. More importantly, it had to concede some of its sovereignty over to Russia, even in the territories that had not been occupied by Russia forces. And the Russians extracted agreements on tariffs and duties which greatly favored Russian goods in Iran to the detriment of local producers, manufacturers and merchants.

After the signing of the Treaty of Turkmanchai, the British wanted similar privileges. The British and the Iranians fought “a little war” over Herat, and Iran’s defeat offered such an opportunity with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1857.¹⁴ In assessing the eventual causes of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, Ervand Abrahamian argued that these treaties set up an economic imparity from which Iran was unable to recover throughout the course of the nineteenth century. The imbalance eventually led to a growing discontent with the usurping presence of Europeans and the weakness of the Shahs to withstand such pressures. “These treaties exacted, in addition to territorial concessions, harsh commercial capitulations that lowered import duties, permitted Britain and Russia to open trading agencies anywhere within Iran, and exempted their merchants from local laws, tariffs, and road tolls. These capitulations, in coinciding with the Industrial Revolution in Europe, opened the way for the dramatic

influx of mass-manufactured goods into Iran.” By the end of the nineteenth century, foreign trade had increased ten-fold to the great detriment of the local economy.¹⁵

Iranians at the time seemed to be aware of the grave consequences of these defeats. In response to the growing demands of both the Russia and the British Prime Minister, the Qa'im Maqam exclaimed, “This type of trade would lead to the annihilation of this poor and weak country and would result in the division of Iran between two fierce lions, who have their claws struck in her corpse. . . . As it is, Iran's chances of survival under the claws of only one lion [Russia] are quite slim. Her chances would be even slimmer if two lions make an attempt to tear her apart. Iran would not be able to withstand that, and no doubt, she would give out under their pressure.”¹⁶ Indeed, as Guity Nashat's studies of the economic history of Qajar Iran have shown, Russian trade with Iran was a tool which Tsarist Russia used to good advantage to exert its influence over Iran without ever having to directly colonize the country. This strategy was not altogether lost on the British either.¹⁷

Given the growing importance of trade as an instrument of colonial power in Iran, the development of Iran's infrastructure and internal communications became increasingly important to both the Russians and the British. The railroad and the telegraph were especially significant to the imperial powers, though the construction of roads, the opening of the Karun River for navigation, and the various mining projects were also conducted through a series of concessions sold to the British and the Russians. The granting of concessions always had to be balanced; if Russia was given a prize, Britain demanded one of equal value. British diplomatic records show that the diplomats who visited Iran or held posts there kept rather complete records of Persian notables and their land holdings. Detailed biographical notices were coupled with descriptions of properties held by members of the royal family, notables, merchants, and clergy, with comments on who was more likely to sell their land or to give away the mining rights of certain territories.¹⁸

As Russia tried actively to win a concession for the construction of railways all throughout Iran, the Iranian government became increasingly alarmed. There was an awareness that holding railway concessions offered tremendous control to an imperial power. When Falkenhagen asked for such a concession, the Shah instructed his minister to not grant it. The Shah reportedly told Mirza Husayn Khan, “The state will be in danger. . . If the Russians come to Tabriz, we must all say the last prayer for Iran, we must perform the last rites of Iran.”¹⁹

The British were also keenly aware of the importance of Russia’s attempts to gain railroad concessions throughout Iran. Whigham wrote, “The Russians learned some time ago what we have not yet grasped – the supreme political importance of railway control in the East.”²⁰ Indeed, the regions of Iran on which Russia held railroad concessions were seen as all but being Russian territory, and if Russia were to have an edge over Britain in this regard, British prestige in Asia could be threatened. Whigham wrote with great alarm, “There exist already maps of Persia in the Russian legation at Teheran in which railways systems for the whole of Persia are mapped out, and if it is argued that it is a good deal easier to make railways on paper than over real territory one need only reply that in this respect at least, Russia has always been as good as her word.”²¹

Drawing railroad tracks onto maps of the colonial world had varied significance in the nineteenth century. The railway was a crucial instrument for dismembering the unity and autonomy of Persia. It is important to note that the “beginnings of modernization” in Iran were intrinsically connected to the construction and deployment of colonial power. The railroad tracks were planned in geographic locations that were convenient to the imperial powers in order to increase their influence and expedite their imperial causes. The railroad system was not necessarily planned according to the logic of developing a cohesive internal infrastructure which would favor healthy industrial development in Iran. Indeed the struggle over and granting of railroad concessions to the

Russians and the British in effect denied the Persian officials any choice over whether railroads would be built throughout Persia.

Still some British officials pointed to the various rewards that would come to the Persians through the construction of rails, even as they readily admitted that linking Britain more directly to India (through the telegraph and the rail) was a major impetus for and ambition of British involvement in Iran. One of the most outspoken proponents of developing the telegraph in Iran was Sir Goldsmid, who had served as the Director of the Indo-European telegraphs before becoming a Boundary Commissioner for Seisten, charged with determining much of Iran's eastern borders. Interestingly, Goldsmid also appears in my dissertation as a theater critic who studied and wrote about Persian drama. Goldsmid argued his position for increasing British involvement in development projects in Iran in a number of published articles and lectures, often through his affiliations with the Royal Geographic Society. One such article was published in 1890 in the Scottish Geographical Magazine, and Goldsmid mailed copies of the article to various diplomats and scholars interested in Iran. In the article, Goldsmid argued for a more active British role in developing a railroad system in Iran. "Both theory and practice are actively at work for the benefit of Persia, the outcome of the movement being necessarily a stimulus to commerce and the direction of the native mind into a comparatively healthy channel." Goldsmid expanded on this connection between development and the Persian people arguing, "For my own part I have great faith in the drastic remedy of the locomotive to awaken a slumbering but active-minded people, for whom it would be a novelty of high price and usefulness." Though these benefits for the Iranian people were an inevitable outcome of the development of a rail system, for Goldsmid, the primary reasons for the British to attempt to build railroads in southern Persia were quite clear; the plan "has not its origins in the mere wish to benefit a particular nation, but rather in the intention of completing a link in the inevitable great line of the connection of England with India, which should be readily available to passengers and goods as any of our home lines."

Thought it was hoped that the collective Persian mind would awaken from its slumber as a consequence of railroad construction, it was clear that Goldsmid viewed the locomotives' passage through Iran towards India as a primary goal. His assertion that any Iranian railway through southern Persia would be as available to British goods and passengers as the "home lines" confirms the imperial position that any territory through which railways were built became, in effect, part of the British Empire.²²

As I have stated, another area of development in Iran that the British viewed as integral to their imperial concerns was the telegraph. Here again various British proponents of the expansion of the telegraph system throughout Iran made a connection between imperial development projects and the Iranian mind and character. In a speech delivered in 1888 before the Scottish Geographic Society, General R. M. Smith detailed the history of the telegraph system in Iran. He noted, "The Persians are a decidedly robust, handsome race, amply endowed with the gifts of intelligence and imagination. They are of a restless, active disposition, and in this and many other respects totally unlike what Orientals are supposed to be."²³ Smith discussed the political context that precipitated a concerted effort by the British to develop telegraph lines through Iran that connected England to India, indicating that an efficient communication system was of utmost importance for linking the metropole to the colony, for ensuring the security of the empire. "The first idea of connecting England with India by telegraph began to take shape during the crisis of the Mutiny thirty-one years ago, when the necessity for such means of communication became painfully manifest. By the most rapid means then in existence it took nearly three months to get answers to communications passing between London and Calcutta – a time more than sufficient for the loss of an empire," Smith argued.²⁴

The establishment of telegraphic communication throughout Iran that linked England and India had an impact on the domestic situations in both Iran and England, integrating imperial issues and domestic affairs more closely. As a result of the telegraph

lines, Smith noted, the public in England had taken a greater interest in events in India: “Every noteworthy event is at once telegraphed to the press at home. . . .” Public support for empire was always a concern in England, and the influx of news wired over the telegraphs and disseminated in the British press was clearly significant in the process of procuring public support for imperial causes. Smith observed the impact of the telegraph on domestic political relations in Iran: “The effect of our telegraph in Persia has been very considerable. By it, and by numerous other lines of which it has been the parent, the power of the local governors have been much curtailed and brought directly under the control of the Shah and his Ministers at Teheran. Oppression has thereby certainly diminished.” The overall effect of the telegraph on Persia, according to Smith, was immense. He noted, “By means of the telegraph, Persia has been brought practically within the community of European states.”²⁵

One aspect of the development of a telegraph system in Iran, with a cadre of officials operating the lines, was the potential political uses and implications of this presence. Some British officials saw the telegraph posts as an ideal way to collect more intelligence on Iran. Others felt the commercial role of the telegraph was tantamount, and the political advantages should be viewed as a secondary, indirect benefit. Ultimately, the commercial aspects of the telegraph system were forefronted, but there was an implicit understanding that the personnel who worked the telegraph posts and who had access to information on Persia were receiving invaluable training for future political careers in the empire. As Wells, the Director of the Persia Section of the Telegraph pointed out in 1892, “To have dabbled into politics more openly would have been to jeopardize the continuance of the department as a commercial work for the sake of obtaining some information and exerting a transitory influence of a political character. To use the Telegraph Department as a school in which to leer men who could afterwards become useful for political work was and still must be considered as a wide and thoroughly legitimate procedure.”²⁶

The geopolitical implications of development in Persian for the imperial concerns of the British and the Russians remained a consistent theme throughout most of the late nineteenth century. Russia's interest in developing a railway system in Iran had several aims. The Russo-Persian Railroad Agreement which granted Russia exclusive rights to build railroads in Iran over a ten year period beginning in the fall of 1890 has been widely understood as a concession granted as a counterbalance to the banking concession granted to Reuter. Though concessionary tit-for-tat may have played a part in the Russian railroad concession, the matter is of larger importance. By 1890, railroads had become an important aspect of Russia's imperial concerns in Iran. On one level, building railways was a way of securing influence over specific territories. Additionally, railways could make trade with Persia easier and more lucrative. Finally, an extension of the rail system could link Russia to the Persian Gulf. This possibility caused great alarm amongst British observers who believed that a Russian port on the Gulf would result in a crushing blow to British influence in the region. There was concern in some quarters of the British Empire that the Persian Gulf could become a "Russian Lake."²⁷

Indeed, the importance of the Persian Gulf in the Anglo-Russian rivalry is unquestionable. Since its victory over the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, British naval power had reigned supreme in the Gulf. British influence in Iran, the Gulf States, Arabia, and India was seen in part as a result of its control over the Gulf. Nasir al-Din Shah's attempts to build a navy were resisted though seldom overtly acknowledged by British colonial officials. After all, if the Shah were to have his own navy, he would be far less reliant on the British and less willing to concede British hegemony in the Gulf.

By the turn of the century, the importance of Persia to British imperial interests seemed unquestionable, yet there remained no unanimity towards how those interests should be protected and expanded. In an attempt to devise a more cohesive Persia policy, Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India asked Curzon to submit a review and analysis of British policy in Persia. In his report to Hamilton dated September 21, 1899, Curzon

concluded, “Although the relations of Great Britain with Persia have for a period of exactly a century occupied a large, and perhaps at times a disproportionate, space upon the field of international diplomacy. . . we have not been able to discover in our records any clear definition of the principles upon which our policy towards the Persian Kingdom is based . . .”²⁸ In Curzon’s considered opinion, British interests in Iran were largely but not completely derivative of India, “The political interests of Great Britain in Persia, although they date originally from a period before India had become a British interest at all, were, in their revival a century ago, in the main Indian in inception, and are still largely Indian in character.” Curzon observes that since the Shah’s visit to Europe, Persia “has been drawn increasingly into the vortex of European politics.” Pointing to the interest that other European powers, including France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Holland, and Belgium, had shown in Persia, Curzon argues, “Persia is, in fact, one of those countries which, whether or not they had fallen into the orbit of Western Powers, more vigorous than themselves, must inevitably have attracted the attention of Europe, partly from their increasing infirmity, but still more from the opportunities suggested by their latent, though neglected, sources of strength” Curzon concludes that the primary impetus and focus of Anglo-Persian policy is “imperial, as distinct from the purely Indian”²⁹

However, in terms of the strategic interest of Great Britain in Persia, Curzon argues doggedly for the centrality of the defense of India. The British rarely forgot that in his scheme to invade India, Napoleon had planned on traveling through Persia with the full knowledge and support of Tsarist Russia and Iran.³⁰ In his report to Hamilton, Curzon made reference to Napoleon’s strategy stating, “In the early years of the present century, when the ambitions of France were the main source of apprehension, it was through Persia that a blow at British supremacy was expected to be struck and that an invasion of India was planned.”³¹ Summarizing the importance of Persian policy as well

as the underlying duality that made a cohesive strategy difficult, the Duke of Argyll exclaimed, “Tehran is the Capital where Indian and European politics meet.”³²

The British preferred to remain the singular naval power in the region and emphasized the responsibility that this role entailed. In 1902, Thomas Jewell Bennett, a leading journalist in India, gave a speech before the Indian Section of the Society of Arts in which he characterized the British role in the Gulf as the white man’s burden. He argued, “Here, if anywhere, in her world policy, the ‘white man’s burden’ has rested upon England; and despite occasional reluctance to carry its full weight, she has borne it, on the whole, unselfishly and well.” In reviewing the importance of British presence in the Gulf, Bennett overlooked the hopes that the Shah had once held to build his own navy and lauded the benevolence of the British role: “Now the English were here beginning to do for Persia what the Persians have never been willing to do for themselves.”³³

In a grand show of British power over the Gulf, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, took a rather controversial trip to the region in 1903. In a notice which he circulated to the British Cabinet, Curzon explained the purpose of his trip, “Lansdowne on behalf of His Majesty’s Government has definitely laid regard to that sea. He has asserted a predominance of British political interest there as a fundamental principle of British Asiatic policy. . . . Now, therefore, would seem a most opportune . . . moment for me to visit and inspect my offices in those regions.”³⁴ The reference to policy statement on the Persian Gulf is an allusion to comments made during a speech by Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, before the House of Lords on May 5, 1903. This statement came to be known as Britain’s Monroe Policy towards the Persian Gulf, after the Times published an editorial characterizing it as such.³⁵ It is clear that British colonial interest in Iran was largely influenced by its interest in preserving India and became increasingly focused on the preservation of British hegemony over the Persian Gulf region.

As I have stated, one of the deterring factors in producing a coherent and established British policy towards Iran was that two central parts of the imperial government felt they should be the authors of that policy, the colonial officials in London and the colonial officials in India. Another complicating factor, I believe, is that British policy towards Iran was often made in reaction to perceived or real Russian threats. The urgency of the Anglo-Russian rivalry over Persia heightened as Russia made greater territorial gains in Central Asia, and British suspicions of Russia's intentions towards Afghanistan, Baluchistan, India, and even Australasia were reawakened with a vengeance in the 1880s. After Iran's defeats to Russia in 1812 and 1828, Russia gained possession of the Caucasus, Georgia, and parts of Azerbaijan and Armenia; it was making good headway in Central Asia, as well. The encroachment of Russia towards British India was noted with alarm by the British representative in Tehran, Thomson. He pointed to ". . . the enormous if not financially overwhelming addition to our military expenditure in India which would be permanently necessitated by our having a great European military power like Russia whose communications for strategic purposes have been for years so largely developed, contentious with us" ³⁶ Thomson repeatedly pointed to the dire consequences of the possibility of Russia annexing territories contiguous with the Indian frontier. "England being so brought face to face, it may be said, in the east with a colossal European military power like Russia, the British Force which we maintain on the frontier of Russia," he surmised, "would require to be increased to an extent which would cripple our resources both in Europe and India and more than embarrass us financially." ³⁷

The fall of Merv in 1883-4 marked a particular crisis. "In 1863 the Russians were separated by nearly 1,700 miles of mountains and deserts from the advance outposts of British India. In 1883 that distance was reduced by almost half." ³⁸ Some official believed that the fall of Merv signaled the eventual loss of all of Central Asia. This would mean that Russia would move ever closer to the "jewel of the crown." In 1884, the Quarter Master General in India, Sir MacGregor published a confidential report, entitled,

“The Defence of India: A Strategical Study,” which was distributed to British officials in Britain, Iran, and India. Assessing the importance of the fall of Merv to the Russians, MacGregor wrote of his “strong belief that a great danger is impending over our Indian Empire, and therefore that it behooves all Englishmen to try to realize exactly what that danger is, and what measures should be undertaken to meet it.”³⁹ He felt that nothing less than the “preservation of our Indian Empire” was at stake, therefore he called for a firm resolution: “The spirit which must run through all our operations, warlike as well as diplomatic, must be that Russia *shall not* invade or threaten India with impunity.”⁴⁰

MacGregor offered a variety of strategies for dealing with the potential threat of a Russian invasion of India. Great Britain should develop communications in Iran linking her more closely to India, to use Iran as a point of pressure against Russian trade, to employ British consulates as spy posts, and to seek diplomatic cooperation with Iran. Iran should be encouraged to join “a grand coalition” with Germany, Austria, Turkey, Afghanistan, and China. If Iran did not agree to join this coalition, it should be divided up. MacGregor offered several specific plans for dividing Iranian territory:

I should not much regret Persia’s not joining, as it would give us the opportunity of further rewarding Turkey, by giving her the provinces of Azerbaijan and Persian Kurdistan; of restoring to Baluchistan the whole of Persian Mekran; and of giving to Afghanistan Seistan, Gain, Khaf, and Turbut Skekhjam. Further, Persia might be broken into two states – the northern to consist of Ghilan, Mazandaran, Astrabad, Khorasan, including trans-Caspia, Khemseh, Teheran, Hamadan, Kum, and Kashan; and the southern, under a ruler completely under our influence, of Yezd, Kirman, Laristan, Fars, Khuzistan, Ispahan, Nain, Kermanshah, and Luristan. I conceive there would be little difficult in arranging this.⁴¹

If MacGregor’s suggestions were not formally embraced, similar proposals to divide the territorial integrity of Persia were proposed and considered by various British diplomats.

In 1889, Colonel Bell wrote to Curzon, suggesting that Britain should eventually take formal possession of at least parts of Iranian territory:

S[outh] W[est] Persia is to us a place of more than ordinary importance and I suppose that we must hold it some day unless we make up our minds

to let the Persian Gulf become a Russian Lake – the latter alternative is worse than the former I think – with Russia a naval power in the Indian and Pacific seas India and our Australasian colonies are badly placed and must well enough ruin themselves by keeping up armies and navies of sufficient strength.⁴²

And the plan to divide Persia into two spheres mentioned by MacGregor also had other proponents. Among them was the British representative in Persia Drummond Wolff who wrote in 1889, “My own wish is that we should come to terms with Russia and jointly map out a system conciliating Russian aims in the North with ours in the South. But the Russians are more suspicious of us than we of them and meet all advances by soft words and delay. The real truth I believe is that nothing suits them but annexation. . . .”⁴³ Drummond Wolff’s prophetic statement warrants a moment of reflection. In this statement, he has mapped out various possibilities for the power struggle over Persia: the unstated possibility is a war between Russia and Britain, another option is a prolonged continuation of the quiet and uneasy tensions, the third possibility rewrites this space of conflict into one of rapprochement, with Russia and Britain turning the geographical entity “Persia” into a space which they can demarcate into respective domains of colonial control. Nowhere in this discursive map do we read of Persia as an independent agent, a possessor of its own geography. Indeed, the discursive disembodiment of Persia as demonstrated in the MacGregor report and the Drummond Wolff memorandum was an important step in the process of implementing colonial power in more direct forms over Persia. As Foucault stated, “The spatialising description of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power.” The various discursive tactics of geography, “. . . forms of implantation, delimitation, and demarcation of objects, the modes of tabulation, the organisation of domains...” were a crucial part of the creation and deployment of geopolitical power.⁴⁴

One great paradox of the Anglo-Russia rivalry was that while it helped to maintain Iran’s formal independence since each power refused to allow the other complete control, the continuing involvements of these imperial powers preempted the

development of any meaningful national integrity under the Qajars. In 1834, Lord Palmerstone and Count Nesselrode entered an agreement to guarantee Persia's independence. A diplomatic dispatch dated September 5, 1834 states, "the Governments of Great Britain and Russia are acting with regard to the affairs of Persia in the same spirit and are equally animated by a sincere desire to maintain not only the internal tranquility, but also the independence and integrity of Persia."⁴⁵ Similar statements were again exchanged between Russian and British diplomats in 1838, 1839, 1873, and 1888. It is clear that safe keeping Persian independence in this sense meant that neither power would directly colonize the territory; it did not insure that Persians would remain sovereign over their own state in any real sense.

Sir Henry Mortimer Durand who had been Foreign Secretary for the Government of India from 1885-1894, was then sent to Iran where he served as the British Minister at Tehran until 1900. He was vastly influential in shaping British policy towards Iran. In 1895, Durand wrote a memorandum on Persia which was often directly quoted or referred to by other diplomats and scholars. He wrote, "With a view to maintaining the integrity and independence of Persia, it is desirable to make timely arrangements for securing a quiet succession on the Shah's death, and we should endeavor to strengthen our influence over the heir-apparent by keeping an English with him, by improving the position of our representative in Tabriz, and in other ways. We should let it be understood that aggressive action by Russia in the north of Persia will immediately result in decided action by us in the south."⁴⁶ The British were aware of the nature of their involvement in Persia which brought to the fore some inherent tensions in their approach to imperialism. The pretense that British imperialists did not interfere directly in the internal affairs of independent states was more difficult to uphold given the nature of British involvement in Iran. Durand argued for a stronger hand in Persia, ". . . if we are to be stronger here [we must] take a resolute tone and not let Persia trifle with us as she is in the habit of doing. The Persians are full of conceit, and have often treated us very

improperly. It never pays to let an Asiatic do that.”⁴⁷ Durand continued to argue a more forceful British stance in Iran and explained his position to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1899. In a letter to Salisbury, he wrote, “Your Lordship tells me that we interfere more in Persia than we do in other independent countries, and it is possible [sic] that this does harm. I suppose the habit of interference [sic] has arisen from our long-standing connection with the Persian Gulf, and from the feeling of the Persians that their national existence depends upon our support.”⁴⁸

In reading through the diplomatic correspondence dealing with Iran, one can detect a propensity to use metaphorical language to step around the question of Iranian sovereignty and to discursively draw it into the domains of the British Empire. One motif which was frequently used to depict Iran and the colonial influence in it was that of the garden, a passion shared by Iranians and British alike. Upon arriving at Iran, Durand wrote, “I like Persia well enough. It is a delicious climate so far We are now enjoying an English spring – the garden full of lilacs . . . and hyacinths – and real English blackbirds singing in it.”⁴⁹ In another letter, he wrote, “The spring is upon us and the trees are all coming out. The blackbirds sing just as in England, and the nightingales are coming.”⁵⁰ And finally, Durand arrived at the logical conclusion of this garden metaphor, “This country might be turned into a garden if only Russia and England c[oul]d agree.”⁵¹ Iran was seen as a place with the makings of a good garden (hyacinths, nightingales, lilacs), but needed the careful attention of the imperial “gardeners” in order to realize its full potential. In this garden metaphor, direct colonial interference in this manner was seen as positive and essential to Iran’s survival. Another function of the British garden metaphor was to discursively link Iran more closely to England; this is not truly a separate, sovereign state if British flowers and birds dwell here.

There were other metaphors that were used to depict the Persian situation and the colonial role in it. In 1896, Lord Curzon published a Memorandum on the Persian situation in which he spoke of Persia using nautical motifs. “Patching up so crazy a

vessel is an almost hopeless attempt. Sooner or later it will founder,” Curzon wrote. “Only as it has some useful timbers and a valuable cargo, there will be salvage worth looking after.”⁵² Indeed, Lord Curzon offered perhaps the most colorful images of Iran and its weakened position. In his 1889 study of Russian expansion into Central Asia, he wrote, “. . . Persia is in the position of the scriptural vineyard whose wall is broken down, and the king of kings is as helpless as a fly in the spider’s web.”⁵³ As I will argue in chapter three of this dissertation, Curzon’s views of Iran carried much weight in scholarly and diplomatic circles alike. His writings were often quoted and appropriated by other diplomats and writers. Indeed, in his assessment of the influence of Russia over Iran, Whigham wrote, “In the meantime Persia is as helpless as a fly in a spider’s web.”⁵⁴

In this review of Iran’s status as a semi-colonial state in the late nineteenth century, I have pointed to some of the key aspects of the Anglo-Russian rivalry. What role did the colonial officials perceive for Iran and Iranians themselves in this colonial game? What was the general response to signs of resistance to colonialism within Iran itself? When there were signs of discontent about colonial incursions, some colonial officials interpreted the turn of events as the actions of a group in society (usually the elite or the clergy) who feared a loss of personal power, wealth, or prestige. Though some British observers sounded an alarm over the rebellious response of some segments of Iran’s population to the increasing encroachment of the Russians and the British, this resistance did not come to play a significant role in determining colonial policy towards Iran until the onset of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. One of the largest protests against European encroachment in this period was the Tobacco Revolt, when various segments of Iran’s population protested the sale of a concession granting a British citizen a monopoly for growing tobacco in Iran.⁵⁵ The head of the Persian Imperial Bank who was known by many as being clearly in touch with Iran and Iranians, Schindler, wrote a cautionary note about the rebellion to Curzon. Schindler argued, “We have had some

anxious moments here last week, and many people fancied that a massacre of Europeans would take place. The little revolution ended happily, the Shah gave in”⁵⁶

After the Tobacco Revolt, Iranians continued to actively oppose the wholesale granting of concessions to Europeans. A former student of E. G. Browne’s from Cambridge, Fahie, went on to work as a British colonial official in Shiraz. He wrote to Curzon about the growing discontent amongst Iranians, “As regards the actual situation in Persia, there are, if I mistake not, unmistakable, although as yet not clearly defined signs of discontent and alarm at changes.”⁵⁷ Fahie observed the response of Iranians to increased colonial intervention in Iran’s domestic affairs, enumerating the reaction of various classes in some detail:

The Imperial Bank is a rude awakening to a large and influential class – the native Bankers of all sorts – whose occupation will soon be gone. There are rumours of monopolies of all sorts, as Tobacco, wheat, etc., all in the hands of the accursed and unclean Feringhess. Thus the Commercial and landowning classes see a speedy termination of a system which though bad for the country at large has been good for them. Then the governing classes already changing under the restraints of the Treaties, Consuls, Agents and active and passive protests of European Residents foresee that their power for evil will be still further hampered by the influence of Europeans and European interest and last though not least there are the priestly whose existence is bound up with the present system. All these classes are taking alarm little by little and are already discussing the means of arresting these changes of throwing off once and for all the horrid European incubus.⁵⁸

Fahie went on to employ a discursive strategy for defining imperial control over Iran’s resources as a positive trend that was intended for the benefit of Iran but that was being opposed by the locals who felt their own self-interest was being threatened, “Rapid and sweeping changes will certainly be resisted in Persia as everywhere else, by the upper classes from motives of self interest and by all from ignorance and short-sightedness. People at home should therefore not be in too great a hurry to carry out their disinterested schemes for the improvement of Persia.”⁵⁹

By and large, British colonial officials reflected views similar to those expressed by Fahie. There was a tendency to see any resistance to European penetrations as a sign of backwardness and a resistance to change; others saw Iranians as passive and inactive. In his book published in 1875, Rawlinson who had served as Minister in Iran, wrote, “Eastern society above all, immovable alike in its predilections and its prejudices, sustains the action of half a century without any sensible effect. . . . Shut in between her colossal neighbors the country has been held together by their opposing pressure. She has received influences, but has never parted them; her condition has been strictly passive, and the tendencies to which she has been exposed have been constant and uniform.”⁶⁰

In his study of Russian expansion into Central Asia, Curzon upheld the idea of the Iranian people as being inactive in the face of Russian domination, “There is not either in the Persian sovereign, in the Persian administration, in the Persian army, or in the Persian people any material capable of opposing a prolonged resistance to these or any demands that Russia may choose by threats to enforce. The Shah, whatever he may feel, and he probably feels bitterly, cannot act. . . . No unity or national spirit exists in the country. A distinguished foreign diplomat is said to have once remarked, after a long Persian experience: ‘*C’est le dernier des pays et le dernier des peuples*’.”⁶¹ Whigham concurred with Rawlinson and Curzon on this point. He wrote, “. . . the chances of saving Persia from the consequences of her own folly are exceedingly small. Anyone who at a distance has formed ideas of raising a Mohammedan rampart between ourselves and Russia has only to stay a month in the country to have all such ideas rudely dispelled. Islam buried its talent in the ground some centuries ago, and has never taken the trouble even to dig it up. As for Persia, you will search the East in vain for a people or a Government more doomed to decay.”⁶²

This inability or unwillingness to perceive any meaningful agency on behalf of Iranians themselves was seen as not only justifying but necessitating further involvement

on behalf of the British. Whigham wrote, “In Persia – apart from the lawless tribes, who have their rude qualities – we are face to face with a people at least as corrupt as its Government, and nothing worse could be said than that. Such a people and such a Government cannot much longer escape the salutary rod of foreign control. It is merely a question as to whether the rulers will be many or single. But in the meantime we must talk of the integrity of Persia. No Secretary of Foreign Affairs would be recognisable unless he had the word integrity or the phrase *status quo* on his lips. But while we talk of integrity we should not be idle.”⁶³

In the final analysis, however, Iran’s geopolitical importance continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century. England became increasingly weary of Russian encroachments onto India. Indeed, by 1901, Curzon asserted, “As a student of Russian aspirations and methods for fifteen years, I assert with confidence – what I do not think that any one of her own statesmen would deny – that her ultimate ambition is the dominion of Asia. She conceives of herself to be fitted for it by temperament, by history, and by tradition. It is a proud and a not ignoble aim, and is well worthy of the supreme moral and material efforts of a vigorous nation.”⁶⁴

In the end, British policy makers decided that a possible loss in the game with Russia was too great. I have referred to Drummond Wolff’s 1889 memorandum in which he cautioned that Russia’s real aims in Persia were annexation; he concluded, “I believe if a line were drawn West to East of Persia at the North of which they might have protective duties they would abandon the South to us.”⁶⁵

This notion of dividing Iran became increasingly favored and became integrated into imperial notions of Iran’s ‘independence’. As the Secretary of State of India, Hamilton noted in 1900, “The very independence which we struggle to maintain may become the most effective instrument which Russia can use against us.”⁶⁶ The façade of Persian independence gradually gave way. As Whigham wrote, “One must admit that the Shah’s government is already an anachronism in the existing stage of the world’s

development, and our policy of jealously guarding the integrity of Persia is daily becoming more and more of a sham.”⁶⁷

Though there seems rarely to have been a consensus amongst British officials on a strategy towards Persia, the notion of a rapprochement with Russia gained more and more support. Increasingly, the idea of dividing Persia into spheres of influence came to be viewed as an ideal alternative. Previous proposals to divide Persia geographically may have seemed theoretical or alarmist, but by the turn of the century, they came to be viewed as a practical solution to ward off Russian aggression without a costly military confrontation. Durand suggested the following boundaries “. . . a line across Persia from Khanikin on the Turkish frontier on the west, through Kermanshah, Hamadan, Ispahan, Yezd, and Kerman to Seistan, and the Afghan frontier on the east, as indicating approximately the existing line of partition between British and Russian spheres of influence both political and commercial in Persia.”⁶⁸ Curzon had written in his Persia and the Persian Question that the deserts in the middle of the country, signaled the possibility of partition. “Should it ever be the fate of Persia to submit to territorial and political partition,” he wrote, “nature has, in part at any rate, saved the contracting or conflicting parties the expense and trouble of a Boundary Commission.”⁶⁹

Curzon’s contention that the deserts offered a natural means of dividing Persia that was natural and efficient was taken up by other British officials. As Whigham wrote:

. . . Persia must be divided, unless we are to allow Russia to dominate the whole kingdom. That there is any great danger to us in such a partition a study of the map of Persia enables one to deny. All Persia, as Lord Curzon has pointed out, is divided into two great parts by the Great Salt desert, which runs five hundred miles from north-west to south-east, and presents a barrier as insurmountable as the bleak Kara Koram or the snows of the Himalayas. Those writers who dread coming to close quarters by land with Russia have overlooked this important strategical fact; better to extend our influence and government, if need be, to this natural boundary, than to surrender to our rival one of the most important bases in all the Indian waters.⁷⁰

The partition of Persia is seen as a natural choice and the only viable option to allowing Russian domination over Persia which came to be viewed as tantamount to losing India. The great salt deserts were a convenient border, the partition of Iran an obvious and natural consequence of its own internal geography -- as described and mapped out by Curzon. The mapping of Persia and discussions of its independence became increasingly connected to the potential threat that Russia posed to India, and thereby to the British Empire at large.

In his report on Britain's Persia policy submitted in 1899, Curzon had noted the Chinese example as a possible model for Persia. In China, the Russians and the British had agreed to divide the territory into spheres of influence in which each power had control over the railroads. In the case of Persia, it was now suggested that the concept of partition into spheres of influence could be used to guarantee commercial and political interests of both imperial powers while avoiding a costly and unwanted war.⁷¹

And what was the Persian response to the Anglo-Russian rapprochement? The British Minister wrote as early as 1895 that "the rapprochement is I suppose skin deep but it is curious what an effect it has had in Persia. All over the country the people have got the story that the Roos and the Inglies have buried the hatchet and sworn eternal friendship . . . and the Shah is much alarmed thereby, for his policy is to play off one against the other."⁷² But as for the actual signing of the 1907 Convention between the two powers, Kazemzadeh writes, "The Iranian government had not even been informed of the negotiations that produced a treaty which divided Iran into spheres of influence, while it paid lip service to her territorial integrity."⁷³

With the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, the imperial powers agreed to carve up the map of Persia into the famous "spheres of influence" which came to demarcate the boundaries of Iran's subjectivity. Russia dominated the North, including the capital, and England dominated the South, including the Gulf. A strip of neutral desert separated the spheres of influence; in later years, the United States would dominate that space. This

basic map was redrawn in crucial times in the twentieth century, especially during the World Wars.⁷⁴ The core aspects of the agreement dealt the granting of concessions.⁷⁵ The official recognition of the spheres of influence permanently fused the geographic integrity of Iran with the commercial interests of the imperial powers.

How did Anglo-Russia relations over Persia take such a turn? The positionality of Persia as the prize in the Anglo-Russian imperial context had changed through the course of the game itself. The emphasis on trade and development had linked the goals of military and economic control more directly. Increasingly, the financing of military goals became an issue. For the British, it never became clear whether Persia was primarily an imperial or an Indian concern. The logic of coming to an agreement with Russia over the partition of Iran reveals much about the nature of British colonialism at the turn of the century.

It seems worthwhile to quote at length from a 1901 letter which Lord Salisbury wrote to Curzon in which he reviews the larger context in which British policy towards Iran was ultimately decided:

Our chief interest in the East, (after China), has been the movements of the Persian Question. In the main it is a question of money. Your government [i.e. the Government of India] will not admit that Persia is mainly an Indian interest and that any advance which may be necessary should come from Indian resources. After all we have spent in South Africa I doubt the House of Commons . . . [would allocate any moneys for Persia] and under these conditions we may expect that sooner or later Tehran will fall under the virtual protectorate of Russia. I do not see that except but bidding higher, we have any means of preventing that issue. The destiny of the court seems to me less clear, for we have the power of resistance if we care to use it. That Russia would be glad to go to Bunder Abbas, and Germany to Koweit, I have no doubts: but they have hardly the strength to do it This is the knot of our Oriental difficulties: and it will become more insoluble every year. In the last generation we did much what we liked in the East by force or threats: by squadrons and tall talk. But we have now “allies” – French German Russians: and the day of free, individual, coercive action is almost passed by. For some years to come Eastern advance must largely depend on payment: and I fear that in that race England will seldom win.⁷⁶

How is it that two powers that had agreed to maintain Persia's independence in 1834 came to an agreement to carve it up in 1907? As I have shown, in the intervening decades, a process of discursive disembodiment of Persia's status as a complete and independent state occurred in diplomatic circles. Meanwhile, Russia and Britain each courted various princes and governors in order to affect Persian policy from within. This was accompanied by increased economic activity, involving trade, finance, and development on behalf of the Russians and the British alike. By 1907, the idea of partition was not only feasible but increasingly desirable. However, it is my contention that a purely political evaluation of the situation leads to only a partial understanding of the complexities of this process. It is for this reason that I will closely examine the manifestations of these struggles in the fields of cultural production in the following chapters. Much overlooked activity will come to the fore.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 2

¹ Ahmad Ashraf, "The Roots of an Emerging Dual Class Structure in Nineteenth Century Iran," Iranian Studies 14 (1981): 5-27.

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³ Michel Foucault, "Afterword, the Subject and Power," in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, Michael Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 208-226.

⁴ Ibid, p.226.

⁵ Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study of Imperialism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 148.

⁶ Ibid, p.6.

⁷ Winston to Bayard, Diplomatic Series, no. 14, Tehran, April 20, 1886, Despatches from the United States Ministers to Persia, 1883-1906, Department of State Records, the United States National Archives.

⁸ H. J. Whigham, The Persian Problem (London: Isbister and Co., 1903), p. 74.

⁹ Na'ib al-Sultan as quoted in Benjamin to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen, Tehran, October 22, 1883, Despatches from the United States Ministers to Persia, 1883-1906, Department of State Records, the United States National Archives.

¹⁰ L. Lockhart, "The 'Political Testament' of Peter the Great" Slavonic Review (1936): 436-441.

¹¹ For drafts of these treaties, consult J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East (Princeton: C. Van Nostrand and Co., 1956), pp. 84-86 and 96-102.

¹² R. K. Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran, 1500-1914 (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1966), p.45.

¹³ Ibid, pp.46-7.

¹⁴ The Duke of Argyll used the phrase in his memoirs in reference to the Anglo-Persian struggle for Herat. George Douglas Eighth Duke of Argyll, Autobiography and Memoirs, ed. The Dowager Duchess of Argyll (London: John Murray, 1906), v. 2, p.65.

¹⁵ Ervand Abrahamian, “The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran,” International Journal of Middle East Studies (1979), p. 391.

¹⁶ As quoted in Guity Nashat, The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870-80 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 149.

¹⁷ Guity Nashat, “From Bazaar to Market: Foreign Trade and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Iran,” Iranian Studies (1981): 53-85.

¹⁸ A primary example of such documentation is “Persia: Biographic Notices of Members of the Royal Family, Notables, Merchants, and Clergy,” compiled by Lieutenant-Colonel H. Picot, Military Attaché at Tehran (December 1897). The copy that I reviewed was in the Curzon Papers, F111/400, OIOC and was marked “For Use of the Officers in Her Majesty’s Service Only, Confidential and Secret.”

¹⁹ As quoted in Nashat, The Origins of Modern Economic Reform in Iran, p.42.

²⁰ Whigham, p. 388.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 422-3.

²² F. Goldsmid, “A Railway Through Southern Persia,” Scottish Geographical Magazine (December 1890), unpagged reprint, Goldsmid Papers, Box 3, OIOC. Please note that at the time of my research, the Goldsmid Papers had not been fully catalogued and marked by the OIOC.

²³ R. M. Smith, “Sketch of the History of the Telegraphic Communication between the United Kingdom and India,” transcript of speech delivered to the Scottish Geographical Society on December 13, 1888, reprinted from the Scottish Geographical Magazine (January 1889); see a copy in the Curzon Papers, F112/611, OIOC.

²⁴ Ibid. It is interesting to note that in Curzon’s personal copy of this article, this passage has been marked.

²⁵ Ibid. Note that the passages alluding to the increased centralization of power in Iran because of the telegraph have been marked in Curzon’s personal copy of the article.

²⁶ Wells to Curzon, Tehran, July 28, 1892, Curzon papers, F111/58-59, OIOC.

²⁷ Col. Mark Bell to Curzon, Florence, May 2, 1889, Curzon papers, F112/614, pt. 1, OIOC.

²⁸ “Extract from a despatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India in Council, dated September 21, 1899, relating to British Policy in Persia, which was referred to in the debate on the Anglo-Russian Convention, which took place in the House of Lords on February 6 and 10, 1908, presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Majesty” (London: Harrison and Sons, 1908), p.2. This includes abstracts of major policy statements on Persian as well as Curzon’s own analytical narrative. Heretofore referred to as British Policy in Persia.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

³⁰ Kazemzadeh, p. 7.

³¹ British Policy in Persia, p. 3.

³² The Duke of Argyll as quoted in Rose Greaves, Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892: A Study in the Foreign Policy of the Third Marquis of Salisbury (London: The Athlone Press, 1959), p. 42; see original in Argyll, The Eastern Question (London: Strahan and Co., 1879), v. 1, p. 368.

³³ T. J. Bennett, “The Past and Present Connection of England with the Persian Gulf,” The Journal of the Society of Arts (June 30, 1902): 640.

³⁴ “Proposed Visit of the Viceroy to the Persian Gulf,” marked confidential, July 14, 1903, Hamilton Papers, D510/14, OIOC.

³⁵ Rose Greaves, “Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India, 1798-1921,” The Cambridge History of Iran, v. 7, p. 416.

³⁶ Thomson to the Earl of Derby, Tehran, March 22, 1877, India Office, L/P & S/9/179, OIOC.

³⁷ Thomson to Earl of Derby, Tehran, July 26, 1877, L/P & S/9/179, OIOC.

³⁸ Greaves, Persia and the Defence of India, p.60.

³⁹ MacGregor, The Defence of India: A Strategical Study (Simla: Government Central Branch Press, 1884).

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 105.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.143. Note that I have retained the author’s geographical spellings.

⁴² Colonel Bell to Lord Curzon, Florence, May 2, 1889, Curzon Papers, EUR.MSS.F 112, v. 614, pt. 1, OIOC.

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- ⁴³ Drummond Wolff to Curzon, Tehran, April 15, 1889, Curzon Papers, EUR.MSS.F 112, v.614, pt.3, OIOC.
- ⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, "Questions of Geography," in Power/Knowledge, ed. Colin Gordon (NY: Pantheon Books, 1980): 63-77.
- ⁴⁵ British Policy in Persia, p.8.
- ⁴⁶ Durand Memorandum of 1895, as reproduced in Durand to the Marquess of Salisbury, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Tehran, February 12, 1899. See copy in Curzon Papers, F111/350 A, OIOC.
- ⁴⁷ Durand to Lansdowne at the War Office, Gulahek, August 29, 1895, Durand Papers, D727/2, OIOC.
- ⁴⁸ Durand to Salisbury, Gulahek, September 19, 1899, Durand Papers, D727/7, OIOC.
- ⁴⁹ Durand to S. Wheeler, Tehran, April 16, 1895, Durand Papers, D727/5, OIOC.
- ⁵⁰ Durand to Lord Elgin, April 6, 1895, Durand Papers, D727/5, OIOC.
- ⁵¹ Durand to Sir Alfred Lyall, April 18, 1895, Durand Papers, D727/5, OIOC.
- ⁵² George Curzon, Memorandum on the Persian Situation, April 17, 1896, marked confidential, printed for the use of the Foreign Office. See copy in Curzon papers, F111/68, OIOC.
- ⁵³ George Curzon, Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question (London: Frank Cass, 1967), originally published in 1889, p. 374.
- ⁵⁴ Whigham, p. 381.
- ⁵⁵ Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 (London: Cass, 1966).
- ⁵⁶ Schindler to Curzon, Tehran, January 14, 1892, Curzon Papers, F111/58-59, OIOC.
- ⁵⁷ Fahie to Curzon, Shiraz, July 13, 1890, Curzon Papers, F112/614, pt. 1, OIOC.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Henry Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 3.
- ⁶¹ Curzon, Russia in Central Asia, p. 376.

⁶² Whigham, p. 391.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 391-2.

⁶⁴ Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, Simla, November 7, 1901, "Maintenance of British Influence in Persia," marked secret, Curzon Papers, F111/351. OIOC.

⁶⁵ Drummond Wolff to Curzon, Tehran, April 5, 1889, Curzon Papers, F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

⁶⁶ Hamilton to Curzon, March 23, 1900, as quoted in Maclean, p.41.

⁶⁷ Whigham, p.73.

⁶⁸ As quoted in British Policy in Persia, p. 5.

⁶⁹ Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, v. 2, p. 251.

⁷⁰ Whigham, p. 68-9.

⁷¹ British Policy in Persia, p. 9.

⁷² Durand to Lord Elgin, Tehran, April 6, 1895, Durand Papers, D727/5, OIOC.

⁷³ F. Kazemzadeh, "Iranian Relations with Russia and the Soviet Union, to 1921," Cambridge History of Iran, v. 7, p.343.

⁷⁴ For a complete text of the convention, see Hurewitz, v.1, pp. 265-7.

⁷⁵ See Hugh Seton-Watson, The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914 (NY: Praeger, 1952), p. 328.

⁷⁶ Salisbury to Curzon, London, September 23, 1901, Curzon Papers, F111/223, OIOC.

CHAPTER 3
“CARAVANS OF KNOWLEDGE”:
ORIENTALISM, EDUCATION, AND NATIONALISM IN LATE QAJAR IRAN

Reflections on Orientalism and Iran

In this chapter, I will contribute to the larger debates on Orientalism by offering a historically grounded reading of Orientalism in the Iranian context. In particular, I will trace the development of the study of Iran in late nineteenth century England and investigate the relationship between the political and commercial interests of the British Empire in Iran and the academic institutions, organizations, and individuals who were formative in the field of Iranian Studies in this period. Though such an analysis is lacking (both from discussions of Iranian history and of Orientalism), I am not the first scholar of Iran to point to the Orientalist underpinnings of Iranian Studies. Hamid Enayat, who trained a generation of Iranists at the University of Tehran and Oxford University, openly discussed the matter at a talk given at the Third Congress of Iranology held in Tehran in September, 1972 – some six years before Edward Said published the first edition of Orientalism. Enayat argued, “In any critical examination of Iranology one has to view it against the background of Orientalism. . . . Although the relations between the various branches of Orientalism and the immediate goals of colonialism may not be readily apparent, the undeniable fact is that Orientalism was largely stimulated by, and in a sense nurtured in the bosom of, colonialism.”¹ Enayat pointed out that practitioners of “Iranology,” whether Iranian or not, had not begun to systematically study the implications of the Orientalist origins of the field, as had historians of Egypt and India.

Strangely enough, two decades after Enayat delivered his address and Said published his book, such a critical analysis of the study of Iran by Orientalists is lacking. This seems an especially startling oversight when we consider that some of the leading nineteenth century Orientalists (such as Gobineau and Curzon) based their studies on Iran. Interestingly, these Orientalist scholars continue to appear in the footnotes of our histories (written in Persian and English) with little explicit analysis of the context in which this scholarship was produced. This is particularly interesting given that Iran has undergone not one but two revolutions since the nineteenth century (1906-1911 and 1979); both revolutions offered ample opportunities for the examination of the relationship between knowledge and power. And yet Iranian Studies as a site of power and resistance has yet to be fully explored. I do not mean to say that History has not been employed as a political tool in the Iranian context, but the Orientalist construction of Iranian history and historiography still remains (for the most part) free of critical examination. In this chapter, I hope to begin to understand the construction of Iran and Iranians as academic subjects in England and investigate the origins of the secular, state-sponsored educational system of Iran in the late Qajar period.

In order to study the educational system of the Qajars, we must also look at the way that Iran was studied by contemporary Europeans. The processes were interconnected; neither side of the equation can be fully comprehended at the exclusion of the other. As the Qajar officials set about the task of revamping Iran's bureaucracy, they involved numerous Europeans in the enterprise. And the work of some Orientalist scholars relied heavily on Iranian intellectuals. While some Orientalists working on Iran wrote within the confines of the imperial system which they served, others were active in the Iranian nationalist movement. For all of them, knowledge of Iran was produced within the power structures of the time; representations of Iran that were inscribed onto their work must be studied as contingent and relational.² Sir Frederic Goldsmid wrote in a preface to Morier's Hajji Baba of Isfahan that George N. Curzon and E. G. Browne

were perhaps the most influential writers on Iran in Victorian England.³ It is these two men on whom I will focus my attention as I try to understand the ways in which Iran was represented by British Orientalists in the late nineteenth century. Together, these men helped to form the Persia Society, which will close my discussion of Iran and Orientalism. I have studied Curzon and Browne's books, but I have also spent months in their personal paper collections, reading drafts of their books which they wrote in their own hand and examining the notes they took on the research materials they used. I have read their mail, looked over their Christmas Card lists and address books, and flipped through their photo albums. But they knew that I would be coming along someday. Wise men who were well aware of their historical importance, Browne and Curzon knew that while they were the historians of one generation, they would be the stuff of history for another. They carefully organized (perhaps even orchestrated) their papers before handing them over to the archivists. Archives are in a sense stages. Curzon, for example, burned all of the papers relating to his activity as the President of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage. Long before he ended his tenure as the Viceroy of India, he wrote to other British officials, asking how they had handled the business of transferring their papers to the archives. To ensure authenticity, Browne's papers are stored just as he left them, in metal trunks. The arduous task of cataloguing his paper is being carefully and painstakingly undertaken by the archivists of the University Library, Cambridge. One trunk contains an empty beer bottle. In the handlist of the collection, it appears as an item, "beer bottle: significance unknown."

In a final segment of this chapter, I will analyze developments in the educational system of Iran under the Qajars. This was the period in which the secularization and the bureaucratization of education was undertaken on a serious level in Iran. This analysis will show that one of the earlier attempts at developing an educated elite were the study abroad programs, known as "Caravans of Knowledge," which sent Iranian students abroad (usually England, France, and Russia) to study at institutions of higher learning.

In order to better understand the development of the bureaucratization of education in late nineteenth century Iran, I will examine the establishment of the Dar al-Fanun, (or Polytechnic), the Military College, and the Translation Bureau.

The Making of Curzon's Persia and the Persian Question

. . . I endeavour to trace the steps by which Persia has passed, and is still passing, from barbarism to civilisation, as she exchanges the slow beat of the Oriental pendulum for the whirr and nash of the Western wheels. . . . Persia is of the East, most Eastern; and though the Persian nobleman may ride in a Russian brougham, the Persian merchant carry a French watch, and the Persian peasant wear a Manchester blouse, yet the heart of the nation is unregenerate, and is fanatically . . . attached to the ancient order of things.⁴

George Nathaniel Curzon received the best education Victorian England had to offer, first at Wixenford, then at Eton, and finally at Oxford University. Curzon was elected as a Conservative Member of the British Parliament in 1886. From 1891-92, he served as the Under-Secretary of State at the India Office. He moved on to the Foreign Office, where he worked as Under-Secretary of State from 1895-98. In 1898, he became the Viceroy of India, resigning in 1905 after a bitter conflict with Lord Kitchener. In his years as Viceroy, Curzon was rather outspoken; his ego at times caused tensions with other diplomats. His personal correspondence abounds with comments on various struggles and disputes which he precipitated or actively engaged in while Viceroy. Some credited his wife, the American Mary Curzon, for helping to smooth over many ruffles. After leaving India, Curzon did not hold another political post until 1915, when he was appointed the Lord Privy Seal in the Coalition Cabinet. In 1916, he was the Lord President of the Council in Lloyd George's inner War Cabinet. For a few months in 1919, he took over the Foreign Office while Lord Balfour attended the Paris Peace

Conference. After the collapse of the Baldwin government in 1924, Curzon left public service altogether. In the few years of his adult life that Curzon was not a politician (1906-1915), he remained active and outspoken. He served as Chancellor of Oxford University, the President of the Royal Geographical Society (1911-25), and in 1912 became the President of the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage.

Throughout his career, Curzon was a prolific writer, producing several books and articles, many on the Asian countries through which he traveled. He was also a prodigious orator and several volumes of his speeches were published.⁵

In 1892, Longmans and Co. published Curzon's Persia and the Persian Question in two volumes, which included a map that Curzon had prepared for the Royal Geographical Society (RGS).⁶ Curzon's aspirations in publishing the book were not small, ". . . I hope, vainglorious hope that, until superseded by a better, it may be regarded as the standard work in the English language on the subject to which it refers."⁷ Before he wrote his book, Curzon claimed, information on Persia was scattered and incomplete. Curzon explained that his book filled an important void, ". . . I realised that there was a genuine and imperative need for a compendious work dealing with every aspect of public life in Persia, with its inhabitants, provinces, cities, lines of communication, antiquities, government, institutions, resources, trade, finance, policy, and present and future development – in a word, with all that has made or continues to make it a nation."⁸

Curzon's purpose in writing the book was not just to compile information on Iran into a compact tome, however; he had a clear audience for whom he was writing – the English public and the English government. Upon hearing of Curzon's forthcoming book on Persia, R. Murdoch Smith wrote to him, "Persia is practically a terra incognita to our public men and heads of Gov[ernmen]t Depart[men]ts. No member of Parliament so far as I know has ever, as you have done, taken the trouble to make himself personally acquainted with the country and with the complicated but important political questions connected with it in which we have a vital interest."⁹ Curzon's first monograph had been

on Russia in Central Asia. In *Persia and the Persian Question*, he described Russia as the Great Power, “whose ever-swelling shadow, witnessed with a sort of paralysed quiescence by the native people, looks like a thunder-cloud over the land.”¹⁰ Given this impending Russian threat, investing the English opinion into Persia and providing the British with information so that they would feel compelled to take an interest in the future of the country was clearly a chief aim of Curzon’s. “Remote and backward and infirm Persia at present is; but, for all its remoteness and backwardness and present debility, I hope I have shown it to be a country that should excite the liveliest sympathies of Englishmen; with whose Government our own Government should be upon terms of intimate alliance; and in the shaping of the future that shall be not unworthy of its splendid past the British nation have it in their power to take a highly honourable lead.”¹¹

The dualistic aim of the book may well be responsible for the paradoxes which can be found throughout its pages. On the one hand, Curzon must show that the Persians are backward, corrupt, and troubled and therefore require British leadership, for they can have none of their own. On the other hand, he must somehow interest the British people in his subject and show that there is hope for gain if the British take a more aggressive role in Persian affairs. In one section, the Shah is likened to Caligula; in another, he is “the most competent man in Iran” who is patriotic and genuinely concerned in the interest of his nation.¹² The main deterrent for the Shah is “a sense of powerlessness against the petrified ideas and prejudices of an Oriental people” whom he can not convince of the need for progress and reform.¹³ But later in his book, Curzon wrote that the Iranian people had “a healthy freedom from deep-seated prejudice or bigotry.”¹⁴

Curzon was not unaware of these contradictory statements; the paradox was not, however, born from the colonialist motivations that colored his gaze of Persia and ultimately produced the book. The contradictions stemmed from the Persian character itself, “The Persian character presents many complex features, elsewhere rarely united in the same individual. They are an amiable and polished race, and have the manners of

gentlemen. They are vivacious in temperament, intelligent in conversation, and acute in conduct. If their heart is soft, which is, I believe undeniable, there is no corresponding weakness of the head. On the other hand, they are consummate hypocrites, very corrupt, and lamentably deficient in stability or courage.”¹⁵ Indeed, this inherent paradox is reflected in the grander fate of Persia on the path towards civilization. On the one hand, Curzon says there are reassuring signs of civilization which he equates with “the influence of the West,” and on the other hand, he observes “superstition resurgent.” This contradiction produces confusion in the British mind, “Is Persia about to enter, nay, has she already entered, the comity of civilised nations, or does she still sit contented outcast without the gate?”¹⁶ A nation that is standing on the cusp of civilization surely deserves the attention of the British public, who can through their intervening leadership ensure its place amongst the civilized nations. This is the natural conclusion Curzon hopes to convey to his readers, and it is this logic of the civilizing mission which forged the foundational link between scholarship on and colonization of Asian countries.

All the while, Curzon is careful to place himself between the reader and the subject. One of the main features of Orientalism was that it established the “otherness” of the Oriental, constructing them as altogether different from Europeans. Curzon reminds his readers of these fundamental differences throughout his book, “Above all we must remember that the ways of the Orientals are not our ways, nor their thoughts our thoughts.”¹⁷ So even as he purports to present a complete representation of Iran and the Iranians in his book, Curzon bears in mind that the British reader has no mental guideposts with which to process these images of Iran which he writes. It is his task as an Orientalist to clarify for his British readers the essential differences between them and the Persians. In a section entitled, “The Poetry of Contrast,” he contrasts life in England to that in Iran: “Thatched roofs and tiled cottages, beyond all the roar and sudden, smoky rush of the train – these might not exist in the world at all, and do not exist in the world of the Persian, straitened and stunted, but inexpressibly tranquil in his existence. Here, all is

movement and bustle, flux and speed; there, everything is imperturbable, immemorial, immutable, slow.”¹⁸

What were the sources that Curzon used in the process of researching his book? He did not use any Persian sources, as Curzon did not know Persian. This is somewhat camouflaged in his book by his frequent use (and sometimes misuse) of Persian terminology. Once when he received a letter in Persian, he forwarded it to Stanley Lane-Poole of the British Museum, known for his work on Perso-Arabic numismatics, asking for a translation. Lane-Poole apparently did not know the language either, but wrote, “if you give me permission, however, I will get my men at the British Museum, or Rieu, to read it. . . .”¹⁹ Curzon had three primary sources of information on which he based his book. First, he read travel literature by other European travelers who had journeyed through Iran. Secondly, he recalled observations he made during his own travels to the country in 1889, when he wrote a series of letters for the Times. Finally, he corresponded with Orientalists and diplomats with some Persian experience and knowledge.

Of these, Curzon seems to have placed great importance on the first category, taking rather extensive notes and evaluating the merit of each book.²⁰ He rated Chardin’s book as “ingenious, profound, laborious, careful.” Fraser was also “careful, painstaking, accurate, but very severe and down on everything. . . .” O’Donovan’s work showed “literary skill, but [was] overdone.” Ferrier was “careful and observant and honest.” Colonel Stewart offered an “excellent account of the court.” And Morier’s book was “sound and painstaking.”²¹

Curzon’s letters which were published in the Times from November 1889 through April 1890 were an introduction to the kind of personal observations he would elaborate on in his two volume study. Curzon’s letters in the Times received a good deal of attention, with many readers penning notes to him about their impact and importance. Some, like Colonel Bell, wrote congratulatory letters to Curzon, “I am delighted that an

independent man like yourself should have given your views to the public.”²² Some readers commented on the reaction in Iran to the pieces. One official of the British Legation wrote, “Your letters . . . have been received at Tehran and have caused a good deal of talk. Everyone agrees that they are very good especially the two treating Khorassan. They should do a good deal of good if they wake up the public to what is going on.”²³ One British resident wrote of the Shah’s reaction when the articles were read to him by his translators, “The Shah sent an autograph to Wolff stating he could scarcely believe that his friends the English could have written anything against him but that he has seen the translation of the articles with his own eyes. Why did not the Gov[ernmen]t stop such articles, etc., etc.”²⁴

If we are to view Curzon as a leading Orientalist of his time, then the approach he took to researching and writing his book offers an insight into the methodology of Orientalists. We have already seen that linguistic expertise was not considered a necessity, as Curzon knew no Persian. It seems that extended fieldwork or time spent in the region under discussion was also not considered essential. One reader wrote to Curzon suggesting that he write on other political issues of importance in the region, with only limited exposure to the area under question. “Armenia is also a country in which political questions of great importance must crop up within the next few years and which therefore it behooves you as a politician to know. About seven weeks absence from England would enable you to study the whole question thoroughly.”²⁵

Curzon’s files show that he did correspond rather vigorously with an array of diplomats and scholars who had experience living in and writing on Iran. He wrote the famous Hungarian Orientalist Vambery, asking his advice on travel literature relating to Iran. Vambery wrote back, “Excepting Englishmen very few people have visited lately the country of the Shehin-Shah [sic].”²⁶ When travelers offered vague or contradictory information, Curzon wrote to British residents in Iran or to other Orientalists, asking for clarification. Ironside cautioned him to use only reliable sources of information. He

recommended that Curzon correspond with Churchill to clarify some points, even if it should mean delaying the publication of his book. Ironside wrote that Churchill, a British diplomat in Iran, “may give you all the information you require. Anyway I think it worth trying – he is a perfect storehouse of knowledge on all connected with Persia and he may be relied on for accuracy Everything with these shifty Orientals out here depends on personality – and unremitting watchfulness and persistency.”²⁷

Some British residents in Iran recognized that the series of articles in the Times signaled a forthcoming book and wrote to Curzon, offering their support and expertise. General Schindler wrote that he was in agreement with Curzon’s views and hoped that he would soon republish his letters to the Times in book form²⁸ and offered his services, “I shall be delighted to give you any information I possess and I can only report to you that I place myself entirely at your disposal.”²⁹ Others offered their help but asked not to be cited in the book. Preece, who worked at the British Legation in Isfahan, answered Curzon’s questions about the Chehel Sutun and the Jewish residents of Isfahan, but he also specifically asked not to be mentioned in the book as the source of this information.³⁰ Others with whom Curzon corresponded, however, asked that Curzon credit them as sources of information for his book. One such example was a British official posted in Tabriz who responded to questions about the trade, geography and population of Azerbaijan. He also gave Curzon information on the Crown Prince Muzaffar al-Din who was “genial and kind, active and very intelligent.”³¹

Curzon’s personal papers also include evidence that he took a keen interest in all aspects of the publication and sales of his book, Persia and the Persian Question. It was published by Longmans and Co., London. While Curzon was in the final stages of writing his manuscript, T. Norton Longman wrote him several notes, urging him towards completion. “The New Year is now close upon us and I should like to get the book out,” he wrote in one such note. “The printers have not had any fresh copy for some time now.”³² Longman expressed concern about the length of the book and urged Curzon to

try to be as brief as possible in the final chapters, “The book is costing us much more than I had anticipated”³³ Once the book was published, Curzon was disappointed in the sales and wrote to Longman, expressing frustration that the book was not being promoted enough. Longman assured him that the advertising of the book had been more than adequate, with ads appearing in numerous publications, including the Edinburgh Review, the Times, the Standard, and the Daily News, adding, “I always shall maintain that no one but a publisher . . . can possibly express a satisfactory opinion as to how much or when the money is to be spent [on advertising]. . . .”³⁴

Curzon had a generous financial arrangement with Longmans. According to the standard contract, the profits were divided equally between the author and the publisher, but Curzon received two-thirds of the profits.³⁵ Ever fastidious, Curzon wrote regularly to his publisher, questioning the accounts and the sales, complaining that he had not received sufficient compensation for his efforts. A total of 1502 copies of the book were originally printed. They were sold in England, India, and the United States. The table below reflects sales information from 1892 through 1901. By March 1901, the book had sold out and the publisher wrote to Curzon that given that the book was unavailable and still generated interest, he was prepared to reprint it.

Table 3.1

Sales of Persia and the Persian Question:

year³⁶	# in stock	# gifted	sold, US³⁷	sold, India	sold, total
1892	1502	95	none	none	559
1892-3	848	5	179	none	257
1895-6	326	1	12	none	26
1896-7	285	none	6	none	20

1897-8 ³⁸	240	none	8	none	22
1898-9	203	none	12	34	67
1899-1900	109	6 ruined	4	24	34
1900-01	54	none	7	3	44

How was Curzon's book received by his readership? One reader to whom Curzon had sent his manuscript wrote back, "It has been a great pleasure to read the proofs – so far as my humble opinion goes, the chapters I have seen are quite the clearest and most impartial statement of the case that exists – the book should be most valuable."³⁹ Stewart, one of the diplomats whom Curzon had relied on for information in writing the book, wrote to Curzon upon receiving a copy of the book to review for the Royal Geographic Society, "I feel certain it will meet a long required want as there is no trustworthy and standard work on Persia."⁴⁰ In another letter, Stewart offered this assessment, "I think it is indeed a monumental work, a monument to your industry and a compendium of information on Persia. It is what has long been wanted for the guidance of all classes connected to that country."⁴¹ Indeed for some British diplomats, Curzon's book did become the standard. Houtum-Schindler, who was widely considered to be quite knowledgeable about Iran and who was retained by Reuter to investigate the country as preparation for the infamous Reuter concession, wrote that Curzon's book, "is my text-book for all things Persian."⁴² Other diplomats used Curzon's book as a touchstone of sorts, comparing the "authentic" Persia that they saw upon arrival in that country with the Persia they had read in Curzon's book.⁴³

While British diplomats stationed in Iran comprised one significant group of Curzon's readers, the major Orientalists of the time seemed to have taken notice as well. E. C. Ross wrote, "Few can really know the vast amount of research and the physical and mental labour that went to its completion. To my congratulations I add my tribute of

admiration.”⁴⁴ Guy Le Strange, another renowned Orientalist who studied in Iran, wrote that reading the book “was like breathing the fresh air and seeing Persia’s blue sky once again. . . . I can not help thinking that no one will during the next generation try to write any substantial book on Persia.”⁴⁵ Vamberry wrote that Curzon had accomplished a wonderful task which showed great insight; he also understood the connection between the scholarly and imperial interest it entailed: “You have cut off all future excuse for want of information and every Englishman, who is as he ought to be, interested in your Asiatic empire, must make your book a household work. . . .”⁴⁶ Vamberry had shared his copy of the book with A. Nicolson, who at the time was working at the British Consulate General in Budapest. Nicolson wrote to Curzon, “It must have been a stupendous task – and you have dug deeper below the surface than any previous writer – a monumental work indeed. . . .”⁴⁷ Speaking before the Indian Section of the Society of Arts, Thomas Jewell Bennett paid tribute to Curzon’s book as a “monument of industry and knowledge.”⁴⁸

It was upon reading Curzon’s book that E. G. Browne first wrote to him. Thus began an exchange which would continue for years, culminating in the two men’s important cooperation in forming the Persia Society. Browne wrote that he was a lecturer in Persian at Cambridge and believed that the two men had much in common. Besides a shared interest in Persia, they had both attended Eton, “but I was considerably junior to you, and you will very likely not remember me at all.” Browne declared Curzon’s book “a monumental work on Persia.”⁴⁹ Indeed, Curzon had produced the very monument that Browne himself had aspire to write.

Curzon’s book had a readership beyond the community of British officials in Persia and Orientalists across Europe. In 1909, Curzon received a letter from Ricardo Davila Silva, who was a professor in Santiago, Chile. Silva wrote that he had been trying to acquire a copy of the book, to no avail. Silva had undertaken a fascinating scholarly pursuit -- to write “a history of Oriental Studies in England in the last century.” He

asked Curzon to send him a copy of *Persia and the Persian Question*, offering in exchange to send Curzon histories penned by Latin American scholars. “Let your work have its complete destiny, which is not much to offer some novelties to European readers already half instructed in the matters you treat, than to come in our lonely countries to create this science and to show us a perfect specimen of English criticism [sic]. We owe already too much to your glorious England: let her guide also our first departments in the field of Orientalism.”⁵⁰

According to the readers’ responses, Curzon had produced a monument of industry and knowledge – the first comprehensive and exhaustive study of Persia in the English language. He had written the book E. G. Browne aspired to have written, the book that became a primer for colonial officials, the book that was to become ‘household work’ for every Englishman interested in Britain’s Asiatic Empire. Silva’s letter suggests that Curzon’s book also had the potential to serve as a foundational text and model for the establishment of Orientalism in new regions, such as Latin America. The importance of the book as symbol of scholarly achievement was signaled in a letter by Sir Edgar Vincent, who writing on the stationary of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, claimed it “merited Westminster Abbey.”⁵¹

The critical significance of Curzon’s book, however, rests not in its apparent or perceived scholarly achievement, for Curzon’s book was not simply an academic project. In 1890, Curzon had become a member of the Board of Directors of the Persian Bank Mining Rights Corporation and remained keenly interested in the mining potential of Iran. In 1898, Curzon became the Viceroy of India, a critically important position in the British Empire. In that capacity, Curzon was able to tap into his recognized role as a scholarly expert on Persia in order to make authoritative statements on British policy towards Iran during critical moments in the colonial power struggle. Indeed, Curzon repeatedly complained bitterly of the lack of a comprehensive British policy in Persia. He wrote policy reports on Persia in 1896, 1899, and 1901, helping to influence the

debate on Persia amongst parliamentarians and diplomats. He was diligent in his attempt to unite the War Office, the Foreign Office, and the India Office behind his policy dictates. In Curzon, we have a critical nexus of British imperial interests in Iran in the late nineteenth century. He embodied imperial, economic, and scholarly concerns. The reception of his book, Persia and the Persian Question, established him as an authoritative scholarly voice and helped to create a paradigm entwining British Orientalism inextricably with commercial and imperial concerns in Iran.

Edward Granville Browne's Persia⁵²

On April 26, 1912, the Persian Minister to England resided over a session of the Persia Society held at the Botanical Theater of University College, London. The speaker for the day was Professor Edward Granville Browne who was slated to deliver a lecture on the literature of Persia. Mirza Mehdi Khan Mushir-ul-Mulk introduced Browne:

[D]oes Professor Browne need an introduction? Those who are in any way connected with Persia, and who know Persia, know Professor Browne well and know his works (hear, hear, and applause). . . . If you talk of Persia, you think of Professor Browne (hear, hear); if you hear the name of Persia, you think again of Professor Browne. He has spent almost all of his life in the study and in the work relating to Persia. . . . I think it is over twenty years since Professor Browne has been back from Persia, but during that time both his heart and his mind have been in Persia and with the Persians.⁵³

In Browne's papers, there is a letter which he had written in his excellent Persian hand, dating from 1328 (1910-11), in which he confessed, "In an intrinsic and spiritual way, I know myself as an Iranian and accordingly, I am joyful of anything that brings about Iran's progress and am grieved and saddened by anything that causes Iran's degradation and decline."⁵⁴ It is clear that E. G. Browne had developed strong ties with Iran, and throughout his career, he fused his roles as activist and scholar in a variety of ways. While studying medicine as a young man, Browne traveled to the Middle East and

became enthralled by the region. Though he studied and taught Arabic and Turkish as well, it was the study of Persia and Persian that eventually became Browne's primary focus. And Browne's involvement with Iran became intrinsically connected to the political situation in that country and to the rise of modern Iranian nationalism.

In the larger sense of the word, both Browne and Curzon were Orientalists whose work merged scholarly pursuits with political agendas. By the early years of the twentieth century, both men became advocates for the Iranian nationalist and constitutionalist movements. The similarities and distinctions between the two men help reveal the nuances of Orientalism as it operated in Great Britain at the turn of the century, a pivotal moment in the British Empire and in Persia alike. An analysis that takes both men into consideration can reveal the complex intermingling of colonialism and nationalist resistance in this period with the establishment of Iranian Studies as a significant component of Oriental Studies in the western academy. Both men wrote editorials, articles, pamphlets, and books to stimulate British interest in Iran and to influence British public opinion. Both men saw Iran as something to be collected and collated in book form, but with different aspirations and intentions. In Browne's case, the connection between Orientalism and the anti/colonial struggle was markedly different than in Curzon's case. Curzon only came to support the Iranian nationalist movement when he viewed it as a potent anti-Russian force; in short, Curzon's eventual support for Iranian nationalism was, ironically, an extension of his larger agenda to promote British colonial interests in Iran.

Browne's academic writings can be generally divided into two areas – the study of Persian literature and the analysis of the Persian Revolution of 1906-1911. Browne went a long way towards establishing the scholarly study of Persian literature as a worthwhile endeavor and left behind volumes meant to function as the standard text on the subject. This area of his scholarship involved collecting, translating, and commenting on Persian texts, leaving behind terminology and classifications that would have an

enduring impact on literary analysis of Persian literature. Browne's writings on the Constitutional Revolution were of an entirely different nature. Browne knew he was witnessing history, and he sought to document and record the details of that history. His scholarly work on the Revolution was meant as an intervention – meant to influence events that were unfolding. By the time the Constitutional Revolution was underway, Browne had come to understand that his role as a Cambridge academic could be used to influence the political relationship between Great Britain and Iran. His book, The Persian Revolution, remains a significant record of events of the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution as experienced by a European academic with wide ranging connections to some of the key players in that Revolution. The dedication of the book shows not only his limited poetic abilities but also his awareness of the connection between his writing and nationalist politics; it reads:

To all who by their thought, or word, or deed
 Have aided Persia in her hour of need,
 Whether by tongue, or pen, or sword they wrought,
 Whether they strove or suffered, spoke or fought,
 Whether their services were small or great,
 This book of mine, I humbly dedicate.
 But most of all I pray that thou who ne'er
 Wouldst counsel halt or countenance despair,
 Who bad'st me hope when scarce a hope remained,
 And whose firm faith my faltering faith sustained,
 Wilt now approve my poor attempt to trace
 This modern effort on an ancient race
 To burst their bondage, cast aside their chain,
 And rise to life, 'a Nation once again'.⁵⁵

As a member of the faculty of Pembroke College, Cambridge, Browne was keenly aware that he was helping to establish an academic discipline through his scholarly work on Iran. His multi-volume study of Persian literature, A Literary History of Persia, linked historical and literary analysis. This multi-volume study and the numerous articles that Browne wrote on the subject helped to enhance the stature of Persian literature as a

legitimate and worthwhile academic subject in Britain. It also had a lasting impact on the field of literary criticism in Iran itself.

Browne's interests and activities as an Orientalist in England were not limited to the development and promotion of Iranian literary analysis, but to promoting the field of Oriental studies at large. Indeed, he had long been interested in establishing a school of Oriental Studies in England. In 1896, he wrote to Sir Frederic Goldsmid:

I saw in the JRAS that a Government Committee was going to consider the organisation of an Oriental School in London. If they take evidence, do you think that I could appear before them? It is a subject that interests me immensely and naturally [in] 8 years of teaching here and studies . . . in various places I have come to serious conclusions which I have long earnestly desired to bring before the notice of the government, if I did but know how.⁵⁶

In 1905, Browne presented a paper entitled, "Council of the Necessity of Granting a Fuller Measure of Recognition and Autonomy to the School of Living Oriental Languages Now Existing in the University of Cambridge." By that time, efforts to establish an Oriental Studies school in London were well underway, but Browne was curiously absent from its board. It appears that his political leanings played a part in his exclusion, a fact that clearly left Browne feeling frustrated. T. W. Arnold, who taught Arabic at Oxford, was a member of the organizing board, however, and he regularly reported to Browne on the progress of the board. Arnold would, in turn, convey Browne's opinions to the board members. On one occasion, Arnold wrote to Browne about a meeting at which decisions were taken to connect the study of Oriental languages to the political and commercial interests of England. I quote liberally from Arnold's letter which was written in December, 1905:

I have just come from a meeting of the Board of Oriental Studies of the London University. After the business on the Agenda Paper had been disposed of, Lord Reay said that, in view of the forthcoming meeting of the Committee that is to discuss the re-organisation of Oriental Studies in London, it might be well for this Board to informally discuss the question. Then Sir Charles Lyall spoke at some length on the proposal as affecting

the Oriental School at Oxford and Cambridge – where Oriental Studies had been organised and were being carried on with zeal and success. . . it must be insisted upon that the proposed London scheme should include nothing that should reflect upon or injure the work being done at Cambridge; ‘such action would only do us injury’. The claim for support from the Government must be based primarily on the political and commercial importance of a knowledge of oriental languages; the Chambers of Commerce were especially to be asked to cooperate in this scheme. Then Lord Reay said that he entirely agreed with him; that an impression had been created in Cambridge that the support now given would be withdrawn; but that this of course would not be permitted.

I kept quiet, except to propose that Lyall’s contention should be put on the record as the opinion of the Board on the matter. As both Lyall and Reay had spoken so strongly and decidedly on the matter, I thought that for this occasion mere re-iteration would do no good. It came to me as an agreeable surprise that they both spoke so strongly on your side, and it will, I am sure please you that they thus recognise that no harm should be done to your work. . . . I will let you know what takes place at the meeting of the Committee on Monday.⁵⁷

Clearly the board was aware of Browne’s concerns which they addressed, but Browne remained fundamentally dissatisfied with his exclusion from a project which had for long been an ambition of his. Furthermore, Browne felt that this personal snub reflected a lack of proper acknowledgement of and appreciation for the academic contributions of Oxford and Cambridge to the field of Oriental Studies. By 1914, Browne had been teaching Arabic, Turkish, and Persian at Cambridge for over 25 years. In that year, he submitted a letter to the Times, entitled, “The Practical Study of Oriental Languages in England,” a complete draft of which can be found in Browne’s personal papers:

A good deal that has been said and written lately by the promoters of the new School of Living Oriental Languages in London appears to assume, explicitly and implicitly, that, while such schools have long existed and flourished exceedingly in France, Germany, Russia, and some other continental countries, nothing of the sort has hitherto been attempted in this country. This assumption, which is neither correct nor fair to the old Universities, is rather resented here, and, I believe, also at Oxford.⁵⁸

Browne went on to state that the Arabic Chairs at both Oxford and Cambridge had been established in the seventeenth century. He also took exception with the notion that the

study of Oriental languages was a question of “book learning” alone, emphasizing the connections between the education offered at Oxford and Cambridge and the British colonial apparatus. “The first class of students for whom special practical instruction in Oriental languages was required here consisted of the India Civil Service Probationers, who, when I was an undergraduate in 1880, were taught Persian and Hindustani by that most accomplished linguist the late Professor E. H. Palmer. . . .” he wrote. Browne then discussed his own employment at Cambridge which began in 1888 as a Lecturer in Persian, assuming the Arabic Chair in 1902. He noted that some 123 of his pupils had gone on to become India Civil Service Probationers. In 1896, he noted, a new group of students seeking to learn Oriental languages for government service entered Cambridge. “There were Student Interpreters destined for the Consular Service in Turkey, Persia, Morocco, etc. . . . Up to the present time 50 Student Interpreters have pursued or are pursuing their studies here, and several of them have already greatly distinguished themselves in the East.” Browne continued by discussing yet a third group of students whom he had taught who had gone on to work for the British government: “In 1903 yet a third class of practical students was added, viz., Probationers for the Civil Service of Egypt and the Sudan, and for a while for the Agriculture Bank of Egypt.” These totaled 44 by 1914. Browne then presented his final tally. In twenty-six years at Cambridge, he had taught 217 students who had gone on to work as colonial officials, “not perhaps a very large number, but it must be remembered that these are all men occupying responsible positions in the East. I have purposely omitted to speak of purely academic students reading for University Honours in Oriental Languages.”⁵⁹

Browne also addressed how these studies had been financed. He wrote, “The money wherewith the extra teaching required is supplied from grants from the India Office and the Foreign Office.” He wrote that the total moneys from the government did not exceed 1500 to 2000 pounds sterling per annum. Browne noted “the pay of the lecturers and teachers specially appointed for these entirely practical purposes and not

otherwise provided for by the University does not average more than £150 a year.” Finally, Browne pleaded the case for support of Oriental Studies at Cambridge and Oxford in light of discussions about a new school in London: “All who desire the promotion of Oriental learning, theoretical or practical, in this country must hope that the new London School of Oriental Languages will prove a success as the large sum of money which it will have at its disposal entitled us to expect and all we hope and ask is that it will not endeavour to destroy the edifice which, with more slender means, we have slowly raised. . . .”⁶⁰

Alongside his efforts to defend the Oriental Studies programs at Cambridge and Oxford, Browne continued his advocacy on behalf of Persian Studies as a growing field of Orientalism. Browne cast his net widely and had a tremendous amount of interaction with Iranian scholars. He was an avid collector of Persian books and manuscripts. Many of his fellow Orientalists gifted him with rare Persian books, and he made significant purchases on his trips to the region and through European book traders. Browne took a special interest in Persian newspapers, and he cooperated with an Iranian scholar, Tarbiyat, in writing his Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, which will be discussed in chapter four. Browne had an ongoing correspondence with Qazvini, who sometimes proofread Browne’s Persian writings.⁶¹ Browne also assisted Iranian students who came to England to study. When political turmoil in Iran made it difficult for these students to continue to receive their government stipends, Browne would often help them to find jobs and adequate housing.

Browne’s activities were often motivated by chiefly scholarly purposes, but he was also aware of the influence that he could attain through his network of affiliations. Browne had contacts amongst British colonial officials and Iranian nationalist leaders. One of the Iranian students whom Browne befriended, Taqizadeh, went on to become an important Qajar historian who was active in the nationalist movement. Lynch, who together with Browne, helped to organize the Persia Committee wrote, “I hope that your

Taghi Zada is attending courses or learning English as quickly as possible to enable him to do so. Our committee shall have as one of its objects the looking after young Persians coming over here to study and the equipping of them for functions of Government.”⁶²

When there was some discussion of Taqizadeh’s return to Iran, Lynch wrote to Browne, “Taghi Zada ought surely to remain here and study. Who knows how long it may be before things are ready for him out there?”⁶³ It would seem that the mentoring of Iranian students in England was taken seriously; the exchanges underline the connection between directing the studies of these students and influencing their development as potential government officials in Iran.

Together, Lynch and Browne formed a network of British supporters, Iranian students in England, and Iranian exile communities in cities such as Istanbul and Paris. This group was organized into the Persia Committee. From these various sources, Browne would collect information which he published as articles, letters to newspapers, and finally his monograph on the Persian Revolution. Both Lynch and Browne met with British government leaders, especially Grey, attempting to affect British policy to support the nationalist movement. The nationalist cause in Persia was not just supported by the Persia Committee; it became their cause. After journeying to Istanbul to meet with members of the Constantinople *arjuman*, Lynch wrote to Browne, “I have just got back after a prolonged stay in C[onstantino]ple. I spent two days in Paris with our Persian friends on my return. . . . Don’t you think it looks as if we might get our way after all in Persia? That is to say if we can keep our committee together and add to its influence?”⁶⁴

By the time the Constitutional Revolution was underway, Browne was actively using his position as an author and a teacher to promote the political causes in Iran which he felt were important. He served as an important conduit between the Iranian nationalists and the British public. He received regular letters from the Anjuman-i Sa`adat-i Iran in Istanbul, a group of exiled nationalists. Some of these letters included lithographed notices for Browne to distribute in England. In 1911, the President of the

recently formed Iranian parliament, the *majlis*, sent Browne a letter addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons, asking for support against the Russian invasion of Iran's northern provinces. The letter reads in part:

The Persian nation at this moment when its sovereign existence is so unjustly threatened having exhausted every means consonant with honour . . . now appeals to the honour of the British people to the end that by their good offices and friendship acquired in the family of nations they may aid the Persian people to a solution of the demands now made them which solution can be accepted by a nation determined at all costs to maintain its national dignity and honour. The Persian people are encouraged to make this appeal by the fact that in the past the British nation has shown itself ever ready to aid the cause of just government and especially to give its moral support in Persia to form a government consonant with the highest ideals of liberty and justice.⁶⁵

For his efforts on behalf of the Persian nationalist movement, Browne was admired and revered by many Iranians. Clearly some Iranians saw the connection between Browne's activism and his scholarship. The *Ihtisham al-Saltanah* wrote from Berlin in 1910, saying that he had read Browne's book on the revolution and wanted to thank him for all of his efforts on behalf of the Iranian nation.⁶⁶ Browne received the Order of the Lion and the Sun. Isa Sadiq wrote to him on the occasion of Browne's sixtieth birthday that some thirty Iranians, including Riza Quli Khan, had purchased a rug as a gift for Browne.⁶⁷

The political situation in Iran was tense; some forces were opposing constitutionalism, while Russia was impinging on the northern frontiers. Browne stepped up his activities in support of the nationalist and constitutionalist causes in Iran. He kept a notebook of the people whom he would contact in his efforts; its cover was marked, "Names and Addresses of Persons Interested in Persia."⁶⁸ There are a total of 84 names listed, including Arberry, Arnold, Blunt, Curzon, Edwards, Scott, and Trevelyan.⁶⁹ The book includes the names of several ministers and journalists. Some names are marked, indicating that they had received a special Christmas card the Browne's sent which

featured a Persian design. Another mark before some names indicates that Browne had sent them a copy of a pamphlet he had written on Russian atrocities in Tabriz. This pamphlet was printed under the auspices of the Persia Committee in October, 1912. Entitled “The Reign of Terror at Tabriz: England’s Responsibility,” the pamphlet featured gruesome photographs of Iranians who were hung and quartered by Russian troops who invaded the city.⁷⁰

In addition to the Persia Committee, which was primarily a political organization, Browne was involved in bringing together the Persia Society. While the Persia Committee was an overtly political organization, the Persia Society was meant to be a scholarly and cultural organization. On a page contained in his personal papers, Browne listed the objectives of the Persia Society, as presented at the Society’s first meeting. Its primary purpose was to make the British and the Persian peoples better acquainted with one another and to promote a mutual sympathy between the two nations. Towards that end, one of the Society’s aims was “to encourage the study of Persian literature in England.” The members of the Society were “to discuss matters concerning Persia, excluding political . . . [and] to study questions (commercial, artistic, industrial concerning Persia-England).” The Society was to be based in London, to meet every three weeks, and to have an annual dinner. Another of its goals was to establish a library of Persian books and newspapers and to have regular exhibitions of Persian artifacts. It was to publish a Persian-English journal. Members of the Persia Committee were encouraged to also become members of the Society.⁷¹

One evening in November 1911, some 200 people gathered at the Savoy Hotel in London to hear Lord Curzon deliver the official address at the inaugural dinner of the Persia Society. Before a cheering audience, Curzon declared that the Society’s main purpose was the preservation of the Persian nation:

It is to the existence of a body of enthusiastic persons thus moved by Persia that this Society owes its origin. It is their object to emphasise the

interest which acquaintance with Persia has created in them, and to create it in those whom it does not already exist. One of the functions of the society is to provoke sympathy with Persia. . . . Sympathy is the greatest gift short of material assistance. . . that one nation can give another. Sympathy means the effort and desire to understand another nation from that nation's point of view, to sympathise with its aspirations and ideal even when the horizon is most covered with clouds (cheers). . . . In one respect our interest in Persia is especially warm – that is in its survival as a nation (cheers).⁷²

The speech represented the culmination of the evolution of Lord Curzon's position on Iran. Throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, Curzon had been an influential voice regarding Persian matters in Britain. He had combined his roles as a journalist, scholar, politician and then diplomat to articulate and disseminate his views of Persia. His various roles had become melded in such a way that his scholarly pursuits could hardly be extracted from his economic and political interest in Persia. Curzon had presented the first comprehensive English language map of Persia under the auspices of the Royal Geographic Society and he went on to point out that the salt deserts in the middle of Persia might serve as a perfect natural divide should the country be partitioned. On several occasions, he had presented papers linking the study of the geography of Persia with its potential industrial value, even using the phrase 'commercial geography'.⁷³ Curzon had traveled to Persia; his photographs and ethnographic observations helped shape the debate on Persia in Britain at the time. Curzon took hundreds of photographs during his travels, often commenting on the Iranian landscape, noting possible mineral deposits in certain regions. His letters in the Times in 1890-91 and his subsequent book, Persia and the Persian Question, served an important purpose in raising his own political profile while drawing the attention to Persian matters. He had ties with the Persian Bank Mining Rights Corporation. In 1899, he wrote an influential report on Persia seeking to influence Britain's foreign policy at a critical juncture. As the Viceroy of India, he had underlined the importance of southern Persia and the Persian Gulf to British supremacy in Southwestern Asia and India. It is, therefore, noteworthy

that he was selected to deliver the speech at the inaugural dinner of the Persia Society, whose stated purpose it was to preserve Persia's autonomy.

By 1911, the threat of a Russian invasion of Persia seemed quite real indeed. Curzon's support of Persian nationalism was not necessarily a turnaround from his previous position. It was perhaps a natural extension of his consistent opinion that Persia was instrumental to the defense of India. As I explained in chapter two, Persian "independence" in the eyes of both the Russians and the British meant that neither side would completely dominate its territory. With the formation of the Persia Society, we witness a peculiar coming together of two very different Orientalists, E. G. Browne and Lord Curzon, who along with British colonial officials and Persian diplomats stood unified in defense of Persian nationalism. This union was forged through a particular hybridity, bred from the imperial context of the production of knowledge on Iran in Victorian England. This current, the mingling of British imperial interests in and the academic study of the region, had been a powerful trend in the late nineteenth century. Despite his many efforts, E. G. Browne was unable to stem the tide or ultimately to influence the grafting of political, economic, and educational interests in Iran. When he was left off the Board of the Oriental Studies at London University, Browne bitterly defended his contributions to the study of the Orient in England. In letters written for the Times, Browne emphasized over all other factors the number of his students, which at that time totaled some 217 in all, who had gone on to distinguish themselves as colonial officials in the East. As Said has shown in his studies of Orientalism, the term represents a wide variety of individuals with varying motivations and methods who ultimately construct and contribute to a particular system of the production of knowledge which fuses economic, political, and intellectual pursuits. Ultimately, two very different men, Curzon and Browne, who both began their illustrious careers at Eton came together to form the Persia Society. In the end, both men espoused the cause of Iranian nationalism in Britain. The distinctions and similarities between the two powerful figures shed light

on the nature and power of Orientalism in Victorian England, and its influence on Iran at a critical time in her history.

The Bureaucratization of Education in Late Qajar Iran

One of the chief aims of this dissertation is to outline the development of cultural institutions in late Qajar Iran in order to reflect the process of cultural production that preceded, underlined, and in many ways determined the political outcome of the colonial-nationalist struggle in the Iranian context. In the previous sections, I have shown some of the important developments in the study of Iran within the context of British Orientalism. Changes were underway in the academic institutions of Iran itself as well. Much of the discussion of the educational system of modern Iran at this time are marked by the theories of modernization and/or Westernization that by and large contend that Iranian resistance to colonial domination did not manifest itself until the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was well underway. These studies tend to show the educational reforms in late Qajar Iran as a feeble attempt to “catch up” with the West when Western influence was already dominant in Iran. This approach neglects to depict the various spaces in society in which power was constructed, deployed, and resisted. It overlooks the important decades during which Iranian intellectuals living both in Iran and abroad worked to create institutions through which they could reproduce a national Iranian identity, debate its features and characteristics, and ultimately maintain its independence. In trying to understand the dynamics of Iranian nationalism in the late Qajar era, it is useful to understand power not just in Gramscian terms (the construction of hegemonic power within and through cultural institutions) but in Foucauldian terms as well (seeing resistance not just in a singular historical moment but looking for “transitory points of

resistance” as well.)⁷⁴ This section of my dissertation, then, seeks to examine the history of education reform in late Qajar Iran within the context of the power struggle for Iran’s independence, as an institutional articulation of Persian nationalism.

In his study, Education and Modernization in the Middle East, Joseph Szyliowicz compared the Turkish, Iranian, and Egyptian educational systems. Of Iran, he wrote, “Iran was compelled to attempt the painful, to ask of transforming itself from a traditional society into a more powerful and modern country because of the pressures exerted by foreign powers who wished to extend their territories at its expense. . . . The Darolfunun represented the first attempt to introduce modern education into the country, and in its classrooms Iranians were exposed to modern subjects taught by Europeans in Western languages.”⁷⁵ This scenario looks at institutional formation in a vacuum, neglecting to situate the institutional development of Iran’s education system within the larger context of cultural production at the time. It suggests that the introduction of modern education into Iran was strictly a European borrowing. It does infer a connection between education reform and pressures from external foreign powers, but does not elucidate the specific ways in which that pressure was felt in the educational realm. Of course, to be fair, Szyliowicz was writing in the 1970s, at a time when Iran was a major focus of modernization theorists, and so perhaps his work was a sign of the times. However, the continuity and prevalence in this method of analyzing Iran’s educational reforms is noteworthy. In an important monograph, Education and the Making of Modern Iran, David Minashri tackles these issues. In an otherwise fine study, Menashri absorbs some of the assumptions of modernization theorists, thus clouding the issue by discussing the development of modern educational systems in Iran as imitative and derivative. His assessment of the advent of a secular education system in the Qajar period follows:

In short, in Iran as in other Muslim countries of the Middle East, the attitude of ‘ignorant complacency,’ which had characterized the attitude towards the West for many centuries, came to an end early in the nineteenth century. But it was not yet being replaced by the ‘anxious

emulation' so prominent later on. For the time being, the ambivalent approach of simultaneously wishing to adopt and reject the ways of the strong – but infidel – West still characterized their attitude. Obviously, the East could no longer ignore the threatening strength of the West; rather it sought, as Bernard Lewis put it, to 'discover and apply the illusive secret of its greatness and strength.' In the view of a growing number of Iranian thinkers, education was one of the main secret sources of western progress. For them, its imitation was no longer an innovation tantamount to an error but rather the high road to salvation.⁷⁶

Faced with colonial power, Iranians had only one recourse: emulation. And although they were slow to realize that therein lay their salvation, there were a few reformers who were aware that the secret of the West's strength was partially due to their education – secrets these Iranian reformers hoped to emulate. In this equation, both the source of and impetus for modern reform is the West. Reform becomes not only a reaction to but an imitation of the West. This view is highly problematic because it glosses over some of the important aspects of the history of educational reform in late Qajar Iran. Important nuances are lost or at the very least distilled by continuing to uphold the underlying premise that modernization in the Iranian context was simply a belated and failed attempt at imitating the West. It undermines the historians' ability to see the ways that the West actually interfered with the process of modernizing the educational system in Iran at numerous important junctures. It further fails to appreciate the nature of modernity in the Iranian context. The importance of cultural translation, appropriation, and adaptation (and the failures therein) are not sufficiently examined. The myriad sources of influence on the educational system of Iran in late Qajar Iran are also overlooked, when the assumption is made that all inspiration stemmed from the West. In this section of the dissertation, then, I will survey the educational models and institutions there were established in late Qajar Iran. This is not meant to be an exhaustive history of the subject.⁷⁷ Rather, I seek to situate these developments within the context of other modes of cultural production and institutions to show important

linkages – processes that ran through and across institutional boundaries. This study will also help reveal the interchange between colonial domination and anti-colonial resistant that helped shape Iran’s history at the time.

In the early 1930s, Issa Khan Sadiq was a student at the Teacher’s College of Columbia University, where he wrote a dissertation entitled, “Modern Persia and Her Education System.” Sadiq enumerated some of the efforts made to establish a modern education system in Qajar Iran. Sadiq also noted the growing influence of the British and the Russians in Iranian’s internal affairs. Sadiq concluded that in the late Qajar era, “the efforts of Persia to introduce reforms and reconstruct her national life on a new basis were openly opposed by notes, threats, and armed forces.”⁷⁸ Sadiq made another telling observation about Iran’s educational system. In describing the philosophy of education in Iran, he referred to a verse from Sa`idi’s Gulistan, “Though silver and gold are extracted from stones, yet it is not in every stone that gold and silver are found.” Sa`di, Sadiq noted, “had laid the foundation of a philosophy of ‘education for those who can profit by it’.”⁷⁹ And so it is important to bear in mind that the call for education reform in Iran, even in the 1930s, was far from a demand for universal education.

As part of the larger attempts at self-strengthening the Iranian nation, some reformers felt that restructuring the educational system was of utmost importance. Amir Kabir, Nasir al-Din Shah’s famous prime minister was a strong proponent of a state-sponsored educational system. Still, the system was meant to train segments of the Iranian elite. This elite was to learn about the mechanisms of industry and government in order to help the bureaucracy of Iran. Until Amir Kabir’s reforms, education in Iran was based on private initiative and was usually attached to a mosque or a religious endowment.⁸⁰ The first major initiative to introduce a secular state-sponsored educational system in Iran was the establishment of the Dar al-Fanun in 1851, but only a few students would benefit from its instruction. As Curzon wrote, “[W]hile the crumbs of European knowledge are dispensed to the few, the old, stale loaves of Mussulman lore

are still thought food enough and to spare the many.”⁸¹ Of course, educational elitism was not unique to the Iranian case. Gramsci observed the oligarchical nature of the traditional European schools, which “were intended for the new generation of the ruling class, destined to rule in its turn. . . .” According to Gramsci, these schools helped perpetuate a social structure in which some were to rule and others were to be ruled.⁸² Indeed, it can be argued that the educational system set forth in the late Qajar era was meant to create and/or foment an elite that would support the Qajar bureaucratic system.⁸³ The Dar al-Fanun, then, became a training ground for members of the Qajar establishment and for some of the leaders of the nationalist movement. Arinpur wrote that the teachers and students of the Dar al-Fanun were instrumental in a “renaissance” of Iranian culture, and those who had been educated in mathematics and the sciences formed an important nucleus of thinkers who participated in the Constitutional Revolution.⁸⁴

Some of the influential members of the educated community in Qajar Iran were the students who were sent to study abroad, mainly in England and France. M. Minovi wrote that these study abroad programs were referred to in Qajar Iran as ‘Karavan-i Ma`rifat’ or Caravans of Knowledge.⁸⁵ The decision to send Iranians to Europe to be educated was taken by Abbas Mirza. In 1811, he asked a British diplomat who was in Iran to take two Iranian men, Hajji Baba Afshar and Muhammad Kazim to study in London. Kazem passed away while in England, but Afshar went on to study medicine. In 1815, five more students left for England under the supervision of William D’Arcy, who would later win the concession for Iranian oil. Amongst these students were Mirza Salih Shirazi, the first Iranian at Oxford University, who studied languages; Muhammad `Ali, who studied gunsmithing; Mirza Ja`far who studied engineering; another Mirza Ja`far who studied chemistry and medicine; and Mirza Riza Muhandis Bashi, who studied artillery sciences. These students were known as the First Caravan of Knowledge. Two of them went on to work in the court of Abbas Mirza in Tabriz upon completing their studies.

Five students were sent to France in 1845 by the Shah's orders. These included Hussein Quli Khan, who studied military sciences; Mirza Yahya, who studied medicine; Muhammad Ali Aqa, who studied mineralogy; Mirza Zaki, who studied military sciences; and Mirza Riza, who studied natural sciences.⁸⁶ In 1848, these students returned to Iran because of the European Revolutions and the death of the Shah. At about the same time, Naqqag Bashi was studying drawing in Italy, Muhammad Hussein Afshar was studying sugar production in Russia, and Mirza Sadiq was studying medicine in England. These students were the Second Caravan of Knowledge. In 1856, Nasir al-Din Shah sent another group of students to Europe; this group consisted of over forty graduates of the Dar al-Fanun.

The building of the Polytechnic, the Dar al-Fanun, was directed under the supervision of one of the students sent abroad, Mirza Riza Muhandis. The college was built on the grounds of the royal palace. The columned structure had large rooms, surrounded by patios. Amir Kabir sought the assistance of European instructors to establish the Dar al-Fanun, but he was not completely free to ask for assistance from any country. The 1814 Perso-British agreement stated that if Persia was to seek foreign teachers to train its army, they had to come from countries with which Britain had good diplomatic relations. The Amir Kabir chose Austria, a neutral European country with little interest in becoming engrossed in the internal politics of Iran. He commissioned an Armenian named John David to go to Austria and hire the first group of instructors for the Dar al-Fanun.⁸⁷ Amir Kabir fell from power soon after the plans for establishing the Dar al-Fanun were drawn up. His successor, Mirza Aqa Khan, and the British Minister both opposed the plans to establish the Dar al-Fanun, urging the Shah to send the Austrian instructors back to Europe. The Shah resisted these attempts. A few more instructors were hired; they were Iranian, German, and French. Classes at the Dar al-Fanun began some thirteen days before the execution of Amir Kabir, the reformer Prime

Minister who had worked so hard to make the Dar al-Fanun a reality and who had planned its inception.

Students entered the Dar al-Fanun around the age of fourteen and the course of study was between six and eight years long. Students received a small stipend (between twelve and fifty tumans annually), free uniforms, and daily lunches.⁸⁸ Instruction began at eight in the morning and continued through three in the afternoon. Examinations were administered three times a year. Following the examinations, the Shah, accompanied by an entourage which included the Prime Minister and members of the nobility, would visit the students and distribute prizes and awards amongst them.

The courses were divided into seven departments: infantry, cavalry, gunnery, engineering, medicine, pharmacology, and mineralogy. Students from each department wore distinct uniforms. Arinpur noted that at first, the curriculum of the Dar al-Fanun consisted of Medicine, Arithmetic, Military Sciences, and Foreign Languages. Afterwards, Persian and Arabic language were introduced and eventually literature was also taught.⁸⁹ My survey of the curriculum of the Dar al-Fanun from its inception through the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah shows that the following subjects were taught: infantry, cavalry, gunnery, military sciences, tactical sciences, military music, arithmetic, geometry, algebra, engineering, cartography, physics, chemistry, natural sciences, biology, pharmacology, medicine, surgery, mineralogy, geography, history, political science, drawing, French, English, Arabic, and Persian. For much of the critical years of its early development, the President of the College was Riza Quli Khan who also served as the Minister of Science under Nasir al-Din Shah. Some of the more notable faculty included Krziz, Polak, Jules Richard, Tholozan, Pesche, Malkum Khan, and Mirza Abdul Ghaffari. It is worth mentioning that the Iranian faculty taught math, geometry, medicine, natural sciences, chemistry, history, political science, as well as Arabic and Persian.

Table 3.2
Nationality of Instructors at the Dar al-Fanun⁹⁰

Nationality	Number of faculty
Austrian	9
French	8
Italian	4
British	2
German	1
Dutch	1
Iranian (including Iranian-Armenian)	11 (2)

Curzon took an interest in the educational system and visited the Dar al-Fanun while he was in Iran in 1880. He estimated that student enrollment at that time was at 387. On the school's instruction, he made the following observations:

I visited most of the class-rooms on a working day, and was interested in what I saw. In the French class, the pupils were invited to compose a short story in French, upon the nucleus of a few given ideas (*voyage, cheval, mal-à-la-tête*); to write French from dictation, Fénelon's 'Télémaque' being the text-book; and to translate from French into Persia. All these tasks were performed very creditably. In the geography class, where the maps in use were drawn by Persians from English models, a pupil traced from memory a respectable map of Europe on the blackboard. In the drawing-class the models were European studies from the nude, classical heads and busts, drawings of Christ, pictures of subjects as various as His Majesty the Shah, Andromeda, and Landseer's 'Challenge.' In the English classes, I also witnessed dictation, composition, and translation, elementary illustrated school manuals being employed, and the text-books in use being 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Baron Munchausen,' the latter of which I thought a somewhat dubious selection.⁹¹

Some attempt was made to coordinate instruction in medicine. At one point, several instructors such as Cloquet, Polak, Tholozan, and Dasil all taught medicine at the Dar al-Fanun concurrently. The class of students was between thirty and forty. In 1990, Picot described the medical training as such, “The courses are purely theoretical at present, and the period of the study lasts six years. Students, however, often lose patience, and as civil and military employment is dependent on other than professional qualifications, a short course is often as useful in after life to the student as a long one.”⁹²

Naturally, students require textbooks. Like the Dar al-Fanun, the state presses were located on the palace grounds, and sometimes the Dar al-Fanun’s textbooks were printed there. While doing research on printed books and lithographs from the Qajar period, I found several samples of textbooks that were part of the curriculum at the Dar al-Fanun. These are worthy of comment. Zaka ul-Mulk wrote a textbook of Iranian history entitled, A Course on the Brief History of Iran. The copy of the book which I have examined is a second printing lithographed in Bombay at the Muzaffari Printers in 1329. In the introduction to the second edition, it is noted that since three years had passed since the first edition of the book had been printed, this history book had come to be used widely in the country’s schools. Hence the author felt it was important to edit, amend, and reissue the book. The first edition of the book had only covered Iranian history through the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah, but this version updated the book by discussing the first years of the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah as well. The book is illustrated and includes several colored maps. The text of the book begins with the following passage:

Our country is Iran and we are Iranian. Our fathers were very different from the present Iranians. The language of ancient Iran was different Their way of life was different, and they had other customs and behaviors. And they were not Muslims because the religion of Islam had not yet appeared. Our ancient fathers were Zoroastrians. . . . Iranians are so ancient that we do not know what the condition they were in at the

beginning and what they did because much of the history that has been written on that period is not accurate and is [more like] a story.⁹³

During this period, other histories and geographies of Iran were also produced for use instructional use. Another example is the book, Zad va Bum, written by Muhammad Ali Ibn-i Muhammad Sadiq. The book was lithographed in 1319/1898 in Tabriz; the scribe was named Ahmad. The copy of the book which I have examined bears the seal of the Tarbiyat Bookshop in Tabriz which was adjacent to a school. Tarbiyat was an important figure in the history of Persian print and bookselling in the Qajar period. This book is a general history of Iran which includes some geographic information. It has an appendix listing all of Iran's kings, beginning with Cyrus and ending with Nasir al-Din Shah. Interestingly, Gobineau is one of the sources used to describe the landscape and topography of the Gulf region. The author wrote, "M. Gobineau says that the topography [of the southern shores of Iran] was not suitable for civilization and progress and even the shorelands are not humid and are all full of stones and there is no water. . . . But in any case, the Persian Gulf is the center for buying and selling for all of southern Iran and is the natural spot for the import of goods from India, Arabia, and Africa."⁹⁴

Muhammad Mirza Kirmanshahi was on the faculty of medicine at the Dar al-Fanun, and he wrote a medical text entitled, Risaleh-yi Muqarrabat. In the preface of the book, it says that Kirmanshahi studied medicine at the Dar al-Fanun under Dr. Tholozan and then went on to Paris where he studied medicine and surgery. The preface also notes that he has penned several other books, which have yet to be published, on topics such as biology, geology, physics, and two translations of European medical texts.⁹⁵

I have also found several copies of textbooks authored by Krziz, the Austrian instructor of the Dar al-Fanun. These copies were clearly personally owned by Krziz and bear his notations. One of the books, on the subject of battery practice, was lithographed in 1269/1855 at the State Press at the Dar al-Fanun. Another textbook written by Krziz is on the subject of gunnery, which was printed in the year 1270/1854 and was translated by

Muhammad Zaki. The preface states that the book will be sent to the various gunneries throughout Iran in order to regulate their practices. Krziz also taught mathematics, and he wrote a textbook on Arithmetic and Algebra. In the preface of this book, it explains that Nasir al-Din had ordered the establishment of the Dar al-Fanun so that all kinds of sciences could be taught to Iranians. For that purpose, faculty members had been gathered from all parts of the world in Tehran. Amongst these was Krziz himself, who had written this book, using the best sources available from the leading intellectuals of France. It had been carefully translated by Muhammad Zaki who was on the faculty of the Dar al-Fanun and was its official translator. A professor of physics as well, Krziz wrote a textbook on that subject. In the copy which I examined, Krziz has written an inscription in French which says that this book on mechanics is the first part of a course on physics.

In the preface of his Manual of Gunnery, Krziz wrote that Nasir al-Din Shah had established the Dar al-Fanun for the purpose of “reinforcing the pillars of the state.”⁹⁶ As Adamiyat observed, the death of Amir Kabir was a clear blow to the viability of the Dar al-Fanun; from the start, it was mismanaged.⁹⁷ But the death of Nasir al-Din Shah hurt the progress of the Dar al-Fanun. In 1900, General Werth, who by then had been attached to the university for eighteen years described the school’s situation:

Since the accession of Muzzeffer-ed-Din, the military college, like all other institutions, has fallen into decadence. The school has not been paid for three years, and the Nayer-ul-Mulk, the director, has had to meet most of the expenses from his own pocket. . . . The work and prestige of the school have greatly suffered, and both professors and students are turning their attention to other means of earning a livelihood. It has been almost impossible of late years to find young men of sufficient instruction to follow the usual courses of study, and many of the classes have had in consequence to be abandoned.⁹⁸

Indeed it is hard to know what might have become of Iran’s educational system if the Amir Kabir had not fallen from the Shah’s graces and been killed around the time of the school’s opening. Nasir al-Din Shah’s desire to reform Iran was often checked by his

greater desire to monopolize authority. But there was another force which strongly opposed the institutionalization of a secular state-sponsored educational system in Iran – the British. From the time that plans for the Dar al-Fanun were being drawn, the British Minister in Iran protested plans to bring foreign instructors from any country other than England. The 1814 treaty between England and Iran had clearly stated that Iran was not to hire teachers to train its army from any country which Britain opposed, thereby giving the British the power to forestall the development of an effective educational system. The Amir Kabir had brought the first group of foreign instructors from Austria, since it was a relatively neutral nation that would not seem threatening to the British. But the British opposed the choice nonetheless, feeling that whoever instructed the Persian army would have undue influence over Iran's internal affairs. Amir Kabir had to struggle against internal and external pressures in order to establish the school. Thus before it was even opened, the forces of colonialism and autocracy converged and prevented the Dar al-Fanun from meeting its full potential.

As the discussion of the curriculum of the Dar al-Fanun showed, much of the instruction there was geared towards military training. There were some attempts to establish a separate military college in Qajar Iran, but none of these institutions met with much success. In 1877, the British Representative to Iran wrote, "There are no means of studying for the Persian military officers. There is only one Military College in Persia, at which the education of young cadets can only be completed and not that of grown up officers."⁹⁹ In his comprehensive report on the Persian Army prepared for British officials, Lt. Colonel Picot wrote of the Nasiri College, a military college founded by the Naib al-Saltanah, the third son of Nasir al-Din Shah, who at one point had been the Commander in Chief of the army. The curriculum was fashioned after the course of instruction at the Dar al-Fanun. Upon the death of Nasir al-Din Shah, his son retired as the Commander in Chief, and the military college floundered. Picot wrote, "Once a year the old students parade at the Dushan Tepe, six miles from Tehran, for the Shah's

inspection at the conclusion of the spring race meeting; otherwise they appear to be neither seen nor heard of.”¹⁰⁰ The only segment of the military college which remained active was the regimental band that continued under the direction of M. Le Maire, who had been serving in that capacity since 1868.

The buildings which the Amir Kabir had commissioned for the Dar al-Fanun housed more than just the university. The structure also contained the Dar al-Tarjumah (the Translation Bureau) and the Dar al-Taba`a-i Dawlati (the State Press). As I will discuss in coming chapters, these institutions were both headed by Muhammad Hasan Khan, the *ʿAtimad al-Saltanah*, a graduate of the Dar al-Fanun. For some twenty-five years, he served Nasir al-Din Shah as the official state historian, the Minister of Publication, the Director of the Translation Bureau, and the Special Translator to the Court. Mirza `Ali Muhammad was the main munshi of the Translation Bureau and of the State Press. And Mirza Muhammad Hussein was charged with translating newspapers in particular. *ʿAtimad al-Saltanah* would read on a daily basis to the Shah from translations of foreign newspapers and from various books.

According to the Salnameh (almanac) of 1879, the Translation Bureau’s employees included Mirza Rahim, M. Richard, Mirza Ali Khan, Mirza Muhammad Riza Kashani, Mirza Qiyas al-Din Adib Kashani, Mirza Muhammad Hussein, Mirza Ali Muhammad, Mirza Mehdi Khan, and Mirza Ja`far who translated works from English, French, German, Arabic, and Turkish. Importantly, half of the employees of the Translation Bureau in the year 1879 were charged with translating works from Arabic and Turkish. One lithographed text from this period, ʿIlm-i Tabaqat al-Ard, is a scientific treatise; its introduction explains that this scientific study was originally written in Arabic in Egypt and was then translated into Ottoman Turkish; this copy is a Persian translation of the Ottoman edition.¹⁰¹ Clearly, the process of cultural borrowing entailed in the work of translating texts in the late Qajar period was not simply focused on European works.

One of the earliest translations produced by the Dar al-Fanun was a compilation of works by Descartes. The Persian translation of Descartes was entitled, Hikmat-i Nasiri. It was translated with the help of Arthur de Gobineau while he was in Iran in the mid 1850s. In his travel diary of his Asian travels, Gobineau had written a section on the probable results of interactions between Europe and Asia in which he drew some distinctions between Arabs and Persians. The Arabs, he wrote, could never be a nation, for Islam which had allowed them to conquer the regions once occupied by the Ancient Greeks and had given them the spoils of pillage, had not given them the art of leading people, the art of administration. Though a noble race, the Arabs were incapable of understanding the idea of a nation. Their attachments were to the tribe, their bonds based on purely religious sentiments. Iranians were able to understand all that was inaccessible to the Arabs, possessing a certain intelligence that the Arabs lacked. Nonetheless, the Persians lacked reason and conscience.¹⁰²

Descartes was an interesting choice indeed. The Persian translation states that the form of knowledge (*`ilm*) that is articulated by Descartes is the greatest of all kinds of knowledge, for it instructs people on Reason (*haqq*). If the science of medicine has as its subject the human body, the preface explains, so the science of philosophy has as its subject Reason. The preface goes on to say that in ancient times, Persia had great kings and learned men, but that for some time, in the fields of science and industry, Iran had undergone a certain decay. But Iran's wilting spirit was being rejuvenated under the guidance of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, who for the purpose of establishing the pillars of the state encouraged Iranians to acquire knowledge. Under his supervision, the instruction of various sciences, especially medicine, had begun in Iran. The Count Gobineau, the preface goes on to explain, is learned in numerous languages and sciences. He is in Iran as a representative of France, and as a way to improve the relations between France and Iran, he has decided to translate the work of one of the greatest Frenchmen, Descartes, so that the work of this great philosopher can be dispersed amongst the

Iranians. This volume, then, fuses the history of Iran with Cartesian philosophy, and brings both into the civilizational discourse articulated by Gobineau and into the contemporary political relations between France and Iran. Even when the task at hand was clearly the translation of a European philosopher into Persian, cultural borrowing was a complex and nuanced process.

In subsequent chapters dealing with the history of print culture and the theater, we will see that discussions of educational reform were a central theme debated by Iranian nationalists in the late Qajar era. In this chapter, we've reviewed the development of the study of Iran in the British academy alongside attempts at establishing a secular educational system in Iran itself. These two processes were to some extent interconnected. Students who were sent to Europe to be educated interacted with professors who taught Iranian Studies in England. Likewise, Orientalists traveling to Iran (such as Curzon and Gobineau) took an interest in the educational system of Iran. Curzon visited the Dar al-Fanun and wrote about it in his book Persia and the Persian Question, while Gobineau actually worked with the staff of the Translation Bureau. Some of the Iranian students who were part of the Caravans of Knowledge returned to Iran to teach at the new Dar al-Fanun, while other faculty were Europeans. The development of Orientalism and the bureaucratization of Iran's educational system, then, were not completely distinct and separate processes. The shortcomings of the educational system in Iran can not be simply dismissed as a feeble attempt at emulating the West. Indeed, in some ways the West (in this case England) actively sought to hinder the process. The internal power dynamics within the Qajar royal establishment and the interference of colonial officials played a part in the failure of the Dar al-Fanun to develop into a cohesive and enduring college. Nevertheless, its importance in Qajar Iran should not be dismissed. Some of the important leaders in the Qajar bureaucracy and the significant agents of Iranian nationalism in this era were graduates of the Dar al-Fanun. Furthermore, it is incorrect to view the process of bureaucratization of the production of

knowledge as a simple attempt to imitate the West. The discussion of the Translation Bureau, for example, showed that half of its staff was used to translate works from Arabic and Turkish. And the translations of European literature were adapted to suit the intellectual needs and political circumstances of Iran at the time. This discussion would suggest that the cultural flows between East and West were nuanced and complex. In the coming chapters, we will see that cultural innovation and adaptation were an important component of Iranian nationalism in the decades leading up to the Constitutional Revolution.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 3

¹ An English translation of Enayat's talk was published a year later. Hamid Enayat, "The Politics of Iranology," Iranian Studies 6 (1973), p.3.

² Enayat argued that all Orientalists should not be "lumped together . . . yet all of them were greatly helped in their work, whether spiritually or materially, by the circumstances created by colonialism, obtaining in its shadow the faculties for the study of Iranian or other Oriental cultures." *Ibid*, p. 8.

³ See my discussion of Morier's Hajji Baba in chapter four and my discussion of Goldsmid in chapter six of this dissertation.

⁴ George N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (London: Frank Cass, 1966), v. 1, p. ix and 12. Originally published in 1892. Heretofore cited as P & PQ.

⁵ Much of the biographical information herein was culled from Curzon's biography in his personal paper collection at the India Office.

⁶ G. Curzon, "Memorandum on the Society's New Map of Persia," Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society (1892): 69-78.

⁷ Curzon, P & PQ, v. 1, p. vii.

⁸ *Ibid*, v. 1, p. viii.

⁹ R. Murdoch Smith to Curzon, Edinburgh, February 26, 1891, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

¹⁰ P & PQ, v. 1, p. 171.

¹¹ *Ibid*, v. 2, p. 634.

¹² *Ibid*, v. 1, pp. 399-401.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, v. 2, p. 633.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, v. 2, p. 632.

¹⁶ Ibid, v. 1, p. 464.

¹⁷ Ibid, v. 2, p. 630.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ S. Lane-Poole to Curzon, East Dean Eastbourne, May 18, 1890, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 2, OIOC.

²⁰ Curzon's notes on travel literature can be found in Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/611, OIOC. For charts of various travelers who have written on Iran from 900 A. D. through 1891, see P & PQ, v. 1, pp. 16-18.

²¹ Sir John Chardin traveled to the Safavid Court in the 17th century which he wrote about in his Travels in Persia (London: Argonaut Press, 1927). J. B. Fraser wrote of his travels in Journey to Khorasan (1821). E. O'Donovan was a correspondent for the Daily News. Colonel Stewart was the British Consul-General in Tabriz. In addition to the Hajji Baba of Isfahan, Morier also published a travel account of his diplomatic missions to Iran.

²² Colonel Bell to Curzon, Shorn Cliffe, September 14, 1889, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pts. 1, OIOC. Colonel Bell himself had published writings based on his travels through Persia in the early 1880s. While in the south-western provinces, he reported on a "rascally host" who had twenty-five wives. See Curzon, P & PQ, v. 2, p.282.

²³ Colonel Stewart to Curzon, Tehran, February 1, 1890, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

²⁴ Ironside to Curzon, Tehran, May 5, 1890, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt.1, OIOC.

²⁵ Co. Stewart to Curzon, Tehran, February 1, 1890, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

²⁶ Vamberry to Curzon, Budapest, September 4, 1891, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

²⁷ Ironside to Curzon, Gulahek, September 25, 1890, Curzon Personal papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 1, OIOC.

²⁸ Schindler to Curzon, Tehran, April 16, 1890, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

²⁹ Schindler to Curzon, Tehran, February 16, 1890, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

³⁰ Preece to Curzon, Isfahan, October 27, 1891; Preece to Curzon, Isfahan, January 7, 1891; Preece to Curzon, Gulahek, September 24, 1890, all in Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 2, OIOC.

³¹ Col. Stewart to Curzon, Tabriz, November 21, 1890 and London, December 29, 1891, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt.3, OIOC.

³² Longman to Curzon, London, December 17, 1891, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MASS.F112/615, OIOC.

³³ Longman to Curzon, London, January 27, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/615, OIOC.

³⁴ Longman to Curzon, London, May 31, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/615, OIOC.

³⁵ See a copy of the book contract in Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/615, OIOC.

³⁶ I have used information from the receipts sent to Curzon by Longmans with his annual payment for this table. Receipts for the years 1893-4 and 1894-5 were missing from the folder. Inventory was taken in the June of each year. The receipts are in the Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/615. OIOC

³⁷ The book was sold through Longmans, Green and Co. in the United States for the retail price of 12 dollars.

³⁸ Beginning in this year, the receipts reflect two figures for the number of books in stock, perhaps reflecting damaged books. I have shown the lowest number cited throughout.

³⁹ Smith to Curzon, Eastbourne, February 24, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F112/614, pt. 3, OIOC.

⁴⁰ Stewart to Curzon, London, May 9, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, OIOC.

⁴¹ Stewart to Curzon, London, May 21, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, OIOC.

⁴² Houtum-Schindler, as quoted in Picot, "Report on the Persian Army," 1900, EUR.MSS.F111/373, OIOC.

⁴³ See for example Durand's comments on his first trip to Isfahan in Durand to Salisbury, Tehran, January 18, 1900, Durand Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.D727/18, OIOC.

⁴⁴ E. C. Ross to Curzon, Clifton, May 26, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, OIOC.

⁴⁵ Guy Le Strange to Curzon, London, September 19, 1892, Curzon Personal Papers, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, OIOC

⁴⁶ Vambery to Curzon, Budapest, May 24, 1892, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁴⁷ A. Nicolson to Curzon, Budapest, May 26, 1892, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁴⁸ T. J. Bennett, "The Past and Present Connection of England with the Persian Gulf," The Journal for the Society of Arts (June 13, 1902), p. 635. See copy of article in EUR.MSS.F111/351, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁴⁹ E. G. Browne to Curzon, Cambridge, June 8, 1892, EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁵⁰ Ricardo Davila Silva to Curzon, Santiago, February 3, 1909, EUR.MSS.F112/65, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁵¹ Sir Edgar Vincent to Curzon, no place, no date, OIOC.EUR.MSS.F111/58-59, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁵² My study of Browne focuses mainly on the early years of his academic interest in Iran. I am interested in tracing the parallel development of his academic and activist roles prior to the culmination of these two roles in his involvement in the establishment of the Persia Committee at the height of the Constitutional Revolution. Other scholars provide us with excellent studies of his role in the Persia Committee. See especially the following studies by Bonakdarian. Mansour Bonakdarian, "Edward G. Browne and the Iranian Constitutional Struggle: From Academic Orientalism to Political Activism," in Iranian Studies (1992): 7-31; "Iranian Constitutional Exiles and British Foreign Policy Dissenters, 1908-9," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (1995): 175-191; and "Persia Committee and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran," British Journal of Middle East Studies (1991): 186-207.

⁵³ Mirza Mehdi Khan Mushir-ul-Mulk, introduction to "The Literature of Persia," lecture presented to the Persia Society, April 26, 1912, republished as a pamphlet of the Persia Society (1912).

⁵⁴ E. G. Browne, untitled note, Box 8, Browne Personal Paper Collection, University Library of Cambridge, original in Persian.

⁵⁵ Quoted from Browne's handwritten manuscript of *The Persian Revolution*, Box 8, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge. See also *The Persian Revolution, 1905-1909*, ed. Abbas Amanat (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1995).

⁵⁶ Browne to Goldsmid, Cambridge, July 20, 1896, Box 3, Goldsmid Personal Paper Collection, OIOC.

⁵⁷ T. W. Arnold to Browne, London, December 6, 1905, Box 10, bundle 1, folio 3, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁵⁸ See draft of the letter in Box 9, bundle 4, folio 54, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ See, for example, Qazvini to Browne, June 1911, Box 9, bundle 12, folio 1, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶² Lynch to Browne, Banbury, March 29, 1908, Box 9, bundle 11, folio 35, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶³ Lynch to Browne, Banbury, December 4, 1908, Box 9, bundle 11, folio 38, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶⁴ Lynch to Browne, Banbury, May 30, 1909, Box 9, bundle 11, folio 60, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶⁵ See draft of letter dated December 6, 1911, in Box 8, bundle 2, folios 33-37, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge. Original is in English.

⁶⁶ *Ihtisham al-Saltanah*, Berlin, October 28, 1910, Box 9, bundle 8, folio 56, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶⁷ See Sadiq's letter in Box 9, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶⁸ The notebook can be found in Box 8, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

⁶⁹ See my discussions of Scott and Trevelyan in chapter 4 and of Blunt in chapter 5.

⁷⁰ See a copy of the pamphlet in Box 8, Browne Personal Papers Collection, University Library of Cambridge.

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- ⁷¹ “Persia Society – Objects,” Box 8, bundle 3, Browne Personal Papers Collections, University Library of Cambridge.
- ⁷² George Curzon, “Persian Autonomy,” transcript of speech delivered by Lord Curzon at the Inaugural Dinner of the Persia Society (published for the Society by John Hogg, 1911), pp. 4-5.
- ⁷³ George Curzon, “The Karun River and the Commercial Geography of Southwest Persia,” Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society (1890): 509-532.
- ⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, volume 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 96.
- ⁷⁵ Joseph S. Szyliowicz, Education and Modernization in the Middle East (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 169-172.
- ⁷⁶ David Menashri, Education and the Making of Modern Iran (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 25.
- ⁷⁷ For a brief narrative on education in Qajar Iran, see A. Reza Arasteh, Education and Social Awakening in Iran (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), pp. 20-25.
- ⁷⁸ Issa Khan Sadiq, Modern Persia and Her Educational System, dissertation submitted to Teacher’s College, Columbia University, 1931, p. 22.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 43.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 35.
- ⁸¹ Curzon, P & PQ, v. 1, p. 496.
- ⁸² Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 40.
- ⁸³ See Partha Chatterjee’s discussion of ‘the middleness’ of nationalist elites in The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- ⁸⁴ Y. Arinpur, Az Saba ta Nima, v. 1 (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahami-i Jibi, 1350), p. 258.
- ⁸⁵ See Mojtaba Minovi, “Avvalin Karavan-i Ma`rifat,” Yaghma volume 4, pp. 181-5. See also H. Ardekani, “Duvvumin Karavan-i Ma`rifat,” Yaghma volume 10, pp. 592-98 and Hafez Farman Farmayan, “The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth Century Iran: A Historical Survey,” The Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, ed. Polk and Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

⁸⁶ According to H. Farman Farmayan, Hussein Quli Khan was the first of a series of European-trained students who expressed strong anti-Islamic sentiments upon returning to Iran and advocated a nationalism with strong pre-Islamic overtones. See Farman Farmayan, p. 126.

⁸⁷ F. Adamiyat, Amir Kabir va Iran, 2nd edition (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1334), pp. 146-8.

⁸⁸ Lt. Colonel H. P. Picot, "Report on the Persian Army," (1900), p. 147.

⁸⁹ Arinpur, v. 1, p. 257.

⁹⁰ The information on this table was collated from various sources, including Picot, "Report on the Persian Army", Adamiyat, Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, personal copies of Krziz's textbooks, Arinpur, and Gurney and Nabavi, "Dar al-Fonun," EIr, v. 6, pp. 662-8. Note that these instructors were not teaching concurrently.

⁹¹ Curzon, P & PQ, v. 1, pp. 494-5.

⁹² Picot, p. 145.

⁹³ Zaka ul-Mulk, Tarikh-i Mukhtasar-i Iran, 2nd edition (Bombay: Matba`i Mubarak-i Muzaffari, 1329), pp. 6 – 11.

⁹⁴ M. Sadiq, Zad va Bum (Tabriz, 1316/1898), p. 16.

⁹⁵ Muhammad Mirza Kirmanshahi, Risalah-i Muqarrabat (Tehran, 1297).

⁹⁶ Krziz, Manual of Gunnery (Tehran, 1857).

⁹⁷ Adamiyat, pp. 154-8.

⁹⁸ Weth, as quoted in Picot, p. 148.

⁹⁹ Thomson to the Earl of Derby, Tehran, December 17, 1877, L/P & S/9/179, OIOC.

¹⁰⁰ Picot, p. 148.

¹⁰¹ Ilm-i Tabaqat al-Ard, trans. Mirza Yusif Khan Mustashir al-Dawlah Mu`tamid al-Saltanah (Tehran, 1299).

¹⁰² Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, Trois ans en Asie: 1855-1858, (Paris: éditions A. M. Métailié, 1980), pp. 329-330.

CHAPTER 4

PRINT CULTURE IN QAJAR IRAN

In this chapter, I will examine the history of print culture in late Qajar Iran, assessing the implications of the increased reliance on mechanized book production for the cultural and political realms. A common notion presented in histories of Qajar Iran is that the press revolution in Iran followed and resulted from the Constitutional Revolution.¹ In this chapter's discussion on printed books and the following chapter's examination of printed newspapers, I will examine the nature of print culture that preceded and arguably enabled the Constitutional Revolution. In his study, The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution, Roger Chartier suggested that the study of print culture entails a process of teasing cultural practices out of texts. The study of printed matter, and the changes in cultural practices therein, allows the historian to look for underlying shifts that bring about social and political transformations. Books may not bring about revolutionary change in and of themselves, but in certain contexts, printed texts can play an important role in constructing and disseminating a political culture. The subsequent discussions of printed books and newspapers will help show some of the ways that changes in the production and consumption of printed matter helped to shape the political culture of the Constitutional Revolution.

In her seminal work, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, Elizabeth Eisenstein argued, "Studies of dynastic consolidation and nationalist might well devote more space to the advent of printing."² The production and consumption of print culture in Qajar Iran was intrinsically connected to the articulation of the authority of the bureaucratic state. The fixity of print, which Eisenstein has drawn our attention to,

helped to standardize languages, illustrations, and images – a process that was interrelated with the process of standardizing the Iranian nation-state. Indeed, the process of textual standardization provided by print enabled an ordering of the discursive production of knowledge – a process that proved central to the consolidation of power and authority – and the resistance to that authority by colonial interests and nationalists alike. Brinkley Messick has shown that textual domination reflects particular modes of authoritative expression.³ An examination of printed materials produced throughout the late nineteenth century can shed light on the contested nature of Iranian nationalism in this period, for these texts often reflect varying articulations of the Iranian nation as set forth by the state, by nationalists, and by the colonizers. Finally, in the nineteenth century, discussions of the nature of print culture produced in the Persian language with its Arabic script were deeply embedded within larger discussions about civilization and progress. These issues will be discussed at some length in the next two chapters.

The arrival of the printing press to Iran predated the Qajar epoch, but it was in the mid- to late nineteenth century that print culture became a significant component of the Iranians' intellectual and political life. 'Abbas Mirza, the Governor of Azerbaijan and a Qajar prince, has been credited with promoting and supporting the printing industry in Iran. In 1812, he oversaw the establishment of an important printing house in Tabriz, and it was largely due to his influence that Tabriz became an important center of publishing. Jan Rypka noted that the first "printing business" in Iran was set up in the year 1824 – 5 but believed the press to have been operational for only a decade before lithography overtook the printing enterprise. In the previous chapter, I discussed the Caravans of Knowledge, those students who were sent from Iran to England, France, and Russia to receive training in a variety of educational subjects. One of the most notable of these students, Mirza Salih Shirazi, was a student at Oxford University. While studying in England, Mirza Salih Shirazi apprenticed at a publishing house and learned the craft. Upon returning to Iran, he brought with him a printing press on which he printed one of

the earlier Persian language newspapers, Akhbar. On subsequent missions to Russia and England, he purchased printing machinery which was used in Tabriz and Tehran. `Abbas Mirza sent other Iranians to St. Petersburg, where they studied the process of lithography.⁴

For this chapter, I have surveyed some 276 printed Persian books, which for the most part were produced prior to 1911. Of these, 49 were produced using moveable type while 227 were lithographed. The books that I used are housed in the collections of the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and the British Library. The preference of lithography over the moveable press is a remarkable feature of Iranian book production in the Qajar era. Lithography was adapted in Iran within decades of its invention by Aloys Senefelder, a Bavarian dramatist, who was searching for an inexpensive and simple method for reproducing plays and sheet music. This preference of lithography over moveable print can be seen as an example of a larger strategy towards cultural adaptation in the Qajar era. Technology was applied to the pre-existing cultural forms, taking into account tastes and the economy of production. As we will see in subsequent sections of this chapter, some argued that the inability to adapt the printing press to cultural production was both a sign of and a cause for the lack of intellectual progress in the Islamic world. This phenomenon has often been ascribed to religious reasons. In his foundational study of the history of book production in the Arabo-Islamic world, The Arabic Book, Johannes Pedersen set for the influential argument that the printing press was understood as being against the mores and dictates of Islam. Citing Edward Lane on the matter, Pedersen wrote, “Lane, after his sojourn in Cairo in the 1820s and 1830s, described the repugnance aroused by printing. It was argued that God’s name, which appears on every word of a Muslim book, could become defiled through this process, and it was feared that books would become cheap and fall into the wrong hands. A bookseller of Lane’s acquaintance wanted to have some books printed but was held back by his doubts concerning its permissibility under holy law.”⁵ So using the

anecdotal reference by Lane which is based on his interactions with a single bookseller in Cairo in the 1820s and 1830s, Pedersen argues for a general theory on the printing press in the Islamic world.

This argument has held a powerful sway over discussions of print culture in Islamic nations, without reference to time and space. In the Persian case, these arguments elide significant factors – such as the aesthetic importance of calligraphy in the art of the book and the economic significance of the scribal trade involved in the production of manuscripts. It would seem that lithography helped to bypass these issues, by offering a way to retain the ritual construction of the page, with its glosses, colophons, *nastaliq* script, and illuminations – while still offering the fixity and economy of print production.⁶ The lithographed press, then, signals a strategy towards cultural production in Qajar Iran – one that applied mechanized production methods to preferred Iranian cultural rituals in order to produce a new cultural form that was well suited to the social and political exigencies of the time.

Interestingly, the two earliest samples of Persian books produced on a moveable print in Iran which are contained in my sample of books are both religious texts. Printed in Tehran in 1824 and 1825 respectively, it is highly probable that these books were printed on presses established by Abbas Mirza. The first book is a multi-volume text entitled Hayat al-Qulub was published in 1240/1824. The first volume begins with a preface, bearing a lithographed header depicting the royal crown which hovers over a calligraphied insignia of Fath Ali Shah; this central image is flanked on both sides by the lion and the sun, the symbol of the royal house. The last several lines at the end of the preface taper into a triangular shape and identify the title of the book, the date of the book, and who its publisher was. We read that Mirza Zain ul-`Abidin, who ranks among the nobles of Tabriz and is a knowledgeable and learned man, is responsible for helping to introduce the art of printing to Tehran and it is under his supervision that this book has been printed. The first page of the text bears a similar header as was found in the preface.

The central focal point of this page, however, bears the calligraphied title of the book. The date of publication reappears again in the colophon of the text. The second earliest example in my sample of printed books is published on the same pressed in Tehran, again under the supervision of Mirza Zain ul-`Abidin in the year 1241/1825. This book is entitled, Haqq al-Yaqin and follows the same format of Hayat al-Qulub, including bordered pages and lithographed headers. Browne identifies the text as an important book of Persian Shi`a theology originally compiled in 1698 by Muhammad Baqir, noting that it was “beautifully printed” in Tehran in 1825.⁷

In his Literary History of Persia, Browne commented on the impact of printing, noting that historically the manuscript had been the primary source for the literary history of Persia. “But since the introduction into Persia of printing and lithography, especially since about 1880, the importance of the manuscript literature has steadily diminished, the more important books were being either transferred to stone or set up in type from the original copy. This printed and lithographed literature has not hitherto received nearly so much attention as the older manuscript literature, and it is often impossible to obtain ready and trustworthy information as to the authors and contents of these modern books.”⁸ Commenting on the recently published catalogue by Edwards of printed books in the British Museum, Browne argued that a more comprehensive study on the subject was lacking. He noted that such a study should also take into account the importance of Persian printing in Egypt, Turkey, and India. Browne clearly understood that such a study was a difficult undertaking. He described the state of the book trade as such:

The fact is that the Persian book trade is in the most chaotic condition. There are no publishers or booksellers of substance, and no book-catalogues are issued. Most books have no fixed price or place of sale; many have no pagination; hardly any have indexes or tables of contents. Often books comprising several volumes change their size and shape, their plan, and even their nature, as they proceed, while the author not infrequently changes his title.⁹

In order to give a better sense of the state of printing in Iran, Browne briefly discussed several books printed under the authorship of Ṭimad al-Saltanah. Assessing the overall quality of these works, Browne write, “These Persian lithographed books, notwithstanding their shortcomings, are, as a rule, pleasant to handle, well written, well bound, and printed on good paper. Some of them . . . are really beautiful books, while almost all are far superior to the Indian lithographs. They are, however, hard to obtain in Europe, and indeed anywhere outside Tihran, Tabriz, and perhaps Isfahan. . . . Since lithography can be carried on with simple apparatus and without any great technical skill or outlay of money, it is often practised by comparatively poor scholars and bibliophiles, who print very small editions which are soon exhausted, so that many books of this class rank with manuscripts than with printed books in their rarity and desirability.”¹⁰

Clearly, the advent of lithography had a significant impact on the history of print culture in Qajar Iran. Though there were moveable presses on which books could be produced, the lithograph was overwhelmingly favored. The relative ease and cost-effective nature of lithography to which Browne refers was undoubtedly a factor in its favor. The pages of the lithographs from this period offer another important clue to why it was preferred over the moveable print. The lithograph which allowed the scribes to produce the print directly on the stone, allowed for the reproduction of the *nastaliq* script, the interlinear glosses, the decorative headers and colophons which were important aspects of the culture of the manuscript. This means of book production also preserved the economic trade that had arisen around the production and sale of manuscripts. The scribal community continued to play an important role in the production of lithographs. The fact that printing in Persian increased after the introduction of the lithograph suggests that its adaptability to the pre-existing cultural mores and economic structures of book production may have helped shape the nature of print culture in Qajar Iran. Though Pedersen’s theory that the aversion to the printing of the sacred texts of Islam and the reproduction of the name of God played a deterring role in the history of the printed book

in the Islamic world, my own investigation of the Persian context suggests that religious considerations were not as formative as had been supposed. The fact that two of the earliest printed texts produced on moveable presses by the Qajars were both religious texts seems to counter the notion that a respect for a perceived religious prohibition against the use of presses to reproduce the word or the name of God was responsible for the reluctance towards the use of print for book publication. The text of Hayat al-Qulub repeatedly refers to God in Persian and Arabic. The adaptability of the lithograph to the culture of the manuscript was probably a far greater influence in determining the preferred form of print culture in the Qajar era.

The State and Print Culture in Qajar Iran: The Role of Ītimad al-Saltanah

Browne had commented on some of the books that had been published under the supervision of Ītimad al-Saltanah. In order to better elucidate the relationship between state-building and print culture under Nasir al-Din Shah, I will focus on the role of Ītimad al-Saltanah. Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar was an avid consumer of print culture – though he preferred to leave the task of book production, book collecting, and even reading to others. We know that the man who served as his official *naqal* for many years, Muhammad Hasan Khan Ītimad al-Saltanah, read from books and newspapers to the Shah on a daily basis, sometimes for hours on end. In his journal, Ītimad al-Saltanah sometimes complained about coming home well past midnight with a sore throat, an aching head, strained eyes, and an empty stomach because he had spent the entire evening reading to the insatiable king. On some occasions, Ītimad al-Saltanah reported incredulously that he accompanied the Shah on brisk walks in the royal garden or on a horseback riding outing, all the while reading as the Shah listened intently. The Shah

took a great interest in book collecting, and housed his cherished volumes in a library in the royal palace which Ġtimad al-Saltanah carefully purchased and organized.

Occasionally, Ġtimad al-Saltanah would have to venture into the royal *andarun* to retrieve the books which the Shah read to himself during his private moments.¹¹

However, Nasir al-Din Shah was not simply a passive consumer of books and newspapers. He actively supported the work of the Ministry of Publication, indicating a recognition the potential significance of print culture for the development of a modern administrative apparatus.

Muhammad Hasan Khan Ġtimad al-Saltanah was one of the key figures in the history of print culture in the Naseri period. He was “the closest approximation to an official historian of the late Naser-al-Din period.”¹² In his various roles – a historian, the personal *naqal* and translator to the Shah, the Minister of Publication, the Director of the Translation Bureau, and newspaper editor – Ġtimad al-Saltanah occupied a critical position in the official cultural production of the Naseri period. An examination of his life and the significant body of work that he produced can help to reveal the interrelated nature of the process of state-building and the particular development of print culture under Nasir al-Din Shah, the man who ruled Iran for nearly fifty years.

Ġtimad al-Saltanah was among the first Iranians to study at the Dar al-Fanun, where he was an infantry cadet. He went on to study in France, where he specialized in French literature.¹³ Upon returning to Iran, he held a number of government positions and in 1863, he served as the second secretary and military attaché of the Persian mission to Paris, a position that offered him the opportunity to further his knowledge of the French language and culture (he would return to Europe as part of the Shah’s entourage during his three European tours). By 1868, he began serving as the official translator of the Shah. In 1870-1, he became the director of the State Press, and shortly thereafter, became the supervisor of the Translation Bureau as well. Continuing to serve in a variety of government posts, he was eventually granted the title of Sani` al-Dawla (later

in his career, he would be granted the title of Ġtimad al-Saltanah, which his father had also held). In 1881-2, he became a member of the Government Consultative Consul, and by the following year was appointed the Minister of Publication. Throughout his career, Ġtimad al-Saltanah befriended other Iranian intellectuals and public servants. He was particularly close during his youth with Mirza Malkom Khan, though he cooled this friendship later in life. He had close ties with the Russian legation, a situation which the Shah apparently encouraged, in order to offset the pro-British tendencies of his premier.¹⁴

In addition to French, Ġtimad al-Saltanah had some knowledge of Arabic. He was an avid collector of coins and made good use of his knowledge of numismatics in his scholarship. He also had an interest in antiquities and during his various travels, he would visit important sites, asking his scribes to make notations on his observations. His scholarly expertise was recognized outside of Iran as well. He was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of London, the Société Asiatique of Paris, and the geographic society in St. Petersburg.¹⁵

Ġtimad al-Saltanah left behind dozens of volumes on a range of subjects produced in a variety of genres. Nevertheless, his scholarly contributions – and the nature of his scholarly authorship itself – have been called into question. E. G. Browne noted that “it is very doubtful whether these books were really written by Sani`ud-Dawla at all; at any rate it is commonly asserted that he coerced various poor scholars to write them, and ascribed the authorship to himself, proceedings of which the latter must be regarded as wholly reprehensible, whatever may be said in extenuation of the former.”¹⁶ Noting that the authorship of some of the works attributed to Ġtimad al-Saltanah had indeed been called into question, Amanat contends that these accusations are “unjustifiably harsh,” pointing out that he “was certainly instrumental in the selection, execution, and final presentation of works produced by his team.” Though he may not have given credit to all of the scholars involved in producing the books that bear his name as author, Ġtimad al-Saltanah was as Amanat argues deeply involved as the editor and compiler of the texts.¹⁷

It may be that the ambiguity about authorship in this case is an extension of the method of book production in the Naseri period, where books were probably written, compiled, edited, and printed in the workshop of the state presses. This workshop method of book production, a natural extension of the communal mode of education common in pre-modern Iran, may well have marked a transitional stage in the nature of scholarship and writing – from a communal to individual act.

What is most remarkable, in my view, about ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah’s publications is the methodology that he applied and the genres he helped to shape. It could be said that the majority of his books were histories – but history with broad strokes – for his works embodied a range of genres within that discipline. He produced historical geographies, historical biographies, updated and retooled chronicles inspired by medieval Perso-Arabic historians, and almanacs. Through his journal and his newspapers, ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah continued to document the history of Nasir al-Din Shah and his own life for posterity. The process of acquiring and accumulating knowledge clearly fascinated ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah, and he was fastidious in reporting on the process of researching, writing, and publishing various books in their prefaces. In his books, the process of producing history is hardly transparent; he takes pride in discussing his research, if only in general and sometimes self-aggrandizing terms. The historical works produced by ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah offer a significant source for understanding the approach to state-sponsored nationalism under Nasir al-Din Shah. A product of a Dar al-Fanun education, ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah went on to supervise important institutions charged with the production of knowledge in the Qajar state – the Translation Bureau, the Ministry of Publication, and various state newspapers. As the supervisor of the state presses, he was able to produce beautifully printed books that reflected the historical past in a way that suited the development of the Qajar state as the author of modern Persian nationalism. This approach reflects of a notion set forth by historian Eric Hobsbawm, who discussed a nationalist tendency that combines the modern techniques of the long nineteenth century

with a particular historicity. Hobsbawm argued that cultural production of this nature could represent a state that was both forward looking and rooted in a glorious past. The authors of such works in a sense attempt to define a nation-state's future progression, even as they conjure up a particular sense of the nation's past.¹⁸

In the preface of his multi-volume Mir'at al-Buldan, for example, he tells us that in producing this historical geography of Iran, he consulted the histories of the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, works by Arab, Turkish, and European historians, travelogues of travelers who had visited Iran, as well as the work of the Arab geographer Yaqut. He notes that amongst scholars in the Arab world and abroad, Yaqut's scholarship is revered. Indeed, he notes that throughout time, the intellectuals and scholars of each nation had greatly valued the fields of history and geography. However, he observes, in the current age of discovery, with the advent of the railroad and the increased use of ships have expedited travel to distant lands, the discipline of geography has become particularly important. ʿTimad al-Saltanah, therefore, felt compelled to produce a worthy historical geography of Iran, out of his feelings of loyalty and pride towards his nation, his country, and his king, Nasir-al-Din Shah.¹⁹ Following the model of Yaqut, ʿTimad al-Saltanah set about producing a historical geography of Iran, with alphabetized entries. The first volume begins with a lithographed and signed portrait of Nasir al-Din Shah. The second volume contains a header with a lithographed lion and sun logo, the emblem of the Qajar dynasty. By the second volume of the book, ʿTimad al-Saltanah had reached the Persian letter "t", and he was sidetracked from his original plan. Having reached the entry for Tehran, the capital city of Iran, he decided to devote his attention to detailing the history of the Qajar Dynasty. The second and third volumes of the book, therefore, digress from its original format and present a chronicle of the Qajar dynasty through the reign of Nasir al-Din. In the fourth volume of the book, he proceeds to the subsequent letters, but again seems to favor historical discussions to geographic observations. Though the book project is abandoned after the fourth volume

appeared in year 1879, it remains a useful source of information. Its greatest interest, however, may be as an example of the application of a genre from medieval Arab scholarship to the contemporary intellectual and political exigencies of Ġtimad al-Saltanah's time. Geography and history combine to form a powerful disciplinary perspective from which to capture the historical past of the Iranian nation-state. This nation-state is closely tied to the Qajar royal establishment – through detailed enumeration of contemporary history. Ġtimad al-Saltanah seems mindful of the symbolic power of the lithographed book – a country as important as Iran, in his view, warrants multiple volumes for the inscription of its historical geography. Interestingly, as the production of the book progresses, its size increases. Browne notes that is aware of two editions of the first volume of the book, the first being 388 pages, the second some 606 pages. Also, by the fourth volume, the size of the book had increased from 10 ½ by 6 ¾ inches to 13 ½ by 8 ¼ inches.²⁰

Indeed, the progression of Ġtimad al-Saltanah's publications indicates the extent to which his ambition of recording and promoting the Qajar Dynasty's historical stature underlined and guided his scholarly pursuits. In this sense, he clearly viewed the production of knowledge and the publication of important toms as a marker of the prestige and power of the Qajar state. After abandoning his historical geography, the Mir`at al-Buldan, with its fourth volume, he proceeded to publish a history entitled, Muntazam-i Nasiri. In a preface to this book, he discusses the reason for this transition in his publication program. He wrote that he was unable to complete his historical geography of Iran because of an inability to access the necessary information. Instead, he had decided to focus on publishing a history of the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah. It was his hope to be able to return to the work of completing Mira`t al-Buldan in the future.²¹

Muntazam-i Nasiri appeared in three lithographed volumes printed between 1298-1300/1881-3. The first volumes presented an outline of Islamic history from 622 through 1258. The history is completed in the third volume with a narrative history of the Qajar

Dynasty from 1770 through 1882. Following the chronological system which ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah seems to have favored, he charts the history of the Qajars year by year, showing the year according to both the Hijri and Christian calendars. Each annual entry begins with a discussion of Asian history, under which Iran falls. He then moves onto much briefer annotations of the history of European countries, such as Russia, Austria, Italy, France, Germany, England and Holland.

Interestingly, Ottoman and Indian history are listed under European and not Asian nations. In the entry for the year 1783, for example, under the header for European history, we read that the British army is fighting a war with the *tipu sahib* in India. In the Ottoman Empire, we read that this year marks the beginning of the decline of the imperial Ottoman state in its territories. The discussion of European history is followed by a brief note on American history. The larger geographic notation for this history is American history under which appears the sub-category of the history of the United States. In the year 1783, ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah wrote that in the United States, thirteen states were separated from England and became known as the United States, and based on a treaty that was signed in Versailles, these collective thirteen states were recognized as being independent of England.²² Significant historical processes, such as the decline of the Ottoman Empire or the independence of the United States, are dually noted in brief entries, without analysis or embellishment.

In a sense, the Muntazam-i Nasiri represents an effort to inscribe the contemporary history of Qajar Iran into the tradition of medieval chronicles and to graft the history of the Qajar Dynasts with caliphal history. At the same time, the contemporary history of Iran is given an exalted place in the larger tapestry of Islamic history. Even as the historical work locates Qajars squarely within the traditions of Islamic caliphal and Iranian dynastic histories, it also sets the Qajars apart. In the preface to the second volume, ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah explains that even as he sought to record the significant historical events and relics of the past, it became clear that writing the history

of the current century was of particular importance. Given the importance of the Qajar dynasty, he argued, it became clear that this dynasty which was “tied to eternity” (*abad-peyvand*) deserved to have a special volume set aside for chronicling its specific history. ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah dedicates his book as “an insignificant service and a small gift” to Nasir al-Din Shah. Producing, documenting, and recording the history of Iran becomes a way to inscribe the Qajars into a historical past, even as they are set aside as particularly significant in the larger historical context; publishing this history in a multi-volume beautifully lithographed edition becomes a gesture of a loyal public servant to his king.²³ If the Muntazam-i Nasiri can be seen as a chronicle that appends the history of the Qajars to the national past of Iran, it also seeks to situate the contemporary history of Qajar Iran into a world history. Though greater attention is given to the historical events in Iran, each year, notable events in Europe and America are also recorded. The Muntazam-i Nasiri, then is a remarkable effort to attach the history of the Qajars to the history of the Perso-Islamic past while integrating it into a larger contemporary world history.

The next historical work that ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah produced was a multi-volume history of the province of Khurasan, Matla` al-Shams. Again, he bemoans the incomplete project, Mir`at al-Buldan, which seems to hover over him, causing him to feel obliged to make excuses for undertaking other works. He justifies this history of Khurasan by stating that the next volume of the Mir`at would have contained the letter “kh” and given that he had accompanied the Shah on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mashhad in Khurasan, it seems appropriate to publish a history of the province.

At the end of the second volume of Matla` al-Shams, the ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah includes an apologia for not having produced a *salnameh* for the year 1302. Noting that so much time had been devoted to carrying out the current project involved researching and writing on the geography and history of Mashhad and that no particular changes had occurred in the operation of the government since the last *salnameh* had been published, he had forgone producing one for this volume. He promised that one would be published

for the following year. It seems that even as ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah sought to bring a sense of order and regularity to the printed manifestation of the state through his books, he struggled to meet his own publication schedule. The discrepancy between his stated ambitions and his actual output remains an ongoing theme in his books – perhaps this is reflective of the overall nature of the Qajar state’s attempts at institutionalizing a modern nation-state.

On the fortieth anniversary of Nasir al-Din Shah’s reign, ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah published a history of his reign under the title Al-Ma’asar va al-Asar (1306). In his preface to his edition of this book, Iraj Afshar notes that some have postured that ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah was not indeed the author of the book. Afshar maintains that it is fair to assume that he was in fact the author. ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah had gathered a group of intellectuals to work with him in the Ministry of Publication and the Translation Bureau, to whom he often delegated the task of researching, translating, and writing selections that he would then edit and compile into the various books that bear his signature.²⁴ Afshar considers Al-Ma’asar va al-Asar to be one of the most important sources for the history of the Qajar era. The first chapter of the book is devoted to a description of Nasir al-Din Shah. His appearance – from the color of his skin to the texture of his hair – is offered in detail. His various areas of knowledge are clearly outlined. We are told that the king is so knowledgeable about geography, that he is familiar with all of the countries and their rivers and mountains. He is well informed on the history of Iran, being conversant on the historical research produced in Persian, Arabic, Greek, and Latin. He is also knowledgeable about the histories of Egypt, and of key historical figures such as Peter the Great, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon. Given that the king has foreign newspapers read to him on a regular basis, he is current on the political situation of the times as well. The king has a steady pen and can write a nice *nastaliq* script; he has a talent for art, and one of his skills is in producing portraits in pencil. All in all, ʿĪtimad

al-Saltanah praises the king for his deep knowledge and wisdom and determination to direct his nation onto the road of progress.²⁵

The second and third chapters detail the Shah's children and wives. The fourth chapter is devoted to a lengthy discussion of the army and various state institutions, including the ministries and government bureaus. Various civil servants, including the official artist, the court physicians, the photographer, the head of the state police, the official state watchmaker, and the state historians, are all listed and discussed in varying degrees of detail. Chapter five offers a discussion of the important towns and provinces of Iran. Other chapters detail the wars and battles fought under this shah, various state structures and buildings, the state of industry and sciences in Iran, the leading intellectuals and scholars of the country, and the foreign representatives and emissaries that reside in Iran. For the most part, the book offers brief notations of various individuals, institutions or places that make up the Iranian nation-state under Nasir al-Din Shah. With few exceptions, the entries are perfunctory.

A fascinating section of the book appears as chapter eight which details the developments in the sciences and industries under Nasir al-Din Shah. There have been advances in the study of linguistics, in particular in learning French, English, Russian, and German. Advances have been made in the teaching of various sciences, including chemistry, physics, pharmacology, botany, geography, cosmography, mineralogy, mathematics, algebra, geometry, logarithms, cartography, geography, numismatics, and archaeology. Timad al-Saltanah continues to list the various sciences that were either introduced or advanced during the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah including various military sciences including "the science of the history of warfare," tactical and strategic sciences. Finally, he notes that there have been developments in the fields of civil engineering, especially in terms of construction of roads and bridges. Other advances include the introduction of the telegraph to Iran. This industry which is a mark of the developed and great countries of the world was introduced to Iran in the early 1860s and has linked her

on three sides to Russia, Turkey, and India. Other developments introduced during the reign of the Shah that Ṭimad al-Saltanah briefly discusses include gas lighting, electricity, the telephone, and photography.

Amongst the significant institutional developments, he lists the establishment of the national postal service, the celebration of various national holidays, and the opening of a national museum and a zoo. The establishment of a number of small industries and businesses are discussed, including gunsmithing, carriage-making, textiles, ironsmithing, haberdasheries, and masonry. Factories had been opened for producing, manufacturing, and processing sugar, crystal, china, candles, and paper. Developments in agro-businesses are also noted, such as the manufacture of silk in Kashan, the use of cotton seeds from the United States, and the establishment of an opium processing plant in Isfahan. The institutions of the state press with its newspapers and gazettes, the introduction of European music, the introduction of the almanac, the establishment of diplomatic relations with foreign countries, the establishment of the Dar al-Fanun, the establishment of the state bank, the institutionalization of the police, the establishment of the theater, the introduction of imported matches, the import of foreign breads, the advancement of the arts, and changes in the dress of Iranian women – all of these social aspects are listed in dizzying fashion alongside one another as signs of Persia's progress and development in the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar.

One of the developments that Ṭimad al-Saltanah deals with in some detail is the improvement in the science of history. He noted that much of the unknown history of Persia had been learned and recorded. The history of ancient Persia had become more clear through the use of histories by the likes of Herodotus. Through reference to histories written on Persia, the Arab world, Rome, Greece, Egypt, and Europe, there was a better sense of the history of the past centuries. The errors in the historical record had been remedied and the true accounting of historical events and monuments had been distilled from the stories and myths that had passed as history in the past.

As a work of historical narrative, Al-Ma'asar va al-Asar, is somewhat lacking. A compendious book which often reverts to listing events, places, and names, it does not attempt to provide an analytical historical framework. As a historical reflection of the time, however, it does provide an important glimpse into the events and processes that were considered notable by the official historian of the time. In a sense, it can be viewed as a *salnameh* for the first forty years of Nasir al-Din Shah's reign. Indeed, *ʿItimad al-Saltanah* lists the *salnameh* or almanac as one of the important developments in the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah. In my view, the *salnameh* signaled an important development in the state-sponsored print culture of Iran, showing the linkage between the production of lithographed texts and the re-production of the Qajar nation-state. According to *ʿItimad al-Saltanah*, the first *salnameh* was produced (under his supervision) in the year 1291/1874.²⁶ The almanac, he notes, has been produced in other countries in order to document the notables and dignitaries of each nation, the wars and battles of each government, and the important events and discoveries on an annual basis. *ʿItimad al-Saltanah* took to appending a *salnameh* to the back of each of his publications. Taken together, these almanacs are a unique historical record of Iran in the late nineteenth century. A discussion of one such *salnameh* may help explain the nature of this unique feature of Persian print culture from the Naseri period that was introduced by *ʿItimad al-Saltanah*.

The *salnameh* for the year 1297/1879 is fairly typical. It begins with a calendar of the year, showing the lunar, solar, and Christian calendars. These calendars made it possible for Iranians to situate the events in their nation within the larger temporal historical landscape of the time. The calendars are followed by a chart of the rulers of the Qajar dynasty. A listing of the date of birth and age of each member of the royal family follows. A significant amount of space is allotted to listing the main ministries and state bureaus, detailing the employees of each. Some of the officials listed include the head of the police in Tehran, the tax collectors, the state physicians, the director of the state

coffeehouse, and the head of the official stable. The various branches of the Iranian national post (altogether forty branches) are listed. Sixteen pages are devoted to outlining the members of the Ministry of War and the various officials of the army. Members of the Foreign Ministry are listed, showing the directors of the Iranian embassies in France, England, and Turkey and naming of Iran's representatives to Istanbul, Baghdad, Basra, Karbala, Najaf, Sumer, Egypt, Trebizond, Damascus, London, Bombay, St. Petersburg, Paris, and Tiflis. Officials of the Ministry of Science and the various state schools are also listed. Altogether, the outline of the bureaucrats that make up the Iranian state in the year 1879 comes to fifty double-columned pages. Five pages are devoted to listing various foreign countries, their leaders, and their capital cities.

It is clear that even as he was writing the history of Iran's past, Ġtimad al-Saltanah was deeply preoccupied with recording and documenting the history of the times in which he lived, particularly the history of the state which he served. The *salnameh* clearly indicates this tendency to read the past through the lens of the present. Perhaps more than any other historical genre that Ġtimad al-Saltanah produced, the *salnameh* reflects his aspiration to attach (sometimes literally) the contemporary history of the Iranian nation-state to the history of its past – the present, that is the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah, is always privileged as the most important period of Persian history. Thus his practice of appending the *salnameh* to every book that he had printed by the state presses was a constant reinscription of the contemporary history of Iran into the larger temporal landscape of the nation's past.

In the year 1308, Ġtimad al-Saltanah published the first volume of a history of the Parthian period entitled, Durrar al-Tijan fi Tarikh-i Bani Ashkan. Ġtimad al-Saltanah wrote that the great Arab historians such as Mas`udi and Tabari and the esteemed Iranian historians of past generations such as Ferdowsi and Khwandmir had written only brief descriptions of the history of this dynasty who were renowned in neighboring realms due to their great military victories. Ġtimad al-Saltanah felt compelled to write his own

history of the Parthians at this particular juncture because reliable documents and archaeological evidence had been discovered. Most importantly since the Parthians were the ancestors of the Qajar kings, he felt compelled to write this history. He had then carried out four years of research on the subject, reading histories in Greek, Latin, and Arabic. After the Shah completed his tour of Europe, ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah began the process of assembling the information which he had gathered and translating selections from the various histories that he had read. In this remarkable book, then, ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah underlines the connection between authority and history. By referring to his studies of well known historians from the Perso-Arabic tradition and to scholarship written in European languages, he lends a scholastic authority to his own historical writing. However, as a ‘modern’ historian who had benefited from recently discovered textual and archaeological evidence, his work has even greater intellectual authority than those written by Tabari and Khwandmir. Finally, by claiming a direct lineage between the Parthians and the Qajars, he uses history to lend a certain authority and legitimacy to the dynasty and the state which he serves.

Alongside these books that chronicled the important events of the time, documented the development of the state bureaucracy, and charted the historical geography of Iran, ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah also devoted time to publishing historical biographies of notables in the Qajar period. Browne notes that the genre of historical biography has always been significant in Islamic historiography.²⁷ ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah contributed to a historical biography of learned men entitled, Namahi-i Danishvaran. Browne says that this book was “compiled by a committee of some half a dozen scholars, of which the first volume was lithographed in Tehran in 1296/1879 and the second in 1312/1904-5.”²⁸ Discussing ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah’s contributions to collective works by Persian scholars produced for the Ministry of Publication, Amanat wrote that the best known of these was the Namah-i Daneshvaran which was printed over the span of 1877-

1906 in seven volumes through the letter *sin*; the book was initially undertaken by `Aliqoli Mirza Fiazad al-Saltanah and was completed by Ftimad al-Saltanah.²⁹

Amongst the books that fall into the category of Islamic historical biography, books dealing with the biographies of prime ministers hold a significant place. They are seen as a model for subsequent leaders and as an articulation of the proper modes of governance. Ftimad al-Saltanah's Sadr al-Tavarikh is a historical biography of eleven prime ministers (*sadr-i `azam*) who had served under the Qajars.³⁰ Interestingly, Ftimad al-Saltanah dedicates this book to the Prime Minister Amin al-Sultan with whom he allegedly had a troubled relationship.³¹ Ftimad al-Saltanah notes that he used as his model the Dastur-i `Azam. Again, we see Ftimad al-Saltanah turning to the Perso-Arabic modes of historiography for his models. He claims that the Dastur-i `Azam served him in the same manner that a blueprint guides the engineers and architects of palaces. Given this enduring model, he hopes that this book will have the same endurance and longevity as the famous Egyptian fortress or the Eiffel Tower. For Ftimad al-Saltanah, the book was a monument, an object that he understood would be left behind as part of the legacy to his king, his state, and himself.

In his preface, Ftimad al-Saltanah wrote that the book was based on the lives and papers of the prime ministers of the Qajar dynasty and was compiled by various scholars and public servants. He argues that this book will make clear that the human being no matter how perfect is restrained by nature and is subject to a variety of deficiencies. The lives of the prime ministers discussed in the book serve as a model alongside the lives of Napoleon Bonaparte and Frederick the Great of Prussia. Given the important role that prime ministers have in shaping the order of the state and the dynasty, the assessment of their lives is subject to "the eye of history," therefore he has put forth his greatest efforts in compiling and producing this book. He ends his preface with two lines of poetry dedicating the book to the Amin ul-Sultan. In this preface, Ftimad al-Saltanah offers some insight into the way he perceived his role as a publisher, an author, and a historian.

History served as a blueprint and books were a sort of monument and a legacy. He acknowledges that the authorship of the book was a communal act, even if he doesn't credit the specific individuals involved in that process. Drawing on a genre of Perso-Islamic historiography, the historical biography, he also points out the importance of being aware of the lives of leading European statesmen such as Napoleon and Frederick of Prussia. Noting that biographies of great men reveal the vulnerabilities of the human condition and secrets to overcoming these flaws in order to achieve great deeds for the nation, he dedicates this book respectfully to the Amin ul-Sultan. Scholarship becomes a gift, if somewhat an underhanded one, as the implication is that the Prime Minister has lessons to learn and that Ṭimad al-Saltanah's knowledge and scholarship serve as a guide for the Amin ul-Sultan to follow. Scholarship and power are intrinsically connected in the production and presentation of this book.

It could be said that the final book of history that Ṭimad al-Saltanah left behind was his Ruznamah-i Khatirat-i Ṭimad al-Saltanah, his private journal, which covered the years 1292-1313. Between 1293-1298, there is no record of his having written a private diary, and it is not known whether this section has gone missing or was never written.³² In the pages he left behind, Ṭimad al-Saltanah documented the details of his almost daily interactions with the Shah, his work, and his social affairs. In the journal, we see that Nasir al-Din Shah took a particular interest in the work of the Ministry of Publication and the Translation Bureau and had considerable interaction with its employees.³³ It even appears that the Shah was aware of Ṭimad al-Saltanah's journal and once told him, "document [this] in your own history."³⁴ For a man who had spent so much of his life reading and writing history, it seems befitting that he would see his own life as a history, his own memoirs as a story worth documenting for posterity.

If Ṭimad al-Saltanah was to some degree preoccupied with writing the history of Qajar Iran into the temporal tapestry of Iranian history, he was also a man who looked beyond Iran's frontiers. Having traveled to Europe on a number of occasions, as a

student, as an employee of a mission, and as part of Nasir al-Din Shah's entourage on his three European tours, ʿAtimad al-Saltanah was keenly aware of the world beyond the Iranian nation-state. Through his histories, ʿAtimad al-Saltanah expanded the context of Qajar history both temporally and spatially. For ʿAtimad al-Saltanah, history was a science. He decried the weak state of historical research in Iran in previous generations and extolled the virtues of recent breakthroughs that had been made possible through the use of European histories and the discovery of new texts and archaeological evidence.³⁵

Making use of the state presses which he supervised and the staff of the Ministry of Publication, ʿAtimad al-Saltanah devoted much of his energy to writing, compiling, and publishing lithographed books – mainly histories. His style emphasized structure and order over narrative and analysis. Information was gathered in the form of lists and chronologies; he favored the encyclopedic format. His habitual references to his scholarly research underlined his view that history was a science. His lithographed histories were meant to reflect the order and grandeur of the Qajar state which he served. When he strayed from the orderly plans he had set for his publication projects (such as the digression from and eventual abandonment of his Mir`at al-Buldan), he felt compelled to offer explanations; usually the reasons he gave were a dearth in reliable and authoritative research. Underlying his structured methods of documenting and recording Qajar history was, in a sense, a comparative model – which examined Qajar history alongside the Perso-Islamic past and the contemporary history of other regions of the world. In this sense, he seems to have been keenly aware of the interrelated nature of knowledge production and state power. As a statesman, he understood that as a member of the court of Nasir al-Din Shah, his most useful instrument of power were the books he printed on the state presses. Even as he wrote them, he wished them to become enduring monuments – to the king, state, and nation he served – and to himself.³⁶

Well Traveled Texts: Reform, Power, and Print Culture

The history of Persian printed books must include a discussion of books that were printed on presses outside of Iran itself. A survey of some of these books will reflect some of the trends in printing discussed above, while also revealing the ways that issues of political and social reform and the contest for power in the colonial-national context can be better understood by examining the medium of print culture. Samples of printed books produced on presses outside of Iran that appear in my database of some 276 books appear using both the moveable press and lithography. Some European scholars of the Persian language clearly recognized the aesthetic distinctions between handwritten calligraphy and the (usually square-shaped) moveable type available in the nineteenth century. Lithography offered them a valuable tool for teaching paleography – creating primers for learning the morphology of manuscripts. In 1838, Forbes Falconer, a member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and a Professor of Oriental Languages in University College, London published a book entitled, Selections from the Bostan of Sadi. The book was lithographed by L. Schönberg and was sold at Allen and Company. Its preface states, “The following Selections, comprising about a third part of that remarkable series of Moral Poems, or chain of Apologues, the *Bostan of Sadi*, are intended for the double purpose, of furnishing Students of the Persian Language with a text book, from sources hitherto not generally available for that purpose; and of facilitating the transition from the perusal of works printed in the ordinary Persian type, to that of Manuscripts written in the Talik hand.”³⁷ Clearly, then, even European scholars recognized the myriad uses of lithography for producing Persian books.

Still, as I have stated, some book production was carried out using the moveable press. Over 17% of the sample that I used were made using this method. Notably, many of these books were made on presses outside of Iran itself. Some Christian texts were

published in cities such as Edinburgh and London for use by missionaries in Iran. Newspaper presses such as the Akhtar press in Istanbul were also used to produce Persian books on moveable printing presses.³⁸ The earliest sample of moveable print in my sample is a volume entitled Anthologia Persica published in Vienna for the Academy of Oriental Linguistics in 1778 by Joseph Nob. De Kurzbök. The book is dedicated to Maria Theresa and contains a Latin introduction, samples of Persian literature – some of which have been translated into Latin. The preface explains that since Maria Theresa is engaged in commerce with the Turks, Persians, and the Arabs, she should be able to study the culture of the people of the region. This literature represents their voices. The volume includes selections from Rumi, Sa`di, and Rudaki.³⁹

Even when using moveable presses to produce Persian language books in Europe for primarily European audiences, careful attention was often paid to retaining some semblance of the art of the book – elaborate endpapers, intricate colophons, orientalist chapter headers, and sometimes even the “bism`allah”. This propensity is evidenced in two examples from my sample of printed books. The first is a history of Tabaristan, Rujan, and Mazandaran which has been edited and translated by Bernhard Dorn. Commissioned by the Academy in Leipzig, the book was printed in St. Petersburg in the year 1266/1850. The title page bears an intricately designed header and border design, which is repeated as chapter headers throughout the book.⁴⁰ Another example of a Persian book produced with moveable print which retains tropes of the manuscript tradition is an edition of *Vasaf* printed in moveable print in Germany in 1856. Even the German printers who produced this volume made an attempt to reconcile mechanized book production with the culture of the manuscript, including beautifully intricate designs resembling illuminations from manuscripts on the endpapers.⁴¹ These samples of Persian language books produced for a European audience by presses in Europe would suggest that the attempt to reconcile the culture of the manuscript with the mechanized mode of book production was not limited to Iran itself. There were clearly matters of

morphology, typography, and aesthetics that influenced the shift from the manuscript to the printed book.

Clearly one of the most important sources for Persian printed books in this period was British India. Though many of the presses in Lucknow, Calcutta, and Bombay tended to produce lithographed books (and newspapers), one early example in my sample is indeed produced by moveable print. An examination of this volume sheds light on the religious, social, and imperial underpinnings of book production in this period. The book, entitled The Desatir or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets, was published by Mulla Firuz Bin Kaus. The multi-volume book was printed by J. F. de Jesus at the Courier Press in Bombay in 1818. The book contains the Ancient Persian Version and Commentary together with a glossary and an English translation of the Desatir and the Commentary. The volume which I have examined was once housed in the library of the College of Fort William. Mulla Firuz Bin Kaus dedicated his book to Sir John Malcolm. The dedication reads in part:

The uniform kindness and attention with which you have honored me for so many years, and the grateful memory of the seal with which, on so many occasions, you have promoted my interest and views, would of themselves have pointed out your name as that with which I should be most proud to adorn my volumes, were not the same distinction called for by your unrivalled knowledge of the history and manners of the East, which has been displayed for the benefit of your country, and, let me add, no less of ours too, both in your admirable writings, and in your numerous successful embassies and negotiations [sic]. Your romantic bravery, and successful daring the late brilliant campaign, if faithfully recorded, might seem to make history encroach on the province of poetry. The generous praise of the noble and illustrious person who guides our Eastern Empire, is but an anticipation of the voice of impartial posterity. . .⁴²

The editor of the text was clearly in awe of his sponsors, who were British colonial officials and his dedication draws a clear connection between the production of knowledge on Iran and the imperial power which the British held over the region. In the preface, he notes, “The attention of the European world was first directed to it by Sir William Jones, a man of whom England is justly proud, and whose profound knowledge

of Persian history and literature, entitles all his remarks on these subjects to the highest attention.”⁴³ The editor writes that The Desatir contains a collection of writings of ancient Persian Prophets, “who flourished from the time of Mahabad to the time of the fifth Sasan, being fifteen in number; of whom Zerdusht; or Zoroaster was the thirteenth and the fifth Sasan the last.”⁴⁴ When collecting materials for his own book on Persia, we are informed, Malcolm was referred to the Desatir by Jones; it was Malcolm who encouraged Mulla Firuz Bin Kaus to edit the volume under discussion. Following the preface, the editor has published a list of subscribers to the book, including some one-hundred copies to officials in the Government of Bombay; fifty copies were sent to readers in England.

Indeed Sir William Jones’ views of the role of print in the Perso-Arabic realm played a significant role in the production of Persian print culture in India. Sir William Jones had devised a new Latinized script which was applicable to Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani characters. In 1878, T. W. H. Tolbort introduced this system to the English reader in a Persian translation of Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe which was published by William H. Allen and Co., publishers to the India office. Explaining the importance of the volume, Tolbort wrote:

Is not the present condition of the whole Muhammad world – compared with that of the Christian world – deplorable? To what is this marked inferiority due? Doubtless to more causes than one, and I am quite prepared to admit that the difference of religion itself is one of these causes. But is it not remarkable that the decided superiority of the Christian world should only have become manifest during the last four centuries – in other words, since the invention of the printing press? The condition of the Muhammadan countries of the world now is nearly the same as it was when the Turks captured Constantinople; but western civilization has made prodigious strides in the interval.⁴⁵

Tolbort’s argument for a Latinized scheme for producing print culture in the Perso-Islamic world, then, was situated within the discourse of the colonial civilizing

mission. Tolbort prefaced the translation with two chapters explaining the motivations and implications of having produced the book. In the first chapter, he discussed the utility of the book to Englishmen wishing to learn colloquial Persian; in the second, he argued the case of a Latinized alphabet in which he reviewed the history of the Jonesian system. The scheme proposed by Jones transliterated Oriental languages into roman letters and have “an Italian sound” to the vowels. The alphabet was initially designed for various Indian vernacular languages and had strong proponents in Charles Trevelyan and a group of missionaries residing in Bengal. For the first half of the nineteenth century, the alphabet was primarily used by missionaries to produce religious texts such as the Bible and the Quran. In 1867, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta circulated papers using the transliteration system.

When Trevelyan became the Governor of Madras, he established a police system and used the transliteration system for preparing a manual for training the recruits who spoke a variety of vernacular languages. He explained:

One of the earliest objects to which I directed my attention, when Governor of Madras, was the establishment of the new police. This was composed of persons representing the four prevailing languages of the peninsula, Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, and Malayalim, besides the Muhammadans, who spoke Hindustani; and much inconvenience arose from the variety of characters in which the daily reports were sent to the different head-quarters. As the easiest and best solution it was arranged that, whatever might be the language of the reports, they should be written in the Roman character.

The establishment of the police in Madras, a colonial reform instituted to better control through systems of law and order, became intrinsically connected to the system of language reform and print introduced by Jones. Control over bodies and minds was made more efficient through reports produced using a language schema applying the Roman character the local vernaculars. Standardization of police procedures and the standardization of native languages were enhanced through the fixity of print.

When Trevelyan was recalled from his duties, the manual – and therefor the Jonesian system which it used and advocated – fell into disuse. But in 1875, Frederick Drew presented a paper on the subject to the Indian Section of the Society of Arts which once again drew attention to the idea. Tolbort offered the following reasons for favoring the Jonesian system. First, in many cases it would substitute one character for a host of others. Secondly, “. . . *one* alphabet so substituted is that accepted over the greater part of civilized Europe, and its adoption by the nations of the East will at once place them *en rapport* with those of the West.” His third reason follows, “Because the Roman alphabet is (practically speaking) a very good one; and all the Oriental characters are (practically speaking) bad.”⁴⁶ Stating further that though the alphabet is applicable to numerous languages, he focused his arguments on the Perso-Arabic characters, so that his work could be seen as a “duel between the Roman and the Perso-Arabic character.”⁴⁷ Indeed, Persian characters did lend themselves readily to being printed and lack the helpful devices that make the European printer so valuable, such as the brackets, italics, notes of interrogation and exclamation, and inverted commas.⁴⁸

This quality of “the Persian characters,” this lack of distinguishing markers in Persian texts, was reflected in the landscape of the East which was equally monotonous and unchanging. Tolbort quoted Dr. Duff, one of the missionaries active in promoting the Jonesian system of transliteration as such:

We may compare the internal aspect of an oriental work to that of the plains of Bengal. Here, are no undulations of soil, no elevations, no crags, knolls, or mounds, to diversify the scenery, to serve as boundaries to the lords of the soil, or protrude as landmarks to aid the traveler in acquiring a topographical knowledge of the country. Go where you may, it is one wearisome unvaried sameness, one interminable interchange of flat paddy fields and close dingy jungles. Similar is the appearance of an oriental work. It looks like one dull monotonous mass, without beginning, middle, or end. There is nothing *prominent* to point out the commencement of new sentences or paragraphs; nothing *prominent* to distinguish proper names of persons, places, objects or events. Wearied and unaided, the reader travels onward; and if he wish to refer to some particular passage,

or the account of some particular person, place, &c. he is left in search without a clue.⁴⁹

Further enumerating “the defects of the Persian character,” Tolbort focused on the fact that the alphabet seemed unsuitable for print, and this had massive implications. He stated that books printed under European supervision were not favored by the Orientals and were peculiar to the eye. “The result is that the printing press cannot compete with manuscripts and lithographs. *Practically speaking, it has no existence for the hundred million followers of Islam.*”⁵⁰ For some four centuries, Tolbort argued, the printing press had allowed Europeans to collect and sift through ideas. This process had elevated the Europeans, helping them develop through the various stages of civilization. Muslims were unable to use this instrument, the printing press, to help them develop in similar fashion. “To search for an idea in a Persian work is like searching for a needle in a bundle of hay,” he contended.⁵¹ According to Tolbort, the printing press had helped bring about the Reformation with the newly translated and printed Bibles that had become available. The printing press had allowed the British to collect and read the ideas of Locke, Smith, and Bentham which had ushered in significant reforms of English policy and legislation. Periodicals and publications had created an enlightened public opinion that served as a check to statesmen. “Could this be done; would these results be attained, if the Persian character were that of civilized Europe?”⁵²

Finally, Tolbort argued that the nature of the Persian character veritably precluded the possibility of education. “. . . I regard true education as impossible where the oriental character is used. But this cannot be said of English. English is making marvelous progress in India; certain classes of the people are eager to learn it; all the new life, and all the liberal ideas of which we hear so much in connection with the younger generation of natives, are due to English education and to that alone.”⁵³ Given that there is such hope for the spread of the English language in India, why should one support this system of transliteration? Tolbort’s response is clear, “Although an English education offers far

greater advantages than one in a Romanized vernacular could do to the natives of wealth, official position, or professional employ, it may be otherwise with rank and file of native society.” Knowing English words when they have no associations with which to relate the words would be futile, and would likely “produce conceit, discontent, and other evils.”⁵⁴

Should his comments imply that Tolbort disfavored the national literature of the natives, he sought to clarify this point, “We value any clear expression of native thought and feeling as much as the most conservative of Orientalists, and our chief complaint against the Perso-Arabic character is that it strangles such thought.”⁵⁵ Again, Tolbort contended that the Persian character preempted the possibility of producing ideas, even the expression of thoughts. Interestingly, throughout the essay, he used the terms “Persian character” or “Perso-Arabic character;” this was perhaps an intentional double-entendre, preparing the reader for the ultimate argument that was being set forth. The Persian character had been likened to the Bengali topography. Now, Tolbort took his argument to the next level, “Be it remembered that the mechanical defects of the native alphabet are not merely obstructive to the *progress* of their literatures. They are the course of serious blemishes which attach to all of them in their present state.”⁵⁶ Tolbort argued that the Government of India should adapt the system in its schools, use it to train its civil servants, and use it in its record keeping. In order to attract the native to it, the Government of India should oversee the production of inscribing the useful pieces of native literature in this transliteration system. In Tolbort’s view, this process entailed a reform that was nothing short of a moral issue.

In concluding his essay, Tolbort wrote, “. . . Let me ask my readers to call to mind the numerous instances in the history of civilization, in which a very simple thought has worked a very great reform.” To further impress upon his readers the vast potential which the Jonesian system offered, he concluded his essay with the following sentence

written entirely in capital letters: “The roman alphabet will be to the education of Asia what George Stephenson’s rails were and are to the locomotive steam engine.”⁵⁷

As I have already noted, Tolbort had two chief aims in presenting the Persian translation of Robinson Crusoe in the Jonesian transliteration system. While offering it as a defense of the use of the Romanized alphabet for Oriental languages, he also hoped that the text would be useful for Englishmen wanting to learn colloquial Persian. Most Englishmen, he conjectured, would fondly recall the novel from their childhood and so could follow the text with ease. He did not offer the book as a specimen of Persian literary style; for that purpose, readers should continue to consult the Gulistan and the Anwar-i Suhaili. But those readers wanting to learn colloquial Persian as it was spoken by the natives, would be well served by this text. To assure its authenticity, Tolbort had solicited an Afghani named Sher Ali whose mother tongue was Persian to translate the text from an earlier Urdu translation. Sher Ali had little knowledge of other languages and no knowledge of English. “He was directed to write just as he would speak in conversation with me, and was repeatedly cautioned against the flowery verbiage which most Persian writers mistake for eloquence.” Assisting Sher Ali was a Hindustani *munshi* who Romanized the translation and “was directed to note carefully Sher Ali’s pronunciation, and to transliterate Sher Ali’s Persian without any amendment of his own.”⁵⁸ Upon returning to England with the translated and transliterated text, Tolbort set about editing and correcting the Persian of Sher Ali. In five detailed pages, Tolbort offered examples of Sher Ali’s flawed Persian which he had corrected. Tolbort assured the reader that once they had acquired an elementary knowledge of Persian grammar, they would be able to read Robinson Crusoe. “The easiest and most profitable mode of studying it, will be read aloud with a munshi in attendance to serve as a Dictionary.”⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that Tolbort used Robinson Crusoe as his vehicle, both for the instruction of colloquial Persian and for the advocacy of alphabet reform. In both of these aims, Tolbort clearly demarcated the Persian speaker as a native to be studied and

improved upon. He invoked a moral obligation. Sher Ali came from the mountains of Kabul to offer an untamed and untainted (if somewhat flawed) colloquial speech, which was captured in this translation of Robinson Crusoe. This text, in turn, was intended to be used as a means for taming, amending, correcting the defective Persian character. This Persian character strangled native thought, prevented the expression of ideas, and was the source of the malaise blemishing native society. Tolbort had bluntly stated his view that the Latin character was “good,” while the Persian character was “bad” – the matter was a duel between these characters (and ultimately the cultures which they represented). The question of language reform was one of bringing civilization to the Orient, which had remained changeless since the Turkish capture of Constantinople.

The use of Robinson Crusoe to frame this duel could hardly have been accidental. As Edward Said has argued, “Robinson Crusoe is virtually unthinkable without the colonizing mission that permits him to create a new world of his own in the distant reaches of the African, Pacific, and Atlantic wilderness.”⁶⁰ The novel, after all, is about an Englishman who goes into the unexplored wilderness (of the colonized world), which he reclaims and brings within the folds of the British Empire and Christendom.⁶¹ Tolbort also sought to reclaim the unruly landscape of the Persian character, to bring to it the order of the Latin character using a transliteration system created by missionaries but perfected for the purpose of establishing a police in Madras. The adaptation of the transliteration system was for Tolbort a moral issue. The Oriental character was the island which he sought to civilize, reform, and order.

The trope of travel literature was a common thread in other important printed books produced in the Qajar era that became significant both as symbols of and progenitors of social reform in the decades leading up to the Constitutional Revolution. Two samples of this kind which I will now discuss were a Persian translation of James Morier’s Hajji Baba of Isfahan and the second is The Siyahat-Nameh of Ibrahim Beg. E. G. Browne wrote that both books were important to the “National Awakening” in Iran.⁶²

Morier's *Hajji Baba* was immensely popular in Victorian England. Several editions were produced throughout the nineteenth century, with well known personalities writing prefaces for the book, including Sir Walter Scott, Lord Curzon, Sir Goldsmid, and E. G. Browne. Indeed, the numerous editions caused some concern amongst the introducers. When approached by MacMillan to write a preface, Curzon responded with questions about another edition already in the process of being published. The publisher responded to Curzon's queries, "I don't think the other edition you mention will interfere with ours as the scope and scale are so different."⁶³ Before he wrote his own introduction, Goldsmid wrote to Curzon, "Wills' publishers have now made me a proposal to write an introduction in their edition of Morier's book. In accepting it, I am sure you will not think me to be entering in a field of competition?"⁶⁴

In his preface to *Hajji Baba*, Goldsmid wrote of the book, ". . . the library shelf has never supplied a greater incentive to the contemplation of out-of-door everyday Orientalism than this book."⁶⁵ Though Morier's book is presented as fiction, the fact that Morier had traveled to Iran earlier in the century on a diplomatic mission lent a certain element of *verité* to the book. The prefaces of the book suggest that the tale of *Hajji Baba* offers a realistic representation of the Iranian people. It fell within the category of travel literature that revealed the customs and manners of a people. Sir Walter Scott dubbed it "the Oriental *Gil Blas*," adding that the book:

affords an easy and humorous introduction to the original manners and customs, but especially to those which are peculiar to the Persians. By what peculiar circumstances, in climate, constitution, education, or government, the national character is chiefly formed has long been disputed; its existence we are well aware of The genius of the Persians is lively and volatile to a degree much exceeding other nations of the east. They are powerfully affected by that which is presented before them at the moment – forgetful of the past, careless of the future – quick in observation, and correct as well as quick, when they give themselves leisure to examine the principles of their decision – but often contented to draw their conclusions too rashly and hastily.⁶⁶

Sir Walter Scott comments further on the use of irony and humor in the book, noting that as the author is “the spectator of foreign manners” the book is indeed of a serious nature:

It is he that is witty himself, says Falstaff, who is the cause of wit in others; and the mercurial Persian may be equally expected to afford entertainment in both capacities. But we may safely say that, not amusement only, but instruction of a very serious kind is to be derived from considering the nature of some of the materials which are here under the management of a master.⁶⁷

For Sir William Scott (and perhaps other English readers of Hajji Baba), the lines between reality and fiction seemed to blur. Hajji Baba became the personification of Iran, his tale the very story of the nation. And if some of the scenes depicted in the book seemed beyond belief, they would indeed ring true of one considered that the nation under discussion was Iran. Sir Walter Scott noted, “Were further apology necessary for the eccentricity of some of the events than the caprice of an arbitrary monarch and the convulsions of a waning empire, we have only to compare the reverse representation as experienced by this Barber of Ispahan with the mighty changes which we ourselves have been witness to, affecting thrones, domination, principedoms, virtues, powers.”⁶⁸ Scott went on to mention the French Revolution which had the good effect of bringing about a connection between nations that were distant not only in geography but also those that were “divided by opinion.” This relationship afforded “the less enlightened” nations to learn from the rest. That some Iranians had taken note of Morier’s book was reassuring to Scott. “The idea of a certain literary influence being exercised by the English press at the course of Ispahan” was encouraging, even if the book had caused some irritation. He then proceeded to publish the text of a letter which was allegedly sent to Morier from “a Persian minister of state” dated May 21, 1826. A short quote from this letter follows:

I am offended with you, and not without reason. What for you write Hadji Baba, sir? King very angry, sir . . . All people very angry with you, sir. That very bad book, sir. All lies, sir. Who tell you all these lies, sir? . . . Persian people very bad people, perhaps, but very good to you, sir. What you abuse them so bad? I very angry.⁶⁹

The transformation of the Persian into Falstaff is completed; should the reader have any doubt that despite the surface of humor in the book that the true nature of the Iranian is reflected in its pages, this alleged quote should assuage any doubt. Furthermore, Scott wrote that the author of the book hoped that irritation would cause reflection. Morier believed that the Persians had a natural talent which through education could produce “the higher moral qualities.” Scott concluded that Morier had done a great service to the Iranians by writing his book, “To fix, therefore, the attention of the leading men of the nation on the leading faults of the national character, may have on them so powerful an effect, that the name of Morier may be remembered as the first who led the way to the illumination of Persia by the introduction of English literature into the pavilions of Tehraun.”⁷⁰ This tale, then fulfilled two possible roles: informing the English reader about the reality of the Persians, while offering the virtues of English literature to help illuminate and rehabilitate the Persians themselves.

As I mentioned, Lord Curzon was another notable who authored a preface to Morier’s satire. For him, Hajji Baba was a “lifelike” character, “a Persian of the Persians, typical not merely of the life and surroundings, but of the character and instincts and manner of thought of his countrymen.” In writing his tale, Morier not only exposed the national character of the Persians, but also wrote in “Oriental forms of expression and modes of thought.”⁷¹ Curzon also sought to assure the reader that if the events of the book seemed improbable to the English, they were quite believable in the Persian terrain. “Hajji Baba never strikes a really false chord, or does or says anything intrinsically improbable; but . . . is faithful to a type of human character which modern times and a European surrounding are incapable of producing, but which is natural to the state of society in which men live by their wits . . . and in which a despotic sovereign is the apex of a half-civilised community of jealous and struggling slaves.”⁷² Curzon was much more direct and straightforward than was Scott in his contention that the book was a truthful depiction rather than a fictional piece. He wrote, “Hajji Baba is a picture of actual

personages, and a record of veritable facts. It is no frolic of imaginative satire only; *it is a historical document.*"⁷³

It was Curzon's contention that the book revealed the domestic life and habits of Persians, thus offering an insider's view of a country; but Morier also had a deep knowledge of the high culture of Iran, sprinkling his book with quotations from Saadi and Hafiz. Indeed, Morier had accomplished a remarkable feat in bringing such an authentic view of Persia to the English reader. To manage to write with such precision of a people whose mode of expression was so alien was a truly remarkable feat. One that Morier had accomplished so well that Curzon felt the book would be immortal. "Even were the Persians to be blotted out of existence as a nation, even though Tehran, and Meshed, and Shiraz were to share the fate of Persepolis and Susa, it would yet remain as a portrait of unrivalled humour and accuracy of a people who, though now in their decadence, have played an immense and still play a not wholly insignificant part in the complex drama of Asiatic politics. It is the picture of a people, light-hearted, nimble-witted, and volatile, but subtle, hypocritical and insincere; metaphysicians and casuists, courtiers and rogues, gentlemen and liars, *hommes d'esprit*, and yet incurable cowards."⁷⁴ If the Iranian nation were to disappear, the book could stand in as a ready representation of that nation. Orientalist scholarship becomes such a complete representation, a truthful mirror image, that it can supplant the thing itself – in this case the Iranian nation. And if all of the books relating the history of Persia were to also disappear, Malcolm's Sketch of Persia and Morier's Hajji Baba would suffice. "Together the two works are an epitome of modern and moribund Iran."⁷⁵ Curzon's preface epitomizes the textuality of Orientalism. A work of humorous fiction is convincingly presented as an accurate depiction of reality; indeed, the text is so complete it can supplant the subject altogether; the text's representation of the subject is so complete, it can not only stand in for the subject as it is now, but can replace the subject's historicity as well. Following a brief diplomatic visit to Iran, Morier wrote a piece of fiction which came to embody the Persian national

character and its history as well. One man's fiction became another's historical document.

Throughout this discussion, we have found that the processes of colonialism and nationalism have underlined the topos, methods, and forms of cultural production; the currents of colonialism and nationalism have often flowed together. They do not remain distinct and separate spheres. An examination of the many lives of the book *Hajji Baba* helps elucidate this co-mingling of national and colonial actors and interests. In the year 1304, a Persian translation of the book was produced on the moveable presses of the *Habl al-Matin* press in Calcutta. *Habl al-Matin* was a publisher of an important newspaper bearing the press' name. It was also used to produce books, namely this Persian edition of the *Hajji Baba*'s story. The preface of the *Habl al-Matin* edition is signed by Jalal al-Din al-Husseini. Browne believed the *Habl al-Matin* edition was derived from the same Persian translation penned by Hajji Sheikh Ahmad Ruhi of Kerman. Ruhi was a staunch opponent of the Shah. H. Kamshad, however, discovered a letter in Browne's personal papers which shows that though Ruhi aided in translation, in the main, it was the work of Mirza Habib of Isfahan, who also translated Molière's *Le Misanthrope* and George Bernhard Depping's *Aperçu Historique sur les Moeurs et Coutumes des Nations*.⁷⁶ According to Kamshad, Mirza Habib left his manuscript of the translation with Sheikh Ahmad, who was killed in 1896. At this time, the manuscript, along with all of the Sheikh's other papers, were delivered to his family in Kerman. Col. Phillott, the British Consul at Kerman, was quite interested in literary matters and sent the book to Calcutta, where it was printed in at least three editions.

Mirza Habib was quite critical of the religious and political establishment in Qajar Iran and seems to have used Morier's satire as a vehicle for expressing those views. He did not render an exact translation of the English original. Some sections are barely summarized, while sections ridiculing the court or the ulama are embellished and expanded. The Persian translation draws heavily from the samples of real persons at the

court, at times even using their real names. All the while, the satirical tone of Morier's *Hajji Baba* is maintained. Kamshad assessed the impact of the Persian translation, "Socially and politically the book had an immense influence on the awakening of the people and on bringing forth the Revolution. And from the literary point of view it was one of the most successful in the new trend of prose writing: its style is still followed by modern Persian writers, and it is acclaimed as one of the best compositions of the present century."⁷⁷

Indeed the increased use of print in the Qajar era had an influence on Persian literary forms. In their analysis of the impact of printing on European literary production from 1450 – 1800, the historians Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin convincingly argued that printing had exercised a profound "influence on the development of the national languages," encouraging "the development and systematisation of the literary language of the nation."⁷⁸ In the Persian context, printed books and newspapers encouraged the development of Persian prose, which gradually became a more respected literary form. The use of print helped in the process of developing a more streamlined mode of writing Persian prose. The Persian translation of the *Hajji Baba* was an influential text in this larger process. As Bahar wrote, the book displays the techniques of classical writing alongside new inventive styles of Persian prose. Bahar praised the original text as well as the translation. For Bahar, in places, the translation recalled Saadi's *Gulistan*; Bahar considered it a masterpiece. Bahar's critique of the text underlines a significant characteristic of cultural production in the later Qajar period. New methods of production (print) allow for an increase of cultural flows (translation of texts from other languages); new literary forms adapt the styles of the translated text to the classical styles of Perso-Arabic literature to produce new literary forms which are appropriate for the times. Using translation, allegory, and satire as a way to critique the Qajar religious and bureaucratic elite, the author of the Persian text is able to use the

diaspora presses to produce a text that is particularly meaningful in the context of late Qajar society.

And this particular strategy of cultural production was a deliberate and conscious one. Indeed the preface of the nineteenth century Persian translation stated, “Hajji Baba is the first novel written in a style [that bridges] the incommensurate and different tastes of the East and the West such that it has become coveted by Easterners and sought after by Westerners alike.”⁷⁹ Using this text as a way to introduce his readers to a new literary form, the novel (*ruman*), Husseini wrote that this literary form was a useful vehicle for acquiring knowledge about the customs and manners of foreign peoples. Husseini argued that the novel also presented a means for improving and reforming the national character (*akhlaq-i milli*) of a people. The various scholars who had produced prefaces for the English editions of the Hajji Baba had argued that the book offered a way to better understand the customs and manners of the Persians. Ironically, then, this satirical novel became a way for Orientalists to represent a certain truthful image of the Iranians’ customs and manners to the European reader. For the nationalist Persian translator of the text, the novel became a way to represent the customs and manners of Qajar society as a way to reform the national character. The same text, using similar literary strategies, can be used to further colonial and national interests alike.

There are, of course, significant differences in the presentation and reception of the book to the Persian and European readers in the nineteenth century. Curzon and some of the other scholars who prefaced the Hajji Baba in its various British editions seemed to take the book at face value, as a historical document; its content offered proof of the immorality, degeneration, and decadence of the Oriental character. One fictional character, the Hajji Baba, came to epitomize the Persians, indeed the Oriental at large. The British reader was charged to enjoy the satire but not to allow it to obfuscate the underlying truth as presented in the book. This admonition was further strengthened by the publication of the alleged letter by a Persian reader who expressed his offense in a

broken language and with a flawed logic commensurate with the characterizations of the Hajji Baba's narrative. The British reader is called upon to read through the satire to see the absolute truth of the Persian customs and manners as presented by Morier, whose diplomatic mission to Persia serves as an authorial legitimacy to the text.

The use of satire in the Persian translation is quite different. Satire has a long history of being used as a form of social critique in the Persian context. The sections of the Persian translation which are emphasized are not the silly anecdotes of the "everyday" mores of Iranians. Rather the segments of the book which are highlighted and augmented in the Persian edition are those dealing specifically with the corruption of the religious and political establishment. Satire offered a way to circumvent censorship. The Iranian translator was able to use Morier's book as a way to "awaken" the consciousness of Iranians to the corruption of their state. Yet even a translated text held a certain risk. The Persian translation was shuffled from hand to hand until it was finally sent to Calcutta by a British consular officer to be printed. But the Persian edition which I have seen mentions several other translations, but recommends this particular edition which is more correct and authentic. This suggests that by the time the Calcutta edition was produced, the reading audience in Iran was already familiar with the story of the Hajji Baba. And the book served primarily to introduce the literary form of the novel to the Persian reader as a means to illustrate and therefore remedy the social and political flaws of Persian society. An upcoming discussion of Persian theater written in the same period shows that the plays that were written were also offered in the same way: as a representation of flawed behavior in order to elucidate social problems. Both the novel and the theater in this period, then, used satire as a way to exaggerate reality for cautionary effect. But in the British context, the exaggeration was taken as fact. Satire was read as reality; if the satire seems hyperbolic in the British context, readers are cautioned to be aware that the exaggerated state of affairs is indeed real in the Persian context. Therein lies a significant difference.

Another Persian book produced in the late Qajar era which should be read alongside the Hajji Baba to show the particular impact of print on the literary production is the Siyahat-Nameh-yi Ibrahim Beg (The Travel Diary of Ibrahim Beg). The book was published in three volumes, the first of which appeared in the years preceding the rise of the Constitutional Revolution. The Iranian government banned the book, fining and arresting those who were found reading it. Several people were arrested on suspicion of having authored the book. As the book could not be published in Iran, each volume was printed on Persian presses abroad. The first was printed in Cairo (undated), the second in Calcutta (written 1905, printed 1907), and the third in Istanbul (1909). The first German translation dates from 1903.⁸⁰ The first two volumes were published anonymously; the third volume revealed the author to be Zain al-Abidin, a Kurd from Maragheh. He was a merchant who lived in Istanbul.

In 1910, Muhammad Kazim Shirazi, the Persian Instructor to the Board of Examiners in India, and Col. Phillott, the Secretary of the Board of Examiners, chose the Siyahat-Nameh as the recommended text for the High Proficiency Examination in Persian for civil servants in India. Shirazi who headed the Habl al-Matin press has included selections of Nasir al-Din Shah's travel journal and Tabrizi's plays as the Persian texts in the language proficiency tests. A curious cross-fertilization of the multifarious purposes of literary texts -- texts that had implications for reformist nationalism in the Iranian context were used to teach Persian to civil servants in service of the British government in India. A copy of the Siyahat-Nameh which I have seen was printed on the presses of Habl al-Matin. It included a photograph of the author, Zain al-Abidin, taken two months before his death. The text has a short English preface authored by Phillott and a longer Persian preface written by Shirazi. Phillot wrote that the first edition of the book bore no date and was anonymous, but that it "was welcomed in Persia and soon ran out of print." A second edition was printed in 1890. Phillott wrote that Zain al-Abidin had died in Istanbul in April, 1910. Phillott and Shirazi had undertaken

the printing of the current Persian edition upon the advice of E. G. Browne. Phillott commented, "The style of the book is easy and idiomatic, being in fact the colloquial of the better classes of the present day. The book is extensively read by Persians, even by ladies of the harem."⁸¹

In his Persian preface, Shirazi wrote a brief history of the book and a biography of its author, Zain al-Abidin, who was born in Maragheh to a merchant father. At the age of eight, he was sent to school and at sixteen, he began working in his father's business. He spent much of his adult life living in Yalta and Istanbul, making a living as a merchant. Shirazi noted that although Zain al-Abidin had little formal education, he had a creative imagination and a patriotism (*hubb-i vatani*). In 1887, he sent a copy of the *Siyahat-Nameh* of Ibrahim Beg to Jalal al-Din Husseini who worked at the *Habl al-Matin* press. This is the same person who had supervised the printing of the Hajji Baba edition and had prefaced it. In 1888, an edition of the *Siyahat-Nameh* was printed on the presses of Akhtar in Istanbul. The book met with great approval in Iran and the first edition soon sold out. Thus a second edition was printed in 1890 in Calcutta by *Habl al-Matin*. Shirazi wrote that because of political reasons, the first and second edition did not reveal the date or place of publication. In 1906, the book was lithographed in the *Matba`b-i Muzaffari* in Bombay.

Shirazi claimed that the true value of the book was in the elucidation of the flaws of the government's bureaucracy (*divan*) and the oppression of the state. It excited the Iranian people who had begun their struggle to attain their legal rights. Though the book was written as a novel, it ultimately tells the truthful state of affairs in Iran and depicts a realistic image of the political situation in that country. Shirazi noted that he had gotten word that some Europeans were beginning to translate the book into English and French.

The book tells the story of the son of a merchant from Tabriz who is born and raised in Egypt. Throughout his childhood, he hears patriotic stories of Iran from his father. When his father passes away, Beg sets off on a journey to Iran to see this beloved

land for himself, all the while recording the details of his travels in a diary. As Kamshad noted, “He misses nothing: the arbitrary power and evil practices of the shah’s entourage, viziers, and senior officials, who, with their high-flown titles, torture and extort money from the people; the backwardness of the country, seen in the total absence of law, justice, and order, in the appalling condition of schools and education in general, in the lack of health services, the habit of smoking opium, and the disruption of commerce; the hypocrisy and dissimulation of mullahs and religious leaders – all are bitterly criticized.”⁸² This book also relied on satire to reveal the corruption of the Persian system of government. Throughout the narrative, the contemporary state of Iran is presented as one of decay that is juxtaposed to a past grandeur. The contributions of Shah Abbas, Nadir Shah, Mirza Taqi Khan, and Amir Kabir are discussed throughout the text. E. G. Browne wrote that his friend Tarbiyat considered the book to have had “an appreciable effect in precipitating the Persian Revolution of A. D. 1905-6.”⁸³ The book’s impact was especially great because “of its approximate coincidence in time with the outburst of the matter of disaffection, and its suitability to the occasion as regards the general distrust and aversion of the people of Persia to the ruinous and scandalous procedures” of the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah.⁸⁴

A fictional travel diary published as a novel with the explicit purpose of critiquing the Qajar state, the Siyahat-Nameh of Ibrahim Beg reveals the complex history of printing in Qajar Iran. Indeed, in his preface to the book, its author, Zain al-Abidin, underlined the importance of printing. He made a connection between the role of writers as social reformers and the medium of print. He wrote that it was now clear to intellectuals that the means for progress and the civilization of nations was possible through printed materials (*matbua`at*). These intellectuals, he wrote, could use print as a vehicle with which to arouse the patriotism of their compatriots, and to encourage these patriots to search for the means to bring about the progress of the nation. Writers should not publish texts in order to further personal friendships or to attack personal enemies.

Those authors who write histories and travel diaries, in particular, should refrain from printing rumor which they hear. Today, Zain al-Abidin continued, it is quite apparent that the progress of the western nations is due to the printed materials they produce. Print allows them to share their writing with people of all classes and all walks of life. As these authors become entrusted with the trust of the people, they are careful not to allow personal feelings and grudges to affect their writings. Instead, these authors chose to put the pages of their printed texts at the service of the public opinion (*anzar-i `umumi*), for the purpose of correcting the flaws they have been able to discern in society.⁸⁵

The publication of this book, then, is intrinsically connected to the history of printing in late Qajar Iran. Not only did the author seem conscious of the potential impact of printing on the changing nature of texts in the social and political arenas, but the actual history of the publication of this book tells a story in and of itself. The publication of the edition under discussion was made possible through the close collaboration of the British consul in Kerman together with an Iranian intellectual who worked for the British government in India and who operated an important Persian press in Calcutta. The professor of Persian at Cambridge University, E. G. Browne had actively encouraged its republication in 1910, at the height of the Constitutional Revolution. The author himself had been an Iranian merchant who had lived most of his life in diasporic merchant communities in Yalta and Istanbul. And yet the book that was ultimately produced helped to fuel the Constitutionalist movement, a reformist nationalist Iranian social and political movement.

This analysis of three travel narratives, Robinson Crusoe, The Hajji Baba of Isfahan, and the Siyahat-Nameh of Ibrahim Beg, has helped us to better understand that in the context of the cultural production of late Qajar Iran, the lines between nationalism and colonialism were indeed blurred. Robinson Crusoe, a significant novel in Victorian England, was intrinsically tied to the imperial process of discovery and imperial reclamation. Its Persian translation was a vehicle for British colonial officials in India to

present a transliteration scheme to “fix” the problems of the Perso-Arabic script and to render it into a superior Romanized language more readily reproduced through print. The Persian Robinson Crusoe was translated by a native speaker from Afghanistan, who then offered the British linguists an authentic textual inscription of colloquial Persian.

In the English version, Morier’s Hajji Baba became for the British reader the vehicle for studying the customs and manners of the Persians, the very personification of all that was corrupt and immoral in the Iranian national character. For its Persian translators, the Hajji Baba became a vehicle for demonstrating the power of the novel as a medium of social reform, as a canvas upon which the corruption of the Qajar government and religious establishment could be presented to the readers. Written as a satire by a British diplomat, it was presented to the British readers as ‘the Oriental Gil Blas’, ‘a sample of out-of-door everyday Orientalism’, and ‘a historical document.’ Translated into the Persian, it became a revolutionary text using satire and prose as a way to illustrate the need for nationalist reform.

The manuscript of the Travel Diary of Ibrahim Beg was itself a well-traveled text: written in Istanbul, it was published in Turkey and India, and smuggled into Iran where, although it was banned, it was apparently read with great zeal. Its author, Zain al-Abidin, was a merchant with little formal education; he was not a member of the intellectual elite, not a professional writer. Perhaps the years spent as a merchant traveling outside of Iran had given him a particular insight into the condition of Persia, an insight which he chose to write in a simple prose – telling the fictional story of a young man who travels to his fatherland in search of the nostalgic country of his father’s memories and instead finds corruption and decadence.

Interestingly, all of these texts are organized around the theme of travel. The history of all of these books is inherently connected to the history of print culture in the nineteenth century. The transformative power of print was recognized by colonial officials and nationalists alike. The actual production of the book brought together Iranians living

in Iran proper, Iranians in the diaspora communities, and British colonial officials. Published on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, they helped foment the ideas of nationalism and constitutionalism amongst their Iranian readers.

The above discussion of Persian printed books produced in the mid- to late-nineteenth century was based on an examination of some 276 books and the larger social context in which they were produced. Some significant facets of print culture have come to light. Clearly, the survey confirms the prevalence of lithography in this period, but I have proposed that this tendency should not simply be dismissed as a rejection of print due to perceived Islamic prohibitions against the reproduction of the word or the name of God using moveable type. Instead, I have underlined important aspects of the culture of the manuscript that were retained by the use of lithography for book production, including the use of the scribal trade, a communal mode of authorship and book production, and the ritual construction of the page.

A detailed examination of the books produced under the supervision of Ġtimad al-Saltanah proved critical to understanding the interrelated nature of the state and Persian print culture in the late Qajar era. It is significant that Nasir al-Din Shah promoted Ġtimad al-Saltanah, a graduate of the Dar al-Fanun and a life-long civil servant, to a ministerial rank charged with overseeing print culture. As Minister of Publication, quasi-official historian to the state, *naqal* and translator to the king, and author, Ġtimad al-Saltanah left an indelible mark on the production of Persian books. Indeed as Nick Dirks and Bernard Cohns argued, “the determination, codification, control, and representation of the past have . . . been central to the establishment of the nation state.”⁸⁶ Like other historians in the service of the royal house, Ġtimad al-Saltanah understood the process of writing history in order to assert the authority of the dynasty. But there are subtle and significant differences between his work and that of court historians from the medieval period of Iran’s history. Ġtimad al-Saltanah was a bureaucrat, serving a growing state and not just a king. He was deeply wedded to the idea of reforming the process of

historical writing, elevating history to a science. His books lent an air of historicity to the Qajar dynasty and state – linking the history of the time to earlier Iranian dynastic and Islamic caliphal history. He also inscribed Iranian history into the larger context of world history, writing the details of events during the time of Nasir al-Din Shah alongside world events, such as the independence of the United States from the British Empire. And his books were produced using the lithographic process at the state presses on the grounds of the Dar al-Fanun, presumably in larger numbers than the manuscript histories of earlier periods. From his own writings, it becomes clear that ʿImad al-Saltanah saw his printed books as a sign of progress and modernity – and as an enduring monument to himself, his king, his state, and his nation. His books reflected, documented, and in a way contributed to the developing process of nation-building by the Qajar state in late nineteenth century Iran.

The history of Iranian print culture, however, is incomplete without a discussion of the works produced by diasporic presses – both by nationalists who resisted the Qajar dynasty and by colonial officials and Orientalists with an interest in Persian stemming from their roles vis-à-vis Iran and India. Indeed, our discussion of some of these books indicated that nationalists, colonialists, and Orientalists sometimes worked together on the production of a single printed book – with the cooperation of scholars in Iran itself. Iranians living in Turkey and India were part of the intellectual landscape of Qajar Iran itself; they were aware of the work being produced in Iran and their own work, in turn, had an audience within the national frontiers of Persia. In the title of this section of my chapter, I referred to well-traveled texts – not just because the books produced carried the theme of travel but because the actual texts crossed over several national borders in the process of being written, printed, and read. Print culture that was discussed in this region was produced through a cooperative relationship between Iranians living in merchant diasporic communities, Iranians working in the civil service in India, Orientalist scholars

in England and British India, British colonial officials stationed in Iran and India, and writers living within the borders of Qajar Iran.

The printed books produced in this time period helped to create and reshape the genres of Persian literature. Ṭimad al-Saltanah's books were often encyclopedic in their form. Panegyric embellishment gave way to the enduring fixity and authority of the printed page. Authorial authority was asserted not just by access to manuscript collections but by access to studies in Greek, Latin, Arabic, and French. Historical geography, historical biographies, almanacs, and comparative histories were written based on models taken from Perso-Arabic and European sources alike. The printed travel books that were discussed brought new forms of prose into the fold of Iranian literature. In these books, the nature of governance in Iran could be presented through the perspective of and fictional experiences of a single character, the Hajji Baba or Ibrahim Beg. Fictional accounts relying on satire were used by Orientalist and nationalist scholars alike to critique the state of affairs in Qajar Iran. Prefaces and commentaries on these texts underlined the use of satire as a way to present truthful images of the problems in Iran which could not be directly addressed. Scholars of Persian literature, such as Browne and Bahar, noted the contributions of these books to the development of modern Persian prose, in particular the use of the genre of the novel, and conjectured on their impact on the ideas of constitutionalism. Notions about the nature of kingship, the role of the ulama, the nature of governance and the state, the historical relationship of the present to the past, and Iran's position in the global and political currents of the time were articulated within the pages of these printed books. Chartier's studies of print culture preceding the French Revolution suggest that the printed texts produced in the decades before that revolution helped to shape the political culture of the time. While books do not create revolutions in and of themselves, some books can help create the social and intellectual environment for political revolutions. A similar process occurred in the production of Iranian print culture in the years leading up the Constitutional Revolution.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 4

¹ In his significant and exhaustive biography of Nasir al-Din Shah, Abbas Amanat writes, “The shah was well aware of the power of words and perhaps could have foreseen the outcome of the press revolution that started soon after his death.” Abbas Amanat, Pivot of the Universe, Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 430. See also Janet Afary.

² Elizabeth Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 82.

³ Brinkley Messick, The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁴ Jan Rypka, A History of Iranian Literature (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), p. 337 and Hafez Farman Farmayan, “The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth century Iran,” in Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, ed. William Polk and Richard Chambers (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 144-5. For other discussions of the early history of print in Iran, see Peter Avery, “Printing, the Press, and Literature,” in the Cambridge History of Iran, volume 6, pp. ____.

⁵ Johannes Pedersen, The Arabic Book (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.137.

⁶ Brinkley Messick finds this to be the case in the Yemeni context as well, noting that “many aspects of the venerable local manuscript culture persisted well into the twentieth” century. The Calligraphic State, p. 1.

⁷ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 417.

⁸ Ibid, p. 453.

⁹ Ibid, p. 453.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 457.

¹¹ ʿItimad al-Saltanah, Ruznamah-i Khatirat, edited by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1345).

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- ¹² Abbas Amanat, "Etemad-al-Saltana," Elr, volume 8, p. 662-6.
- ¹³ Afshar, preface to Ruznamah-i Khatirat, pp. 5-6.
- ¹⁴ Amanat, p. 665.
- ¹⁵ Afshar, p. 12
- ¹⁶ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 454.
- ¹⁷ Amanat, p. 664.
- ¹⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, "The Sense of the Past," in On History (NY: The New Press, 1997), pp. 10-23.
- ¹⁹ Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, Mir'at al-Buldan (Tehran, 1294-6/1877-9).
- ²⁰ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 455. The copies which I have examined confirm Browne's observation that the actual size of the book increases by the fourth volume.
- ²¹ Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, preface to Tarikh-i Muntazam-i Nasiri, volume 2 (Tehran, 1299).
- ²² Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, Tarikh-i Muntazam-i Nasiri, volume 3, edited by M. Isma`il Rizvani (Tehran, 1367), p. 1395.
- ²³ Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, preface to Tarikh-i Muntazam-i Nasiri, volume 2 (Tehran, 1299).
- ²⁴ Iraj Afshar, preface to Al-Ma'asar va al-Asar, by Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, edited by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Intisharat-i Asatir, 1363).
- ²⁵ Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, Al-Ma'asar va al-Asar, edited by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Intisharat-i Asatir, 1363), p. 30.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 149.
- ²⁷ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 446.
- ²⁸ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 447.
- ²⁹ Amanat, Elr, p. 663.
- ³⁰ Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, Sadr al-Tavarikh, edited by M. Moshiri (Tehran, 1357), 2nd edition.
- ³¹ Amanat argues, for example, that Ḡtimad al-Saltanah's promotion to higher office was halted by the rise to power of Amin al-Sultan. See Amanat, Elr, p. 663.

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- ³² Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, Ruznamah-i Khatirat-i Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, edited by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1345), preface, p. 3.
- ³³ Ibid, p. 20.
- ³⁴ Ibid, p.3.
- ³⁵ Ḡtimad al-Saltanah, Al-Ma'asar va al-Asar, edited by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Intisharat-i Asatir, 1363), p.131.
- ³⁶ In Chapter 5, I will discuss Ḡtimad al-Saltanah's role in newspaper publishing during this period, with a focus on his role as the editor of Sharaf.
- ³⁷ Sa`di, Selections from the Bostan of Sadi, edited by Forbes Falconer (London: L. Schönberg, 1838), p. i.
- ³⁸ See for example, an edition of the Rubaiyat of Mawlana published at the Akhtar presses in Istanbul in 1314.
- ³⁹ Anthologia Persica (Vienna: the Academy of Oriental Linguistics, 1778). This book was printed under the supervision of Joseph Nob. De Kurzbök.
- ⁴⁰ Geschichte von Tabaristan, Rujan, and Mazanderan, ed. Bernhard Dorn (St. Petersburg, 1850).
- ⁴¹ Wassaf, Geshichte Wassaf's, edited by Joseph Hammer-Purgstall (Wien: Aus Der Kaiserlich – Königlichen Hof – Und Staatsdruckerel, 1856).
- ⁴² Mulla Firuz Bin Kaus, The Desatir or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets (Bombay: Courier Press, 1818), pp. i-iii.
- ⁴³ Ibid, preface, p. i.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ T. W. H. Tolbort, Ra'binsan Kru'so, translated by Sher Ali of Kabul, edited in the Roman character by T. W. H. Tolbort (London: William H. Allen and Co., 1878), pp. xxv-xxvi.
- ⁴⁶ As quoted in Tolbort, p. xxi.
- ⁴⁷ Tolbort, p. xxii.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Duff as quoted by Tolbort, p. xxiv, emphasis his.

⁵⁰ Tolbort, p. xxiv, emphasis his.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. xxvi.

⁵² Ibid, p. xxvii.

⁵³ Ibid, p. xxviii.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. xxix.

⁵⁵ Ibid, xxix-xxx.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. xxx, emphasis his.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. xxxvi.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. iv.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. xvi.

⁶⁰ Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 75.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 83.

⁶² E. G. Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Iran (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1983), originally published in 1914, p.22.

⁶³ George MacMillan to Curzon, London, March 13, 1895, EUR.MSS.F111/38, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁶⁴ Goldsmid to Curzon, London, April 8, 1895, EUR.MSS.F111/38, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.

⁶⁵ F. J. Goldsmid, in the introduction to The Adventures of the Hajji Baba of Ispahan, by James Morier (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1897), p. xi.

⁶⁶ Sir Walter Scott, "An Appreciation," in The Adventures of Hajji Baba, by James Morier (London: E. P. Dutton and Co.,), p.vii. This book was an Everyman's Library Edition.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. vii-viii.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. ix.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. x. Note that in the Curzon preface, he emphasizes the sentences, "Persian people very bad people, perhaps, but very good to you, sir."

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. ix.

⁷¹ George Curzon, introduction to The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan, by James Morier (London: MacMillan and Co., 1895), p. x.

⁷² Ibid, p. xi.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. xiv, emphasis mine.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. xxiii.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. xxiv.

⁷⁶ H. Kamshad, Modern Persian Prose Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 24.

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 26-7.

⁷⁸ Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, The Coming of the Book: the Impact of Printing, 1450 – 1800, translated by David Gerard (London: Verso, 1976), the French original was published in 1958, pp.319-323.

⁷⁹ Jalal al-Din Husseini, preface to The Hajji Baba of Isfahan (Calcutta: Habl al-Matin Press, 1304), p. 3.

⁸⁰ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 467, note 1.

⁸¹ D. C. Phillott, preface to Siyahat-Namah-i Ibrahim Beg (Calcutta: Habl al-Matin Press, 1910).

⁸² Kamshad, p. 18.

⁸³ Browne, LHP, v. 4, p. 467.

⁸⁴ Browne, Press and Poetry, p. 22.

⁸⁵ Zain al-Abidin, preface to Siyahat-Namah-i Ibrahim Beg (Calcutta: Habl al-Matin Press, 1910).

⁸⁶ Bernard S. Cohn and Nicholas B. Dirks, “Beyond the Fringe: The Nation State, Colonialism, and the Technologies of Power,” The Journal of Historical Sociology (1988), p. 266.

CHAPTER 5

“THE POWER OF THE PEN IN THE SERVICE OF THE NATION”: NINETEENTH CENTURY IRANIAN NEWSPAPERS

In the previous chapter, I examined the history of print culture in late Qajar Iran through the medium of the printed book; here, I will turn my attention to printed newspapers produced in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. I will not attempt an exhaustive survey of Persian language newspapers in this period, collating detailed information in an encyclopedic manner, nor will I revert to impressionistic conjecture about the nature of newspaper publishing in Iran. Instead, I will try to flesh out key aspects of newspapers from the sample of some 63 titles I have examined from the collections in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., the British Museum in London, in E. G. Browne’s collection at Cambridge University, and various university libraries in the United States and England. To get a better sense of the context in which these newspapers were read and produced, I have studied personal paper collections and memoirs of key figures as well as British diplomatic records.

Mirza Malkum Khan claimed, “The newspaper is the fountain-head for reforming the world Without the newspaper, there is no right or bounty which is protected from the wickedness of fools.”¹ Indeed, one of the notable characteristics of the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) was the role of the press – as an instrument of reform and a tableau for documenting, articulating, and debating the nature of the Iranian nation-state. A flourishing of publication accompanied the Constitutional Revolution, and this phenomenon has been duly noted in the historiography on the period, usually describing the flurry of newspaper publishing that accompanied that revolution. One

important consequence of that revolution was the passage of a law meant to guarantee freedom of the press by the newly formed majlis, or parliament.

This scenario, however, overlooks at least seventy years of Iranian newspaper publishing which preceded the Constitutional Revolution. It can be argued that the early newspapers offered an impetus, strategy, and ideology for the political revolution that took place. During the period of newspaper publishing which I will be discussing, we see a shift in the nature and purpose of newspapers – from being primarily a vehicle for the collation and transmission of information to become “transmitters and amplifiers”² of certain political and social ideologies. By the end of the period under discussion, Iranian newspapers had not yet become the modern institutionalized media with which we are now familiar. Advertising, regular publication schedules, a routine systems of distribution, and large readerships were still not features of the Persian press. Some of the newspaper produced in the mid- to late-nineteenth century were organs of the state, published on command of the Shah or provincial governors. Other newspapers closely resemble those that Jürgen Habermas observed normally appear in times of revolution, when politicians or intellectuals form their own newspapers and journals. These newspapers became a forum for debating social and political matters of the time.³ Given Iran’s interest to colonial powers during this time, the newspaper offered an instrument for colonial officials to follow affairs of the state and to set forth their own political views. For all of the groups involved in newspaper publishing – the state, the nationalists, and the colonialists – the newspaper was a sign and a marker of progress and reform.

The first scholar to attempt a comprehensive study of the early period of Persian journalism was E. G. Browne. He delivered a lecture entitled, “The Persian Press and Persian Journalism,” in May, 1913 before the Persian Society in London. Browne credited two individuals as the primary source for much of his information on the subject. The first of these was H. L. Rabino who “until lately British Vice-Consul at

Rasht, a good Persian scholar and friend of the Persians, who, during his long sojourn in the Caspian province of Gilan, devoted himself with assiduity to the collection of all sorts of information, literary, historical, and topographical, as well as commercial, likely to be of interest to students of Persia. His greatest service to Persian literary history is, in my opinion, a list of Persian newspapers which he printed at Rasht in November, 1911, under the title of 'List of the newspapers of Persia, and of newspapers written in the Persian language and published outside Persia'."⁴

In the introduction of the handlist, Rabino wrote that newspapers had been greatly beneficial to the state of affairs in Iran and had increased the desire of the Iranian people to acquire literacy. Even those who were illiterate, he reported, would purchase the newspapers for their children and would thus be encouraged to learn to read themselves. Rabino's handlist includes some 226 Persian newspapers, four more that were published in French, and 6 that were published in Armenian.⁵ For each entry, Rabino listed the title of the newspaper, the date and place of publication, the type of print that was used, the publication schedule, the political affiliation, the publisher, and other miscellaneous information of interest.

The second person who had assisted Browne in his study of Persian journalism was Tarbiyat (who remained unnamed at the lecture, perhaps for reasons of his personal security). Browne presented him as "one of my Persian friends, now a fugitive in Constantinople, who, by reason of his connection first with an important book-selling establishment, and afterwards with a literary and scientific magazine in Tabriz during the last fourteen years, had enjoyed exceptionally wide opportunities of acquainting himself with the literary activities of modern Persia, and who, like Mr. Rabino, had formed a very extensive collection of newspapers and other documents bearing on the recent history of his country, which collection, unhappily, was completely destroyed as a result of the Russian aggressions in Tabriz at the end of 1911 and beginning of 1912."⁶ Tarbiyat had, however, produced a handlist of his collection that was 52 pages in length; this became

the primary source for a book published by Browne in 1914 under the title, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia.

Browne went on to sketch the history of the Persian newspaper through the Constitutional Revolution. He hesitatingly and incorrectly claimed that the first Persian newspaper was produced by Amir Kabir in 1851 and went on to trace the role of the early state newspapers. Their primary nature, he observed, “was to serve as a Court paper, containing Royal decrees, promotions and decorations, Court news, and especially accounts of the personal doings of the Shah.”⁷ Browne then reviewed some of the major Persian language newspapers published abroad in the years before the Constitutional Revolution “in India, Turkey, Egypt, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Transcaspia, and even in London and Paris. . .”⁸

Browne then moved to a passionate discussion of the Persian press produced during the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution, noting: “The special interest and value of the modern Constitutional Persian Press of 1907-1911 arises from the presence in the best part of it of three rare qualities, to wit (1) Originality; (2) Sincerity and Courage; (3) Literary Merit of a high order.” On the literary merits of the Persian press, Browne noted that “even in translation, the directness, concision, energy, and simplicity of the new style as contrasted with the circumlocution, diffuseness, flabbiness, and complexity of the old, is sufficiently evident.”⁹

To underscore the originality of the Persian constitutional press, Browne compared it to that produced in Turkey in the middle of the nineteenth century. The New Turkish movement “was essentially a discarding of the old Turco-Persian ideas and models in favour of French ideas and forms of expression. The Persian Reform movement, on the other hand, was, for the most part, if not entirely, autochthonous, and was especially on its literary side, an original and striking development of new forms out of the old. . .” When discussing the sincerity and courage of the Persian press, Browne contrasted it to the British press which “is, for the most part, so insincere, so entirely

representative of definite political or financial interests, which judge and subordinate their main aims all other questions, that it is almost a shock to us to come in contact with a Press which, whether right or wrong, whether violent or moderate, is passionately in earnest about every topic which it discusses.” He pointed out the names of several journalists who were killed or tortured during the Constitutional Revolution. Browne quoted an article on the Persian press published in the Times in July, 1908 that said, “the free press of Persia proved to be as mischievous and as dangerous as it had proved to be in the other Oriental lands.”¹⁰

Browne’s sharp retort to the Times comment reveals both his frustration with the role of the British government in the nationalist struggle of Iranians at the time as well as his deep knowledge of Persian literary history which helped him to better appreciate the significance of the contemporary press in that country:

To ideas which remain sterile no one objects; but ideas which differ from its own and which dare to produce results are to the *Times*, and to those who share its mentality, an abomination and a portent to be condemned in unqualified language. That Persians should love their country and desire to abolish bribery and corruption and to better the condition of the poor was, in the view of Sir Edward Grey and the *Times*, an attempt to ‘put the clock back’ which could not for one instant be tolerated. And this was, after all, the meaning and essence of the Persian Revolution, to keep Persia independent, and to make every Persian, even the humblest peasant, a *man* with rights and duties of a citizen. . .”¹¹

From the perspective of Browne, a scholar who studied the rise of Persian journalism and its role in the Constitutional Revolution, it was clear that the press played a significant role in the nationalist struggle. He quoted a poem published in the newspaper Iran-i Naw in 1909:

This clamour, this stirring, this breathing of the Nation,
This striving of the Nation, this seething of the Nation,
By God, ‘twas to gain and obtain the poor man’s right. . .”¹²

In my view, this lecture on the Persian press and journalism given by E.G. Browne to the Persia Society in 1913 and the book on a similar subject which he

published the following year intrinsically linked the nature of the nationalist and constitutionalist struggle in Iran to its reproduction on the printed page. At a critical stage of the nationalist and constitutional movement, Browne, who by this point was considered a leading Orientalist with deep ties to Iran, foregrounded the print culture that enabled and accompanied that revolution. Using print culture as his primary analytical tool for assessing the intellectual, cultural, and political merits of the revolution, he contrasted the press in Iran to the British press which by then was deeply wedded to political and economic interests. Unlike the Turkish reform movement that sought to duplicate the French model, he asserted that the Iranian reform movement as understood by 'its literary side', i.e. its print culture, was a process of developing new models out of old forms. For Browne, the Constitutional Revolution was a nationalist movement seeking to disentangle Iran from a web of colonial interventions and a constitutional movement seeking to make every Persian man into a citizen. For evidence of this, he turned to the printed pages produced by the revolutionaries, who not unlike their French counterparts from 1789, wedded print culture to their larger political agenda. For many of the political ideologues involved with the revolution, producing print culture became a form of political activity, and from the outset of the movement, they participated in "the accumulating memory of print."¹³ This possibility, however, was available to them because of the decades of print culture that preceded that revolution, making available the modes of publication, distribution, and readership available to the ideologues of the revolution in Iran and the diasporic communities in Istanbul, Calcutta, London, and Paris.

The Scope of Newspaper Publishing in Iran, 1837-1906

Jam-i Jahan-nama, a Persian language publication printed in Calcutta in 1822, may well be the earliest Persian newspaper. This newspaper was lithographed; each page contained two columns. The earliest copy which I have been able to locate is dated

August 1, 1832, but it is numbered 529. It was apparently published bi-weekly.

Although the newspaper was published in Persian, it was clearly intended for an Indian reading audience. One of the earliest Persian newspapers which was published in Iran appeared in 1837, and it may have been published by Shirazi.¹⁴ The newspaper, which was published in Tehran, has been called Akhbar, though the copies which I have seen bear no title. The header of the first page depicts the official emblem of Qajar Iran, the Lion and the Sun. Beneath the emblem, there is a subheading bearing the date and place of publication. Beneath this, there is another centered subheading that reads, "The news of eastern countries." The second page begins with a similar subheading which reads, "The news of western countries." Both issues of the newspaper which I have studied are lithographed and are two pages in length. The pages are not columned, and the text contains no punctuation. The smooth and uniform lithographed script is marked by a bold and slightly enlarged font used for place names of cities, provinces, and countries about which news is reported.

The first page of the copy dating 1253/1837 contains news of Tehran, Khurasan, Afghanistan, Pishawar, and India. Its focus is primarily on affairs of the state, especially official visits. The second page reports news from England, France, Russia, and Spain. In the section on England, the paper discusses various types of ships that are being built in England. Citing a St. Petersburg newspaper as its source, it further reports on a special gun made by the British which can be reloaded several times each minute and can discharge several bullets each time they are loaded. "So that each time a troop of 100 men bearing 100 such guns goes to war, they can spray the enemy with 120,000 bullets in 10 minutes."¹⁵ The entire section on France describes the construction of new bridges. The second issue which I have examined is also dated 1253/1837. Interestingly, the news from Turkey and Egypt appear under the subheading "The news from western countries." The anonymous author again cites an unnamed newspaper from St. Petersburg as the source of his information. He reports that Muhammad `Ali has

commissioned the construction of a bridge across the Nile and that in any given day some 24,000 workers are at work on the construction project under the supervision of various knowledgeable architects.

In 1839, just two years after the original publication date of the newspaper, a transcription and translation of one of its issues was published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.¹⁶ A brief introduction gives insights into the way the newspaper was received by British Orientalists, the primary audience of JRAS:

The following transcript of a Persian newspaper, lithographed and printed at Tehran, is give as a specimen of the political advances of the Persians, among whom the printing press is but of very recent introduction It is the object of the publication [of the newspaper here] to show not only what matters are thought likely to engage the attention of the public in Persia, but also to give a specimen of the language and orthography in use among ordinarily educated persons.¹⁷

The tone of the introduction is of special interest. The newspaper is offered as a sign of political advances in Iran. For the Orientalist, it is seen as a useful linguistic tool for the study of the language and orthography of “ordinarily educated” Iranians. There is little discussion of the actual content of the newspaper. It is clear, however, that the practice of using Persian newspapers as a linguistic exercise for learning Persian orthography and paleography – and as a way to study colloquial Persian – was not uncommon amongst British Orientalists and colonial officials alike. Though using them in this manner was frustrating for some whose familiarity with the Persian language was limited. The British Minister Durand remarked in a letter to the Marquess of Dufferin, “I can well understand your feeling the type of the Persian newspapers hard – I have given up reading them myself. I got to be able to decipher them but found they were such rubbish.”¹⁸

For this chapter, I have surveyed some 63 Persian language newspaper titles, 35 of which began publication prior to the Constitutional Revolution. Some newspapers were published somewhat regularly over a span of time, while others appeared in only

one or two issues. These newspaper were published in 15 cities; 41 were published in Iran and 22 were published abroad (see tables 5.1 and 5.2). Persian newspaper publishing in the nineteenth century, then, was a spatially dispersed phenomenon. It was not limited to major urban centers in Iran that are traditionally associated with print in the Qajar era, such as Tabriz and Tehran. The places in which the newspapers were published offer clues to the types of communities that were involved in the production and reading of these early newspapers – it is likely that the diasporic presses were produced for and by Iranian merchant communities and British civil servants in India. Furthermore, the Constitutional Revolution did not initiate newspaper publishing in Iran, rather a significant amount of newspaper publishing was carried out in the decades preceding that revolution.

Table 5.1
Persian newspapers published in Iran from my sample

City of publication	Number of titles
Tehran	29
Tabriz	6
Isfahan	2
Mashad	2
Shiraz	1
Bushir	1
Total	41

Table 5.2
Persian newspapers published outside Iran from my sample

City of publication	Number of titles
Calcutta	3
Bombay	3
Agra	1
Istanbul	3
Cairo	4
Baku	5
Ashkabad	1
London	1
Total	22

Some of these newspapers were official organs of the Iranian state. Of the 63 titles which I studied, 9 were official papers of the Qajar state. In reading British and American diplomatic correspondence from the late Qajar era, it is usually these official papers that are discussed or translated and appended to letters sent to the India Office, the Foreign Office, or the Department of State. For the diplomats, these papers were of interest as sources of information on particular political personalities or events. The first official paper to be published in Qajar Iran appeared under the supervision of Mirza Taqi Khan, the Amir Kabir. Titled *Vaqaya-i Ittifaqi*, it began regular publication in 1851. Government officials were under compulsion to subscribe to the newspaper.¹⁹ In 1867, Nasir al-Din Shah ordered the institution of four newspapers that would be published by

the Iranian government. These newspapers were to print news on current affairs in Iran and abroad. The Shah further commanded that research on the lives of notable Iranian intellectuals, from all periods of Iranian history, should be published in the newspapers. Iranians were encouraged to purchase these newspapers, and the Ministry of Science was charged with the distribution of official state newspapers. By 1914, according to Browne, there were a total of 1100 registered subscribers of these official newspapers and journals in the provinces of Tehran, Azerbaijan, Khurasan, and Fars.

Two of the newspapers in my sample, Muzaffari and Ruznamah-i Fars, were organs of Provincial governors. Ruznamah-i Fars was published by order of the Farmanfarma, a Qajar prince who was the governor of Fars province. The copies which I have studied bear a crown as the logo of the newspaper. The newspapers are lithographed in the nastaliq script, and each page is divided into three columns. The annual subscription rate was three tumans, and advertising space was offered for sale. The newspaper covers news of Fars province and other parts of Iran. News from foreign countries such as India, China, France, and the United States is also presented. In the first issue, the editor wrote that newspapers are a form of progress which allow useful news and scientific knowledge to be spread throughout the nation. He noted that newspaper publishing was a widespread concept throughout the world, listing the large number of newspapers produced in other countries. In order to emphasize this point, the editor included a chart of newspaper publishing in countries around the world, though he offers no source from which this information is taken. The primary purpose of this chart, printed in the initial issue of the provincial governor's newspaper, seems to be to incorporate his own newspaper into a larger global phenomenon. Using the newspaper, he is able to inscribe the events of his own province, Fars, into the events of other regions of the world. I have included a translation of a chart in the newspaper regarding newspaper publication in other regions of the world:

Table 5.3
“Number of newspapers published each day in foreign countries”

Place of publication	Number of Titles	Place of Publication	Number of Titles
Germany	1743	Italy	333
Austro-Hungary	368	Portugal	26
Switzerland	252	Spain	91
France	392	Denmark	96
Belgium	196	America	131
Greece	1253	Brazil	144
Russia	160	Africa	502

Amongst the newspapers in my sample, most dealt primarily with political or literary issues. News from abroad tended to focus on discussions of heads of state or reports on technological and industrial events. Some newspapers included translations of European novels in serialized form, while others published original poetry or essays by Iranian authors. A few newspapers, such as Hifz-i Sihhah which was published in Tehran in the 1890s, focused on scientific and medical topics. Some newspapers featured lithographed illustrations, such as Sharaf and Sharafat, or cartoons, such as Kashkul. The majority of the newspapers from this period, however, served two larger purposes: recording events of the state and technological advances – writing the progress of Iran alongside that of countries such as India, Egypt, Turkey, England, and France. They were written primarily for and by the state and the merchant communities. In this sense, they resemble the early American newspapers as described by Anderson, which became an extension of the market and an instrument of administration²⁰. And like the pattern described by Habermas, we see in some of these early newspapers “the elements of the new commercial relationships: the *traffic in commodities and news* created by early capitalist long-distance trade.”²¹

However, not all of the newspapers published before the Constitutional Revolution fit this description. Some were produced by political ideologues, as a way to construct and transmit alternative views of the Iranian nation, as a form of political critique of the Qajar state and the colonial powers, as a means to initiate and conduct a dialogue amongst Iranians in a space that was not subject to the powers of the state or bound by proximity in space or time. In order to get a better sense of this kind of newspaper, I will now discuss Qanun, a newspaper published in London by Mirza Malkum Khan. The following section combines a close reading of a year's run of the newspaper Qanun found in the Library of Congress, with information culled from Malkum's personal papers housed in the Biliothèque Nationale in Paris, diplomatic correspondence by and about Malkum housed in London at the Foreign Office and the India Office, editorials he published in the British press, letters relating to Qanun in E. G. Browne's personal papers at Cambridge University, and published memoirs by his contemporaries amongst the Iranian intellectuals and political figures.

The Qajar State and the Illustrated Press: Sharaf and Sharafat

The advent of a new cultural form, the illustrated newspaper, in late Qajar Iran signaled important shifts and continuities in the cultural production of the period. This new kind of print culture allowed the Qajar state an important means with which to articulate and disseminate a certain image of itself. In this section, I will examine the relationship of the Qajar state and print culture by focusing on two illustrated newspapers Sharaf and Sharafat. Printed between 1882 and 1903, these newspapers serve as a virtual pictorial history of fin-de-siècle Iran. These semi-official newspapers offer a window onto the Qajar state's worldview and self-perception in the critical decades preceding the

Constitutional Revolution. Studded with lithographed drawings produced by artists in the employ of the state, they are a valuable source for the examination of artistic production in this period, suggesting ways in which traditional modes of art education and patronage were melded into the Qajar bureaucracy. Furthermore, these newspapers reflect the appropriation of new technological innovations, in this case lithography, by Iranian artists and writers to produce a new genre, one that combined art, reportage, and history with the political news of the time. The illustrated press was an integrative and symbiotic art form, combining word and image. Here, pictures served as a form of documentation, an elaboration of the ideas expressed in the text, while the editorial commentary enhanced the communicative power of the illustration.²²

In the previous chapter, I stressed the centrality of ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah in the history of Iranian print culture in the Qajar era. In his various roles -- as a historian, the personal naqqal [reader] and translator to the Shah, the Minister of Publication, the Director of the Translation Bureau, and a newspaper editor -- he has an enduring impact on the nature of print culture in the Naseri period. It was largely through his works that the development of the Qajar state and Iranian print culture became intimately linked and interrelated historical processes. ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah was very much a product of and participant in the modernizing reforms that were attempted in nineteenth century Iran. As I have noted, he was among the first Iranians to study at the Dar al-Fanun, where he was an infantry cadet. He went on to study in France, where he specialized in French literature.²³ Upon returning to Iran, he held a number of government positions, and in 1863 he served as the second secretary and military attaché of the Persian mission to Paris, a position that offered him the opportunity to further his knowledge of the French

language and culture. He would return to Europe as part of the Shah's entourage during his three European tours. By 1868, he began serving as the official translator for the Shah. In 1870-1, he became the director of the State Press, and shortly thereafter became the supervisor of the Translation Bureau as well. Continuing to serve in a variety of governmental positions, he was eventually granted the title of Sani` ul-Dowlat. Later in his career, he would be granted the title of Ġtimad al-Saltanah, which his father had also held. In 1882, he would be appointed Minister of Publication and was commissioned by the Shah to produce an illustrated newspaper, Sharaf. In this section, I will extend my discussion of state-sponsored print culture by looking at the development of the illustrated press in Iran, showing the ways that the state used this new mode of cultural production as a way to propagate a certain image of itself, within Iran and abroad. Since I will focus on the production of illustrated newspapers, I will help underline the shifting patterns in artistic production that were enabled by and necessitated by changes in print culture. In particular, I will examine the impact of new technologies on book illustration and calligraphy, both of which are time-honored features of Persian manuscript art. Furthermore, the state took an increasing role in art education, as many of the artists associated with the production of print culture were trained at the state-sponsored university Dar al-Fanun. In turn, then, this examination of state-sponsored newspapers will elucidate important characteristics of the development of the modern nation-state in Qajar Iran.

The first issue of Sharaf appeared on November 12, 1882, featuring a portrait of Nasir al-din Shah, seated and in full regalia on its first page. The header bearing the newspaper's title featured the emblem of the lion and the sun. Though similar in some

respects to an earlier newspaper published by Sani` ul-Mulk, *ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah* observed that Sharaf was not an organ of the state though it clearly had an official nature (samt-i rasmiyat darad).²⁴ Sharaf was a monthly newspaper costing one qiran per issue while an annual subscription was priced at one tuman and two thousand dinars. The newspaper began with an announcement explaining that illustrated newspapers are fairly common in most European countries and that the editor has been wanting to publish one in Iran for some time; this newspaper will include portraits of the leaders of Iran, Europe, Asia, America, Africa, and even Australia; each portrait will have an accompanying biographical notice. Sharaf continued publication for nearly a decade. Four years after it stopped production, its successor Sharafat was established by Muhammad Baqir Khan *ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah*. The last issue of Sharafat was published in 1321/1903.

According to M. Bahar, the quality of Sharaf's calligraphy and illustrations was unparalleled in its time.²⁵ E. G. Browne noted that Sharaf "enjoyed a certain distinction and value by reason of the excellence of the portraits."²⁶ *ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah* supervised the staff of Sharaf, which included writers, artists, calligraphers, a mostawfi [financial manager] and several farrash [office assistants]. The visual language of lithography was used to enhance and circulate images of the royal family and government functionaries. The lithographed images were the primary feature of the newspapers, and in his journal, *ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah* usually referred to the publication not by its title but as "the illustrated newspaper" (ruznamah-yi musavvar). The chief illustrator for Sharaf was Mirza Abu Turab Ghaffari, who was the older brother of Mirza Muhammad Khan Ghaffari Kamal ul-Mulk. He was the son of Mirza Buzurg and the nephew of Mirza Abu'l-hasan Ghaffari Sani` ul-Mulk. Abu Turab was born in 1279/1863 in Kashan. At

the age of fourteen, he was sent to Tehran to study at the Dar al-Fanun, where he took courses in painting and French. In 1882, when Sharaf was established, he became an employee of the Ministry of Publication where he was appointed as a naqqash-i makhsus and naqqashbashi, titles traditionally given to the most honored artists working under royal/state patronage. He drew some 155 lithographs for Sharaf, nearly half of which he signed. Abu Turab's lithographs enhanced his artistic reputation. Ṭimad al-Saltanah was quite pleased with his work and requested that the Shah gift Abu Turab with a khil`at [an honorary robe traditionally given by the king as a sign of praise], which he received. Notice of this honor was printed in the 30th issue of Sharaf. It was announced that Abu Turab, the special artist of the newspaper Sharaf, had received special royal praises and had been presented with an honorary robe of Iranian silk by the Shah in recognition of his high level of artistic achievement.²⁷ He was later given the Order of the Lion and the Sun, 3rd degree, and was granted the honorific title of sarhang, a military title given in the Qajar era to respected civilian members of the bureaucracy.²⁸

Abu Turab's elegant, penetrating, and detailed portraits may reflect the influence of his famous uncle's style,²⁹ but they also reveal the young artist's fascination with applying a painter's creativity to the new art forms enabled and necessitated by the mechanization of art production in nineteenth century Iran. The influence of photography is clearly evident in both his lithographic illustrations for Sharaf and the watercolors he produced. In his hands, even watercolors are used to depict sharp edges, accurate shading and clean lines mimicking the precision of the camera. Abu Turab's artistic ability supercedes mere mimicry, however, in the soulful depictions of the eyes and facial expressions of his portraits.³⁰

On Tuesday 11 March, 1890, Ġtimad al-Saltanah awoke and before he had the chance to wash up, he received a letter from Mirza `Ali Muhammad Khan, one of the employees of Sharaf. The letter stated that during the night, Abu Turab had committed suicide by taking an overdose of opium. On the previous day, Abu Turab had visited his relatives and complained that he could no longer tolerate life. He had taken some opium from his pocket and eaten it all. Several people had tried to intercede, but Abu Turab had refused their ministrations. Finally, at 3:30 in the morning, he had passed away. The news affected Ġtimad al-Saltanah deeply, and he personally undertook the preparations for a memorial service for Abu Turab.³¹ He held Yahya Ghaffâri, a cousin of Abu Turab's who had been present during the incident, personally responsible for the death.³² Abu Turab's grief had ended his life at the young age of 28.

Abu Turab's portrait was featured along with his obituary in the 75th issue of Sharaf. From that issue on, Mirza Mussa, a graduate of the Dar al-Fanun who held the titles of sarhang and naqqash, took over the primary task of illustrating the newspaper. He worked with Sharaf for the last two years of its production, and there are some 29 lithographs bearing his signature in the newspaper.

Throughout the pages of Sharaf, Abu Turab's lithographs were interlaced with the calligraphy of Mirza Muhammad Reza Kalhur, whose expertise in the nastaliq script garnered him a reputation as one of the finest calligraphers in the Qajar era. Born in 1245/1829-30 in Kurdistan, he was the son of Muhammad Rahim Kalhur. Following the tradition of his family, he became an expert horseman. He studied calligraphy in Tehran under Mir Mohammad Khwansari who was a student of Muhammad Mehdi Tehrani. When his teacher passed away, he continued to sharpen his skills by practicing mashq

following the work of Mir `Imad, even traveling to Qazvin and Isfahan to get inscriptions of the master's work. Kalhur became renowned for his calligraphic expertise, and Nasir al-din Shah studied with him.

It is reputed that he regularly worked eighteen-hour days, practicing his calligraphy, giving instruction to his students, and working on calligraphic projects for the state press. In addition to his work on Sharaf, Kalhur wrote segments of the Shah's travel diaries to Karbala and Khurasan. A perfectionist, he often destroyed samples of his writing, so few examples of his calligraphy beyond those printed by the state presses remain. Kalhur worked for Sharaf throughout its entire production. He passed away in July 1892 at the age of sixty-five in Tehran.³³

Each issue of Sharaf was signed "Muhammad Hasan" indicating that `Imad al-Saltanah ultimately took responsibility for its content. The content of Sharaf reflected `Imad al-Saltanah's overarching approach to historical writing, as articulated in numerous lithographed books that were printed at the state press. As I discussed in the previous chapter, he had a particular interest in the genre of historical biography. In the preface to Sadr al-Tavarikh, he noted that biographies of great men reveal the vulnerabilities of the human condition and secrets to overcoming these flaws in order to achieve great deeds for the nation. Drawing on a significant tradition in Perso-Islamic historiography, the historical biography, he also pointed out the importance of being aware of the lives of leading European statesmen such as Napoleon and Frederick of Prussia. The proclivity to intertwine the biographies of the great men of Persia with those of world figures is evident in the pages of Sharaf. Alongside biographical notices of Qajar bureaucrats, we read about the leaders of the Ottoman Empire, England, Germany,

Russia, and the United States. The newspaper also featured serialized histories of the Muslim conquests of Iran and the decline of the Abbasid Empire. As the editor of Sharaf, ʿTimad al-Saltanah was able to parlay his approach to documenting the history of his contemporaries into a format that had a broader distribution than his books.

The newspaper also reflected the priorities and interests of Nasir al-Din Shah himself. He must have been especially pleased when the fourth issue of Sharaf showcased a lithograph of him hunting a tiger. We know that Nasir al-Din Shah kept a watchful eye over the newspaper's production, surveying the adjusted proofs before they were printed and distributed. ʿTimad al-Saltanah regularly read drafts of articles intended for the newspaper to the Shah who at times expressed his displeasure at its contents and edited the biographical notices. In his journal, ʿTimad al-Saltanah recalls an incident when he read an article on the Amin al-Sultan which he had written for publication in Sharaf to the Shah. The Shah cut the entire piece, stating that it was not good for so many contrary opinions to be written, for they will say bad things about us abroad.³⁴

At times, government officials reacted with sensitivity to their portrayal in the pages of Sharaf. The Na'ib al-Saltanah, the Minister of War, was featured in the fourth issue. ʿTimad al-Saltanah recalled that one day, he spent the morning riding with the Shah. After lunch, he returned home to find that Muhammad Qasim, an employee at Sharaf, has come to pay him a visit. Muhammad Qasim informed him that the Minister of War had taken issue with the article written about him and was equally displeased with the unflattering portrait, complaining that his face had been depicted badly (surat-i mara bad sakhtid). He had ordered a group of his employees to disrupt the offices of the Ministry of Publication and had had his portrait erased from the lithograph stone. He had

further written a letter of complaint to the Shah, who had personally assumed responsibility for what had been printed thus sparing *ʿImad al-Saltanah* from further retribution. The Minister of War may have been displeased with the simple, hurried lines that characterize his lithographed portrait and the scant five lines devoted to his biographical notice. His temper tantrum seems to indicate that the degree of sophistication of the lithographic rendering of dignitaries and the length of the accompanying biographies may have been a status symbol and a marker of one's standing and prestige in the Qajar bureaucracy.³⁵

Alongside images of Qajar statesmen, *Sharaf* published illustrations and biographical notices of European leaders. An issue printed in 1884 features a full-page portrait and lengthy biography of Otto von Bismarck.³⁶ Bismarck, we read, is one of the great men of the world whose reputation and integrity of thought are known in most countries of the world and descriptions of his intelligence and profundity are heard in the political circles of every country. The unity of Germany which Bismarck had long wished for was one his visionary achievements. The newspaper further lauds Bismarck's pacifist foreign policy. Peace among all nations of the world, it writes, which is necessary for the well being of all nations, the progress of the sciences, the development of industry, the expansion of trade, and the solution to the important problems of humanity is one his main ambitions. Meanwhile, Bismarck's approach to internal affairs has been marked by his firm opinions which are as strong as iron.³⁷ Another issue of *Sharaf* from 1887, features a full page portrait of "Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of England and Empress of India."³⁸ Since the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in June 1887 was celebrated in most countries of the world, this issue of *Sharaf* was

dedicated to her. The newspaper includes a biography of Victoria's life, a list of all nine of her children, an outline of the highlights of her reign, and a portrait of Prince Albert.

Sharaf did not limit itself to discussions of political affairs alone. Its pages provide information on cultural events and personalities in Iran and throughout the world. For example, an issue from 1885 features a portrait of Victor Hugo signed by Abu Turab, accompanied by an obituary of the French writer. Hugo, we read, was so fragile at the time of his birth that no one expected him to survive. His father was an officer in Napoleon's army and had planned on encouraging Hugo to have a military career as well. When his talent for writing became manifest at a young age, however, his father supported his decision to pursue a career as a writer. He began a new mode of writing, known as Romanticism. Since Hugo opposed Napoleon III, he went to the isle of Jersey, where he wrote a book called *The Little Napoleon*. After Napoleon fell from power, he returned to Paris where he lived with the complete affections and respect of the people. The writings of this great poet, we are told, helped to promote progress and civilization and the betterment of humanity. He was a "collector of ideas of freedom and a defender of liberty."³⁹

Sharaf's pages also offer important insights into the nature of state patronage for the arts in the Nasiri period. In the 6th issue printed in 1883, an illustration of the Gulistan Palace is accompanied by a lengthy narrative about the Humayuni Museum. The discussion of the museum, which is written within the discursive rubric of civilization and progress, gives us some insight into the conventions of artistic presentation by the Qajar state at this time. The museum hall is nearly 147 feet in length and 61.5 feet in width.⁴⁰ A museum, we read, is a mirror that reflects the world without

impurities and flattery, and exaggeration has no place in it. According to European customs, museums are repositories for antiquities, rare objects, precious things, and novelties of the world. Museums are a marker of the civilization of a nation, and a measure of the knowledge, a scale of the intelligence, and a mirror of the genius of a people. Objects that are collected in museums provide historical evidence and can be used by scholars to investigate the arts, crafts, languages, and customs of all peoples across time. The Humayuni Museum is a repository that brings together jewels, precious objects, rarities, illustrious scientific objects and manufactured goods. Its collection reflects the imaginations of great scholars and artists and includes statues and paintings from famous artists and crafts from renowned workshops.⁴¹

Another issue of Sharaf features a full-page illustration by Abu Turab of a statue of Nasir al-Din Shah on horseback. The lively and masterful detail of the lithograph is marked with the humorous caricature-like renditions of the lions that decorate the base of the statue. The narrative of the newspaper is particularly important in its reflection of the relationship of the state to artistic production. It boasts of the Qajar dynasty's patronage of the arts, which it holds as a marker of the civilization of the state. The state arsenal, in particular, is noted for its support of factories and workshops in which various products crafted from metal and wood, including but not limited to military equipment, are produced. Aqa Reza Khan Iqbal al-Saltanah, the chief of the royal arsenal, had commissioned the statue and supervised the team of Iranian craftsmen who had built the statue. None other surpasses him, we read, in the arts of casting metals and sculpting. The quality of his work, it is written, rivals those of European sculptors and surpasses all other sculptors in Iran. Nasir al-din Shah had personally come to survey the statue,

which had been completed in Muharram 1306/September 1888. The statue stood in the Bagh-i Shah until it was destroyed in the reign of Reza Pahlavi.⁴²

By the time the next state-sponsored illustrated newspaper began production under the name Sharafat in 1896, much had changed in Iran. Nasir el-Din Shah had been assassinated. Muhammad Hasan Khan ʿImad al-Saltanah had died of a heart attack. His nephew, Muhammad Baqir Khan Adib al-Mamalik had been granted the title of ʿImad al-Saltanah and had been appointed to the Ministry of Publication by Muzaffar al-Din Shah. The first issue of Sharafat featured a serene and dignified portrait of the new king signed by Musavvir ul-Mulk. The Shah's characteristically robust moustache and sleepy eyes are skillfully drawn. A notice announces that it has been four years since the last issue of Sharaf appeared. In this age when the publication of books and newspapers is a primary interest to the monarch, he has decreed the publication of another illustrated newspaper. A total of sixty-six issues of Sharafat were published over the course of some eight years.

In most respects, Sharafat followed the format and style of Sharaf. Like his uncle, Muhammad Baqir Khan signed the bottom of the last page of each issue, indicating his responsibility for the content of the newspaper. Muhammad Baqir Khan was born in 1274/1857-8 and came from a family that had long served the Qajar household. In his early childhood, he was a ghulam in the Shah's andarun [harem] and at the age of ten, he became a pishkhedmat. His studies focused on geography. In 1303/1885-6, he received the title Adib ul-Mulk, which his father had also held, and the following year he became the special reader, or naqqal, for the Shah. In 1306/1888-9, he went with the Shah to Europe, and in 1308/1890-1, he became the Director of the State Buildings and Gardens,

a position that had also been held by his uncle. Throughout the years, he was honored by the king with two royal khil`ats, the Order of the Lion and the Sun, 1st degree, and a diamond ring. The 79th issue of Sharaf features a portrait of him rendered by Mirza Mussa and the 31st issue of Sharafat includes an illustration of him later in life drawn by Musavvir ul-Mulk.

Like its predecessor, Sharafat featured lithographed illustrations, the majority of which were signed by Mirza Mehdi Khan Musavvir ul-Mulk. His style was based on Abu Turab's work, which he clearly sought to emulate. His lithographs echo Abu Turab's fascination with photographic mimicry, challenging his pen to create a visual language worthy of the mechanical age. The newspaper's calligrapher was Mirza Zayn al-Abidin Malik al-Khatatin, who had been a student of Kalhur's and had apprenticed with him at Sharaf.

The pages of Sharafat reflect a growing awareness of Iran's position in the global arena, as evidenced in an issue featuring the Iranian pavilion at the Paris World Exposition. The pavilion which was managed by General Kitabchi is lauded as a great success; the Persian structure, it is asserted, was completed before most of the other buildings at the exposition. Sharafat's report of the pavilion is based on French newspaper accounts. The Iranian pavilion was covered with turquoise-colored tiles and featured the calligraphic works by leading Iranian artists of such artists as Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Sirjani. The structure was 110 meters in length by 12 meters in width. The inside of the structure featured glasswork embellished with pearls and turquoise and was covered in intricate textiles. In addition to this structure, the Iranian pavilion included a bazaar selling Oriental crafts, such as rugs and ceramics; a theater

featuring Oriental plays; and a structure resembling the Chihil Sutun of Isfahan. The French journalists reportedly state that exposition gives the visitors a sense of the vastness of the world and how much there is to learn.⁴³

Like his uncle, Muhammad Baqir Khan incorporated serialized histories of Iran into the pages of his illustrated newspaper. While the historical frame of Sharaf had reached back to the Muslim invasion of Iran, the histories recounted in Sharafat's pages extended further into the pre-Islamic past of ancient Persia. And so from the earliest issues of the newspaper, alongside biographical notices of Qajar bureaucrats, we read historical biographies of Bahman, Darius, and Dara. Meanwhile, ample attention is still given to foreign dignitaries. Issue no. 27 features a lithograph of Bismarck rendered by Musavvir ul-Mulk with his obituary. We read that Prince Bismarck had passed away that year and in order to honor him they are producing a translation of his obituary from the French newspaper, Le Revue Diplomatique.⁴⁴ As I've mentioned, the pages of Sharaf had also contained a notice on Bismarck. We are thus able to compare the techniques of Abu Turab and Musavvir ul-Mulk and the editorial commentary of Muhammad Baqir Khan and his late uncle.

In turn of the century Iran, print culture served multiple purposes of the state. It had a performative quality, allowing the Qajar state a means with which to construct and disseminate a particular world view that could be controlled and edited to the officials of the state, who were the most likely readers of these newspapers. This view, which integrated Iranian officials with other world leaders, created the perception of Iran as an active participant in a larger global arena, placing her within the greater frame of the Age of Empire. The lithographed illustrations were a critical means of documentation and

explanation; coupled with elaborate biographical notices, they were indicative of the rank and prestige of individuals associated with the Qajar state. The ease and economy of lithography allowed the dissemination of this royally proscribed world-view in a manner that had not been available to previous monarchs. At the same time, the newspaper allowed the Shah to propagate a certain image of Iran and Iranians abroad. In his discussions about Sharaf with *ʿIṭimad al-Saltanah*, Nasir al-Din Shah cautioned against publishing critical notices about members of the Iranian state that might be read by those abroad. In the 33rd issue of Sharaf, we find a notice that the editors of a newspaper in Tiflis had praised the quality of the newspaper and recommended it to its readers. Meanwhile, the books and newspapers produced at the state presses indicate that the editors drew on foreign sources for information, often translating passages from the European press or entire books for the Iranian reader. Print culture thus served as a medium for the exchange of gazes, between Iran and the outside world, during the Age of Empire.

Printed between 1882 and 1903, the pages of Sharaf and Sharafat serve as an illustrated history of Qajar Iran and the world through a Persian lens. A visual catalogue of bureaucrats and the royal household in the late Qajar era, the newspapers are an important source for the political history of Iran. The newspapers are also an important source on the cultural history of Iran, providing information on the art, architecture, educational system, poets, historians, and clerics of this period. Importantly, the notices on cultural developments often posit the Qajar state, in particular the king himself, as the progenitor of cultural innovation and reform. From the establishment of a museum to the building of an impressive Iranian pavilion in the Paris World Exposition, it is always the

Qajar state that is identified as the agent of progress and civilization in Iran. In turn, the newspapers themselves were seen as a marker of civilization, progress, and modernity.

While the content of the newspapers serves as a rich source of historical information, the ways that print culture was produced in the late Naseri period is also telling. Brinkley Messick has noted that aspects of manuscript culture persisted and were integrated into print culture; official presses helped to delineate patrimonial state authority. The analysis of the production of Sharaf and Sharafat offers important insights into the ways that new technologies were used by the Qajar state to create a new bureaucratic apparatus that still maintained past practices and rituals. Even as the illustrated newspaper represents an important cultural innovation, its production maintained time-honored rituals. The Shah took a personal interest in its production, overseeing proofs of the newspaper before it was printed. Muhammad Hasan Khan Ġtimad al-Saltanah came from a family that had long served the Qajar household, and when he passed away, his title and governmental positions were passed down in his family. Thus his nephew, Muhammad Baqir Khan Ġtimad al-Saltanah, took over the production of Sharaf's successor, Sharafat. The calligrapher for Sharafat had studied and apprenticed under Kalhor, the chief calligrapher for Sharaf. And Abu Turab, the gifted illustrator whose lithographs for Sharaf show a tremendous talent that had barely been tapped into when he took his own life at a young age, came from a long line of artists working in the service of the royal households. His famous uncle, Sani` ul-Mulk, had worked as a newspaper illustrator before him. Thus, while the adaptation of lithography in Iran coincided with other attempts to reform and modernize the Qajar bureaucracy, we see a clear proclivity to meld the new with the old, to integrate long standing patterns of

governance into new modes of organization and production. The production of state-sponsored print culture "stayed in the family."

Print Culture and Opposition to the Qajar State: Mirza Malkum Khan's Qanun

"Law is the language and power of justice."
–Mirza Malkum Khan⁴⁵

Browne was clearly convinced that publications issued prior to the Constitutional Revolution had an impact on bringing that revolution about. He wrote, ". . . in examining the causes and means which produced the prodromata of this Revolution it will be established that these publications were an important agent, and hold a conspicuous place amongst numerous other influences."⁴⁶ That publications in general and newspapers in particular were a revolutionary agent seemed clear to Browne, as he wrote his monograph just a few years after the revolution had ended. But the historian who is reconstructing the era nearly a century later is faced with a special challenge in trying to get a more specific understanding of that process. What was the particular context in which political newspapers were produced and read in nineteenth century Iran? What was the impact of newspapers published abroad on the domestic politics of Iran in this crucial era? What was the status of readership at the time? Who was likely to read the newspapers? If the ideas printed in these newspapers were indeed revolutionary, how did they bypass the censors of the Qajars?

These are all important questions to ask but difficult ones to answer. It is with these questions in mind that I will now focus on one particular newspaper, Qanun, whose editor Mirza Malkum Khan began publishing it in 1890. It was clearly one of the more significant Persian newspapers published in its time. Fereydoun Adamiyat, one of the leading historians of modern Iran, wrote of Malkum, "We regard him as the most

prominent . . . social critic of nineteenth century Persia.”⁴⁷ Shaul Bakhash wrote, “Of the publications that appeared in Nasir a-Din’s lifetime, Qanun was the most important and influential.”⁴⁸ Browne had this to say about Malkum’s newspapers:

It was written by himself, and produced an important revolution in men’s opinions, while its simple style of writing and peculiar form made people eager and desirous to read it. . . . By reason of the incomparable style and expression of Mirza Malkum Khan in Persian, this became the best newspaper in the Persian language, and, by reason of its effect, has an important historical position in the Persian awakening. In short, the writings of Mirza Malkom Khan have, generally speaking, a great twofold historical importance in the political and literary revolution of the latest Persian renaissance. Politically they were one of the chief supporters of the promoters of the Revolution and the renovation of Persia, and the founders of the movement of the *Risorgimento*; while from the literary point of view they were the sole originator of a peculiar style at once easy and agreeable.⁴⁹

Mirza Malkum Khan was a son of an Armenian from Isfahan.⁵⁰ At the young age of ten, he was sent to France to study. Returning to Iran in 1852, he took a position as a translator at the Dar al-Tarjumah (Translation Bureau) and joined the faculty of the Dar al-Fanun (the Polytechnic) where he taught “the new sciences.” He allegedly converted from Christianity to Islam at this time, though this remains a matter of some controversy.⁵¹ Soon after his return to Iran, Malkum founded a masonic group, called the faramushkhaneh (lit., the house of forgetting). Malkum once met the Orientalist Wilfred Blunt who said of him, “he was the most remarkable man I had ever met.” During this meeting, Malkum told Blunt that his faramushkhaneh boasted some 30,000 members to whom he taught the “religion of humanity.”⁵² Many leading members of the nobility joined his secret society; some even believe that Nasir al-Din Shah was a member at one point. If so, the Shah soon lost his taste for the faramushkhaneh and banned it. Indeed, Malkum quickly became an annoyance to the government he served and was exiled from Iran in 1862 and given a series of diplomatic posts in Istanbul and Cairo. While serving as a diplomat in Istanbul, Malkum developed an important friendship with the Mushir al-Dawlah, the influential ambassador to Turkey. Apparently, it was also at this time that he

made the acquaintance of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the famous pan-Islamist who hopped between Europe and the Middle East in the late nineteenth century, leaving an indelible mark on Egyptian and Iranian thinking on Islam and modernity. When Mushir al-Dawlah, the ambassador to Turkey, was appointed Prime Minister in 1872, Malkum took a position as his assistant. Malkum then became the Persian ambassador to London, an important diplomatic post he held for some sixteen years.

In 1889, Malkum was granted a lottery concession by Nasir al-Din Shah who was visiting England. Upon returning to Iran, the Shah began to have second thoughts and rescinded the concession. In his memoirs, the Amin al-Dawlah wrote that the Shah came to the realization that the lottery, a form of gambling, was against the precepts of Islamic law and that this precipitated the Shah's decision to revoke the concession. Malkum, who had already sold interests in the concession for a profit of some 50,000 pounds sterling, refused to abide by the Shah's decision.⁵³ Needless to say, the primarily British investors in the Lottery Concession were little pleased at this turn of events. Many complained to the Shah and to British colonial officials in Iran, to no avail. One British resident of Iran wrote, "The Lottery people are, I think, behaving very stupidly. They telegraph the Shah instead of persecuting Malcolm. What can the poor Shah do? He has no power whatever over Malcolm now."⁵⁴ Malkum's rivalry with the influential minister Amin al-Sultan peaked during this crisis. Possibly under his advice, the Shah recalled Malkum, who refused to leave his post and return to Iran. The British Minister in Tehran, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff wrote of the diplomatic impasse to Lord Curzon, "I do not know whether you were here when Malcolm Khan was recalled. He had induced the Shah when in England. . . to give a concession for. . . a lottery and roulette tables in Persian and when the Shah wanted to withdraw it he sent a telegram abusing the Amin-es-Sultan. I fancy there must be a great row going on about it in London, but the telegraph is down."⁵⁵

Despite the Shah's desire for him to return to Tehran, Malkum stayed on in London. Once again, he refashioned himself, this time as a "loyal opposition." It was in the aftermath of this diplomatic fallout, in the years 1890-1, that Malkum published Qanun (Law). Though Malkum had been in the service of the Qajar state for most of his adult life, as a translator for the Translation Bureau, a professor at the Polytechnic, a diplomat in Cairo and Istanbul, an assistant to a prime minister, and as the Persian representative in London, he saw himself as a credible oppositionist and turned to publishing a newspaper as his primary tool for articulating and disseminating his oppositional views.⁵⁶ Some of Iran's historians consider his role as the editor of Qanun to be his most significant contribution.⁵⁷ Qanun was printed on a press with moveable type in London at an address on Lombard Street. Its pages were divided into two columns. Its header bore changing emblems, which may have held symbolic meanings taken from his freemason activities. It is important to note that Qanun was reprinted repeatedly in Malkum's lifetime and afterwards, and so extant copies may not necessarily be the original copies that were printed by Malkum himself.

Qanun was seen as an influential paper not just by virtue of its political content but also for the style of its writing. Its literary style and vocabulary left a mark on Persian writing. The words nation, nationality, and national (millat, milliyat, milli) were ubiquitous in the pages of Qanun.⁵⁸ He popularized the terms law (qanun), reform (tanzimat), and principles of administration (usul-i idara).⁵⁹ Some have argued that Malkum could not have written the articles in the newspaper; since he had been educated primarily in France, his knowledge of the Persian language was insufficient for composing such articles in Persian.⁶⁰ Still others have claimed that his simplified style of writing in Persian was influenced by his knowledge of foreign languages, while some have attributed his style to his years of experience in composing diplomatic correspondence. According to Browne, Malkum perceived the traditional tropes of diplomatic correspondence to be cumbersome and sought to restructure and streamline

the literary style of his own correspondence. He then adapted this style to his newspaper writing.⁶¹

In his classic study of Persian linguistics and literature, Bahar dubbed this straightforward style of Persian writing “Maktab-i Malkum.”⁶² Natiq has argued that though Malkum’s ideas themselves were not necessarily unique, his literary style itself was quite influential. Though he was not the first to argue for the particular reforms which are discussed in Qanun, Natiq argues, the fact that the articles of the newspaper were written in an easy and succinct style made them comprehensible and therefore appealing to a larger audience of Iranians.⁶³ Malkum’s simplified, though not simplistic, style was not accidental. He had been a great proponent of language and alphabet reform. While in Turkey, he had collaborated with Ottoman reformers interested in reforming languages produced in the Arabic script. E. G. Browne wrote that when he met Malkum, the two had discussed the idea of reforming the Persian alphabet. Indeed, Browne claimed, Malkum had a special printing press designed for printing Persian, Arabic, and Turkish literature with unjoined letters, which he operated out of his house in Knotting Hill Gate. Browne mentioned that Malkum has used the press to print the Gulistan of Sa`adi, but that as far as he knew, it did not produce any direct significant results.⁶⁴

Long before he undertook the publishing of Qanun, Malkum had been a vocal advocate of language reform and connected this process to the spread of print. He viewed these matters within the larger context of reform, progress, and civilization. In February, 1875, Malkum was in attendance during a lecture by Fredric Drew at the India Section of the Society of Arts, where he commented on the relationship between progress and writing systems, “Unfortunately, we know too well of the prodigious difference that European progress has placed between you and the people of the Orient. In searching for the causes of this difference, I have come to the profound conviction that the obstacle to our progress does not come from our religious principles or an inferiority in our race; the

principle obstacle – and I can say the sole [obstacle] – comes from our system of writing.”⁶⁵

As I mentioned, there were those who argued that the French-educated Malkum could not have possibly written the articles in Qanun himself. Even after copies of the newspaper were reprinted in Iran during the Constitutional Revolution under the supervision of Hashim Aqa Rabi-Zadeh,⁶⁶ these rumors persisted. Some suggested that it was really Afghani who wrote the articles in Qanun. In all probability, the articles were produced through a collaborative effort. The rumors about the true authorship of Qanun greatly troubled his wife, Princess Malkum, even after Malkum’s death. Having heard that Browne was writing a history of the still ongoing Constitutional Revolution, she wrote to Browne about this question. Malkum had passed away in the year 1908, and his wife felt strongly that he should be remembered. In a letter she sent to Browne, she wrote:

I am writing to ask you whether you will allow me to send you copies of my husband’s Persian paper, Kanoun, which, though you most probably have read before now, I should much like you to have in remembrance of the Prince, who constantly spoke of you with the most sincere appreciation of your works on Persia and your profound knowledge of matters appertaining to his country.⁶⁷

In another letter that followed shortly, Princess Malkum wrote to Browne upon having read an article in the Times about a reception in London for members of the late *majlis* at which Browne had spoken of Malkum as a prominent leader of the revolution and had credited Afghani with authoring Qanun. She wrote to Browne:

I cannot think that you have been correctly quoted, for I was certain that you knew Prince Malkom Khan to be the promoter, Editor and writer of Kanoun which he published anonymously in London. Every word of it he conceived and wrote entirely himself, unaided by anyone and I have the original M.S. in his writing. Some short time ago, many members of the late Majlis had the first numbers of the paper printed in gold letters and sent them to him as an expression of what they thought of his words, and indeed the whole of Persia knew it to be his work. I feel it my duty, dear Professor Browne, to insist on this from the many years of work, this

labour of love for his country gave him, and I know that the sin of plagiarism is not uncommon when so many wish that they were the originator of those new ideas. I hope you will have the goodness to let it be known that 'The Times' was incorrect, Prince Malkom Khan being the only writer and originator of Kanoun.⁶⁸

In his published work on Qanun, Browne seems unwavering in attributing the authorship of Qanun to Malkum; indeed he had argued that his literary style as reflected in its pages was influential in developing a new kind of Persian prose. What, then, can be said of the content of the newspaper? What motivated him to produce a newspaper as his vehicle for reform, his instrument as the loyal opposition? In the first issue of Qanun, Malkum clearly stated his reasons for choosing to edit a newspaper:

A small group of Iran's people, for a variety of reasons, have dragged themselves out of their familiar country and have become dispersed in foreign countries. . . Amongst these dispersed immigrants, those intelligent individuals who compare the progress of foreign countries with Iran have been wondering how to help the helpless ones who remain in Iran. After much thought and inquiry, they were agreed upon the idea that for the purpose of the rescue and progress of the people of Iran, no better instrument could be imagined than a free newspaper.⁶⁹

For Malkum, then, the publication of a free newspaper was a sign of progress as well as a vehicle with which to rescue Iran. Malkum probably had some less than benevolent reasons for publishing Qanun as well. It became for him an instrument with which to discredit his personal enemy, the Prime Minister Amin al-Sultan, who had been influential in persuading the Shah to revoke Malkum's lottery concession. Malkum's personal disdain for the Prime Minister is reflected in this passage from the first issue of Qanun, where he anticipates Amin al-Sultan's reaction upon seeing Qanun:

The Prime Minister will leap half a yard out of his seat as soon as he sees Qanun. He will hurl his cap on the ground, tear his collar, and after various womanish outbursts of anger, will run off to the foreign ambassadors, kiss their feet, and pledge them whatever is still left of the rights of the state, so that perhaps, by their help, the Qanun may be put on the proscribed list.⁷⁰

Though personal vengeance and vanity may have played some role in the tone of Qanun, Malkum's sole motivation for producing the newspaper could not have been to simply

annoy his longtime rival, the Amin al-Sultan. Indeed, a study of Malkum's diplomatic correspondence shows that his concern for Iran's troubles long preceded the publication of Qanun. For example, in 1874, he wrote an eight page memorandum to the British Foreign Office, sounding an alarm over the condition of Persia. The memorandum is marked "confidential: desired seen only as his personal opinion." In it, Malkum wrote:

Persia finds herself in the midst of two great dangers, one interior, the other exterior. The exterior danger, the whole world knows, is the natural and almost inevitable expansion of the Russian Empire across Asia. The internal danger is the general situation of Persia; her inability to establish a regular administration on her frontiers.⁷¹

Malkum pleaded for British intervention, which he felt was necessary in order to assure Persian independence. He concluded, "Persia abandoned to herself can do absolutely nothing; alone, she is irrevocably lost."⁷²

Even after he began publishing his newspaper, Malkum continued to lobby the British to help the situation in Iran. No longer an official diplomat, he turned his attention to influencing the British public opinion. One June 6, 1891, he published a letter in the British press under the heading, "A Crisis in Persia." In the letter he said that his life's work had been to strive for "Persian regeneration." He informed the British public of the establishment of his newspaper and said:

The body of the doctrine which I seek to explain gradually through the instrumentality of a popular journal, diffused throughout Persia, whilst it embraces the essential conditions of modern civilization, is strictly founded upon the great principles of Islam, and largely answers tot he wants and aspirations of the Persian people.⁷³

He went on to describe his plans for the articles that he would publish in his newspaper:

Not a word which is not perfectly in agreement with the best science and the purest morality; not a premature idea; no pretensions to an advanced Western liberalism – nothing but the elementary principles universally recognized as just, inoffensive, and indispensable. All this I have wrapped up in formulas calculated to strike the imagination and penetrate the heart of the people. As to my immediate object, my ambition goes no further than asking humbly of our Government to give us a Law.⁷⁴

In addition to publishing letters in the British press, Malkum gave lectures to various groups in order to affect British public opinion. One such address was given at the Queen's House in Chelsea which was the residence of the Rev. H. R. Hawels. In this lecture, Malkum asked, “. . . Why is it that European people have made such wonderful progress, while the Asiatic races, who were the first promoters of civilisation, have lagged so far behind?”⁷⁵ Malkum went on to restate his belief that neither race nor religion were a handicap for the Asians. Again, he emphasized the importance of security and law for achieving progress:

Without security of life and property, no progress – without justice, no freedom – without freedom, no national prosperity, no individual contentment and peace. Europeans have somehow fought for and won in varying degrees justice, freedom, and representative government.⁷⁶

He further advised his audience that it would be preferable if Europeans interested in the Eastern Question would “present European civilization independent of Christian dogma.”⁷⁷ And Malkum spent much of the talk arguing that Islamic civilization was not opposed to progress. Here, his views reflected the influence of his friend Afghani as he articulated an idea which remains an enduring concept in Iranian political thought:

As to the principles which are found in Europe, which constitute the root of your civilization, we must get hold of them somehow, no doubt; but instead of taking them from London or Paris, instead of saying this comes from such an ambassador, or is advised by such a Government (which will never be accepted), it would be very easy to say that it comes from *Islam*, and that this can be proved.⁷⁸

Although Malkum's rivalry with Amin al-Sultan and his inevitable anger at having been stripped of his rank as ambassador to London may have fuelled his outspoken criticism of the state of affairs in Iran, Qanun must not be seen as a mere instrument in the intrapersonal disputes of the Qajar royal court. And if the ideas he expressed in the newspaper reflect the influence of other thinkers, they are clearly in line with views he had long expressed. Malkum once said that Qanun was a culmination of forty years of his efforts, his thinking and planning on how to bring progress to the

Iranian nation. In the first issue of the newspaper, Malkum wrote, “Useful thoughts until they are collected together will not have any power and the collection of thoughts will not be possible without a newspaper.”⁷⁹ The larger mission of his newspaper consisted of four main goals: to publish the truth, to solidify unity, to search for the law, and to assist the oppressed.⁸⁰ With the publication of Qanun, Malkum hoped to offer a means through which various scholars could come together to employ their knowledge through “the power of the pen . . . in the service of the nation.”⁸¹

Qanun was printed roughly on a monthly schedule in the years 1890 – 1. In all, some 42 issues were printed, though they are not dated. When Qanun was originally published, it contained a price list in its header. The price was 20 grans in Tehran, 25 grans in other Iranian cities, and 15 francs abroad. Soon, however, the impracticality of selling the newspaper became clear and rather than listing a monetary price, the header of the newspaper asked for other forms of payment from its readers. In the fourth issue, the price of subscription was “one bit of knowledge.” The thirty-seventh issue’s price was listed as “patriotism” (millat-parasti). In exchange for payment, readers of the tenth issue were told that “understanding will suffice.”

Having named the newspaper “Law,” Malkum’s chief concern was to attempt to put in place an abiding code of law in Iran. “Iran is filled with God-given blessings. The thing which negates all these blessings is the absence of law. No one in Iran is the proprietor of anything, because there is no law.”⁸² Malkum went on to describe the anarchy that has resulted from this absence of law, “We appoint governors without law. We dismiss generals without law. We sell the rights of governance without law. We imprison the slaves of God without law. We grant concessions without law. We tear open stomachs without law.”⁸³ Malkum asserted, “All of the progress and calm of other nations is because of the establishment of law.”⁸⁴ Laws of other nations allow their citizens to know their rights and duties clearly. Such is the case in India, in Tiflis, in Egypt, in Istanbul and “even among the Turkmen.”⁸⁵ In the earlier issues of the

newspaper, Malkum was reticent to directly criticize the Shah. At times, he clearly stated that the flaws of the country were not due to Nasir al-Din Shah. In his discussion of the consequences of the lawlessness of the corrupt bureaucracy, he claimed that the problems were not a result of a lack of justice (ʿadalat) on the part of the Shah. However, the Shah's ʿadl was ineffectual without a system of law and an orderly bureaucratic system. He concluded, "All of the desolation and all of the tyranny have been because of lawlessness."⁸⁶

What did Malkum have to say to those Iranians who claimed that Iran already had a system of law in the form of the Islamic law, the shari`a? Had not the Qu`ran and the hadith provided every Muslim with a system of law which was abiding to all men for all time? Was Malkum advocating a secular system of law over an Islamic one? Indeed, in the very first issue of Qanun, Malkum addressed this matter directly. For several thousand years, he wrote, prophets and scholars had been collecting laws, "And the complete basis of laws we see before us in the shari`a of Islam as clearly as the sun. The problem is not in selecting the laws. The main issue is that good laws whether of the heavens or of the intellect, from whichever they are chosen, and in whatever language they are printed, and however much we fill our libraries with these laws, it is unlikely that they will be enacted by themselves."⁸⁷ So for Malkum, Iran's problem was not that it lacked a system of law. Indeed this passage conveys a seeming indifference as to whether the laws were divinely inspired or written by men; the focus of Malkum's discussion was on finding a system for enacting and enforcing the law. Sensitive to the possibility that his ideas might be perceived as advocating a European mode of law for Iran, he wrote:

We do not say that we want the law of Paris or the law of Russia or the law of India. The basis of good laws are universal and the best basis of laws are those which the *shari`a* of God have taught us, but from the lack of enactment of these laws, we have witnessed much damage and now we are so in need of and thirsty for law that we'll be satisfied with any law

even if it is the law of the Turkmen because even the worst laws are better than lawlessness.⁸⁸

This was a notion that Malkum repeated throughout the pages of *Qanun*. In a much later issue, he wrote, “We do not think it is necessary to refer to the laws of foreign nations. We find the shari`a of Islam completely sufficient for [bring about] the calm and progress of this nation.”⁸⁹ Though Malkum spoke approvingly of Islamic law throughout *Qanun*, he was clear that even Islam as witnessed in Iran at the time had been corrupted. As though responding to a question about the kind of Islam he would endorse, he wrote:

Which Islam? The Islam of learning, not the Islam of ignorance; the Islam of love, not the Islam of persecution; the Islam of progress, not the Islam of decline; the Islam of unity, not the Islam of division; the Islam of development, not the Islam of ruin; the Islam of reason (*‘aql*), not the Islam of imitation (*naql*); the Islam of man, not the Islam of things.⁹⁰

Even as Malkum criticized the state of affairs in Iran, then, he attempted to do so without alienating the Shah and the clergy. Alongside his bitter criticisms, he published words of conciliation. Indeed, Malkum attempted to devise a system which brought together various factions of Iranian society. He felt it was essential to forge a union amongst the people of Iran, to bring together the secular and religious scholars of the law, “The Mujtahids and scholars and the lords of the pen and owners of the words must bespeak the virtues of law and the necessity of unity night and day into the ears of the people of Iran from the schools, the pulpits, the streets, and bazaars.”⁹¹ Throughout *Qanun*, we see references to various classes of Iranian society. Developing “a union” (*ittifaq*) amongst these classes and groups was clearly one of Malkum’s objectives, “All classes of people: the mullah and merchant, the general and soldier, the prince and peasant in search of law must be of one opinion, one tongue, and cooperate.”⁹²

What did Malkum mean by unity? He noted that in Iran, the meaning of communal unity was still unclear. “Most think that when we say unity, it means that in all of our actions and in all of our thoughts, we must be unified. Such unity has never existed in this world and one can not have such expectations from human nature.”⁹³

What Malkum meant by unity was for the people to come together out of a common sense of knowledge – and to search for a universal law on the basis of that shared knowledge. Iran’s awakening was to come through knowledge. “If there is a means to awaken us, it is that whip of the people of discourse (ahl-i kalam).”⁹⁴

But Malkum also sought to bring about certain reforms in Iran – and the key to Iran’s prosperity was to implement the reforms that were based on knowledge. “The prosperity of Iran is linked to the prosperity of the world, and the prosperity of the world is, as we know, subject to the spread of knowledge.”⁹⁵ In one of the issues of Qanun, he wrote that a reader had written him asking, “How can the old ways of our nation be changed?” To which Malkum responded, “The same way that forty other nations of forty other lands have changed.”⁹⁶ And for Malkum, the answer to reform and progress was always to work to acquire knowledge and then to unite to spread that knowledge through the nation using a system of law. “Today, in the face of the power of neighboring states, neither Arabic words nor the bones of ancestors is of any use,” he once said, “Today, what we need is knowledge.”⁹⁷ Even the Shah needed to have a better understanding of “the meaning and power of knowledge” in order to better govern the country.⁹⁸ At one point, he beckoned the reader, “Arise, o champion of the wounded heart, for the days of darkness are at an end and the sun of knowledge has illuminated the world from East to West.”⁹⁹

Ultimately, what Malkum wanted for Iran was summarized in the three words that he wrote into the motto of the newspaper: unity, justice, and progress. Clearly, uniting the people of the nation, putting knowledge at the service of that nation, and instituting a code of law were chief among the ideas that Qanun reiterated in issue after issue. What concrete means did Malkum propose to bring about these desired goals? In one issue, Malkum set forth four demands. First, he wanted Iranians to have security of property and life. Secondly, he wanted to create a framework whereby the reigns of government were in the hands of the learned men of the nation. Thirdly, he wanted the taxes that the

people paid to be used to protect the rights of the nation and to be used for the betterment of the country rather than being squandered by corrupt religious and government organizations. And finally, Malkum wanted Iran to have a parliament.¹⁰⁰

Throughout the issues of Qanun, Malkum talked about establishing a parliament. In the third issue, he wrote that codifying a system of law in Iran must be carried out by a national parliament (majlis-i shura-yi milli).¹⁰¹ According to Malkum, in order for this parliament to be effective, it must be granted complete autonomy and authority. Its membership should be no less than 70 officials. The supervision of the ministries and government bureaus must fall to this parliament. Also, the parliament must be allowed to decide the tax rate on an annual basis, designating tax rates for certain groups; the parliament should be responsible for tax collection. In order to protect the members of parliament, Malkum held that no individual who was a member of that organization could be penalized for the decisions that were taken, unless he made a clear and significant error. In such a case, it should be left to the parliament itself to determine whether a mistake had been made that warranted recourse. The members of parliament should feel secure in their positions. And who did Malkum think belonged in this parliament? “The great mujtahids, the renowned intellectuals, deserving mullahs, the nobility of each province, and even the knowledgeable youth should be members of this parliament.”¹⁰²

At times, the writing in Qanun is a bit cryptic. This may be because of Malkum’s continued freemason activities, and it appears that the newspaper became incorporated into the activities of his secret society as well. Members of his faramushkhaneh were called adam (human). In one passage, he wrote:

In the end, what is one to do? One must become human. One must find other humans. And one must make a union with these humans. While human and which unity? The People of Knowledge will teach you. Which People of Knowledge? If you have not found the People of Knowledge, the People of Knowledge will find you.¹⁰³

In another issue, Malkum wrote, “This newspaper is written only for humans. People who are not human must not see these pages.”¹⁰⁴ The only way to understand this statement is as a reference to members of his faramushkhaneh. Browne was a bit skeptical of the extent of the impact of the faramushkhaneh, writing, “How far there really did exist in Persia such an organized society of reformers (the ‘Word of Humanity’), with pass-words and secret assemblies, as is hinted at in the pages of Qanun, is another matter.”¹⁰⁵

Still it appears that the network of Malkum’s followers in his faramushkhaneh played some part in distributing the newspaper throughout Iran. Indeed, the story of how Qanun, which was published in London, was delivered to Iran is an intriguing story in and of itself. One can not simply read printed texts in and of themselves in order to assess the larger historical impact of the printing revolution. Indeed the context in which these texts were produced and read is a crucial piece of the puzzle. Still it is quite difficult as a historian to get a sense of the distribution and readership of nineteenth century Iranian newspapers. Given the nature of the Iranian government at the time, what exactly do we mean when we discuss censorship? How did it function? We know that censorship did indeed exist; Malkum even speculated that upon seeing Qanun, the Amin al-Sultan would try to get it banned.

In his memoirs, the Amin al-Dawlah, who was a friend of Malkum’s, wrote that issues of Qanun began to appear in Iran. The Shah himself apparently saw some of the issues and became very angry. He declared the printing and distribution of Malkum’s paper to be strictly forbidden in Iran. The Minister of Publication, the ʿTimad al-Saltanah, who was discussed at some length in the previous chapter, had explained the European concept of “sansur” to the Shah.¹⁰⁶ The Persian government seems to have adapted this form of restriction. However, there were always authors and readers willing to actively bypass the censors. The ban on Malkum’s newspaper, according to Amin al-Dawlah, simply encouraged Malkum even further and made his newspaper even more

famous; people were even more eager to read this forbidden paper. Amin al-Dawlah, who as Minister of Post was responsible for censorship, claimed that he confiscated copies of Qanun that were posted to Iran. Nevertheless, he claimed that copies of the newspaper continued to enter Iran from the Ottoman Empire, from the Caucuses, and from Iraq; they were carried by travelers and merchants. Soon, the articles of the newspaper were read and discussed in social gatherings.¹⁰⁷

Some Iranians who were suspected of helping to distribute the newspaper were punished. According to Browne, “those unfortunate Persians who were known to have received it or to be in possession of it were arrested, and in several cases severely punished.”¹⁰⁸ Amongst these was Mirza Muhammad Baqir, who had been Browne’s teacher. Browne wrote that he suffered a long and hard imprisonment. By January, 1891, the arrests of readers of Qanun and those suspected of being affiliated with the newspaper had increased. Several mullahs were expelled. High government officials, including the Ambassador to Istanbul, lost their posts. Mid-level officials, such as the Consul-general in the embassy at Baghdad, were charged with distributing the newspaper. Mirza Nasrullah Khan, who was a Secretary to the Austrian Embassy, was arrested. He had a printing press in his house on which he reprinted copies of Qanun for distribution throughout Iran. Seyyid Hussein, who worked for the court translating newspapers, especially those from India, was also arrested.¹⁰⁹ Mirza Reza Kirmani was amongst those arrested for reading Qanun; in 1896, this same man assassinated Nasir al-Din Shah. These arrests demonstrate that the ban against the newspaper was seriously imposed, but that despite the dangers many were willing to read the paper at great personal risk. The readership seems to have come from various classes, including the clergy, mid-to high level Iranian bureaucrats, and merchants.¹¹⁰

It is clear, then, that despite the prohibition against reading Qanun, it had a following in Iran who read, reprinted, and distributed the newspaper. To get a better sense of the distribution of the paper and readers’ reactions to it, I now turn to comments

from subscribers in Mirza Malkum Khan's personal papers. One reader named Abdul-Hussein wrote that the people are complaining that one issue a month of Qanun was not enough and encouraged Malkum to publish the newspaper more frequently.¹¹¹ Another letter contains comments from readers living in Istanbul, Tehran, Kirman, Nizir, Zanjan, and Sirjan.¹¹² So Qanun seems to have been read in the provinces as well as Tehran. Another series of unsigned letters from a reader in Iran update Malkum on the arrival of various shipments of the newspaper. In one of these letters, we read that those issues of Qanun that were sent through the French post had arrived.¹¹³ In another, he mentions that the shipment of Qanun that was sent through the British post had been received.¹¹⁴ It would appear that the French and the British cooperated in distributing the banned, oppositionary newspaper into Iran. The diplomatic post was not subject to the Shah's censors.

Mirza Aqa Kirmani, the editor of Akhtar, an influential Persian newspaper printed in Istanbul, wrote to Malkum regularly. Akhtar had printed articles discussing the need for instituting a code of law long before Qanun was published. But Natiq believes that Qanun, with its more simple and direct style, was read by more Iranians than Akhtar.¹¹⁵ There seems to have been a relationship between the two newspaper publishers, Kirmani and Malkum. Kirmani wrote admiringly of Qanun, "Each of its arguments was a spring of life-giving water; a new life came into my body. . . . I was dead; I came to life. I was tears; I became laughter by reading its pages. . . . After all the hopelessness and grief that I have felt for the condition of Iran, I have once again become hopeful."¹¹⁶

Another reader from Istanbul wrote to Malkum, "Qanun stirred a new joy in my heart and connected the roots of my soul to a divine [mystical] song . . . I see myself as a new person . . . A slave on the road of patriotic martyrdom and for the advancement of Humanity, I stand with . . . firm resolution." He talked of the various connections that he had in Istanbul with other Iranians, noting that soon large numbers of Iranian pilgrims would be coming through Istanbul. He asked that Malkum send him at least 20 copies of

each issue of Qanun to be distributed to these pilgrims. He also wrote the addresses of various Iranians, mainly merchants, living in Bombay, Baghdad, Basra, Egypt, Trebizond, Erzerum, Istanbul, and Tiflis who had requested copies of Qanun.¹¹⁷ Merchants living in Iran and in merchant communities outside of Iran clearly played a key role in the distribution of the newspaper and were among its loyal readers. They sometimes smuggled copies of the newspaper into Iran, hidden in shipments of cloth and sugar. But this reader also made a direct reference to working to advance Humanity, suggesting that he was also promoting membership in Malkum's secret society. There seems to have been a connection between Malkum's faramushkhaneh and the distribution of his newspaper.

The letters from readers also indicate the deep impact that the newspaper had on them. Though some of the comments could be seen as typical Persian polite exaggeration, one can not dismiss these responses altogether. One reader wrote, "If Sa`adi came to life [and read Qanun], he would say nothing in praise of himself."¹¹⁸ Qanun came to fore at a time of great turmoil in Iran; the Tobacco Revolt was underway during its publication. In response to the colonial pressures I have discussed in chapter two and the intransigence of the Qajar dynasty, Malkum's newspaper offered a democratic and nationalist solution. To those readers who were also active in the nationalist movement, such as Kirmani, the newspaper offered some hope. For some of its readers at least, it may have also offered spiritual solace.

Lahuti, who later became one of the leading nationalist poets of the Constitutional movement, described his discovery of Qanun:

The first issue of Qanun seduced me [as I read it]. When I came to myself, I saw my father standing above me. He was staring at me. It became clear that I had been drowned in the reading of Qanun for hours – to the point where I did not notice my father's entrance. Sweating in fear, I pleaded for my father's forgiveness for having taken Qanun and read it without his permission. My father said: Dear Son! It is I who have sinned

for not having informed you of the existence of this newspaper until now.¹¹⁹

Lahuti's father explained that he was a member of Malkum's secret society and that this was how he had come to own and read copies of Qanun. His father added:

Qanun was very secretive and dangerous. In any house where it is found, that house and its inhabitants will be destroyed. My wings were opened from hearing my father's words and tiredness and hopelessness left me. I told myself this is that fire which I seek.¹²⁰

That Qanun was a significant influence on Iran is undeniable. It openly discussed ideas of constitutionalism in a way that fused Islamic ideology with notions of representative government. It held the Shah accountable to a body of represented officials. The law of the land could no longer be left to the will of the Shah alone. Instead, Malkum wrote that the ultimate authority lay with the people of Iran. Fifteen years after Qanun was published, the people of Iran began a revolution. It was the first revolution to take place in a Middle Eastern country for the explicit purpose of establishing a constitutional government. Qanun helped to set the stage for that revolution. It did so by creating a shared discourse amongst various segments of Iranian society – a discourse with which the Iranian people could critique the state, a discourse which allowed them to imagine an entirely different relationship with the state. After Qanun, words like reform and law became integrated into the Persian vocabulary of governance. And the act of reading and distributing an oppositionary newspaper which had been banned by Shah was itself a revolutionary act. From the comments of readers, one gets the impression that the act of importing the illegal newspaper, distributing it to readers, reading it together in majlises or social gatherings, and passing along cherished copies was in itself a means of creating a community.

As Brinkley Messick has noted, the process of imagining a community through print in the Middle East was notably different than the way it has been described by Benedict Anderson.¹²¹ Iranians in the nineteenth century did not get up every morning, go to the front door in their bathrobes to get the daily issue of Qanun to read over coffee

and toast. They were more likely to read it at a social gathering, to have it read to them in the bazaar, or to read a copy of it in Istanbul on their way to make the Holy Pilgrimage. Or like the poet Lahuti, they might have read it crouched in a dark closet in their home. We can not claim that Qanun was a newspaper that framed the world within a universally shared cultural product which neutralized space and time, allowing a shared link amongst otherwise disconnected citizens of a state. But Qanun did cut across some important barriers of class and of geography. Merchants and princes, ambassadors and secretaries, mullahs and university instructors living in Tehran, Kirman, Nizir, Zanzan, and Sirjan read the newspaper. And at a time when the exile communities of Iranian merchants and oppositionary intellectuals were geographically dispersed, we know that Qanun had a readership in Bombay, Baghdad, Basra, Egypt, Trebizond, Erzerum, Istanbul, and Tiflis. And through the power of the print, these men were able to read about ways to put the power of knowledge to the service of their nation. And this, after all, was the chief aim of the Constitutional Revolution.

In his study of print culture and the French Revolution, Roger Chartier cautioned against a simplistic notion that the printing press brought about the French Revolution.¹²² Clearly, I am not arguing that the printing of newspapers in itself was a revolutionary impetus in Iran either, but print facilitated the production and dissemination of revolutionary ideas in the decades preceding the onset of the revolution. For decades prior to the political manifestation of the Constitutional Revolution, a tradition of newspaper publishing was already in place in Iran and amongst Iranian exiled communities. Newspapers like Qanun provided a forum through which ideas on government and society could be formulated and shared among various groups of Iranians.

British Colonial Officials and the Persian Press: Coverage of Lord Curzon's 1903 Visit to the Persian Gulf in the Local Press

In the previous chapter, we saw that the Iranian exile community in India and British Orientalists and colonial officials played a role in shaping the nature of some significant printed books. How did these elements influence Persian newspaper publishing in this era? Are we to assume that Persian newspapers that were printed in India, and therefore not subject to the censorship of the Qajar authorities, were a free press? And what role did the newspapers published in the provinces in Iran play on the larger nature of print culture? In this section, I will turn my attention to these questions by focusing on the coverage of Lord Curzon's visit to the Persian Gulf in 1903 in the provincial newspaper Muzaffari. An examination of the coverage of that trip in the provincial newspaper Muzaffari, published in Fars, gives some insight to the multifarious nature of the pressures placed on newspaper publishers by both British and Persian officials. There had been some concern about Lord Curzon's proposed trip to the Gulf to visit officials from Persia and the emirates. Should Persia be treated in the same fashion as the emirates? Was it necessary to clearly demonstrate the different status of Persia vis-à-vis the Government of India in the deployment of official protocol? Was this trip Curzonian grandstanding that might further complicate Anglo-Persian relations?

These concerns were raised by various British diplomats, but in the end, the decision was taken that Curzon should proceed with the trip. In November, 1903, Grant Duff send Curzon a translation of an article about the impending trip from Iran, an official gazette. It reads in part:

The English press is attaching much importance to the Viceroy's visit to the Persian Gulf and his meeting with the British Minister . . . We congratulate the Viceroy in the part of the Persian nation on his arrival on our frontier, we expect good results from his visit, and we pray The Almighty for the continuation and consolidation of friendship and union between Persia and her old friend Great Britain, who rules today over millions of our coreligionists in the East whose prosperity and welfare we desire.¹²³

But in December when Curzon's ship arrived at Bushire, he did not come to shore. There was a dispute as to where he would be staying – at the home of a Persian dignitary or at the British consulate. There was also a question of whether local Persian officials should greet Curzon on board his ship or whether he should disembark and greet them on the shore. The rank of the dignitaries who would participate in the welcoming ceremonies was also at issue. Clearly, diplomatic decorum was a reflection of power and authority, and this power struggle between the local Persian officials and the Viceroy of India remained unresolved. Curzon explained his impression of the diplomatic debacle:

The progress which I had been making around the Gulf can not have given unmixed pleasure in all quarters; and the remark of the Ala-ud-Dowleh blurted out in conversation to Colonel Kemball that he was not going to be treated like an Arab Sheikh, indicated what was passing in the Persians' minds Indeed it was obvious that the local desire was to show that the Governor of India was an inferior personage to the Governor General of Fars.¹²⁴

Not all British officials agreed with Curzon's understanding of the situation. One letter initialed THS (possibly authored by Thomas Sanderson) from the India office indicates that there was an alternative reading of the events in the view of some British officials:

In strictness . . . the Governor General of Fars was at Bushire the Representative of the Shah of Persia, Sir A. Hardinge was the British Representative and Lord Curzon was a very eminent British official of the highest rank. It is quite intelligible that the Shah may have felt that if his Representative paid the first visit to the British officer, who had not been in any way accredited to Persia, at the British Consulate General, that act would popularly be construed as in some way an acknowledgement of British domination in South Persia.¹²⁵

The Persian press had sent correspondents to Bushire to cover the ceremonies of Curzon's visit. Instead, they reported on the ensuing political dispute, and British and Persian diplomats alike followed what was written in the press closely. Curzon forwarded a lengthy translation from Muzaffari to other British officials. Curzon prefaced the translation:

I now forward, for your information, a copy of the “Muzaffari”, a local paper, which purports to give an account of what occurred on the occasion of my visit to that port. . . [T]here is reason to believe that Ala-ed-Dowleh inspired the articles, and paid the Editor for writing them, so that the paper possesses some interest as indicating the explanation of their conduct which Persian officials thought fit to advance. . . .The tone of the article is distinctly impertinent. . . .¹²⁶

An abstracted translation of the article follows in Curzon’s letter. It stated that although in an earlier article, it had promised to discuss in detail Curzon’s trip, it must now discuss the injury incurred due to the refusal of the distinguished guest from disembarking: “So they bring the facts to notice for their compatriots and strangers, and so that the former may be fully aware that they have suffered this treatment at the hands of people who consider themselves civilised and educated and the Persian uneducated.”¹²⁷ According to the abstract forwarded by Curzon, the article went on to discuss the preparations which at great expense had been made for the visit by Persian officials. Interestingly, the newspaper described the visit as ‘a spectacle’ which was to be covered in great detail by Persian journalists:

. . . [C]rowds, who had never seen such a military display, were waiting expectant of the spectacle, shop-keepers, photographers, and newspaper correspondents, the latter noting the details of the comings and goings of all.¹²⁸

And then Curzon quoted the final sentence of the article in direct quotation: “The reasons for his not landing and the various excuses he made will be detailed in our future numbers, so that the magnanimity and the sense of honour of the Persians may be made manifest in contradistinction.”¹²⁹

However, the editor’s promise to publish information on the ongoing dispute never materialized. Instead, the newspaper coverage of the issue itself became part of the diplomatic haggling. Curiously, the editor seems to have displeased both Persian and British officials with his article and was bastinadoed. The British representative to Tehran discussed the matter of punishing the editor and censoring Muzaffari in correspondence with Lord Lansdowne, the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs:

The Governor of the Gulf Ports has asked to demand at Tehran the suppression of the local newspaper Muzaffari and that the punishment of its editor whom he has already bastinadoed for some misstatements, believed to have been inspired by the Ala-ed-Dowleh, about the Viceregal visit. I have replied that we cannot, consistently with our dignity, demand the further punishment of the man, and that his articles are not libelous nor of a nature that constitute a press offence as we understand it. The Salar Moazzam's object undoubtedly is to draw the attention of the Tehran Government to these rather foolish newspaper comments, and to strike through them at Ala-ed-Dowleh.¹³⁰

It appears that Curzon's debunked visit to Persia, that came to be known in British diplomatic circles as 'the Bushire incident,' was resolved when both Persian and British officials decided to deem the event a misunderstanding. Patient diplomatic mediation, with a series of visits on behalf of representatives in London and Tehran seem to have assuaged various injured parties. Though it seems that the Bushire incident did little to improve Curzon's reputation as an egoist with a difficult personality. It served as yet another incident of tension between the India Office and the Foreign Office over handling Persian affairs. Still the underlying implications of official decorum remained a sensitive matter in the years leading to the actual partition of Persia between the British and the Russians in 1907.

What is of special interest to me is the role played by the press in the articulation of power and authority in this scenario. Naturally, the British press had written articles discussing Curzon's trip prior to his departure. These articles had been read by Persian newspaper editors and had been included in their coverage of the event. Indeed, reporting on information from European newspapers (especially Russian, French, and British) was a regular practice of many Persian newspapers. In discussions of the preparations made for Curzon's trip in Bushire, we read of photographers and reporters who had come to the city to cover the story in ever detail. And in the ensuing diplomatic quarreling, we see that both the British and the Persians took issue with the way Muzaffari, the official paper of the province of Fars, reported the Bushire incident.

Torturing the editor with the bastinado was acknowledged by the British officials to be sufficient punishment.

Just as the Curzon incident draws attention to the importance of ceremony in the construction of colonial power as well as anti-colonial resistance, its coverage in the press and the reception of that press in diplomatic circles is illustrative of the power of the press in Persia at this time. Attempts were made by various parties to influence the editor. The contest for power – between the central government in Tehran and the provincial officials and between the British and Persian governments – manifested itself in the pages of newspapers of the time. Ultimately, the views published by the editor of Muzaffari, whether his own or influenced by local dignitaries, were suppressed – but not before causing some alarm in Tehran and London. Clearly, censorship is deployed in cases where the power of the press is perceived to be threatening. By 1903, it appears that the real or perceived power of the Persian language press was sufficiently threatening to the authority of British and Qajar rule.

The story of the Bushire incident, however, did not stop with the punishment of the editor and the diplomat resolution of the problem. Even as they were exchanging diplomat visits and letters to lay the matter to rest in official circles, they sought other ways to control the damage to British prestige by the incident. Here again, the Persian language press came into play. Duff, a British official in Tehran, wrote his recommendations to Lord Lansdowne:

I would then publish the correspondence as part of a Blue Book, dealing with [the] entire visit to [the] Gulf. It will be reproduced in the *Habl-ul-Matin*, and will be diffused all over Persia. Object, should I think be to make it clear rebuff has been administered by us, and that the Viceroy's own action has sufficiently vindicated his own dignity.¹³¹

This comment is extremely revealing. It makes it clear that the press offered the British a dual diplomatic strategy – appearing to make peace through normal diplomatic channels while at the same time presenting views that favored their position in the Persian press.

Important, it also indicates that a British official in Tehran was able to suggest to the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs that the Persian newspaper *Habl al-Matin* was at their disposal for the publication of pro-British views. The *Habl al-Matin* was an important press headed by Muhammad Kazim Shirazi and located in Calcutta. Shirazi is widely considered to have been an important voice of opposition to Qajar autocracy – within the diasporic Iranian community in India and inside Iran itself. The newspaper *Habl al-Matin* is considered to have been influential. In 1914, Browne described it in the following manner:

It is the oldest regular Persian newspaper which still survives, and holds an important position, especially amongst men of learning and in religious circles, in which it has a special weight and influence . . . The office of this newspaper, by reason of its old-established and steadily progressive character, produced many other publications and institutions. . . ¹³²

In assessing the progressive nature of the newspaper, however, some scholars including Browne have failed to take into account that Shirazi not only lived in British India where the Persian language press was subject to the kinds of press controls that I have described, but that he was in the employ of the British Government in India. And while his presses were used to print books and newspapers in the Persian language that offered a critique of the Qajar state, they also printed Persian language examinations for the British civil servants. And from the comments of Duff to Lansdowne, it was clear that British officials from Tehran to London felt secure in their ability to publish their views in *Habl al-Matin* and to control its distribution as well. Ironically, while the existence of a diasporic Persian press community in India clearly facilitated the fusion of nationalism and print culture, it also helped to subsume part of the discursive articulation and distribution of that nationalism to the authority of British colonialism. As Seton-Karr's discussion of 'the native press in India' showed, British colonial power was heavily reliant on the manipulation of public opinion, for which they relied heavily on their ability to control the native press.

The process of state-building by the Qajar bureaucracy, the development of nationalist thought and the constitutional movement, and the articulation and deployment of British power were all reflected in the print culture produced in the late Qajar era. But the analysis of these larger political processes through the medium of print culture reveals the delicate dance between power and resistance in this critical period of Iran's history. A newspaper meant to reflect the power of a provincial governor in Iran becomes threatening to the legitimacy of the authority of the Indian government over the Gulf region. An influential and progressive newspaper read by Iranian men of learning and clerics during the constitutionalist movement was printed in Calcutta by an Iranian opposition figure who worked as a civil servant to India; his newspaper was apparently also a vehicle for printing pro-British sentiments. A lifelong civil servant of the Qajar bureaucracy printed a newspaper in London which was smuggled into Iran through a network that included French and British colonial officials, merchants, and members of a secret society. Though its publisher had served as an ambassador under two Qajar kings, his newspaper was republished during the Constitutional Revolution and was heralded by the members of the newly formed parliament. And if the print culture of this period in Iranian history is seen as having helped to produce and document the ethos of the Constitutional Revolution, this is in no small measure due to the academic work undertaken by the Cambridge Orientalist, E. G. Browne. The early stages of Iranian newspaper publishing in the decades leading up to the 1906 Revolution show that the lines between the cultural production of the state, the nationalists, and the colonizers were blurred. The boundaries of power and resistance were interrelated, linked, and sometimes overlapping.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 5

¹ Qanun, no. 4, p.1.

² Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), p. 183.

³ Jürgen Habermas, pp. 181-186. In a valuable commentary on Habermas' important study, Geoff Eley summarized key aspects of Habermas' articulation of the public sphere: "It was identified most obviously with the demand for representative government and a liberal constitution, and more broadly with the basic civil freedoms before the law (speech, press, assembly, association, no arrest without trial, and so on). But Habermas was less interested in this more familiar process of overtly political change. More fundamentally, the public sphere presumed the prior transformation of social relations, their condensation into new institutional arrangements, and the generation of new social, cultural, and political discourse around this changing environment. Conscious and programmatic political impulses emerged most strongly where such underlying processes were reshaping the overall context of social communication. The public sphere presupposed this larger accumulation of socio-cultural change. It was linked to the growth of urban culture – metropolitan and provincial – as the novel arena of a locally organized public life (e.g. meeting houses, concert halls, theaters, opera houses, lecture halls, museums), to a new infrastructure of social communication (including the press, publishing companies and other literary media, the rise of a reading public via reading and language societies, subscription publishing and lending libraries, improved transportation, and adapted centers of sociability like coffeehouses, taverns, and clubs), and to a new universe of voluntary association." See Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," paper delivered at the conference "Habermas and the Public Sphere," University of North Carolina, September 1989, p. 2. Published in Craig Calhoun, Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

⁴ E. G. Browne, "The Persian Press and Persian Journalism," A lecture delivered to the Persia Society, London (May, 1913), p. 3.

⁵ Note that Browne states that the Rabino handlist contained some 243 entries, whereas the edition of the handlist which I studied included 236 titles.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁹ Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 20-1.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 22.

¹² Ibid, p.22.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983), p. 77.

¹⁴ see my discussions of Shirazi in chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁵ Akhbar, 1st of Jamadi, 1253/1837, p. 2

¹⁶ "Persian Newspaper and Translation," JRAS (1839), pp. 355-371.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 355.

¹⁸ Durand to the Marquess of Dufferin, Tehran, April 16, 1896, MSS D727/5, Durand Personal Papers, OIOC.

¹⁹ Avery, p. 821.

²⁰ Anderson, p.62.

²¹ Habermas, p. 15.

²² Patricia Eckert Boyer, "The Artist as Illustrator in Fin-de-siècle Paris," in The Graphic Arts and French Society, 1871-1914, ed. Phillip Dennis Cate (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988), p. 163.

²³ Iraj Afshar, preface to Ruznamah-yi Khaterat, pp. 5-6.

²⁴ Sharaf, no. 1, 1300/1882.

²⁵ M. Bahar, Sabk Shenasi, v. 3 (Tehran, 1337/1958-9, 2nd printing), p. 345.

²⁶ E. G. Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Iran, p. 109.

²⁷ Sharaf, no. 30, 1302/1885.

²⁸ Much of this biographical information is derived from Abu Turab's obituary, published in Sharaf, no. 75.

²⁹ Abu Turab's famous uncle, Sani` ul-Mulk, was himself a highly accomplished lithographer and served as the chief illustrator for a state newspaper. He also supervised the production of a six-volume illustrated manuscript of One Thousand and One Nights, which is considered one of the greatest examples of an illustrated printed books from the Qajar period. See Layla S. Diba, "The Qajar Court Painter Yahya Ghaffari: His Life and Times," in Persian Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars, ed. Robert Hillenbrand, London, 2000, p. 83. According to Basil Robinson, the noted Islamic art historian, Sani` ul-Mulk's portraits were "among the finest products of the lithographic process to be found in any Persian publication." See B. W. Robinson, "Persian Painting in the Qajar Period," in Highlights of Persian Art, ed. Richard Ettinghausen and Ehsan Yarshater (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 352-3.

³⁰ This tendency is best exemplified in a watercolor attributed to Abu Turab that is reproduced in Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785-1925, p. 254. Layla S. Diba has characterized this watercolor as "one of the most charismatic images of Qajar painting known." She notes the intensity of the image and the precision of execution that are blended with the artist's "aesthetic impulse." The watercolor, featuring dark colors on a neutral background, depicts a simple subject: a cleric sitting cross-legged and staring straight ahead. The soulful quality of the piercing eyes, however, show the depth of the artists' feeling and his tremendous communicative talent. Layla S. Diba, Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785-1925, ed. Layla S. Diba with Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: I. B. Tauris with the Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1998), p. 254-6.

³¹ Γtimad al-Saltanah, Ruznamah-i Khatirat, p. 785.

³² Layla S. Diba, "The Qajar Court Painter Yahya Ghaffari: His Life and Times," p. 87.

³³ `Abd al-Rafi` Haqiqat Rafi`, Tarikh-i Hunarha-yi Milli va Hunarmandan-i Irani, v. 2 (Tehran, 1990), pp. 1011-13.

³⁴ Γtimad al-Saltanah, Ruznamah-i Khatirat, p. 226 and p. 309.

³⁵ Γtimad al-Saltanah, Ruznamah-i Khatirat, 232.

³⁶ Sharaf, no. 24, 1302/1884.

³⁷ Sharafat, printed an obituary of Bismarck with an illustration by Musavvir al-Mulk in 1316/1898.

³⁸ Sharaf, no. 51, 1304/1887.

³⁹ Sharaf, no. 31, 1302/1885.

⁴⁰ The measurements are given as 43 zar` by 18 zar`.

⁴¹ Sharaf, no. 6, 1300/1883.

⁴² Sharaf, no. 50, 1304/1886. See a description of the statue and Abu Turab's lithograph in Royal Persian Painting: The Qajar Epoch, 1785-1925, pp. 265-6.

⁴³ Sharafat, no. 46, 1318/1900.

⁴⁴ Sharafat, no. 27, 1316/1898.

⁴⁵ Qanun, no.3, p.1.

⁴⁶ Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, p. 19.

⁴⁷ Adamiyat as quoted in H. Farman Farmayan, "The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth Century Iran," in Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, ed. William Polk and Richard Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 137.

⁴⁸ Shaul Bakhash, Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy, and Reform Under the Qajars, 1858-1896 (London: Ithaca Press, 1978), p. 396.

⁴⁹ Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰ A sometimes controversial character, Malkum has had his share of detractors as well. Here, I am not attempting to judge his character but to ascertain the significance of his newspaper. Huma Natiq has written that questions about Malkum's desire for financial gain, his continued efforts to be granted titles by the Shah, and other controversies do not call into question his status as a reformer of the Qajar era. See Huma Natiq, "Ma va Mirza Malkum Khan-ha-yi Ma," in Az Mast ke bar Mast, pp. 136-200. One of the criticisms that is sometimes made of Malkum is that he espoused different views when speaking to different audiences. A close reading of his work, however, indicates a striking continuity in the ideas he sets forth -- both across time and to audiences in Europe and within Iran. Indeed the views he presents in his newspaper, Qanun, reflect his private correspondence with British officials and commentaries he produced in the British press.

⁵¹ See. H. Farman Farmayan, Modernization, p. 173 and Mangol Bayat, Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 55-56.

⁵² As quoted in Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (London: Frank Cass, 1966), reprinted edition, p. 38.

⁵³ Khatirat-i Siyasi-yi Amin al-Dawlah, ed. H. Farman Farmayan (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1370), pp. 138-9.

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- ⁵⁴ Ironside to Curzon, Tehran, January 12, 1891, MSS.EUR.F112/614, pt.1, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.
- ⁵⁵ Drummond Wolff to Curzon, Tehran, December 21, 1889, MSS.EUR.F112/614, pt. 3, Curzon Personal Papers, OIOC.
- ⁵⁶ He went on to serve as the Persian ambassador to Rome under Muzaffar al-Din Shah.
- ⁵⁷ See Isma`il Ra`in, Mirza Malkum Khan (Tehran, 1350), pp. 11; Huma Natiq, introduction to the reprints of Qanun (Tehran, 2535), p. 1; Bakhash, p. 382.
- ⁵⁸ Bakhash, p. 320.
- ⁵⁹ Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, p. 18, Amanat, "Constitutional Revolution," EIr, v. 6, p. 163.
- ⁶⁰ Natiq, Az Mast ke bar Mast, pp. 163-200.
- ⁶¹ Browne, The Persian Revolution, p. 39.
- ⁶² Malik al-Shu`ara Bahar, Sabk Shinasi (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1327), v. 3, p. 374. Bahar is considered one of the most prominent literary critics of modern Iran.
- ⁶³ Natiq, introduction to Qanun, p. 4.
- ⁶⁴ Browne, The Persian Revolution, p. 39.
- ⁶⁵ Mirza Malkum Khan, commenting following a lecture by Fredric Drew at the India Section of the Society of Arts, as printed in the Society of Arts Journal, February 19, 1875. Original is in French. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from French and Persian which appear in this dissertation are by myself.
- ⁶⁶ Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, p. 125.
- ⁶⁷ Princess Malcom Khan to E. G. Browne, Paris, October 15, 1908, Box 12, bundle 2, folio 70, Browne Personal Papers, University Library, Cambridge.
- ⁶⁸ Princess Malkom Khan to Browne, Paris, November 7, 1908, Box 12, bundle 2, folio 71, Browne Personal Papers, University Library, Cambridge.
- ⁶⁹ Qanun, no. 1, p.1. A complete English translation of the 14th issue of Qanun appears in Hamid Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1969), Appendix C, pp. 300-308.
- ⁷⁰ Here, I am using Browne's wonderful translation of the passage, The Persian Revolution, p. 36.

⁷¹ Memorandum from Malcom, received April 8, 1874, FO 60/166, original in the French.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Malkum Khan, "A Crisis in Persia," June 6, 1891, newspaper clipping found in the Curzon's Personal Papers, MSS.EUR.F111/68, OIOC. Curzon subscribed to a service that collected newspaper clippings on subjects that interested him. His personal paper collection suggests that he followed news of Persia closely throughout his career.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Malkum Khan, "Persian Civilization," as printed in Contemporary Review (1891), pp. 238-244.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 239.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 244.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 243, emphasis his.

⁷⁹ Qanun, no. 1, p. 4

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Qanun, no. 2, p. 1.

⁸² Qanun, no. 1, p. 1.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Qanun, no. 1, p. 3

⁸⁵ Qanun, no. 1, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Qanun, no. 3, p. 1

⁸⁷ Qanun, no. 1, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Qanun, no. 1, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Qanun, no. 17, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁰ Qanun, no. 27, as translated by Bakhsh, p. 343.

⁹¹ Qanun, no. 1, p.3.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Qanun, no. 3, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Qanun, no. 14, as translated by Algar, p. 304.

⁹⁵ Qanun, no. 17, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Qanun, no. 29.

⁹⁷ As quoted in Bakhsh, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁸ Qanun, no. 41, p. 4.

⁹⁹ Qanun, no. 14, as translated by Algar, p. 308.

¹⁰⁰ Qanun, no. 22, p.1.

¹⁰¹ Amanat has pointed out that Malkum was the first Iranian to articulate a notion of parliamentary government, even in this oblique and vague fashion. The notion of representative government as espoused in Qanun were “central to the emerging revolutionary ferment.” See Amanat, “Constitutional Revolution,” p. 164. The fact that the newspaper was reissued and circulated after Malkum’s death while the revolution was underway and the praise with which Malkum was spoken of during the early sessions of the parliament or majlis support Amanat’s position.

¹⁰² Qanun, no. 3, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰³ Qanun, no. 4, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Qanun, no. 3, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Browne, The Persian Revolution, p. 42.

¹⁰⁶ Avery, p.828.

¹⁰⁷ Khatirat-i Siyasi-yi Amin al-Dawlah, pp. 139-140.

¹⁰⁸ Browne, The Persian Revolution, p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Natiq, pp. 10-12.

¹¹⁰ Bakhsh, pp. 315-7.

¹¹¹ Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folios 99-100.

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- ¹¹² Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folios 101-102.
- ¹¹³ Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folios 110-111.
- ¹¹⁴ Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folios 66-67.
- ¹¹⁵ Natiq, p. 3.
- ¹¹⁶ Kirmani to Malkum, Istanbul, 1308/1890, Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folio 63.
- ¹¹⁷ Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folios 94-95.
- ¹¹⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folios 61-62.
- ¹¹⁹ As quoted in the Persian in Isma`il Ra'in, p. 119.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ Brinkely Messick, paper delivered at the Johannes Pedersen Conference on Print in the Islamic World, the University of Copenhagen, June 18-19, 1994.
- ¹²² Roger Chartier, The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).
- ¹²³ "Translation of Article which Appeared on Nov. 3rd, 1903 in Tehran Gazette 'Iran'," enclosure in Grant Duff to Curzon, Tehran, November 10, 1903, FO 60/730. British colonial officials regularly included translations of articles from the Persian press in their correspondences. At times, the articles were translated verbatim and other times abstracts appeared sufficient. This seems to suggest the weight given to opinions appearing in the press, that is having a public nature.
- ¹²⁴ Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, Camp, December 10, 1903, FO 60/730.
- ¹²⁵ THS, India Office, December 31, 1903, FO 60/730.
- ¹²⁶ Curzon to Brodrick, Fort Williams, January 7, 1904, FO 60/730.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.
- ¹³⁰ Hardinge to Lansdowne, Basrah, December 15, 1903, FO 60/730.

¹³¹ Duff to Lansdowne, Tehran, January 13, 1904, FO 60/730.

¹³² Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, pp. 73-4.

CHAPTER 6
THE HOUSE OF SPECTACLE:
THEATER AND NATIONALISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY IRAN

After eating dinner, the sun was still up, and we went to the theater (tamashah-khanah, lit. the house of spectacle). There were many people in the streets. When we arrived at the theater, we ascended many steps, passed through the lobby, and sat in the box in front of the space where they performed plays. It is a large theater, one of the structures of the Emperor Nicholas. It has six levels, and in each level, there were women and men. There was a large chandelier hanging from the middle of the theater. . . . The curtain went up and a strange world appeared.¹

This description by Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848-1896) recounts his evening at the theater in Moscow in the year 1290/1873, at the outset of a journey that would take him through Russia, Prussia, Germany, Belgium, and England. The Shah made copious observations of his trip which were recorded in his journal, and the theater was clearly of special interest to him. When he was not en route by boat or train, he seems to have visited the theater, the ballet, or the opera nightly. Little evaded his keen eye. He carefully noted the lighting of the stage, the orchestra that played throughout the performance from a section beneath the stage, the orchestra that played throughout the performance from a section beneath the state, the actors who were dressed in fantastic or realistic costumes. His travel journal, which was printed and widely read in Iran, allowed him to share the spectacle of nineteenth century Europe with his Iranian countrymen.²

The theater also offered the nineteenth century European observer a vantage point from which to view Iran. In the late nineteenth century, European scholars of Iran “discovered” Persian theater. In his preface to Théâtre Persan, the first anthology of Persian drama to be published in a European language, A. Chodzko noted, “The Persians

have dramas, spectacles, and a complete dramatic literature, that can astonish the Orientalists. We are astonished, that among all of us, among the great many scholars and tourists who study and observe the Orient, we know of no one who before us has reported on this literature that is so remarkable.”³ Chodzko introduced the European reader to the taziyeh, a form of popular religious theater likened by some to the passion plays of the European Middle Ages. Through the nineteenth century, the taziyeh continued to be performed, yet Iranian theater was to undergo a major transformation with the creation of a new form of theater that was secular and nationalist by Mirza Fath `Ali Akhundzadeh and Mirza Aqa Tabrizi. Their plays are an example of the innovative use of culture by some of Iran’s intellectuals seeking solutions to some of Iran’s social and political problems. The theater was a “house of spectacle” in which the Iranians created representations of Iran and of “Farangistan” (Europe) as nations with distinct cultural boundaries. In return, these plays offered a new venue for the Orientalists who studied Iran.

The study of theater can elucidate aspects of the interrelationships of culture, colonialism, and nationalism. And for the historian seeking to integrate cultural and social history, the theater is particularly inviting for as Raymond Williams noted, “dramatic forms have a real social history.”⁴ Though Williams admitted that drama has very different expressions within different historical and social contexts, the theater nevertheless retains an implicitly social quality as it entails not only the creation but transmission and reception of representations.⁵

The Tradition of Popular Theater in Iran

One of the main attractions of studying the emergence of secular nationalist theater in Iran is that one can trace the creation, documentation, and reception of a new cultural form. Clearly one can not fully understand a “new” cultural form without

studying the “old” forms that preceded it. And before the rise of a secular, nationalist theater in the nineteenth century, Iran had an array of theatrical arts such as the ruhowzi, arrusak-bazi, naqali, siyah-bazi, and taziyeh that could best be described as popular theater.⁶ Perhaps the best known of these forms of popular theater in Iran prior to the nineteenth century was the taziyeh, which were representations of religious scenes, primarily those revolving around the martyrdom of Hussein and Hasan, two Shi`ite imams.⁷ The taziyeh flourished in the nineteenth century, both in its street festival form and in its magnificent stage representations that took place on especially constructed stages (takiyehs). In his study of Persia, a German diplomat and Orientalist included a photograph of a taziyeh production that captures the mystical aura of the plays. From a distant vantage point, we see the production taking place in a large circular room. The actors and the audience are indistinguishable from one another; only a thin stream of light from a hole in the ceiling illuminates the scene.⁸

On his trip to Iran, the indefatigable Lord Curzon experienced the taziyeh firsthand. In his Persia and the Persian Question, he described the occasion in his characteristic prose:

At the time of my visit Meshed was in one of its chronic spasms of religious excitement. The anniversaries of the martyrdom of both Hasan and the holy Imam were being commemorated. Tazihs, or religious plays, were being acted; the holy paces were crowded to suffocation; and beaten tomtoms and clamored convocations made the night hideous. Judging from the noise that he made, there must have been some particularly holy personage living near my quarters in the British consulate; and freely did I anathematise this insufferable saint, as I lay awake at night listening to his long-drawn lamentations and plaintive howls.⁹

Travelers to Iran had noted the taziyeh, but it was not until the late nineteenth century that the Europeans took serious note of these plays. In the preface to his Théâtre Persan, Chodzko noted the absence of critical study of the taziyeh by Europeans. “This can be easily explained,” he wrote. A European has certain fixed ideas about the theater

and matters relating to it. For example, it takes place in specially constructed buildings. One expects a certain “personnel du théâtre” such as the promoters of the actors. None of these can be found in Iran. Furthermore, the Persians lack a dramatic language. What drama the Persians had, according to Chodzko, was completely different from that of the Europeans. And finally, he observed that the character of Persian drama was exclusively religious.¹⁰

Chodzko saw the lack of a theatrical tradition resembling the European style to be evidence of the lack of civilization in Iran. He was heartened, he wrote, though amazed at the site of the Turkish Sultan walking down through the streets of Paris, partaking in the fruits of French civilization. He viewed the travels of Nasir al-Din Shah to Europe as a hopeful sign and remarked that his own copy of the Shah’s Ruznamah was within sight as he wrote this preface. Though the Iranian writers had nothing by way of a substitute for the taziyeh as yet, he hoped that their increasing travels to Europe would remedy this situation. Though Chodzko claimed to be introducing the taziyeh to the European readers for the first time, he did not appear to be enamored with it. In fact, he commented on the brief translation of such a play in Gobineau’s book, “In my view, the charm of the French style of the scholar/traveler sheds a light that brings life to the work, which when read in the original language” offer nothing to the European scholar that can not be found in the *Mysteries of the Middle Ages*. What is of interest in the taziyeh for the history of art, he claimed, was the absolute religious conviction of the men involved in the productions. Men of riches were known to channel their energies in order to increase their religious and political influence by sponsoring taziyeh productions.¹¹

Taziyeh productions were sponsored by the Qajar kings and Nasir al-Din Shah commissioned a new state takiyeh. In an issue of a state newspaper, Sharaf, the *ʿAtimad al-Saltanah* reported on the structure. He wrote that he hoped that subsequent generations would view the building as a sign of the generosity and piety of Nasir al-Din Shah. Underlining the size of the structure, he detailed the specific building materials and

estimated the cost of the structure would be 300,000 tumans. The building was to feature a spectacular dome shaped roof. When visiting the Gulistan Palace, Curzon saw the completed takiyeh and commented on the famous roof:

At the further extremity of the Gulistan rises the extraordinary circular structure, the arched ribs and girders of whose open roof I had seen from a distance as I approached Tehran, rising above the low level of the housetops. . . . From the upper rim of the building rise the great arches and iron-bound traverses of the roof. It was originally intended to cover the whole with a dome, the Shah, it is said, having been so impressed with the Royal Albert Hall in London, as to long for the reproduction in Teheran; but the substructure was found to be inadequate to the burden. Accordingly, these spans were thrown across and awnings were stretched over them when the play is acted in the heat of the day; the precise counterpart of the velarium of the Roman amphitheater.¹²

And Curzon noted that the rental of boxes in the takiyeh was a source of revenue for the state. In the year 1888-89, the state derived 16,250 qrans from these rentals which amounted to about 485 pounds sterling.¹³

The year after the publication of Chodzko's anthology, Colonial Sir Lewis Pelly's English anthology of taziye was printed in London by William H. Allen, publishers to the India Office.¹⁴ Pelly had served as the Secretary of Legation and Political Resident in the Persian Gulf from 1862 until 1871 until his transfer to Tajputana. Pelly noted the impact of the taziye on Iranians, "I was struck . . . by the effect produced upon all classes of society at the capital as they listened, day after day, to this unprecedentedly long tragedy. From the palace to the basaar there was wailing and beating of breasts, and bursts of impassioned grief from scores of houses wheresoever a noble, or the merchants, or others were giving a tazia."¹⁵ Pelly determined to inscribe this tradition and render it into English. "It so happened that I was acquainted with a Persian who had long been engaged as a teacher and prompter of actors. I arranged with this man that, assisted by some of his dramatic friends, he should gradually collect and dictate all the scenes of the Hasan and Husain tragedy."¹⁶ Here we get a different sense of the taziye from Chodzko's description. These does appear to be a "personnel du théâtre" attached to the

taziyeh, one whose cooperation Pelly enlisted in order to produce his book. After leaving Iran, Pelly turned over the project to A. N. Wollaston, a translator for the Indian Service with whom he corresponded regularly about the completion of the manuscript, primarily discussing matters of cost and speed of printing the book.¹⁷

A striking feature of Pelly's explanation of the taziyeh is that it is one play. The European reader who was being introduced to the taziyeh by Pelly would inevitably have the false impression that all across Iran, all taziyeh productions were one and the same, and that Pelly had inscribed that "oral tradition" into a fixed text. However, various representations of religious events were enacted in the plays. He wrote:

This drama is singular. It is so in many respects. It is singular in its intolerable length, in the fact of the representation of it over many days, in its marvelous effects on the Mussulman audience, both male and female; in its curious mixture of hyperbole and archaic simplicity of language; and in the circumstance that the so-called unities of time and space are not only ignored, but abolished. . . . Mohammed appears on the scene at will...it seems to be a universal Here and a universal Now.¹⁸

Chodzko and Pelly inscribed and translated the taziyeh and offered it to European consumers of Persian literary history. This cast of characters is of interest in and of itself. Chodzko was on the faculty of the Collège de France when he wrote his anthology, but his interest in Iran began when he was the Russian Consul in Rasht. Pelly was an officer of the Indian Government who undertook literary studies during his spare time in the field. These anthologies, however, were more than simple literary studies. They were investigations into the language, form, ritual, and religion. They were elements in the study of civilization, or the lack thereof, in the colonial world. As theater critics, they noted the formatic difference of Iranian drama as digressions from the civilized norms, as further examples of the difference of the Iranian. Iranians may be more civilized than other Orientals because they had a dramatic art, but the seeming inability of Iranian dramatists to adhere to the rules of drama (i.e., European dramatic mores) offered further proof of the inherent cultural superiority of the European. The process of translation was,

in their view, an improvement upon the original. By rendering these text from the oral tradition, printing it in Persian and in translation, the European literary scholars were rendering a mysterious theatrical form into readable and understandable texts.

Yet the very act of transcribing, editing, and translating these plays in a sense disembodied them. They were not meant to be scripted dramas. They were not meant to be literary masterpieces. The essence of the taziyeh went beyond simple plots. These were productions that blurred the line between ritual and theatrical representation, between the audience and the actors. The producer/director, known as the mu`in al-buka (the bringer of tears), stood amidst the actors on stage, preparing props, giving stage directions, and distributing scripts to the appropriate actors as the plays progressed.¹⁹ For the participants, the taziyeh may have offered a release from the daily tensions of life, an opportunity to shed tears for the martyrs of this life and the past.²⁰ For some European scholars and travelers, the taziyeh was a spectacle of Shi`ite sentiment, a venue into the sacred, and further evidence of European cultural superiority.

Mirza Fath `Ali Akhundzadeh and Mirza Aqa Tabrizi: The Beginnings of Nationalist Theater in Iran

In 1859, Mirza Fath `Ali Akhundzadeh published a series of tamsilat or comedies formed on the models of Molière and Shakespeare. Written in Azeri Turkish and published in Tiflis, these plays have come to be known as the first secular plays written in the Islamic world and the first nationalist plays written by an Iranian. Influenced by Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Tabrizi wrote the first modern secular Persian plays in the 1870s. Together, these men can be credited with creating a new theatrical form in Iran, one that marks a clear departure from the traditional theatrical representations discussed earlier. Their plays were written with a clear text and were intended to be read and seen by an audience that was set apart from the stage. Gramsci observed that theater was a

controlled cultural form, and the theater of Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi stood in juxtaposition to previous kinds of theatrical art forms in Iran in this respect (Gramsci 1985). In their plays, extemporaneous theatrical representation gave way to scripted plays with clearly defined dialogues and plot development; a communal and religious theater gave way to a nationalist and educative theater. No longer was Shi`ism the assumed link of the audience; for the first time, the audience was referred to as a millat or a nation.

Why did these men feel compelled to create a new literary form? Both Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi left behind explanations of their motivations for writing these plays. Akhundzadeh's insights appear in his autobiographical essay, in the preface to his plays, and in his letters. In a letter to Tabrizi, Akhundzadeh wrote, ". . . the purpose of the art of drama is the refinement of the character of the people and the edification of the readers and listeners. . . . The era of 'Gulistan' and 'Zinat al-Majlis' is past. Today, these kinds of writings are not useful for the nation (millat). Today, the writings that are useful for the nation and agreeable to the taste of the readers are the drama and the novel." Encouraging Tabrizi's own interest in playwrighting, he wrote, "I hope you will devote much time to this noble art . . . and that you will make great progress and will become a guide to your compatriots, those who share your language, and your co-religionists in this art."²¹

Tabrizi wrote a dialogue on the usefulness and purpose of drama in which he asserted, "studying these plays and becoming informed of the stories, narrations, thoughts and counsel that is in them will lead to the vision and increased education . . . of the nation and the cause of progress and prosperity in the country" and this in turn would strengthen the government.²² Above all, it is this focus of using the theater as a vehicle to communicate with the nation that sets these plays apart, for in the process, Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi were in a sense delineating the nation with whom they were communicating.

Both Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi used theater as a forum for debating contemporary social and political issues. Their plays were written in a simple colloquial style and did not retain the complex and intricate symbolism of classical Persian. Their tashbih or representation was simple to decode. Their candid discussions of everyday life were thinly cloaked in satire. They repeatedly refer to theater as a venue for the edification and the education of the nation. In fact, the subtitle of Akhundzadeh's plays as they appeared in the Persian was, "The Book of the Edification of Behavior." In its preface, Akhundzadeh noted that human beings were capable of happiness and sorrow, that they were confronted in life with good and bad. However, he observed a strong resistance to constructing representations of "the bad" in Persian literature. In Europe, he noted this had been done to great advantage. By viewing representations of social maladies, he contended, one could better understand them and therefore remedy them.²³ If these playwrights sought to remedy social ills, as they claimed, what did they consider these maladies to be?

Tabrizi's plays are generally set in urban settings and deal primarily with the corruption of the government at various levels and the implications for Iranians of all classes, genders, and ethnicities.²⁴ In his Tariqqih-yi Hukumat-i Zaman Khan, which takes place in Burujird in 1266/1849, he confronts the issue of the corruption of provincial governors and their rank and file quite openly. The play begins with the Governor telling his main farrash (attendant), "This year in this state, I want to govern and behave in such a manner that the residents will forget all of the previous governors and bureaucrats and as long as they have life, they will praise my governance."²⁵ He complains that something must be done about all the wine-making and prostitution in his province. His main attendant understands that his Governor seeks to make greater profits from pishkish (favors). He first approaches Vartanus, the Armenian, with false claims that his neighbors have been complaining about his wine-making. Vartanus is stunned, as he has an established arrangement with the local officials, providing them with some

of his produce as well as regular cash payments in order to carry out his business. Vartanus becomes quite distraught and pleads with the attendant saying, “In Church, I will say a big prayer for you.” Whereupon the attendant motions towards some money saying, “You know this all will not be fixed with money.” A relieved Vartanus whispers that he finally understands the purpose of the visit and agrees to make another payment. Take it, he says, “and still say that Armenians are stingy.”²⁶

The attendants then searches for a prostitute in town. To his great disappointment, they all seem to be out of work, having passed away, married, or retired. He calls on one who has retired and convinces her to contact a former client, a wealthy merchant in town. Together they plot to entrap the merchant in order to bribe him. He is lured to the prostitute’s house and is caught with his pants down (literally) by local officials who receive healthy bonuses for their silence.

Another play, Sarguzasht-i Ashraf Khan, Hakim-i Arabistan, further demonstrates the direct and harsh tone of Tabrizi’s criticism of the corruption of the government and the acquiescence of the people. Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi were well aware of the dangers of writing plays that too closely resembled the actual state of affairs in Qajar Iran. Indeed, Akhundzadeh warned Tabrizi that this particular play may cause him some problems with the authorities, “Writing and publishing these sorts of things . . . is a dangerous thing. And especially in a kingdom like Iran where freedom has not yet been extended to printing, writing, and thinking, what is one to do? [Yet] the issue is very worthy.”²⁷ The setting of this particular play is the capital city of Tehran in 1815. A local official of the province of Arabistan has come to the city to clear up his accounts for the taxes of his province for the past three years, to pay the percentage owed to the central government, and to receive the khil`at (customary robe) of governance for his province. He hopes that his meetings with the chief tax collector will be quick and that his stay in Tehran will be short. Realizing that he must pay some favors in order to get through the bureaucratic machinery, he has made arrangements to bring several bags of

gold with him. Unbeknownst to him, the prime minister and the chief tax collectors have conspired to over-estimate the tax intake for his province, in order to get a larger commission from him. In addition, they have agreed to stall Ashraf Khan in the capital as long as possible in order to receive as many favors as possible for making the arrangements of his stay.

Ashraf Khan's original bags of gold that were meant to last for the duration of his trip begin to dwindle with great speed as everyone from the attendants to the prime minister ask for more bribes that he had anticipated. Every time he takes a meal or smokes a nargil (water pipe), it appears that he must pay a dozen people. After a few days, Ashraf Khan becomes distraught. Speaking to himself, he says, "God, what a mistake I have made? What governance? What account?!" That night, poor Ashraf Khan sleeps in great discomfort and dreams that he is in a courtyard surrounded by seven or eight great snakes that are attacking him. He awakes screaming. In the morning, he enters the courtyard of the house where he is staying and calls for a Karim Aqa to come and interpret his dream, when suddenly five men dressed in red appear before him. Ashraf Khan recalls his frightening dream and becomes frozen in fear; his stomach becomes tied up in knots and makes loud noises until he finally defecates on himself. He runs to the outhouse and asks an attendant for a clean pair of pants. Stepping once again into the courtyard, Ashraf Khan is still riddled with fear and faints. As he is resuscitated, he moans, "Oh dreams of snakes, oh snakes of dreams!" The play's twisted plot continues with Ashraf Khan paying a favor at every turn until he sneaks quietly out of town, with great reservations about the value of the governance of his province.

Akhundzadeh took great offence at certain aspects of this play by Tabrizi, especially at the use of words such a "outhouse," "defecation," and "filth." He cautioned Tabrizi to remove these words from his script.²⁸ Some contemporary theater critics also deride Tabrizi's plays, viewing them as contrary to the accepted norms of the theater. This play, in particular, is offered as evidence of his lack of familiarity with the basic

rules of drama.²⁹ Others, however, see Tabrizi's plays as innovative and in mood with the theatrical breakthroughs of his contemporary European playwrights:

Mirza Aqa shocked the conformists and the believers in classical conventions in theater . . . who criticized his free language and disregard for the three unities. Precisely these 'mistakes' gave his work an unintended boldness and modernity. A. Bricteux believes that the comical situations and funny everyday dialogues make these masterpieces of humour comparable to Gogol's 'Revisor' and Jules Romain's 'Knock'. These plays denounce, in an uninhibited way, moral simperings, corruption of absolute rulers, and the sheepishness of the people.³⁰

Akhundzadeh's plays are set in rural Azerbaijan and deal with the lives of peasants. Like Tabrizi, Akhundzadeh portrays the consequences of various social problems and the passive acceptance of them by the peasantry. He questions the value of arranged marriages, suggesting that women should have a greater say in the choice of their spouses. He exposes the corruption of alchemists and sorcerers. He draws attention to the corruption of local Islamic courts, which could be manipulated by local officials and corrupt mullahs, meting out injustice in the name of Islamic law. And several of his characters are foreigners.

Akhundzadeh was born in the Persian Empire. By the time he was an adult, his hometown was part of the Russian Empire. As a translator for the Russian viceroy in Tiflis, he was in a position to meet various foreign intellectuals and diplomats. As Adamiyat noted, Georgia at the turn of the century was a crossroads of Persian, Armenian, Russian, Turkish, and European cultural influences. It was at this crossroads that Akhundzadeh derived his inspirations for cultural innovation.³¹ H. Algar portrayed Akhundzadeh as a reformer who along with Mirza Malkum Khan stood in awe of the West and sought to remake Iran in its shape. He cites the play, M. Jordan and Musta'`Ali Shah, as evidence that Akhundzadeh favored western-style sciences over traditional forms such as sorcery that still retained an influence among the Iranian people.³² I suggest that the play can be read quite differently leading to an alternative understanding

of Akhundzadeh's position on western sciences and his general attitude towards reforms in Iranian society.

M. Jordan, a European botanist, visits a village in Azerbaijan in order to collect some specimens which he will take back to "farangistan" where there is a giant chart. If M. Jordan manages to add enough new specimens to this chart, he will become famous and probably rich as well. The local villagers watch with amazement as he plucks away at the weeds, wildflowers, and leaves that grow around their village, preserving them carefully as though they were rare and precious possessions. His amazed unfamiliarity with the things that seem so ordinary to the peasants may be seen as Akhundzadeh's critique of nineteenth century Orientalists, with whom he undoubtedly had contact in his official duties.

During his stay in the village, M. Jordan befriends a young man who is slated to be married to a local girl. But M. Jordan fills his head with ideas of going to Paris to learn French, so he can get a bureaucratic job in the city. The women of the village suspect that the boy's real motivations for making the trip to Paris are to see the women who reportedly walk around nearly naked and dance with men who are not even their husbands. The village women enlist the help of a local sorcerer who convinces them that this grave situation will require gross measures. Requesting a huge fee, which is paid with the money that had been set aside by the villagers for the impending nuptials, the sorcerer promises to cast a spell on Paris itself so that it will be destroyed once and for all. The spell is cast and when M. Jordan hears of it, he pretends to be in great anguish. The villagers regret their actions, feeling pity for the people of Paris, including M. Jordan's friends and family, who have now all been killed. M. Jordan takes advantage of the ensuing chaos to sneak the young man out of the village and takes him to Paris after all.

The villagers realize that they have been tricked by M. Jordan and the sorcerer alike. The play ends with a peasant asking why it is so easy to fool people who clearly

have the capacity for wisdom. In my view, in this duel between the botanist and the sorcerer, there is no clear winner. It does not appear that Akhundzadeh meant to endorse the western sciences over the more traditional local forms. Rather, he reveals flaws in both and calls on the people to use their wisdom and to not be so easily duped by practitioners of either sort.

In the preface to his Persian translations of Akhundzadeh's tamsilat, Mirza Ja`afar Qarajedaghi wrote that the readers of these plays should employ patience and wisdom in reading them. They will then be justly rewarded by reading the book which had been produced under great difficulty for the purpose of opening the eyes and ears of the people.³³ Both Tabrizi and Akhundzadeh remarked repeatedly on the educative power of drama through its representations of social ills to the audience. They consciously chose to create a new literary form, a highly satirized drama dealing with everyday problems, that was form of social and political critique. In their writings, they referred again and again to the nation, millat, as their chosen audience. In the following section, I will attempt to establish the history of the transmission and reception of these plays.

Transmission and Reception: Reconstructing the Audience of Iranian Nationalist Theater in Qajar Iran

Who was likely to have seen or to have read the plays of Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi in the nineteenth century? How were these plays received and perceived by the audience? Akhundzadeh promoted his plays vigorously, sending copies to his network of intellectual friends in Iran and taking copies with him on his trip to Istanbul in 1873 with which he gifted the Sultan. He set about the task of getting his plays translated into Persian to make them more accessible to an Iranian audience. In a letter to Qarajedaghi, he wrote that his Persian translations had not only captured the essence of his plays but possibly improved on them. He urged Qarajedaghi to see to the quick printing and

distribution of the book. The lithographed Persian edition appeared in 1874 and did not go unnoticed.

Akhundzadeh claimed that his plays were performed in the Caucasus in Russian translation and were favorably reviewed in literary magazines in Berlin and St. Petersburg.³⁴ H. W. Brands confirms that they were published in Russian in the journal *Kavkas* and were performed in Russian at Tiflis and St. Petersburg. Apparently the only time they were performed in the original Azeri Turkish was by school children at state schools in Azerbaijan at the end of the 1870s.³⁵ There is no evidence that the plays were performed in Iran until the 1960s and 1970s,³⁶ but they were read in social gatherings in Qajar Iran. This is not unusual as Akhundzadeh meant for his plays to be read and seen, often referring to theatrical audiences as mustama`in (listeners). Tabrizi, Mirza Ja`afar, and Akhundzadeh all gave specific directions on how the plays should be read, noting the importance of using a different voice for each character, of maintaining appropriate voice inflection, and avoiding reading the stage directions. The speech of older men, foreigners, and Armenians were to be read with the appropriate intonations and accents.³⁷

In fact, Tabrizi wrote that he first heard Akhundzadeh's plays at a gathering (majlis) where talk had turned to the art of rhetoric. The host of the gathering brought out a copy of Akhundzadeh's plays which were read aloud. "Its simple and sweet words and meaningful and pleasant expressions hung like . . . gems . . . from the ears of the listeners Retelling these sorts of stories and articulating these sorts of plays will lead to the progress and education of the nation (millat)."³⁸ And so Tabrizi took it upon himself to translate the plays. Failing at that task, he decided to write some plays in Persian using Akhundzadeh's plays as his model. He sent a copy of his plays to Akhundzadeh, asking that he remain anonymous. Given the fact that his plays were highly critical of the government and that Tabrizi worked as a bureaucrat, this request is not surprising. Clearly this anonymity led to the confusion that caused his plays to be ascribed to Mirza Malkum Khan for some time. In 1956, two Soviet Azeri scholars discovered original

drafts of the plays which Tabrizi had sent to Akhundzadeh and correctly attributed the authorship to Tabrizi himself.³⁹

This new dramatic Iranian form also had an audience in Europe and British India, among Orientalists and diplomats alike. It was in their Persian translation that Akhundzadeh's plays first came to the attention of W. H. D. Haggard and G. Le Strange. Haggard had served as the Second Secretary to H. M. Legation in Tehran and G. Le Strange was an Orientalist who had already translated Persian literature. In 1882, they published an English translation of the *Vazir of Lankarun* as "a text-book of modern colloquial Persian for the use of European travelers, residents in Persia, and students in India." Their edition included a transcription of the play in Persian, an English translation, an introduction that paraphrased the preface to the Persian translation, a grammatical introduction, several pages of notes, and a glossary for the study of the vocabulary and pronunciation of key words. Here was an opportunity for Europeans wanting to learn Persian to have a colloquial text. ". . . It may safely be said that there is hardly a sentence in the whole Play that he might not find daily occasion to use in the Bazars."⁴⁰ Subsequent translations were rendered in French and English throughout the 1880s and 1890s by Barbier de Maynard, S. Guyard, A. Cillière, and G. Le Strange. A German translation was published in 1889 by an Austrian Orientalist, Adolf Wahrmund. A few of these translations were published in academic journals, such as Le Journal Asiatique and The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. More commonly, they were collated, glossed, and published as textbooks of colloquial Persian.

Students of Persian in British India made good use of these texts in their language study. Several editions of the plays and their English translations were printed and lithographed in India. One edition of particular interest was produced in 1906 by Muhammad Kazim Shirazi, the Persian Instructor to the Board of Examiners and an editor of the Persian newspaper, Habl al-Matin, who has been discussed in previous chapters. In one of his textbooks for the lower standard examination in Persian, he

published a literal translation of the Vazir of Lankarun by Akhundzadeh alongside an excerpt from Nasir al-Din Shah's travel journal. In fact, the segment of the Shah's journal recounts his travels through Rasht and Lankaran, the same cities in which Akhundzadeh's play is set. The juxtaposition of a play ridiculing the corruption of local officials and selections from the Shah's travel diaries through this same region of Iran underlines Akhundzadeh's critique of the power plays common among Qajar provincial officials. The use of Akhundzadeh's play in a textbook for the examination of Persian for the civil servants in India ensured a wide readership amongst India's colonial officials in 1905, just as the Iranian Constitutional Revolution was underway.

The publication of some of Akhundzadeh's plays in translation in JRAS drew the attention of its readers, several of whom wrote letters to the journal on the subject. In one such letter published in 1890, F. J. Goldsmid responded to the plays passionately, claiming that they addressed "no less important a question than the regeneration of Persia. . . If Mirza Fath `Ali's plays do not attempt at high teaching, they are at least suggestive of a healthy innovation, which the Persian now living are capable of turning to good account, both for themselves and their countrymen."⁴¹ Commenting that these plays had not been performed in Iran, Goldsmid wrote:

May it be that they touch too keenly the sore points of the Persian character, and interpret too plainly the national vanity which kills every germ of enlightenment obtained from outside influences? They lay bare for the first time in Oriental literature a painful Truth, acquaintance with which is the first step to reformation. My humble opinion is that a drastic treatment such as this would open the minds of the more simple-minded native to the wretched shams which he has been taught to acknowledge as Justice and equitable government, and to the real character of those whose decisions he has been trained to respect and obey – consequently, to the consciousness of power to rise from his self-imposed abasement and become a free and thinking creature.⁴²

That Goldsmid had very strong opinions about the need for reform in Iran and the potential power of this new drama is clear, but what was his particular relationship to Iran? F. J. Goldsmid was a life-long colonial official. He began his military service for

the Indian Government in Madras in 1839. While in Hong Kong in 1841, he started a journal; on the first page, he wrote a list of places, including Russia, Turkey, American, Persia, Aleppo, Damascus, Florence, and Jerusalem. Beneath this list, he wrote, “How many, if any, shall I be permitted to see?”⁴³ Indeed his career did offer him the chance to see many countries and to learn several languages, including Hindi, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.

In 1841, Goldsmid won a Chinese war medal for his service in the capture of the Forts of the Bocca Tigris. In 1855, he served in the Crimean War after which he returned to his post in Sind as the Assistant Commissioner for a special inquiry into Alienated Lands in Sind. After the Indian Mutiny, he worked in the trials translating “addresses to the native troops and the promulgation of sentences to the Mutineers.”⁴⁴ He later worked with the Indo-European Telegraph and served as its Director-General at one point. In this capacity, he traveled to Iran to negotiate a telegraph treaty and wrote a pamphlet, “Telegraph and Travel” about his journey. In 1870, he was the official Arbitrator of the Perso-Afghan frontier, after which he served in various diplomatic capacities in India and Egypt. As his official biography at the India Office explains:

He was in Egypt during the outbreak In September, 1881, to June, 1882, when he proceeded to London, and thence, by special order from Lord Granville, to Constantinople. Reaching Alexandria again on July 8th, he remained, under instructions, on board the P. and O. Tanjore pending the bombardment. Under the authority of Sir Beauchamp at Alexandria he organized an Intelligence Department at Alexandria, and remained its chief until it was broken up at the end of the war. In this capacity he made constant reports of the enemy’s movements, examined suspected persons, controlled the despatch of telegrams, and was Censor of the local press.⁴⁵

In 1883, Goldsmid undertook his final colonial mission in the Belgian Congo where he was sent “to carry out special measures for the organization of the new State.”⁴⁶ Upon retiring from the colonial service, Goldsmid continued to be active, principally through his work for the Royal Geographic Society and his writing. His personal papers show that his sometimes intertwined interest in the theater and the East continued.

The plays also came to the attention of another colonial official. While writing *Persia and the Persian Question*, Lord Curzon contacted numerous specialists on Persia. One British diplomat in Iran, Churchill, who had been a source of information for Curzon wrote disparagingly of the corruption of the provincial governors:

In the towns the Gov[ernor] has many sources of income. But his most successful one is the administration of Justice. . . In the judicious administration of what is called 'moeurs' by the French the Gov[ernor] has a goose and a golden egg. If there are no prostitutes in his district it is to the Gov[ernor]'s interest to introduce some. By means of them as a decoy the Gov[ernor] can do a great deal. He can surprise wealthy merchants entertaining them and . . . [engage in] heavy blackmail as a bribe to prevent any scandal.⁴⁷

If Churchill's description of the use of prostitutes as decoys to engage in bribery sounds suspiciously like one of Tabrizi's plays, that is not surprising. Churchill continues to explain to Curzon, "I have some comedies written by a very smart pen which w[oul]d – in translation – give you more insight into the Persian character and its government that you would get in ten years sojourn among them."⁴⁸

Incredibly, the narrative of Tabrizi's play which was presented as a truthful depiction of local governance in Churchill's letter to Curzon became inscribed into the scholarly record of Orientalism. The following passage from Curzon's *Persia and the Persian Question* indicates that he did read the plays as suggested by Churchill, for Curzon's description of the nature of provincial officials in Iran closely resembles two of Tabrizi's theatrical characters, Zaman Khan and Ashraf Khan.

. . . Every wheel of the judicial machine will require constant greasing. Another device is the introduction of prostitutes into a district where they were previously absent. Using them as a decoy, the Governor suddenly pounces upon some wealthy merchant, giving convivial entertainment on the sly, and extorts a heavy blackmail as the price of silence. These and many other expedients are devised by the Governors, in order to meet the troublesome inquisition of the Ministry of Arrears, which has a beautiful way of producing all sorts of arrears, and deficits, and objections to provincial budgets. No final acquaintances can be obtained without considerable 'palm-oil'.⁴⁹

The line between theatrical representation and reality was crossed. The playwright's attempt at social criticism was used by colonial officials and Orientalists to assert the weakness of Oriental morals and the corruption of the Persian governmental system. The satire of the plays was taken at face value; nationalist opposition as presented in cultural production served the purposes of Orientalists and colonial officials alike. Cultural analyses that could be offered as evidence of an inherently corrupt social and political framework in the Orient strengthened the moral imperative of the colonial powers and underlined the necessity of the civilizing mission. Culture, in this sense, became a key feature in constructing the colonial other. Flaws in the cultural forms (i.e., a lack of a dramatic tradition or an imperfect application of dramatic norms as understood by Europeans) or flaws that were represented in the cultural forms (i.e., corruption of government officials) helped Orientalists assert Western superiority on cultural and ideological grounds, a superiority that had clear economic and political implications in the Age of Empire. It was not coincidental that many of the Orientalists who took an interest in Persian drama in the late nineteenth century had a background as colonial officials. These included A. Chodzko who had been the Russian Consul at Rasht, Sir Pelly who had been the British Consul at Bushire, Sir Goldsmid who had been the Boundary Commissioner for the Seistan and Baluch borders, and George Curzon who was a powerful Conservative MP about to become Viceroy of India.

This chapter on theater has shown a close relationship between the scholarly realm of Orientalism and colonialism – not just on an abstract ideological level – but also in terms of personnel. But an analysis of the Orientalist interest in nineteenth century Persia drama showed another important aspect of colonial power – the linkage between colonial machinations in different regions. The discussion in this chapter has shown that often the same men were a part of the British colonial hierarchy, traveling between posts in India, Iran, and Egypt. Goldsmid, for example, was present in India during the Indian Mutiny, in Iran for the drawing of her eastern borders, and in Egypt during the

bombardment of Alexandria. The link between parts of the empire are clear, both on the level of ideology and personnel. The linkage between cultural studies by Orientalists and the articulation and justification of colonial authority are also significant.

The discussion of the rise of a new cultural form in Iran, the secular, satirical theater shows that culture was also used by the indigenous intellectuals to articulate and propagate nationalism. Although Akhundzadeh borrowed his models of play writing from European dramatists, he created a unique cultural form that allowed him to write the language of the peasants, to recreate the rural settings of Azerbaijan, and to address specific problems he perceived in his time. Among the issues he wrote about in his plays were the corruption of local officials, the lack of basic rights for women, the gullibility of peasants in light of practitioners of traditional sciences such as alchemy and sorcery. But Akhundzadeh, who worked in the employ of the Russians in Azerbaijan, was not a blind admirer of the West. Western characters in his plays receive the typical satirical treatment, and look to be self-serving, naïve, and markedly out of place in his rural Azeri settings.

Following the model of Akhundzadeh, Tabrizi wrote plays dealing with the problems that beset urban Iran in the nineteenth century. Showing the problems of corruption at the local and central level and government, Tabrizi used the theater to communicate scenes he must have witnessed as a member of the bureaucratic system. His liberties with the theatrical art were criticized by Akhundzadeh and subsequent theater critiques. However, his plays were written at the same time that modernist theater was being written and produced in Berlin and Munich. Tabrizi's creative experimentation with the theatrical form need not be dismissed as naïve or flawed literary expressions.

The connection between form and content should not be overlooked here. It is significant that Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi consciously created a new Iranian cultural form. They had a new objective, attempting to use their plays as a vehicle for social

criticism with nationalistic aims. Self-strengthening was a key feature of nationalist cultural production in Qajar Iran. Recognizing that they were confronted with a changing political landscape, Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi eschewed traditional Iranian cultural forms. As such they were sending an important signal that their cultural production served different purposes. Their plays depicted representations of society before an audience that they viewed as a nation.

Though their plays were not staged in Qajar Iran, they were read at social gatherings. The advent of lithography allowed the plays to be reproduced more readily. In translation, their plays were made available to readers in British India, Russia, and Europe. Their reception in translation underlines one of the chief ironies of cultural production in a colonial context. While their desire may have been to edify and educate the Iranian nation, their plays in translation were used to great advantage by colonial interests. They were used to study colloquial Persian, and the social problems they satirized were used as evidence of a morally flawed Oriental social and political order. Whereas the publication of the taziye by Orientalists offered the European scholars entry into the realm of the sacred Shiite ritual, the plays of Akhundzadeh and Tabrizi offered them a chance to understand the language and lifestyle of the everyday Orient. The correspondence between Churchill and Curzon showed that for them at least, the line between reality and artistic representation was oblique. This intermingling of the textual and the political and the uneasy convergence of nationalist sentiment and colonial interest which was reflected in the production and reception of the plays written in nineteenth century Iran indicates an important aspects of cultural production in the decades that preceded the Constitutional Revolution.

Endnotes to Chapter Six

¹ Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, Ruznamah-i Safar-i Farangistan [Journal of a trip to Europe], lithographed under the supervision of Mirza Muhammad `Ali Shirazi (Bombay, 1293/1876), p. 25. The original is in the Persian.

² The Shah traveled to Europe three times during his reign. British consular reports indicate that the Shah dictated his journals to his secretary on a daily basis. The published journals were widely read in Iran and British India, and influenced Persian prose writing with their simple style. Sections were included in the Persian examinations of the British civil service in India. The Shah's journals were recommended reading for students of Persian, as the British Minister noted to the Marquess of Dufferin, "For the modern Persian idiom the best book is said to be the present Shah's diary. In case you have not got it, I shall send you a copy." Durand to the Marquess of Dufferin, Gulahek, June 18, 1895, EUR.MSS.D727, volume 5, Durand Personal Papers, OIOC. An English translation was reportedly a popular read in Victorian England.

³ A. Chodzko, Théâtre Persan: Choix de Téaziés ou Drames, traduit pour la premier fois du persan (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1878). He notes that while he was preparing the preface, A. Gobineau published his book which included a discussion and a transcription of some Persian theater. See J. A. Gobineau, Les Religions et Les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale (Paris, 1866), pp. 359-379.

⁴ Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Hogarth Press, 1992) originally published in 1962, p. 273.

⁵ Ibid, p. 243.

⁶ See F. Ghaffary, "Evolutions of Ritual and Theater in Iran," Iranian Studies (1984), pp. 361-389; M. Ghanoonparvar, introduction to Iranian Drama: An Anthology, ed. M. Ghanoonparvar and J. Greene (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Press, 1989); A. Jannati `Atai, Bunad-i Namayish-i dar Iran (Tehran: Chap-i Mihan, 1333/1955); and J. Malikpur, Adabiyat-i Namayish dar Iran, 2 vs. (Tehran: Intisharati-i Tus, 1963).

⁷ For discussions of popular theater in Europe at this time, see R. Isherwood, Farce and Fantasy, Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and J. McCormick, Popular Theaters in Nineteenth Century France (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁸ F. Rosen, Persien, in Wort und Bild (Berline: Franz Schneider Verlag, 1926).

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- ⁹ Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, v. 1, p. 164.
- ¹⁰ Chodzko, pp. vi-ix.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. ix and xx.
- ¹² Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, v. 1, pp. 327-8. While the Shah may have been duly impressed by the Royal Albert Hall, clearly domed structures were also common in Islamic architecture.
- ¹³ Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, v. 2, p. 481.
- ¹⁴ The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain, collected from the oral tradition by Colonel Sir Lewis Pelly (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1879).
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. iii.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. iv.
- ¹⁷ Pelly Private Collection, MSS.EUR.F 126/11, OIOC.
- ¹⁸ The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain, p. v.
- ¹⁹ F. Ghaffary, "Evolutions of Ritual and Theater in Iran," Iranian Studies (1984), pp. 361-389.
- ²⁰ See B. Beeman's article in Ta`ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran, ed. Peter Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press and Soroush Press, 1979).
- ²¹ See a copy of the letter in the Persian in Namayishha-yi Mirza Aqa Tabrizi, ed. H. Sadiq (Tehran, 1975-6), pp. 149-163.
- ²² *Ibid*.
- ²³ Akhundzadeh, preface to the Persian translation of his plays, Tamsilat, trans. By Mirza Ja`afar Qarajedaghi (Tehran: Karkhanah-i Ustad Muhammad Hussein, 1291/1874), p. 17.
- ²⁴ When Tabrizi's plays were first published, in serial form in the newspaper Ittihad, they appeared under the name of Mirza Malkum Khan. Subsequent reprints of his work into compilations were also printed under Malkum's name, including those published by the Kaveh Press in Berlin in 1921, in Russian translation in Tashkent in 1927, and in Persian in Mirat in 1933.
- ²⁵ Tiyatr-i Mirza Malkum Khan, ed. Rizavi (Mirat, 1933), p. 29.
- ²⁶ Rizavi edition, pp. 32-3.

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- ²⁷ Rizavi edition, p. 153.
- ²⁸ Rizavi edition, p. 150.
- ²⁹ See for example M. Ghanoonparvar, introduction, Iranian Drama, ed. M. Ghanoonparvar and J. Greene (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Press, 1989).
- ³⁰ Gaffary, p. 375.
- ³¹ F. Adamiyat, Andishaha-yi Mirza Fath `Ali Akhundzadeh (Tehran, 1970).
- ³² H. Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
- ³³ Qarajedaghi, introduction to Tamsilat (Tehran, 1291/1874), p. 6.
- ³⁴ J. Malikpur, Adabiyat-i Namayish-i dar Iran, 2 vs. (Tehran: Intisharati-Tus, 1963).
- ³⁵ H. W. Brands, "Akhund-zada," in Encyclopedia Islam, 2nd edition, v. 1, pp. 331-2.
- ³⁶ Ghanoonparvar in introduction to Iranian Drama.
- ³⁷ For such remarks by Mirza Ja`afar and Akhundzadeh, see preface to Persian translation, pp. 12-15; for Tabrizi's instructions to the reader, see preface to the Sadiq edition.
- ³⁸ Preface to the Sadiq edition.
- ³⁹ See appendix in Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan.
- ⁴⁰ The Vazir of Lankarun: A Play, ed. W. H. D. Haggard and G. Le Strange (London: Trübner and Co., 1882), p. xii.
- ⁴¹ F. J. Goldsmid, "Le Théâtre Persan," JRAS (1890), pp. 663-4.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Goldsmid Personal Paper Collection, MSS.EUR.F.134, box 3, OIOC.
- ⁴⁴ Goldsmid Personal Paper Collection, MSS.EUR.F.134, box 4, OIOC. Biographical information was taken from his official biography contained in the Goldsmid personal paper collection.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Churchill to Curzon, Tehran, October 6, 1891, Curzon Personal Paper Collection, MSS.EUR.F112, volume 614, pt. 2, OIOC.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, v. 2, p. 474.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Iran emerged from the Age of Empire as an independent nation-state. This was no accident of history. Although Iran never became a colony, a protectorate, or a mandate, it came to occupy the geopolitical nexus of the imperialist contest for power. As Russia advanced further into Central Asia and Britain resolved to maintain control over its Indian and Arab territories, colonial attention became increasingly focused on Iran. Wars, border skirmishes, threats of force, and damaging political treaties that extracted land, taxes, and tariffs were indeed part of the history of Qajar Iran, but by the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the primary means of colonial control over Iran were more indirect and discreet. Economic concessions and development schemes – for mineral extraction, railroad construction, banking, river navigation – figured largely in the competition for power over Iranian territory. At the same time, the cultural terrain became a significant space for constructing and deploying colonial influence. The more transparent spheres of colonial power – brute force, diplomacy, and economic concessions – were not separate from the more oblique realms of influence – the literary, the textual, and the discursive. In the Iranian context, the nationalist struggle took shape against the backdrop of internal absolutism and colonial aggression; this struggle ultimately manifested itself as a constitutionalist movement.

Partha Chatterjee has taken nationalist histories to task for marking the originary moment of nationalism at the time of its expression as “the contest for political power.” Chatterjee’s reading of Indian nationalism divided the call for social reform into two stages – the first entailed a marking off of the “inner domain of national culture” which

was separate from and outside of the purview of the colonial state; the second was the political manifestation of nationalism with the intent of creating a postcolonial state.¹ In this dissertation, I discussed the development of nationalism in the decades before its expression as a political movement calling for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy accountable at least in theory to the will of the nation. Unlike Chatterjee, however, my reading of Iranian national culture placed it squarely within the contest for colonial power.

In the Iranian context, the nationalist struggle – against the Iranian monarchy and the European colonial powers – ultimately manifested itself as a political movement, the Constitutional Revolution, which led to the writing of a constitution and the establishment of a parliament. That Revolution itself did not frame the temporal landscape of this study. It could be said that my narrative strategy has been to write history backwards: why did that Revolution take place and why was it a Constitutional Revolution? My approach has been to study cultural production in the decades leading to that revolution as a reflection of and influence on the larger political impetus and strategies of that revolutionary movement. I have also studied cultural production as a site of power and resistance: a means for the Qajar state to legitimate and expand its power, for European colonial officials to extend their power in Iran, and for opposition thinkers to articulate their resistance. It was within these cultural forms, I have argued, that some of the notions of modern Iranian nationalism took shape. One of the most cogent arguments for the necessity of examining the relationship between culture and power was set forth by Edward Said, in his Orientalism and the subsequent Culture and Imperialism.² “Culture,” he proposed, “is a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another.”³ As a source of identity, culture has been a way for colonized people “to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.”⁴ Said does not view “culture” as a self-contained social sphere, abstracted from other historical and political currents. Indeed, he has argued that “...culture and the aesthetic

forms it contains derive from historical experience...,”⁵ and he called for an examination of cultural forms that takes into account the interrelationship between the cultural terrain of the colonizer and the colonized and one that examines the connections between scholarship and the institutions of nationalism.⁶ Here, I am not applying a concept of culture as a discreet system in society, a system with a fixed set of meanings. Instead, culture has been examined as a productive site of power that was actively constructed, debated, and contested.⁷ I have viewed cultural production as a historical concept whose formation and reception must be seen as contingent and changing, rather than determined and immutable. Cultural formation in late nineteenth century Iran was a stage on which national symbols were created, appropriated, and applied towards the ideological and institutional development of a modern Iranian nation-state. And the means available for cultural production were changed by the technological and political undercurrents of the nineteenth century. The more systematic use of the printing press which enabled the circulation of ideas in the form of newspapers and printed books, the rise of a secular educational system, the linkage between the study of Iran in Europe and imperial interests in the place, and the development of a secular theatrical tradition in late nineteenth century Iran were phenomena that were deeply implicated in the formation of Iranian nationalism. In the period of my study, the cultural sphere was transformed – by the state, its opposition, and the colonial powers. In turn, the cultural sphere itself was transformative, helping to shape the larger political currents that eventually became manifested in a political revolutionary movement calling for a constitutional form of government in Iran.

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I reviewed the works on nationalism that had been most formative in shaping my own analytical framework. Iran does not fit neatly into the broader categories used by most scholars of nationalism. Rather than viewing it as exceptional, I have tried to show the ways that the case of Iran reveals particular strengths and inadequacies in our broader understandings of nationalism.⁸ In

his seminal study, Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson highlighted the integral role of print capitalism and the rise of modern nationalism. Originally conceived in the Western context, Anderson's concept of a modular nationalism was later adapted by "new states." Indeed, many theoretical studies of nationalism contend that it was primarily a Western phenomenon formulated in the long century that was then applied by the colonized to construct their own nation-states. Non-Western nationalisms, then, were fundamentally imitative, derivative, and emulative. Chatterjee takes issue with this contention:

I have one central objection to Anderson's argument. If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. I object to this argument not for any sentimental reason. I object because I cannot reconcile it with the evidence of anticolonial nationalism.⁹

In short, Anderson's focus on the discursive production (and replication) of a modular nation state may reduce the histories of non-Western nationalisms to a mimetic exercise, forever trying to infuse localism onto inherently foreign forms of thought, social activism, and political organization. Like Chatterjee, I dispute this reductionist view of non-Western nationalisms, both on a larger theoretical scale and in terms of specific cultural borrowings. My examination of the discursive construction of nationalism showed that even when the cultural forms were knowingly and self-consciously borrowed from European precedents, these forms can hardly be dismissed as merely derivative. For example, it is clear that the playwright Akhundzadeh was aware of the plays of Molière and Shakespeare, in whom he found his inspiration. Yet the plays he wrote are deeply steeped in the local, dealing with local political concerns, using local tropes of

satire, and clearly addressing a local audience. In his letters to fellow playwright Tabrizi, he advised him to avoid tendencies that would offend local sensibilities and to write his plays with an eye to the political and social exigencies of Iran.

I've examined the ideological, discursive, and institutional development of nationalism in late Qajar Iran through a historically grounded examination of cultural forms, such as modern educational institutions, the printed book, newspapers, and modern drama, through which nationalism in the Iranian context was articulated, debated, and contested. It was largely through these cultural forms that the possibilities of forging "intimate connections between personhood and belonging to a nation" were created.¹⁰ My reading of nationalism borrowed heavily from Anderson's approach, but I focused on a historical examination that included an analysis of the production, distribution, *and* consumption of these cultural forms in their *local* context.¹¹ That is to say, this I have examined the content of nineteenth century Iranian nationalism, the ways in which cultural forms were adapted to the exigencies of a particular time and place.

I also illustrated their role in forging an emergent public sphere. A close historical reading of this process showed that various social groups (merchants, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and clerics) participated in the early development of the public sphere in Iran. Commensurate institutions and networks appeared enabling the production of this public sphere. Political societies (anjumans) and freemason organizations (like the faramushkhaneh) were used to produce and distribute these new cultural forms. Meanwhile, more traditional networks were adapted to this new purpose: banned materials were distributed along the route of the holy pilgrimage to Mecca and shipped in containers of goods such as sugar and textiles. Political newspapers and plays were read in traditional salons (majlis), at gatherings in the bazaar, and in a growing number of bookshops and libraries. An exchange of information was established between activist communities within Tehran, the provinces, and diasporic communities. These networks would play a critical role in the struggle for constitutionalism in Iran in

subsequent years. My study also allowed us to better understand the mechanisms that were put in place (by the state and the colonialists) to inhibit the development of the public sphere. Newspapers became a gauge of public opinion, closely followed by the state and colonial officials alike. Colonial officials in England and India followed the local Persian press through telegraphic communications by diplomats posted in Iran and through newspaper clippings that accompanied official colonial correspondence. Newspapers that published information offensive to the Qajar state and/or colonial officials were censored; editors and readers were imprisoned; alternative views were planted in other newspapers to counter public opinion. By examining the content of nationalism within an emerging public sphere, the institutional frameworks of the state, and the mechanisms of colonial power, we are better able to understand the complexities of Iranian nationalism. In essence, nationalist cultural forms did double work: defining a particular form of Iranian nation-state while simultaneously resisting the development of an increasingly centralizing and autocratic state and imposing colonial trajectories of power. As we have seen, intervention, appropriation, accommodation, and obstruction were techniques used by the state and colonial officials throughout the process of the discursive production and dissemination of notions of nationalism.

My focus on the producers of cultural forms has destabilized analytical categories. Throughout this study, I have discussed three groups of individuals who contributed to the construction of this cultural domain: Orientalists and colonial officials, bureaucrats and officials of the Iranian state, and oppositionist thinkers. I have shown that membership, ideas, and strategies between these groups was often fluid. The Orientalist Gobineau worked for a time on the translation projects organized by the Iranian state. Meanwhile other Orientalists, like E. G. Browne, actively supported the nationalist movement at a critical stage of its struggle to maintain Iranian independence. Newspapers printed by the Iranian state were read by colonial officials in order to measure the political undercurrents in Iran; other colonial officials helped smuggle banned

newspapers through the diplomatic post. Some members of the constitutional movement had studied in the Qajar state's schools and worked for the Iranian state or in colonial offices. The plays penned by Iranian reformist thinkers were used by Orientalists as an entrée to the inner workings of Iranian society and by colonial officials to learn Persian in order to pass necessary civil service examinations to become employees of the Colonial and India Office. Satires of Iran penned by European diplomats were translated into Persian and used to critique the Iranian state by articulating notions of corruption and "social ills." One of the strengths of the approach taken in this study has been to show, through historical examination, the interconnectedness of these groups, who are often seen as discreet. The nature of Iranian nationalism was shaped to some degree as much by their complicity as their opposition to one another.

My analytical frame, then, allowed me to examine nationalism through the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural forms that helped shape an emergent public sphere in which divergent social groups participated. These cultural forms were not mimetic and adapted in wholesale fashion from the West. Rather, they were localized and contested forms, through which power was constructed, deployed, and resisted. Focusing on the production and consumption of nationalist texts and institutions, I conducted rigorous historical research into a diverse range of actors involved in Iranian nationalism in this era. This historical analysis painted nationalism as a dynamic process shaped by various social groups and embedded in emerging institutional networks. The cultural forms that formed Iranian nationalism in the period before the political revolution were a transformative force that figured prominently in the contest for power between the colonialists, the state, and the oppositionists. In essence, then, the methodological approach I adapted, which borrowed heavily from Eley, Chatterjee, Anderson, and Said allowed me to write both a social history and a discursive analysis of Iranian nationalism.

This methodological framing allowed me to perceive Iranian nationalism as a complex phenomenon. Iran was not a "new state" seeking to construct a *raison d'être*, nor was it seeking liberation from the vestiges of direct colonial control. Like Thailand, China, and Egypt, Iran as a territorial entity had a long pre-history. It remained the only country in the Middle East and South Asia that escaped formal colonization. Any youngster in Iranian schools will read how waves of invaders trampled across Iran's borders only to be repelled or subsumed within her politico-cultural sphere. Iranian nationalists in the latter half of the nineteenth century were focused on preserving its territorial integrity and reversing colonial penetration of its internal infrastructure. They were simultaneously preoccupied with transforming Iran from a monarchy with subjects to a state accountable to its citizens.

In the second chapter of my dissertation, I explored the history of colonialism as it related to Iran. Though Iran was never formally colonized, it stood at the epicenter of the colonial project in the East. Iran's liminal status in the colonized-colonizer binary reveals the multifarious technologies of power and resistance. In a sense, the cultural forms produced by Iranians in this period could be seen as a culture of resistance, a means to articulate Iranian national identity in the face of colonial incursions. Partha Chatterjee and Timothy Mitchell have shown that nationalist resistance arose within the power structures of the colonizing projects. Members of the Qajar bureaucracy and its intellectuals alike perceived a colonial threat – a competition between Britain and Russia which may lead to the demise of Iran's independence. In 1901, Lord Salisbury wrote to Lord Curzon arguing, "Our chief interest in the East, (after China), has been the movements of the Persian Question."¹² The continual concern over Iran as a strategic element in Britain's Empire is born out through a close reading of the diplomatic records of the times. Policy papers, diplomatic letter, official memoranda, parliamentary speeches, and scholarly studies penned by colonial officials clearly demonstrate the strategic importance, both real and perceived, of Iran to British colonial influence.

British leaders had been mindful of the possible threat to the empire in India since Napoleon's planned invasion that would have crossed Iranian territory (with the permission of the Shah) to attack the borders of India. The memory of this planned incursion lived on in the minds of colonial officers in the late nineteenth century.

Russian advances in the Caucasus and Central Asia that brought its territorial gains closer to the Persian Gulf and to India seemed ominous. Indeed, the subsequent history of Iran in the first half of the twentieth century shows that the Russians were able to move within Iran's northern frontiers. The contest for power became even more compelling with the rise of German interests in the East, which focused on the building of the Baghdad Railway. Yet another power was seeking to impinge on British hegemony in the Persian Gulf.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the British and the Russians were prepared to recognize that neither had the power, the will, or the material resources available to fully colonize Persia, nor were they ready to relinquish their interests in the region altogether. The decision to divide Iran's territory into spheres of influences, where certain colonial interests were recognized and preserved within specific regions, became the favored solution for the impasse. This choice was not simply an about-face, a reversal of long standing policies in light of the specific contingencies of the time, however. It was not a hurried response to the shifting power balance amongst imperial powers, especially as Germany took an increasing interest in the Middle East. I have shown that the idea of dividing Iranian territory up had been discussed by various colonial officials throughout the nineteenth century. In 1834, Russia and Britain signed an agreement to preserve Iran's independence. By 1907, they agreed to divide Iran into spheres of influence. In the intervening years, policy papers calling for the division of Iranian territory had been issued; concessions favoring Russia in the north and Britain in the south had been extended; and political alliances with local Iranian officials had been forged. Telegraph lines had been erected, and plans for building railways and roads had

been proposed. On some levels, the partition proposal of 1907 formalized certain on the ground realities. Curzon had proposed that the colonial approach used in China of carving out spheres of influence might be applied to Iran with good results. This colonial strategy was to be honed and reapplied by the British again in the early twentieth century – preserving its colonial interests in light of dwindling resources and increased local resistance and external competition by settling on partition.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I examined the study of Iran in Britain in relation to the rise of Orientalism, examining its influence on Britain's colonial relationship to Iran. I focused on the careers and intellectual output of two figures – George N. Curzon and Edward Granville Brown – who are widely recognized for their influence on the scholarly study of Iran in Britain. Curzon's interest in Iran can be traced to his visit to that country in 1890-1 when he was a Conservative member of the British Parliament; the trip resulted in the publication of a series of letters by Curzon in the Times. In 1890, Curzon became a member of the Board of Directors of the Persian Bank Mining Rights Corporation. In 1892, he published his two volume study of Iran, Persia and the Persian Question, which included a map he had produced under the auspices of the Royal Geographic Society. The book was Curzon's effort to produce the "standard work in the English language on the subject."¹³ My survey of Curzon's personal records indicate that the book had a wide readership, in Europe, India, Iran, the United States, and even Latin America within a few years of its original publication. Some of the major themes Curzon elucidated in the book, especially the importance of Persia to British colonial influence, were echoed in policy papers he penned. Curzon's views on Iran took on greater importance when he became the Viceroy of India in 1898. The following year, in 1899, Curzon wrote a policy paper on Persia, in which he referenced the policy of spheres of influence in China as a possible model for British policy in Iran – sharing power with Russia in a way that preserved both parties' imperial concerns. That vision

ultimately became an official policy with the 1907 agreement between Russia and England to divide Iran into spheres of influence.

I also reviewed the works of Edward Granville Browne, a professor at Cambridge who dedicated most of his life to the study of Persia. His classic studies of Persian literary history helped to establish the field as a legitimate and worthwhile academic pursuit. Browne was also an advocate, for Oriental Studies as a scholarly field and for the nationalist cause in Iran. As steps were taken to establish a program in Oriental Studies at London University, Browne advocated for the legacy of Oriental Studies at Oxford and Cambridge. In making his case, Browne pointed to the number of his students who had gone on to serve in various colonial offices. Meanwhile, his contacts with Iran led to his involvement with the nationalist movement there. He served as a conduit between various nationalist thinkers and British officials, he wrote scholarly monographs and pamphlets about the constitutionalist movement in Iran, and he helped organize activist and scholarly groups in support of Persian causes – in particular the Persia Committee and the Persia Society. Throughout his career, he maintained a correspondence with Lord Curzon, and in 1911, these two very different men joined forces. Both had lived lives that combined scholarly and political interests, albeit motivated by different ideals. In the end, however, both men came to support the nationalist movement in Iran. Browne had been one of the main figures behind the formation of the Persian Society, an organization calling for the support of the nationalist cause in Iran. It was Lord Curzon who delivered the inaugural address of the Persia Society. An examination of the work and activities of Lord Curzon and E. G. Browne shows that the study of Iran in Britain in the decades preceding the Constitutional Revolution fused scholarly, economic, and political concerns.

Meanwhile, my study shows that changes were underway in the academic institutions of Iran as well. Educational reform was a subject that interested various groups – including British colonial officials, the Qajar state, and nationalist thinkers. In

1814, the Persians and the British signed an agreement which set controls on the establishment of educational institutions in Iran; Iran could not hire foreign instructors for its army from countries with whom Britain did not have amenable diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, various nationalists called for reforms within Iran through “self-strengthening” projects – and education figured prominently in these reform agendas. Educational reform was one of the hallmarks of “official nationalism” as espoused and implemented by the Qajar state. Early in the nineteenth century, a Qajar official, Abbas Mirza began the practice of sending handfuls of Iranians to study abroad. The first major initiative to establish a secular state-sponsored educational system in Iran was undertaken by Amir Kabir, the famous prime minister of Nasir al-Din Shah. The Shah had become increasingly suspicious of Amir Kabir, who was ultimately killed before the school was fully operational. This signals the Qajar leaders ambiguous relationship towards the institutionalization of nationalism. On the one hand, such institutions could serve to expand the power of the state; on the other hand, they were feared as potential sites of resistance. British officials also resisted Amir Kabir’s plans to hire foreign instructors for his proposed school, the Dar al-Fanun. Ultimately, the faculty of the Dar al-Fanun included teachers from Austria, France, Italy, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, and Iran. Some of its students went on to serve the Qajar state, while others became leaders in the nationalist movement. Some of the textbooks used in the classes of the Dar al-Fanun helped establish notions of a modern Iranian nation-state. The compound that included the building housing the Dar al-Fanun also included the offices of the official state Translation Bureau and the State Press. This survey revealed that the relationship between educational institutions (in Iran and in Britain), colonialism, and Iranian nationalism in the nineteenth century were complex and multi-layered.

The next two chapters of my dissertation dealt with the relationship of print culture and nationalism in late nineteenth century Iran. In particular, I was interested in understanding the relationship between print capitalism and the articulation of and

dissemination of nationalism by various groups in Iran. In chapter four, I discussed the implications of the shift from manuscripts to printed books. E. G. Browne had been an avid collector of Persian books and had written on the nature of book production in nineteenth century Iran. He had argued that books had played a prominent role in the “National Awakening” of Iran. Discussions of the advent and history of print culture in Islamic society have inevitably been entwined with the discursive constructions of civilization, progress, and modernity. Accordingly, the reticence to adapt a mechanized means of producing written material was seen as both indicative of and partially responsible for the lack of ‘progress’ in the Islamic world. These arguments, whether set forth by nineteenth century Orientalists or contemporary scholars of print in the Islamic world, tend to overlook the differentiated history of the press in various locales. The reluctance to reproduce the word of God as manifested in the Qu’ran through mechanized book production has too often been used as an explanation for the delay in the advent of print culture throughout the Islamic world.¹⁴ These arguments tend to elide important factors – such as the aesthetic significance of calligraphy and the economic importance of the scribal trade involved in the production of manuscripts. Too much focus on the attenuated history of Islamic print culture has obscured the historical importance of printed books in the production of intellectual and social developments in nineteenth century Iran.

My survey of printed Persian books from the nineteenth century showed that print activity increased with the advent of lithography later in the century. This might suggest that the willingness to adopt print was affected by secular concerns such as the aesthetic of the scripted page and the economy of the book trade. In discussing print culture in the Iranian case, I argued, we need to consider factors such as the aesthetic significance of calligraphy and the economic importance of the scribal trade involved in the production of manuscripts. It would seem that lithography helped bypass these issues, by offering a way to retain the ritual construction of the page, with its glosses, colophons, *nastaliq*

script, and illuminations – while also offering the fixity and economy of print production. The lithographed press, then, might be viewed as an example of a particular strategy to cultural adaptation in the Qajar era – one that applied mechanized production methods to preferred Iranian cultural rituals in order to produce a new cultural form that was well suited to the social and political exigencies of the time. In a sense, then, when we discuss the shift manuscript knowledge to print knowledge in the Iranian context, we should see it as a transition rather than a historical break. Lithography allowed these two traditions to be combined in a manner that infused the economy of print with the culture of the manuscript.

My discussion of printed books from this period of Iranian history then focused on two specific types of texts that appeared in the 276 examples of printed Persian books that I studied for this chapter – those books printed by the state presses in Iran under the supervision of the Minister of Publication and those Persian books printed on presses outside of Iran. In an attempt to understand the nature of print culture produced by the Qajar state, I focused attention on the printed books produced under the supervision of Ḥtimad al-Saltanah, a graduate of the Dar al-Fanun, who went on to serve the Qajar state in various capacities, including the director of the State Press, the Minister of Publication, the Director of the Translation Bureau, and a newspaper editor. The State Press published dozens of books under the name of Ḥtimad al-Saltanah. Many of these books were historical in nature. He often adapted and reshaped traditional forms of historical writing, such as historical biographies, historical geographies, and dynastic chronicles. He also introduced new genres, such as yearly almanacs, into the Iranian book culture. In his prefaces, Ḥtimad al-Saltanah often referred to the scientific nature of his works, emphasizing the research methods he used in producing the texts. Some of his works attempted to situate the Qajar dynasty into larger contexts – Iran’s past history and contemporary world history. As the official state historian and the Minister of Publication, he made efforts to create a scientific approach to historical writing and took

pride in reproducing his volumes in beautifully lithographed editions at the state press. Mindful of the power of print, ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah attempted to construct an impressive façade of the state in the form of the printed books he produced within its bureaucratic structure. His books – the bureaucratic system in which they were produced, the narrative strategy they used, and their enduring legacy – remain a significant example of the nature of cultural production by the Qajar state in late nineteenth century Iran. It was perhaps in the person of ʿĪtimad al-Saltanah, more than any other individual, that the power of print was mobilized in the service of the Qajar state.

In the following section, I examined the nature of Persian printed books published outside of Iran, primarily in Europe and India. Persian print culture produced in India has a complex history that is often tied to the nature of British imperial control. My discussion of a Persian translation of Robinson Crusoe published by T. W. H. Tolbort using the Latinized scheme of Sir William Jones showed the connection between imperial control and language reform. Tolbort's arguments for reforming the Perso-Arabic script by applying a Latinized transliteration system showed that discussions of print culture in the Islamic world were situated within the discourse of the colonial civilizing mission. Such transliterations systems were also of interest for use by the police in Madras – control of the Perso-Arabic character through a Latinized print was connected with the control of the minds and bodies of the Indian population.

The trope of travel, introduced in my discussions of Robinson Crusoe, appeared as a prominent theme in some of the important Persian texts produced by Iranian nationalists on presses outside of Iran. Morier, a British diplomat who had traveled as an official representative to Iran, wrote The Hajji Baba of Isfahan, about the travels and travails of an Iranian through the country. Likened to Falstaff, the character was a smart simpleton with somewhat swarthy qualities. The book became popular in Victorian England, where its satire was often seen as a penetrating insight into the true Persian character. Ironically, the book's Persian translation which was produced in India became

an important book in its own right. As a satirical critique of corruption in Qajar society, it was embraced by some nationalists calling for social reforms. Some have credited it with helping to popularize the genre of the novel in Iran.

Another novel written as a fictional travel diary, the Siyahat-Nameh of Ibrahim Beg, penned by Zain al-Abidin also used satire to deploy a biting criticism against the Qajar state. The book which was written by an Iranian merchant in Istanbul was published in India. Considered an important work by the nationalists, it was reissued in 1910 in the midst of the Constitutional Revolution. The history of this book in a sense reflected the cultural flows that produced the nationalist ideas that were ultimately manifested in the Constitutional Revolution. The printed books produced in the decades before that revolution through the efforts of colonial officials, state bureaucrats, and nationalist thinkers played a part in shaping the political culture of the time.

Continuing my investigation of print culture in late Qajar Iran, I studied the nature of newspaper publishing in the following chapter. Benedict Anderson argued that print-capitalism “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.”¹⁵ Indeed, the convergence of print technology and capitalism, he argued, “created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.”¹⁶ Newspapers, in particular, were tied to the market, in Anderson’s articulation of print-capitalism. I also found Habermas's theory of the development of the public sphere, especially as extended by Geoff Eley, particularly useful for understanding the importance of Iranian print culture in the creation of a political culture imbued with a constitutionalist ethos. Eley has shown the utility of examining “the circulation of news and the growth of the press, the rise of a reading public, the organized sociability associated with urban living, the distinctive institutional infrastructure of social communication accompanying the development of capitalist markets, and the spread of voluntary associations...” in order to write a social history of political culture.¹⁷ Eley has

argued that such a framing of cultural production allows historians to extend our analyses beyond the history of ideas and to perceive political activity outside of rigid institutional manifestations of the political. The analysis of the public sphere, allowed me to move beyond more conventional readings of nineteenth century Iran, to examine ways in which networks of exchange and alliances between social groups critical to the 1906 revolution were constructed (and interfered with) in the previous decades.

Persian newspapers *were* related to the market. They often carried news related by and relating to merchant communities outside of Iran. They created a discursive space in which discussions of world and local events were reported alongside one another. In a sense, one might argue that within the pages of these early newspapers, key features of modern Iran began to take shape – in their standardized Persian print that helped produced the vocabulary of nationalism and constitutionalism, and in the virtual yet bounded national space they created. The newspaper itself became a commodity, a sign of modernity and socio-political reform. And once again, the Qajar state, the colonialists, and the nationalists alike partook in publishing, distributing, and reading newspapers as a way to further their aims.

Using a sample of 63 titles, I provided a broad overview of the kinds of Persian newspapers that were published between 1848 and 1906, showing that there was a healthy, if often overlooked, tradition of newspaper publishing before the 1906 Revolution. Many scholars have incorrectly mark that revolution as the originary point for a politically active and thriving newspaper culture in Iran. The overwhelming majority of these newspapers were lithographed using the nastaliq script – and that Persian newspaper publishing was a geographically dispersed phenomenon. Of the forty-one newspapers in my sample that were printed in Iran, twenty-nine were published in Tehran while the others were produced in provincial cities such as Tabriz, Isfahan, and Mashad. Some twenty-two of the newspapers were published outside of Iran, in

particular in India, Turkey, Egypt, the Caucasus, and Europe. Some of these newspapers were published for local communities while others were distributed within Iran.

In order to get a better sense of the nature of and impact of newspaper publishing in Iran in this period, I focused on particular case studies. In each case, I complimented a close reading of the newspapers with archival research and the published memoirs of those involved with the production and consumption of newspapers to understand their impetus, dissemination, and reception. I began with an examination of two illustrated newspapers, Sharaf and Sharafat, which were published in Iran between 1882 and 1903. My review of these semi-official newspapers focused on the relationship between the Qajar state and cultural production. I showed the ways that the bureaucratization of the state affected shifting patterns of in art education and techniques. The advent of lithography affected the fields of painting and calligraphy. Increasingly, artists working for the state were trained at the Dar al-Fanun. The nature of art patronage in Iran, then, was shifting from a *royal* patronage to a *state* patronage. Still, as I argued, patterns of artistic expression and production retained traditional methods; positions of art production sponsored by the state were often handed down within prominent artistic families bound to the state bureaucracy. In this way, patterns of pre-modern artistic production were subsumed into the modern nation state. Additionally, these illustrated newspapers were used to create an integrated world view, one that wove local Iranian history into a broader world history. This function replicated patterns established in book publishing undertaken at the state presses.

In my second case study, I focused on the newspaper Qanun, examining the way the opposition employed print culture to critique the state, call for reforms, and espouse notions of constitutionalism. Several important scholars of Iran have argued that Mirza Malkum Khan was the most significant social critic in the Qajar period. A life-long Qajar bureaucrat, Malkum had worked in the Translation Bureau, been on the faculty of the Dar al-Fanun, served in the Iranian embassies in Cairo and Istanbul, worked as an

assistant to a prime minister, and went on to become Persia's ambassador to England. After a rift over a proposed lottery concession, Malkum was recalled by the Shah but refused to return to Iran. Calling himself a "loyal opposition," Malkum began publishing Qanun from London.

Qanun's impact was multifarious. Perhaps more than any other newspaper of its time, Qanun had an impact on the language of Iranian political culture. This linguistic turn was not accidental, for Malkum had been a proponent of language reform; he had collaborated with Ottoman intellectuals on the matter, had discussed the connection between progress and language reform at a session of the Society of Arts, and had attempted to establish a system that would print Perso-Arabic characters in unjoined letters. Qanun's simple and streamlined language, later dubbed "Maktab-i Malkum," represented a significant transition from the complex flourished Persian in official usage at the time. The newspaper repeatedly used the words nation, nationality, and national (millat, milliyat, milli). In its call for reforms, the newspaper used key phrases that came to be associated with the constitutional movement, such as law (qanun), reform (tanzimat), and principles of administration (usul-i idara).

Qanun was also a part of Malkum's larger efforts to advocate for Iranian nationalism – amongst British colonial officials and Iranian reform communities. In his letters to British newspapers and private correspondence with British diplomats, Malkum had called for the "regeneration" of Iran and for the need to preserve its autonomy in the face of Russian imperial incursions on its independence. In the pages of Qanun, Malkum articulated his ideas for nationalist reform. The motto of the newspaper which appeared on every issue was unity, justice, and progress. He called for the establishment of a systematic rule of law and an orderly bureaucratic system. Malkum saw "knowledge" as a key to reforming Iran. In order to implement these ideas, he called for the establishment of a national parliament that was autonomous and had authority. It should

have seventy members, who should be representatives of the clerics, intellectuals, provincial notables, and the youth.

Though Qanun was published in London, it clearly had a readership within Iran. Malkum tapped into his connections to get the newspaper, which was officially banned, into Iran. His followers in his faramushkhaneh, his friends in the official Qajar bureaucracy and amongst foreign diplomats, and his contacts in diasporic communities throughout the Middle East helped to bypass official censors and circulate copies of the newspaper in Iran. Letters from readers in Malkum's personal paper collection suggest that the impact of Qanun on his readers was considerable. Kirmani wrote to Malkum that upon reading its pages, "...a new life came into my body..."¹⁸ The official ban on the newspaper made the very act of reading and distributing the paper a revolutionary act in itself. My survey of letters of readers and memoirs written by intellectuals and officials at the time suggests that the reading community of Qanun was dispersed – in terms of class and geography. Iranian readers included merchants and princes, ambassadors and secretaries, clerics and university instructors. Within Iran, readers lived in Tehran, Kirman, Nizir, Zanjan, and Sirjan; outside of Iran, the newspaper had readers in Bombay, Baghdad, Basra, Cairo, Trebizond, Erzerum, Istanbul, and Tiflis. As the Constitutional Revolution coalesced into a political reality, Qanun was reissued within Iran. Malkum's influence on reshaping Persian to help create a language of nationalism and constitutionalism was a result of his keen awareness of the connection between print and reform, between language and power. His newspaper, published as an act of loyal opposition, helped to shape and disseminate notions of nationalism and constitutional government at a critical time of Iranian history.

I have said that Persian newspaper publishing was a geographically dispersed phenomenon which was used by various groups as a vehicle to further their own political aims in Iran. In order to better understand this, I studied the newspaper coverage of a proposed trip by Lord Curzon to southern Iran in 1903. The diplomatic visit was part of

Curzon's larger attempt to coalesce the power of the Government of India over the Gulf region. The provincial newspaper, Muzaffari, was prepared to report the Viceroy's visit, which they called a "spectacle." When his ship arrived at the Persian port in Bushire, however, Curzon did not disembark, due to heated differences of opinion on diplomatic decorum between him and the local governor of Fars. The editor of Muzaffari then said that he would publish news of the fall out of the failed visit. British colonial officials in the India Office and the Foreign Office closely followed the coverage of the issue in Persian newspapers, especially the editorials in Muzaffari. Eventually, the editor of the newspaper was punished and prohibited from publishing further editorials and articles on the matter, that came to be called 'the Bushire incident.' Both British and Persian diplomats preferred to resolve the diplomatic fallout in private official meetings and correspondence.

A review of materials in the British archives, however, revealed the matter did not end there. British colonial officials decided to follow a two-track approach to resolving the matter. Through diplomatic channels, they would assuage Iranian officials. At the same time, a British representative in Tehran, wrote to Lord Lansdowne that the British version of events would be published in the newspaper Habl al-Matin "and will be diffused all over Persia."¹⁹ This correspondence suggests that British diplomats had the means to publish their views in the newspaper and to distribute it throughout Persia, a particularly startling revelation given the stature of Habl al-Matin as a nationalist, oppositionary newspaper that was influential during the constitutional movement. As I showed, the British colonial regime in India had viewed the local press there as a means to influence public opinion. The very dispersed nature of the Persian press, which had a long tradition in Indian cities such as Calcutta and Bombay, made some Persian newspapers that were read in Iran permeable to similar kinds of colonial power. My review of the seventy years of Persian newspaper publishing that preceded the Constitutional Revolution showed that the relationship between power and print culture

in the Iranian context was an important vehicle for the state, the opposition, and the colonizer alike.

My discussions of cultural production in late Qajar Iran underlined the relationship between content and form and between the text and the context. My discussion of theater in nineteenth century Iran showed two new developments – the inscription and translation of passion plays known as the taziye and the creation of a new form of secular, satirical theater. I suggested that there was a shift in the nature of the taziye in this period. The Qajar state asserted its role as a patron of this form of popular theater by constructing a grand takiye, which was touted in state newspapers. At the same time, European literary scholars, some of whom were also colonial officials, took an interest in the taziye. They inscribed, translated, and anthologized this theatrical form, even using it as a text for learning colloquial Persian. Some of these scholars evaluated the taziye within a larger civilizational discourse. The fact that Iran had a theatrical tradition was promising; the fact that it did not resemble European dramatic forms, however, was seen as a social and cultural shortcoming.

The playwright Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh has been credited with creating a new genre – secular, comedic plays – in the 1850s. Based on the model of Shakespeare and Molière, these plays penned in Azeri Turkish are considered the first secular, nationalist plays to be written in the Islamic world. Influenced by Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Tabrizi wrote some comedic plays in Persian in the 1870s. The correspondence between these two playwrights indicates a conscious attempt to create a new genre that would meet the social and political exigencies of the time. Their plays were meant to be educative, helping to bring about necessary social reforms. Their intended audience was the “millat” or the nation. Tabrizi’s plays were based in urban settings and generally dealt with the impact of corrupt government officials on the lives of ordinary, working-class Iranians. Meanwhile, Akhundzadeh’s plays dealt with the lives of peasants in rural

Azerbaijan. Interestingly, both men were mid-level bureaucrats who had first-hand experience in government and diplomacy.

My research also focused on the reception of these plays. Akhundzadeh's plays were translated into Persian by Qarajedaghi. The advent of lithography allowed the plays to be reproduced more readily. In Iran, his plays were read in private social gatherings. They were published in the English by Haggard and Le Strange who offered them as a text for studying colloquial Persian. They were also translated in the nineteenth century into French and German. Russian, French, and English academic journals also published them in translation. One of his plays, The Vazir of Lankarun, was used as a text in the lower standard examination of Persian for civil servants in the Government of India. The response of European readers was telling. Sir Goldsmid, a colonial official who had served as a Boundary Commissioner in Iran, said that they addressed, "the regeneration of Persia." A British diplomat in Iran, Churchill, sent Akhundzadeh's plays to Curzon, while he was writing his Persia and the Persian Question. Akhundzadeh's descriptions of corrupt local officials appeared in Curzon's book as factual evidence of the nature of local government in Qajar Iran. I have argued that the line between fiction and reality was crossed; once again, a satirical work was taken at face value and offered as evidence of the inherent corruption of Iranian politics and society. The intermingling of the textual and the political and the intersection of nationalist and colonial projects that was revealed in the discussion of the reception of these plays indicates an important feature of the cultural production of Iran in the late nineteenth century.

As I have said, a main purpose of this dissertation was to examine the historical preconditions of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. In examining the cultural production of Iran from 1848-1906, I have tried to reveal the relationship between the texts and the contexts of their production and reception. Cultural forms were a domain for the articulation of power and resistance. Colonial officials, Iranian bureaucrats, and reformists alike participated in this process. As this dissertation has shown, boundary

commissioners were also theater critics, viceroys were also ethnographers and historians, diplomatic envoys were also novelists. Concomitantly, resistance to colonial influence and criticism of internal corruption came to inhabit the cultural terrain – the schools, the books, the newspapers, and the plays. Mid-level Qajar bureaucrats were also playwrights. Graduates and instructors at the state universities went on to serve and critique the state through their roles as newspaper editors. The interrelated histories of indirect colonial power, the development of the bureaucratic infrastructure of the state, and the articulation of a nationalist resistance in late nineteenth century of Iran was manifested in and transformed by the cultural production of the period. The cultural production of Iran in the period of this study, from 1848 - 1906, was formative in shaping the nature of the constitutionalism movement. During this era the colonizers and the state both used the mechanization of cultural forms to consolidate their power. At the same time, a burgeoning public sphere gradually radicalized an emergent public, who sought to establish a constitutional form of government in Iran. The ideas and impetus for the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911 were very much rooted in the cultural production of the preceding decades. The creation and consumption of new cultural forms -- the printed book, the newspaper, the modern play -- also helped to create new communities in Iranian society. Graduates of the new secular university, mid-level bureaucrats, clerics, and merchants all participated in producing, reading, and distributing newspapers and books with revolutionary ideas. The important pre-history of the Constitutional Revolution has received too little attention by historians.

It was ultimately a dispute over sugar prices sparked the first public protests of that revolution. In 1905, the governor of Tehran ordered that some sugar merchants be bastinadoed for refusing to lower their prices. A group of merchants, tradesmen and mullahs took sanctuary (bast) in a Tehran mosque. Government officials dispersed the group who then took refuge in the shrine of `Abd al-`Azim just south of Tehran. The group grew to some 2000 people who remained in the shrine for twenty-five days. By

January 1906, Muzaffar al-Din Shah agreed to their main demands, the formation of an adalatkhanah (a house of justice) and the dismissal of the governor of Tehran. This adalatkhanah was to be the parliament which some Iranians had been calling for, but the process by which the parliament would be established and would function was still unclear at this juncture.

Despite his assurances, the Shah did not follow up on his promise to establish the adalatkhanah, leading to growing discontent and unrest. Finally, there was a confrontation involving a group of clerics and their students in which a young sayyid was killed. This violent encounter led to another bast. This time, nearly 14,000 protestors including mullahs, merchants, and tradesmen gathered in the British legation.²⁰ The protestors demanded the formation of a majlis, or parliament. The Shah finally relented and in August 1906, he issued a decree calling for the formation of a national assembly in Iran. The first majlis convened in October 1906 and set about the task of writing a constitution. An ailing Muzaffar al-Din Shah decreed the document they produced into law in December 1906, a few days before he passed away. In October 1907, the new king Muhammad `Ali Shah signed the Supplementary Fundamental Law. Together, the two documents formed the core of the Iranian Constitution for some seventy years.²¹ The constitution called for freedom of speech and the press, and it called for a committee of mujtahids, experts on Islamic jurisprudence, who would advise the legislators and ensure that legislation passed by the majlis would be in accordance with Islam.²²

The establishment of the majlis and the issuance of the constitution, however, did not mean the end of the Constitutional Revolution. Indeed, the course of the Revolution would remain rocky for some years to come. Internal differences amongst the revolutionaries about the nature of constitutionalism, continued reluctance by the Qajar shahs to relinquish power to the national assembly, and colonial interests in maintaining control over key aspects of governance severely hampered Iran's first experience of democratization. In August 1907, the Russians and the British signed an agreement in

which Iran was divided into “spheres of influence.” The convention fomented colonial influence over Iran and helped to further undermine constitutional rule.²³ The Shah, with the backing of the Cossack Brigade, carried out a coup in 1908, closing down the *majlis*. Some of the leading intellectuals and activists who supported constitutionalism were imprisoned, executed, or exiled. This phase of the revolutionary years came to be known as the Lesser Tyranny. The constitutionalists continued to struggle and eventually regained power in 1909. They forced the abdication of Muhammad `Ali Shah, and reopened the majlis.²⁴ While some clerics had supported the constitutional cause, others opposed it. The most famous of these was Shaikh Fazl-Allah Nuri, who called instead for mashru`a, a form of constitutional government that was based more rigidly on the shari`a. Concerned that the constitutionalist movement was calling for an increasingly secular form of government, Nuri eventually sided with the Shah. Following the 1909 constitutionalists counter-coup against Muhammad `Ali Shah, Nuri was brought to trial and executed.²⁵

One of the primary goals of the second majlis was to create an independent financial system for Iran. To that end, Morgan Shuster, an American advisor was hired to consult the new parliament on strategies for reforming the country's finances.²⁶ Russian officials were displeased at growing American influence in Iran and at the possibility that their own profitable tariff agreements and concessions might be reversed. They complained that this arrangement was in violation of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which did not allow Iran to hire foreign advisors without the consent of both England and Russia. By the fall of 1911, matters came to a head and Russia, with the support of England, gave the majlis an ultimatum that would essentially nullify Iran's independence. The majlis refused, and Russian troops entered northern Iran; they brutally killed some of the leading constitutionalists. Other intellectuals and activists fled Iran. Russian troops stormed the majlis. Under threat of foreign occupation, the majlis was dissolved.²⁷

In the critical years leading up the Constitutional Revolution, the ideas espoused by men like Malkum and Akhundzadeh helped Iranians imagine ways to create a form of representative government that protected their rights as citizens. The Qajar shahs were reluctant to respond to growing demands that they share power and establish a legal framework for governance; the struggle between the shahs and the revolutionaries lasted for six years. In the intervening years, Iran faced a tremendous blow to its sovereignty with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 that divided her territory into colonial spheres of influence. The struggle to establish a government based on sovereignty by the people of Iran culminated in the spectacle of the Russian bombardment of the house of parliament, an act that had the backing of the British. As Russian troops moved south through Tabriz, Rasht, and Tehran, they left behind a trail of ruin. Libraries and bookstores were destroyed; many newspapers were closed down; some intellectuals who opposed colonialism were brutally murdered; other constitutionalist thinkers fled into lives of exile in Istanbul and London.

Inattention to the pre-history of the Constitutional Revolution, a lack of a proper accounting of the instrumental texts and actors who produced the cultural forms in which the aims and structures of that revolution ultimately took shape, has led to misreadings of this critical period of Iranian history. In a fairly typical statement, one scholar argued "...[F]or all the richness, the diversity of visions and voices, the dominant trend in this movement called for the imposition of the Western narrative of modernity in Iran. This resulted in a cultural capitulation and a concession of inferiority to European ideas."²⁸ It is not sufficient to read the books, pamphlets, and newspapers that the ideologues of that revolution left behind. One must examine them with a eye to the activities of the authors and to the historical context in which they were written and read. Often, these intellectuals were carrying on a polyphonic conversation: addressing an emerging constituency, western colonial officials, and members of the Qajar state. They were writing at a time when the West was not simply a liberal utopia to be emulated; indeed, it

was a mitigating factor in the production of liberal democracy within Iran. The terms of the debate were deeply affected by the multifarious technologies of power against which they were articulated. Iranian intellectuals writing in London, Istanbul, Calcutta, Tiflis, and Tehran were well aware that damaging treaties and concessions had left the banking system, the telegraph, the railroad, the army, the educational system, and even the press in Iran were deeply susceptible to colonial penetration. In articulating a form of nation-state, then, they imagined ways to shift the right to construct and manage Iran's infrastructure to her own people. Increasingly, they imagined the Iranian people as citizens of a state, rather than subjects of a kingdom. A historically rooted view of that revolution not only clarifies the ideas and institutions it promulgated, but can also reveal the limits on the possibility of achieving a constitutional democratic form of government in Iran in the early twentieth century. In a lecture he presented in 1913, E. G. Browne, the Orientalist who had devoted himself to the success of the Constitutional Revolution said, "The meaning and essence of the Persian Revolution [was] to keep Persia independent, and to make every Persian, even the humblest peasant, a *man* with rights and duties of a citizen."²⁹ Iran's first experiment with representative government, however, did not meet with a happy ending. The legacy of this failure would cast a long shadow over the history of twentieth century Iran.

ENDNOTES TO CONCLUSION

¹ Ibid, pp. 6 – 9.

² Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto, 1993).

³ Said, Culture and Imperialism, p. xiv.

⁴ Ibid, p. xiii.

⁵ Ibid, p. xxiv.

⁶ Ibid, p. xxii-xxiii, p. 51.

⁷ See the helpful article on the possibilities of wedding cultural studies and political science by Lisa Wedeen, "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," American Political Science Review (December 2002): 713-728

⁸ Writing in the late 1960s, two scholars identified two main categories in the broader literature on nationalism: nation-states and state-nations. Nation-states were developed countries in which "a developed sense of national identity evolved prior to the crystallization of the structures of political authority." State-nations were underdeveloped, newly independent countries in which "authority and sovereignty have run ahead of self-conscious national identity and cultural integration." They argued that Iran and Turkey were the only non-Western examples of nation-states. See Mostafa Rejai and Cynthia H. Enloe, "Nation-States and State-Nations," International Studies Quarterly (1969): 140-158.

⁹ Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5.

¹⁰ Geoff Eley and Ronald Suny, "Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation," in Becoming National: A Reader, ed. G. Eley and R. Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 24.

¹¹ In a useful critique of Benedict Anderson's conception of modular nationalism, Manu Goswami argues, "Anderson's almost exclusive focus on print-media rather than the new form of social relations established by capitalism overlooks the multiple causal registers

that shape nationalism and privileges processes of circulation over processes of production. This leads to a conceptual narrowing of the social causalities that produced the modular character of nationalism." Her argument, however, overlooks the point that capitalist modes of production were central to the production of print-capitalism (which is indeed why Anderson uses the term *print-capitalism*). Most serious scholars of print culture no longer limit their analysis to textual readings alone. This has been largely due to recognition of the imbricated histories print and the public sphere. M. Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism," Comparative Studies in Society and History 44, no. 4 (2002), p. 780.

¹² Salisbury to Curzon, London, September 23, 1901, Curzon Personal Papers, F111/223, OIOC.

¹³ Curzon, P & PQ, v. 1, p. vii.

¹⁴ See for example the foundational study by Johannes Pedersen, The Arabic Book (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) where he cites Lane authoritatively on this point and in a sense canonizes this view for contemporary scholars.

¹⁵ Anderson, Imagined Communities, p. 40.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Geoff Eley, "Politics, Culture, and the Public Sphere," Positions 10, no. 1 (2002), p. 221. See also "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," paper delivered at the conference "Habermas and the Public Sphere," University of North Carolina, September 1989. Published in Craig Calhoun, Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Kirmani to Malkum, Istanbul, 1908, Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplement Persan, 1996, folio 63.

¹⁹ Duff to Lansdowne, Tehran, January 13, 1904, FO 60/730.

²⁰ For more on the importance of the bast for creating a revolutionary community and spreading ideas of constitutionalism, see Janet Afary, The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911 (NY: Columbia University Press, 1996) and see E. G. Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (London: Frank Cass, 1966), reprinted edition.

²¹ For a comparative analysis of Iran's first constitution, see Nader Sohrabi, "Historicizing Revolutions: Constitutional Revolutions in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Russia, 1905-1908," American Journal of Sociology, 100, no. 6 (May 1995).

²² This committee was never actually formed. Throughout the twentieth century, various individuals and parties called for the formation of this committee.

²³ See Keddie, Qajar Iran, p. 59.

²⁴ A weak Ahmad Mirza took over the kingship and ruled until the 1921 coup that eventually overthrew the Qajar dynasty.

²⁵ Algar, "Religious Forces in Twentieth Century Iran," pp. 734-5.

²⁶ For more on the Shuster mission to Iran, see Robert A. McDaniel, The Shuster Mission and the Persian Constitutional Revolution (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974).

²⁷ For a more complete history of the Persian Revolution see E. G. Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909; Mangol Bayat, Iran's First Revolution (NY: Oxford University Press, 1991); Nikki Keddie and Mehrdad Amanat, "Iran Under the Late Qajars, 1848-1922," Cambridge History of Iran, v. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 174-212; and Nikki Keddie, Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, 1796-1925 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Press, 1999).

²⁸ Ali Mirsepassi, Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 61

²⁹ E. G. Browne, "The Persian Press and Persian Journalism," A lecture delivered to the Persia Society, London (May 1913), p. 22, emphasis his.

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