



# ṬEQAT AL-ISLĀM, MIRZĀ 'ALI TABRIZI

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**ṬEQAT-AL-ESLĀM, ḤĀJJ MIRZĀ'ALI TABRIZI** (b. Tabriz, 7 Rajab 1277/3 May 1860; d. Tabriz, 10 Moḥarram 1330/31 December 1911; [Figure 1](#)), a religious leader of the Shaikhi (Šaykī; see SHAIKHISM) community in Tabriz and a reformist actor of the constitutional era (see [CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION](#)).

*Biography.* Ḥājj Mirzā 'Ali was born in Tabriz into a family of ulema from Khorasan. His father, Ḥājj Mirzā Musā Ṭeqat-al-Eslām (d. 1319/1901), was then head of the Tabrizi Shaikhi school. His ancestor Ḥājj Mirzā Šafi' Ṭeqat-al-Eslām Tabrizi (d. 1301/1884) had played a key role in the establishment of Shaikhism in Tabriz.

The father of Mirzā 'Ali Ṭeqat-al-Eslām Tabrizi was very active politically. He was one of the leaders of the movement in Tabriz against the Tobacco Concession in 1891-92 (Fatḥi, 1973, p. 18). He was the one who primarily dealt with the education of his son Mirzā 'Ali until the latter married his first wife in 1300/1882 and left for the *'atabāt* (q.v.), at the age of 22. Mirzā 'Ali Ṭeqat-al-Eslām was particularly impressed by his father's attempt to reconcile religious sciences and other sciences as well as by his political activism. He was interested in astronomy, mathematics, geography, and especially the history of Shi'ism (Ṭeqat-al-Eslām, "Shi'a dar Jabal 'Āmel," pp. 382-83). Ṭeqat-al-Eslām resided in Najaf for eight years, where he studied under the direction of three principal masters, all Oṣulis (adherents of the dominant rationalist school),



namely Ḥājj Shaikh 'Ali Yazdi Bafri'i, Shaikh Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Fāzel Ardakāni, and Shaikh Zayn-al-'Ābedin Māzandarāni Ḥā'eri (Fathī, 1973, p. 21), none of whom had a status comparable to that of Mirzā Ḥasan Širāzi (q.v.; d. 1312/1895), the main source of emulation (*marja'-e taqlid*) of the Shi'a world of the time. Teqat-al-Eslām returned to Tabriz in 1890, with the rank of *mojtahed*, shortly before the agitation against the Tobacco Concession (Fathī, 1973, p. 22). He then began to teach Muslim law (*feqh*, q.v.), but became especially famous for his preaching, which also attracted devotees who did not belong to the Tabrizi Shaikhi school (Fathī, 1973, p. 24). Two themes seem to have been of priority to him. On the one hand, he insisted on the end of hostilities and violence between the Shaikhis and Oṣuli jurists (*motašarre*) of the city. Tabriz, like other Iranian cities, was particularly affected by the urban factionalism opposing different sects and religious currents to each other. The non-Shaikhis of the city were then called *motašarre'*, literally meaning one who leads a godly life or is versed in religious law. Family disputes had long existed between the family of Teqat-al-Eslām and that of Mirzā Aḥmad Mojtahed. The latter had been one of the representatives of the Oṣuli-*motašarre'* community of Tabriz and even pronounced an excommunication on all Shaikhis at the beginning of the reign of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96). On the other hand, Teqat-al-Eslām invited the population to engage politically in favor of reforms. During this period before the Constitutional Revolution, it was essentially through preaching that he expressed his political views to the masses. He also advocated early on for reform of the education system. He especially supported the formation of schools influenced by the European model (e.g., Rošdiya, Tarbiat, Loqmāniya in Tabriz) during the reign of Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1907) and defended the teaching of foreign languages (Teqat-al-Eslām, in Fathī, ed., *Majmu'a-ye ātār-e qalami-e šādravān ...*, pp. 172-73).

As a Tabrizi Shaikhi, Teqat-al-Eslām's training differed somewhat from that received by the majority of Oṣuli ulema. Even if the doctrinal differences between Tabrizi Shaikhis and Oṣulis were minor, Teqat-al-Eslām had only limited relations with the main Oṣuli masters of Tabriz or the *atabāt* (Teqat-al-Eslām, "Mojmal-e ḥawādeṯ ...," p. 33). Tabrizi Shaikhis lived in separate neighborhoods and had their own mosques and schools, such as Ḥojjat-al-Eslām, Kāzemiya, and Šāḥeb-al-Amr mosques. Teqat-al-Eslām lived near the last mosque, where he taught. It was mainly through endowment deeds (*waqf*), which is generally the best way for a minority community to finance its activities, that Tabrizi Shaikhis could increase their presence and visibility in



Tabriz (Werner, 2000a, pp. 81-82, 226). When Teqat-al-Eslām's father died in 1319/1901, he became the master of the Tabrizi Shaikhi school. This new status was endorsed by Mirzā Moẓaffar-al-Din, then the governor of Azarbaijan and crown prince (*wali al-'ahd*), who bestowed on him the same title (*laqab*) held by his father, "Teqat-al-Eslām" (Teqat-al-Eslām, "Mojmal-e ḥawādeṭ ...," pp. 21-22). Despite his new responsibilities, he continued to devote much of his time to reformist activities. We have very few details about his brothers and sisters, some of whom he described as political activists in the reforming circles of Tabriz before the advent of the Constitutional Revolution (Fatḥi, 1975, p. 271).

It was only after the opening of parliament by Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah on 14 Jomādā II 1324/5 August 1906 that Teqat-al-Eslām began writing political treatises on reform. The personal diary that he kept during the Constitutional Revolution, as well as many letters and telegrams that he sent and received during that period, have been preserved. He is one of the pro-Constitutionalist ulema for whom the greatest number of documents are available. Despite his interest in politics, he refused to stay as a member of parliament in Tehran (Afšar, 1999, p. 65). In Tabriz, he decided not to assume permanent official duties at the [Anjoman-e Eyālāti-e Tabriz](#) (q.v.). His assistance was requested in the month of Jomādā II 1326/July 1908 to help find a way out of the conflict between the tribal leader Raḥim Khan Čalabiānlu, a loyal supporter of Moḥammad-'Ali Shah (r. 1324-27/1907-9), and the Tabrizi revolutionaries like Sattār Khan (Teqat-al-Eslām, "Mojmal-e ḥawādeṭ ...," pp. 88-90). After the closure of the first parliament on 23 Jomādā I 1326/23 June 1908, he assumed a growing diplomatic role, serving as an intermediary between the government forces of Moḥammad-'Ali Shah, who besieged Tabriz with the help of some Šāhsavan clans, and the pro-Constitutionalist rebels who came into resistance (Tapper 1986, p. 522). The general public, who saw Teqat-al-Eslām as a man of integrity, also sought his help to resolve conflicts. Commodity prices were particularly high and clashes between neighborhoods took place regularly.

During the dissipation of power under the second parliament, Teqat-al-Eslām's commitment to reform became more relaxed. He drafted most of his important treaties before the reopening of parliament on 28 Jomādā II 1327/17 July 1909.

Teqat-al-Eslām was killed on the morning of 10 Moḥarram 1330/31 December 1911, hanged by Russian forces that had entered the city a few days earlier. The pro-Constitutionalist commitment of Teqat-al-Eslām marks the



culmination of the politicization of the Tabrizi Shaikhis, the exact opposite of the Kermāni Shaikhis, who remained quietists during the Constitutional Revolution (Hermann, 2010b).

Many of the Osku'i-Eḥqāqi family of the first half of the 20th century obtained *ejāza*s (q.v.) from the Teqat-al-Eslāmi masters, including Mirzā 'Ali Teqat-al-Eslām Tabrizi. The latter transferred the center of the Tabriz branch from Iranian Azarbaijan to Kuwait during the 20th century, where they became active proselytes.

*Works.* Tabrizi Shaikhis are much closer to Oṣulism than Kermāni Shaikhis, as they recognize the use of *ejtehād* (q.v.; Hermann, 2017, pp. 63-66, 70-73). Mirzā 'Ali Teqat-al-Eslām also summarized the discrepancies between Oṣulis and Tabrizi Shaikhis as a simple and unique difference in method (*mašrab*; Teqat-al-Eslām, "Mojmal-e ḥawādeṭ ..., " p. 33). The literary style and the language of the ulema of the Tabrizi branch is very close to that of the members of the Oṣuli clergy. For example, several ulema of the Tabrizi branch received the titles of *marja'* or *āyat-Allāh* (q.v.; sign of God) during the 20th century. This is notably the case with Mirzā Ḥasan Eḥqāqi (Eḥqāqi, 1970, p. i).

Teqat-al-Eslām has written relatively little about the classical Muslim religious sciences such as *feqh*, *kalām*, Qur'anic exegesis, etc. On the other hand, the political works by Teqat-al-Eslām are important. He composed several pamphlets and essays during the constitutional period. They are almost all in the Persian language. He also wrote some articles in Arabic in the years 1328-29/1910-11. The latter were published in various newspapers printed in the Arab world, including *al-Ḥelāl* and *al-Moqtataf*. Apart from the political treatises, he also composed several historical articles and translated a mathematical work, *Kamāl al-riāzi*. All his works are marked by pan-Islamism as well as faith in the reform and legitimacy of the constitutional movement. He systematically presents constitutionalism as the only solution for Iran and for all societies in the Muslim world in order to get rid of the European grip and establish just Islamic governments. The most important comprehensive of his political treatises is certainly *Lālān*, a manifesto for parliamentarism (Fatḥi, 1975, pp. 418-45) in which he calls on the principal pro-constitutionalist ulema of the 'atabāt for more political involvement (on their involvement, see Hairi, 1977 and Hermann, 2013). *Lālān* has been translated into French (Hermann 2007a, pp. 352-83) and Japanese (Hachioshi). After a long description of the disasters experienced by the Muslim world and by Iran, it justifies historically and religiously the need to resort to public



consultation (*mašwara*). It also details what the roles of parliament and the legislature should be. *Bālun-e mellat-e Irān ba kojā miravad?* is another of his important works, dealing comprehensively with constitutionalism. Unfortunately, we do not have it in totality (Fathī, 1975, pp. 399-406). Teqat-al-Eslām also wrote a book called *Oşul-e siāsat-e eslāmiya*, which he lost. He took up the partial conclusions from it in two other small treatises, *Eslām wa siāsat wa eqteşād wa aklāq-e ān* (Fathī, 1975, pp. 389-95) and *Tasāwi dar hayāt-e ejtemā’i* (Fathī, 1975, pp. 395-98). Some of these works have recently been edited again (Ḥaqdār, 2010).

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