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AṢNĀF
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AṢNĀF

AṢNĀF, the plural of *ṣenf* (class, kind category), collective designation of guilds in Iran since the 11th/17th century. Historically the term *ǰamāʿat* was also used for the singular, and for the plural such phrases as *moḥtarefa, ahl-e ṣaṇʿat o bāzār*, or *aṣnāf-e kasaba* (see, e.g., J. Aubin, *Deux sayyids de Bam au XV^e siècle*, Wiesbaden, 1956, pp. 413, 463; *Ḵāṭerāt o asnād e Ẓahīr-al-dawla*, ed. Īraǰ Afšār, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 93, 95). The special use of *ṣenf* probably developed through such expressions as *aṣnāf-e mardom*, *aṣnāf-e raʿāyā* or just *aṣnāf* in pre-Safavid times, denoting the common people in the towns, most of whom were engaged in crafts, trades, or services (Moḥammad b. Hendūšāh Naḵǰavānī, *Dostūr al-kāteb fī taʿyīn al-marāteb*, ed. A. A. Alizade, 3 vols., Moscow, 1971, I, p. 11, I, part 2, p. 197, II, p. 86, 112, 137). From Safavid times the term was specially used to refer to artisans and traders. Even those craftsmen who were employed by the army in Qajar times were simply referred to as *aṣnāf* (see the overview of the government's bureaucratic organization appended to books by Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Ṣanīʿ-al-dawla Eʿtemād-al-salṭana such as *Maṭlaʿ al-šams, Merʾāt al-boldān, Tārīḵ-emontaẓam-e nāṣerī*, etc.).

The organization of artisans, shopkeepers, and traders into separate corporations is not peculiar to Iran or to Islamic countries. Such corporations were the natural outcome of the structure and needs of pre-industrial society. Sjoberg has shown that in such societies guilds are a universal phenomenon, "not necessarily in specific cultural content, but certainly in basic form." He distinguishes the following functions of guilds: 1. Guilds have the monopoly of

a particular occupation; 2. guilds have rules for the selection of membership; 3. training only occurs within the guilds; 4. guilds see to the maintenance of workmanship; 5. guilds are a channel for voicing political demands; 6. members may assist each other by pooling resources; 7. the feeling of mutual welfare is strong; 8. guilds have religious and ceremonial function (G. Sjoberg, *The Pre-Industrial City*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1965, pp. 5, 190-94).

The number and importance of these functions varied by guild and period, and an increase in their number is an indication of the guilds' strength and vitality. These functions can be divided into two categories. Ascribed functions are those inherent in the nature of guilds, i.e., fiscal and administrative functions. The other functions are acquired ones, i.e., guilds do not necessarily have them, but may acquire them in the course of time.

Not all urban groups formed guilds, even though they had features in common, e.g., wholesale merchants (*toǰǰār*) and distributors (*bonakdār*s). Therefore a guild is here defined as a group of townsmen engaged in the same occupation, who elect their own chief and officers, who pay guild taxes, and whose group has fiscal and administrative functions.

It should be noted, however, that many scholars, by failing to define their object, have found "guilds" where none have existed, thus, e.g., L. Massignon, "Ṣinf," *EI*[1]; B. Lewis, "The Islamic Guild," *Economy History Review* 8, 1937, pp. 27-30; and even recent works such as M. Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period*, Berlin, 1982. This shortcoming has been dealt with by Cl. Cahen "Yat-il eu des corporations professionelles dans le monde musulman classique?" in A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City*, Oxford, 1970, p. 59 and S. M. Stern ("The Constitution of the Islamic City," ibid., pp. 45-46).

Government in pre-industrial society concerned itself mainly with collection of taxes, provision of public services, and the maintenance of law and order. To maintain order and security and thus to ensure the collection of taxes, the government had to provide some organization of economic life. The symbol of this activity in traditional Islamic culture was the *moḥtaseb* (q.v.). In order to obtain efficient implementation of its rules, the government singled out certain socioeconomic groups which had common characteristics and interests, and then would allow them to regulate their own affairs within certain limitations without relinquishing its right to be the final arbitrator. These groups were treated by the government as a corporate body, i.e., it

treated with a representative of such a group instead of with the individual members. The degree of interference with the guilds by the government varied with the internal security of the state and its own resources. This development was promoted by the fact that literates were few among the elite of pre-industrial societies, and the elite were often of non-local origin. Governments therefore relied on qualified non-elite members of the local population to implement government rules in the practical sphere (W. M. Floor, "The Guilds in Iran: An Overview from the Earliest Beginnings Till 1972," *ZDMG* 125, pp. 99-103).

Prior to the 9th/14th century we have no convincing evidence that guilds as defined above existed in Islamic Iran, although artisans and traders played an important economic and social role in the cities. In fact as early as the fourth century A.D. mention is made of the existence of groups of artisans in Sasanian Iran. A Georgian text of the sixth century A.D. even mentions that groups of artisans had festivals peculiar to them and that they paid taxes. However, it is not known whether the chiefs that were mentioned were government officials, what their tasks were, and whether these groups of artisans really formed guilds (N. V. Pigulevskaya et al., *Tārīḵ-eĪrān az dawrān-e bāstān tā pāyān-e sada-ye heǰdahom* I, tr. K. Kešāvarz, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973, pp. 90, 141-44). In Sasanian Iran there was also an official called *wāzārbed*, or market overseer (Šāpūr I on the Kaʿba-ye Zardošt, Mid. Pers. line 35 *wʾcʾlpt*, Parth. line 28 *wʾšrpty*, i.e., *wāžārbed*, Greek line 67 *agoranomou*) who, like the Moslem *moḥtaseb*, supervised weights and measures in the market (Floor, "Das Amt des Muhtasib im Iran—Zur Kontrolle der "öffentlichen Moral" in der iranischen Geschichte," K. Greussing and J. H. Grevemeyer, eds., *Revolution in Iran und Afghanistan*, Frankfurt, 1979, pp. 125-26). This has led some scholars to assume that guilds existed in Sasanian Iran. However, it is quite unlikely that guilds in the proper sense existed at that time.

For the early Moslem period we find scattered data on the existence of artisans. In Samarqand, Asfīǰāb, and Marv certain crafts extended mutual assistance to each other (*noṣra*, *yatanāṣarūna*), but no further particulars about this custom are known (Cahen, loc. cit.). The same is true about "guilds" (*aṣnāf*) referred to by A. J. Arberry (*Shiraz: Persian City of Saints and Poets*, Norman, 1960, p. 84) and J. M. Smith Jr. (*The History of the Sarbadār Dynasty 1336-1381 A.D. and its Sources*, the Hague, 1970, p. 127). Especially from the *šahrāšūb* poetry (q.v.) we know that many individual crafts and trades existed in Iran (R. Qāsemī, *Pīšavarān dar Īrān az dawra-ye Moḡol tā Ṣafawīya*, unpubl.

thesis, University of Tehran, 1968). These crafts apparently had a fiscal and administrative function by the 8th/13th century for Ḡāzān Kahn appointed to each of them (called *ṭāyefa*) an overseer (*amīn*). Each craft was obliged to deliver a certain quota of arms as a form of taxation (Rašīd-al-dīn Faẓlallāh, *Tārīḵ-emobārak-e ḡāzānī*, ed. K. Jahn, London, 1940, pp. 336-39).

Ebn Baṭṭūṭa in A.D. 1392 gives the earliest information on the existence of guilds in Isfahan and Shiraz, where "the members of each craft appoint one of their members as headman over them, whom they call *kolū*." The same author related that these guilds were taxed as a corporate body and that they had a vivid social life (Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, tr. Gibb, II, p. 310).

Safavid period. More substantial information on guilds becomes available after 1600. During the Safavid period each trade or craft formed a guild headed by a headman elected by at least two-third (four *dāng*s) of the guild's masters (*ostād*; Mīrzā Rafīʿā, *Dostūr al-molūk*, ed. M. T. Dānešpažūh, *MDAT* 16/5-6, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968, p. 121). The guild headman (*kadḵodā*) did not have a shop, but received a salary paid by the guild. Although ideally one of the oldest and most experienced masters of the guild was chosen, this function, in practice, often was hereditary. The headman was confirmed in his function by the city's mayor (*kalāntar*, q.v.), who drew up a mandate (*taʿlīqa*) and gave him a robe of honor. The *kalāntar* also legalized the *kadḵodā*'s election document after it had been sealed by his assistant, the *naqīb* (q.v.). Guild leaders were powerful, having judicial powers relating to internal conflicts and to complaints by customers. The leaders of those guilds which were subject to corvées (*bīgārī*) were especially powerful, for they decided who had to contribute to the corvées and to what extent. Opposition to the headman and his council (*rīš-safīdhā o sar ǰūqahā*) could be punished with non-existent corvées.

A qualified person who wished to begin his own shop presented himself to the guild headman, stated his name and address, and was registered. If there were no objections against the candidate, he was allowed to open a shop after the payment of a small sum. The only limitations appear to have been the masters' consent and that he keep a certain distance between his and the other shops of the guilds outside the (closed) area exclusively occupied by the guild (*Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse etc.*, ed. L. Langlès, Paris, 1811, IV, p. 93, VI, pp. 119-24).

Guilds either paid taxes (*bonīča*, q.v.) or corvées. Accordingly they were under

the orders of either the *kalāntar* and the *naqīb* or of the *nāẓer-e boyūtāt*. Each year the *kalāntar* had the guild leaders convene in the house of the *naqīb* or with a *moḥaṣṣel* appointed by the latter during the first quarter of each year. Here they discussed the *bonīča* or quota to be paid by each guild. When the quota was fixed and agreed upon by all parties concerned, the *kadḵodā*s would seal the taxation document (*ṭūmār*), which then would be sealed by the *naqīb*. He would send it to the *kalāntar*, whose duty it was to collect the guild taxes. The *kalāntar* would send the guilds' taxation assessment to the state government's financial department to be included in the total revenues collected each year (*Taḏkerat al-molūk*, pp. 81, 83).

Although annual income was taken as the assessment base, ample opportunity existed for favoritism, especially concerning guilds subject to corvées. Those guilds, such as the shoemakers and leathermakers, which were exempt from corvées had to pay a tax known as *ḵarǰ-e pādšāh*. The guilds subject to corvées appear to have been more heavily taxed than others. If the king had some work to execute which was beyond the capacity of his own workshops, he ordered his *nāẓer-e boyūtāt* to see to it that the relevant guilds would deliver the necessary labor and/or materials. The corvées were an oppressive burden, especially for the masons, but could be evaded by substituting payment (*Taḏkerat al-molūk*, pp. 48, 81-83, 181; Chardin, op. cit., VI, p. 120). In addition to *bonīča*, *ḵarǰ-e pādšāh*, and corvées, guilds also had to pay for the expenses incurred by visits of ambassadors of foreign nations. This tax was known as *ḥawādeṯ*. In Isfahan the total revenues of the guilds amounted to 3,000 tomans per annum (R. du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, ed. Ch. Schefer, Paris, 1890, p. 30; for further details on artisans during the Safavid period see Keyvani, op. cit. (a look to be used with caution as the author uses and analyses his material somewhat uncritically).

Qajar period. 1. Organization. Guild membership was a prerequisite to the pursuit of any trade. Many families traditionally pursued certain crafts, but there was no guild compulsion (as in medieval Europe) to take up a hereditary occupation. Choice of a profession was free, even if conditioned by family and financial considerations (many new entrants to a guild would be relatives of members). However, some guilds limited membership, making the possibility of entry uncertain, and among these closed guilds the custom of hereditary occupation was strong.

Most guild members had no formal education. They would start as a jack-of-all-trades or *pādow* at an early age to earn money and learn the craft. The

*pādow*s were trained on the job and were used for all kinds of activities such as doing simple technical tasks, running errands, and serving tea to the customers. At what stage a *pādow* became an apprentice (*šāgerd*) and whether formal qualifications were required for this is not known. Many guilds required a period of apprenticeship which varied according to the nature of the craft, the ability of the *pādow* or, *šāgerd*, and the willingness of the master (*ostād*). Many accomplished *šāgerd*s remained with their masters because they could not afford to start their own shop.

To become an *ostād* was relatively easy in most guilds. In some guilds a master's certificate, subject to approval by the *kalāntar*, was needed. In most cases, the candidate would request permission from the head of his guild and give a money present, and the *kalāntar* would give him permission to practice his trade in a certain neighborhood.

The *ḥaqq-e bonīča*, the right to set up a shop, was characteristic for a few (closed) guilds. To guarantee each member of the guild a fair share of the available trade, the number of shops in every quarter was fixed in relation to the number of inhabitants and houses. This fixed number could not be increased, and the opening of new shops could only occur outside the original area, and then only with the permission of the guild and government. The holders of the *ḥaqq-e bonīča* could sell their rights on the condition that the buyer had a master's certificate and that the other guild members agreed to the sale. The master's certificate required by these guilds had to be signed by the candidate's master and the *kalāntar*. In the nineteenth century when an *ostād* in the baker's guild refused to sign his *šāgerd*'s certificate, the *kalāntar* would allow two other masters of the same guild to sign the certificate as proof of the *šāgerd*'s skill (A. K. S. Lambton, *Islamic Society in Persia*, University of London, 1954, p. 24; J. M. de Rochechouart, *Souvenir d'un voyage en Perse*, Paris, 1867, p. 180).

Besides the *ḥaqq-e bonīča* there were other means to guarantee the guild member a reasonable share of the trade. In some guilds the number of shops was not fixed, but a newcomer had to set up his shop at a distance of at last seven shops from that of his colleague. Another variation was that outside the immediate bazaar area guild members had their own territory or *goḏar* where they would not allow others to settle (de Rochechouart, op. cit., p. 182; J. Greenfield, *Die Verfassung des persischen Staates*, Berlin, 1904, p. 145).

A peculiar trait of Iranian guilds was the existence of a kind of master

organization of central guilds. Under the aegis of one head-guild, several related guilds were organized as one unit. The purpose of this organization probably was fiscal. In view of the number of central guilds (thirty-two), this organization may have originated in Safavid times. In that period, the royal workshops numbered thirty-two, and the head of each was responsible for the related normal central guild and its subsidiaries. This “organization” of guilds survived until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the guilds were represented in the first parliament by thirty-two representatives, each representing a number of related guilds.

The internal organization of a guild was in the hands of its head and the most influential masters, who were known as *rīš-safīdhā* or elders. They together formed the governing body of the guild, and when there were disputes to be settled or misdeeds to be punished, this body constituted the guild court. Disputes between guilds were settled by a joint court. The head of the guild was variously known as *kadḵodā*, *bozorg*, *raʾīs*, *ostād-bāšī* or *wāseṭa-ye ṣenf*. The *kadḵodā* had to be chosen from among the guild masters and approved by the *kalāntar*. A guild headman was seldom dismissed except on grounds of objections against him from his electors; even they had to prove his negligence or criminal practices (J. Bleibtreu, *Persien: Das Land der Sonne und des Löwen*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1894, p. 125; W. M. Floor, *The Guilds in Qajar Persia*, unpubl. thesis, Leiden, 1971, p. 33).

The function of guild headman was dual. He was appointed by his fellow guild members to represent and promote their interests before the government, while the government expected him to keep the guild in line with government wishes and to see that taxes were paid and on time. The headman therefore had the right to give the bastinado or to fine offending guild members. In the nineteenth century, however, the powers of the guild headman were greatly curtailed. The authority of the headman depended on the success of their mediator’s role between the government and the guild. If a headman was able to restrain too demanding a governor, his influence with the guild would increase; this in turn would boost his “bargaining power” with the authorities. The government, by dealing solely with the headman, fixed responsibility on one reliable and influential member of the guild. The guilds benefited from their corporateness according to their ability and strength. Many guilds in the nineteenth century held a weak position, and their “organization resembled rather a police regulation than a privilege” (De Rochechouart, op. cit., p. 183).

2. Social function. Notwithstanding the rather loose organization of the guilds,

certain features favored a sense of corporate life. The guilds had their own bazaars, and in some cases they worked closely together for their common wealth. Members of the same guild often used the same mosque for observing daily prayers and together participated in religious ceremonies. Finally, guilds had their own habitual coffee houses or *pātūq* (hangout). Guilds seldom provided for mutual assistance. Thompson, the British Consul in Tehran, stated: "This system of association is not adopted with a view to render assistance to such of its members as may be in difficulties owing to sickness or other unforeseen misfortune" (FO. 60/337, "Report on Persia," Tehran, June 24, 1886). There were exceptions, however, for the bakers' guild in Tehran around 1865 had a guild fund with the aim "to help those of the colleagues, whose business is doing badly" (De Rochechouart, op. cit., p. 180). The same source, however, states that no other guild funds existed. The guilds best demonstrated their existence when they took part in public ceremonies of which the Moḥarram and the ʿĪd-e Qorbān processions, and the special guild *rawża-kᵛānīs* (q.v.) were the most important. But not all guilds participated as such in these activities. The guilds took part in the congratulation of the shah and the governor at Nowrūz or New Year. Individual guilds also had custom or practices which were characteristic for them only (Z. Šīdfar, *Ḥoqūq-e kār wa ṣanʿat* I, Tehran, 1339 Š./1960, pp. 183-90). While it would appear that a strong bond existed among guild members, these groups only showed a corporate spirit when participating in socio-religious activities. Even then this spirit was focused on religious themes which they had in common with other Muslims, rather than (with few exceptions) on causes unique to their guild.

Notwithstanding the prevailing idea that guilds were part of the *fotūwa* (*fotowwa*) organization or were identical with it, we find no evidence for this belief in Iranian or European sources. The organization and objectives of the *fotūwa* groups were completely different. It is likely that many individual guild members joined *fotūwa* organizations, but the number of guild members exceeded the number for the *fotūwa* orders such as the Faqr-e ʿAǰam (Floor, "Guilds and Futuvvat in Iran," *ZDMG* 134, 1984, pp. 106-14).

There is no evidence for the existence in Iran of the *hamkār* organizations which prevailed in the Caucasus (Ch. Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*, Chicago, 1971, p. 288; A. Bournoutian, *Eastern Armenia in the Last Decade of Persian Rule 1807-1828*, Malibu, California, 1982, pp. 148-49).

3. Taxation. Each year after Nowrūz the *kalāntar* convoked the heads of those guilds who were not exempt from paying the guild tax and with them fixed the

total tax amount and the proportion to be paid by each individual guild. Each guild head then divided the amount to be paid by his guild among the guild members. This custom was know as *bonīča-bandī*. The prevailing name for guild tax was *mālīāt-e aṣnāfīya*, but terms such as *bonīča*, *taḥmīl*, and *ḵarǰ* also are reported.

Guild tax was levied from all shopkeepers, varying according to their location, occupation, and income and with "the exigencies of the situation, of the province and its population" (ʿAbd-al-Raḥīm Żarrābī, *Tārīḵ-eKāšān*, ed. Īraǰ Afšār, Tehran, 1342 Š./1963, p. 416). The *aṣnāfīya* then was collected by the *mobāšer-e aṣnāf*, who often also collected the shop rent. For the nineteenth century a rule of thumb of twenty percent on the profit of trade is mentioned as the rate of *aṣnāfīya*, but this practice was not universal. The *aṣnāfīya* was normally paid in twelve monthly installments, as in Tehran, Tabrīz, and Isfahan. But other patterns occurred; e.g., in Kāšān it was due in four installments (Lambton, op. cit., pp. 24-25).

For various reasons guilds would be granted temporarily or permanent tax exemption. However, if the government was in need of money it would demand payment of *aṣnāfīya* nevertheless. Another practice was that governors demanded payment of *aṣnāfīya* before the date due, a practice which was known as *mosāʿada*. This payment was deducted when the proper time of payment arrived (R. M. B. Binning, *A Journal of Two Years' Travel in Persia, Ceylon, etc.*, London, 1857, I, p. 279).

When towards the end of the nineteenth century European (mostly Russian) subjects increasingly came to Iran to trade or pursue a craft, these did not pay taxes. In 1886 the Iranian government demanded payment from these craftsmen. Although Russia admitted that European traders were in a privileged position, it opposed the Iranian plans. Finally it agreed to payment of taxes by European craftsmen in two installments for an amount to be fixed by the Russian consul. Although all legations were informed of this new measure in 1893, some time passed before it was implemented (Floor, op. cit., pp. 55, 144-45).

Guild taxation remained a complex subject, the more so since the custom of convening guild heads to discuss the quota had fallen into disuse by the turn of the century. After the revolution of 1906 the Iranian government tried to introduce reform but failed to do so. A new attempt was made in 1921, but it remained restricted to the Tehran guilds and had not been implemented when

Sayyed Żīāʾ-al-dīn's cabinet fell (H. Naficy, *L'impôt et la vie économique et sociale en Perse*, doctoral thesis, Paris, 1924, p. 133).

4. Price-fixing and standard of workmanship. Part of the task of urban government was to fix prices for products such as bread, meat, wood, and fodder. High prices for these necessities might lead to social unrest. The *kalāntar* therefore held each month a meeting with the heads of the bakers, butchers, grocers, foragesellers, and coalsellers guilds. Together they would fix the maximum prices of the products sold by their guilds. The monthly price list was drawn up by them (*tasʿīr-e aǰnās*) and was made public by the *ǰāṛčīš* or public criers. Beginning in 1852 the price list was also published in the government newspaper in Tehran. These monthly meetings fell into disuse after the 1870s.

Guilds such as the bakers and the butchers were to a great extent able to control the price of their products. The head of the butchers' guild decided each day how many head of cattle and sheep were to be slaughtered in the abattoir or *qaṣṣāb-ḵāna*. Here the meat was given a seal, so that illegal slaughters could be spotted easily. A similar situation existed for the bakers' guild, which controlled the amount of wheat that was to be baked each day. Leading members of both guilds often were party to the many meat and wheat corners which occurred especially after 1890 (Floor, op. cit., pp. 61-65). In general, however, guilds were unable to control prices, which were usually arrived at through haggling. Both buyer and seller had incomplete knowledge of the changes in the supply situation due to the poor and inefficient organization of the market. Bazaar prices therefore were often unstable and sensitive to bazaar rumors.

Accompanying this inability to fix minimum prices was the absence of any guild guarantee or control over the standard of workmanship. This lack was the result of the rather loose organization of the guilds. It was therefore up to the government to supervise the maintenance of price regulations and to check the quality of products put up for sale. As in Safavid times this task was executed by the *moḥtaseb* but later also by the *dārūḡa-ye bāzār*. In 1907 the task was given to the police or Naẓmīya by parliament. Supervision of the government regulations was, however, lax (W. M. Floor, "The Police in Qajar Persia," *ZDMG* 123, 1973, p. 306).

5. Political function of the guilds. At no time during the Qajar period were the guilds able to strengthen their political or economical position by political

actions. During the period of the constitutional movement the guilds were a power to reckon with, but they failed to translate this power into an improvement of their position due to their weak organization. Yet, only by belonging to a guild could artisans acquire some measure of security and status. The loosely organized guilds could bridge the gap between rulers and ruled and manage to present their grievances only through the intermediary of patron-brokers, in particular religious leaders and powerful merchants. It is therefore not surprising that concerted guild actions were controlled by their patrons. Although the political influence of guilds was marginal, they had several means of getting their way. Guild headmen could change allegiance to other important patrons, offer bribes, or threaten with social unrest, slander, campaigns, and demonstrations. Such actions could entice other groups with grievances against the same authorities to join in the action. The best known technique was that of closing the bazaar, whereby the economic life of the city would be completely paralyzed.

It was only during the constitutional revolution that the guilds wielded real political power, although their role must not be exaggerated. The leaders of the guilds may have had political aspirations, but the majority was mainly worried about how to make a decent living, and therefore could not press for structural reforms in a society whose functioning they hardly understood. This explains why many bazaars believed that the Maǰles which the revolution demanded would lower and fix prices of necessities. Moreover, their patrons expressed the aims of the *mašrūṭīya* in Islamic terms, an approach which was a good mobilizing force.

The guilds probably were the most cohesive group during the revolution. During the general *bast* (q.v.) in the grounds of the British Legation, each guild had its own tent. The guilds also constituted themselves into political club or *anǰoman*s (q.v.). In Tehran alone guilds had formed seventy *anǰoman*s. To strengthen their role in the constitutional movement the *anǰoman*s of the guilds in Tehran formed a central guild council (Anǰoman-e Markazī-e Aṣnāf). Each guild *anǰoman* had one representative, from whom representatives were chosen to form an executive committee (Anǰoman-e Ḵāṣṣ). Their headquarters were in the Sepahsālār mosque next to the Maǰles building. The central guild council was also joined by provincial *anǰoman*s (Y. Dawlatābādī, *Tārīḵ-emoʿaṣer yā ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā*, Tehran, n.d. II, pp. 116-17).

In Yazd we find the Ḥayʾat-e Aṣnāf, in Kermān the Maǰmaʿ-e Ettefāq-e ʿOmūmī, in Shiraz the Anǰoman-e Aṣnāfīya. The central guild council also issued a

newspaper called *Anǰoman-e aṣnāf*, which shortly thereafter was renamed *Bāmdād*. The cohesion of the guilds resulted in their being selected as one of the groups allowed to send delegates to the Maǰles. The guilds according to the first election law were in fact represented by thirty-two delegates or twenty-two percent of the Maǰles membership.

That the short-lived political influences of the guilds did not result in the rise of their own leaders with political programs demonstrated the lack of political awareness among guild members and the fact that they still thought along traditional lines. In the new election law of 1909 the guilds were completely barred from political power, which they never would regain. Guilds thereafter reverted to the old style of communication. The only difference after the revolution was that new power-brokers, the political parties, offered themselves as channels for their grievances. Moreover, in 1920 in several cities of Iran the guilds formed themselves into one union in order to represent their trade and political interests along the lines of the earlier *anǰoman*s (See V. Osetrov, "Rabochee i professional'noe dvizhenie v Persii," *Novyĭ Vostok*, no. 2, 1929, p. 571).

Pahlavi period. The guilds during the reign of Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-41) were strictly controlled by the government. In 1926 the Maǰles abolished taxes on 230 guilds, and they were no longer treated as corporate bodies in fiscal matters. A new income tax law with four different schedules substituted for the old *bonīča* system. However, the new system did not work well in practice, so that the old system of group assessment was restored in 1948.

Although guilds as economic and social organizations continued to exist, the government tried to increase its influence over them. Meetings of the guilds were only allowed after permission from the police, who also attended. The Maǰles also passed a law regulating the handling of differences among guild members and between guilds (Qānūn-e Rafʿ-e Eḵtelāfāt-e Ṣenfī, 5 Mehr 1311 Š./1932).

After Reżā Shah's abdication in 1320 Š./1941 guilds increased their activities. A report from 1948 shows that many of the workers employed by various guilds were members of the Tūda party. Nevertheless the influence on the guilds of nationalist and traditional leaders such as Āyatallāh Abu'l-Qāsem Kāšānī, Moḥammad Masʿūd, Aḥmad Qawām (Qawām-al-salṭana), Moḥammad Moṣaddeq, and Āyatallāh Ḵomeynī was very great (*Ḵᵛāndanīhā* 16/53, pp. 14, 15). Especially Moṣaddeq, through his contacts with Kāšānī and Moẓaffar

Baqāʾī, could reckon with guild support for street demonstrations. Not surprisingly after Moṣaddeq's fall the government wanted to bring the guilds under its control.

In 1958 the status of the guilds was regulated by the law of Mehr, 1336 Š./September-October, 1957. In each town a craft or trade could constitute itself into a guild, which then would be the only guild of its kind that would be allowed. Each guild appointed one representative to the high council of guilds (*Šūrā-ye ʿālī-e aṣnāf*). In towns where too few artisans and traders existed to form several guilds, one all-embracing guild could be formed. All decisions taken by the high council had to be approved by the governor, who was represented on it.

Several guilds had an office, clerks, and legal advisors, while the guild leaders did not exercise their trade or craft anymore. The high council could regulate matters such as holidays, business hours, and protection of trade secrets. It was also supposed to see that services and goods delivered by guild members were of a certain quality. Their most important activities, however, were centered on negotiating the amount of taxes to be paid, seeking bans on importation of competitive foreign goods, and starting modern factories.

Each year the governor convened the guild leaders to fix the amount of taxes to be paid by each guild. Negotiations could drag on sometimes for years. The amount was dependent on such factors as political reliability and economic and/or financial difficulties. After the guild tax was fixed, it was apportioned among the members (L. Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*, Berkeley, 1962, pp. 185-87).

In 1969 there were 110 guilds with a membership of about 120,000 in Tehran which participated in the election of the high council, which in practice acted as the representative of guilds in the provinces. The elections were held under the supervision of the government, which preferred to have its own men elected. This fact and the competition by government shops led to several conflicts with the government, ending in the dismissal of the high council in 1969 ("Echo of Iran," *Iran Almanac*, 1969, p. 562).

In June 10, 1971 a new Guild Act (Qānūn-e Neẓām-e Ṣenfī) was adopted by the Maǰles: Members of a craft (*wāḥed-e ṣenfī*) could form a guild union (*etteḥādīya-ye-ṣenfī*). The unions together formed a guild chamber

(*oṭāq-e aṣnāf*) in each town. The guild chamber was under a supervisory board (*hayʾat-e ʿālī-e neẓārat*) composed of five cabinet ministers, the chief of police, the chairman of the Tehran guild chamber, and five independent experts. The board was the final arbitrator of all matters concerning the guilds. By 1974 ninety chambers existed, and sixty others were in the process of formation.

The guild chambers were responsible for the implementation of the Guild Act. A chamber defined the duties of each guild union, settled disputes between members, investigated complaints by consumers, and had to control the level of workmanship of its members. It also prepared detailed plans for the number of shops needed in each city. Nobody was allowed to engage in a trade or craft outside its guild. In 1971 some 80,000 tradesmen still were not members of a guild. Finally the guild chamber issued trade permits, and was responsible for price-fixing, pension, insurance, and key money rules (*Iran Almanac*, 1972, pp. 583-84; ibid., 1971, p. 579). Although the guilds were allowed more internal freedom after 1971, the government, by pulling financial, economic, and political strings, had fair control over them. In 1963 the mayor of Tehran stated, “The name of these guilds is not worth a penny. They are only used to stuff ballots in elections or to hold meetings in favor of this or against that.” This still held in the 1970s (*Iran Almanac*, 1963, p. 540).

The contemporary guilds often show the same social patterns and characteristics as the nineteenth-century guilds, e.g., many still occupy certain bazaars and streets. However, the guilds are even more loosely organized than before, and less cohesion exists among its members, at least in the big cities. In smaller towns such as Kermān the situation appears to be more traditional (P. W. English, *City and Village in Iran*, Madison, 1966, pp. 96-97). It seems, however, to have changed in the 1970s as is shown by the situation in Zābol (B. Rist, *Die Stadt Zābol*, Marburg, 1981, pp. 140-49). The guilds are run by wealthy members who have political influence. Rather than being based on a strong cohesive membership and organization, guilds are centered on their leaders’ position. These, however, often have other (political, commercial) interests as well, which hamper guilds in becoming effective channels for members’ interests. Moreover, the government does not always treat the guilds as economic and legal units with defined legal rights, but as amorphous intermediaries haggling over taxes and price policies (N. Jacobs, *The Sociology of Development: Iran as an Asian Case Study*, New York, 1967, p. 91; Floor, “The Guilds in Iran,” p. 115).

The guild membership played an important role in the 1977-79

demonstrations which led to the Iranian Islamic Revolution. The traditional-minded bazaaris had strong links with the religious opposition and resented government interference in their own affairs, the more so, since they felt that it was to their disadvantage. This feeling was stronger from 1974, when the public criticized the guild chambers for the rise in prices and overcharging. The chambers, however, accused the importers and producers as the main cause of the fast-rising prices and the lack of information about the market on the part of the high council of pricing. Nevertheless, the guild chamber of Tehran appointed 400 inspectors to look into the work of the 250,000 members (*Iran Almanac*, 1975, p. 431). This activity led to an increasing number of members being turned over to the chamber courts to be fined for violation of price regulations. The guild members felt this to be an unjust treatment, especially since the big importers and producers of the modern sector remained free. This feeling no doubt explains the willingness of the bazaar community to finance the 1978 revolution, just as it had done in 1906.

See also Bazaar.

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