



BARDA AND BARDA-DĀRI IV. FROM THE MONGOLS TO THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

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1. The Il-khanid, Timurid, Safavid, and Zand periods (1300-1800). Male slaves were referred to as *golām* (in Arabic lit. a youth) or *zar-kaṛīd* (lit. bought by gold), while black slaves also were commonly called *kākā sīāh*. Female slaves were referred to as *kanīz(ak)* (Polak, I pp. 248, 258; Mostawfī, I, p. 213 n.; Naḳjavānī, II, pp. 67, 68, 70).

Sources of supply. After the Mongol period, the manner in which white slaves were obtained basically remained unchanged, i.e., warfare and raids continued to be the main slave-producing activities. Tīmūr, for example, “had as many as a thousand captives, who were skilful workmen, and laboured all the year round at making head pieces, and bows and arrows” (Clavijo, p. 172). Of course prisoners of war (*asīr*) could be ransomed as happened to the Portuguese captured after the conquest of Hormuz (Anonymous, I, p. 218 n. 1). Poor parents who sold their children were a small source of supply of slaves. Slaves were also imported from India: Herbert (p. 110) in 1628 observed that on the ships that sailed with his from Surat to Bandar-e ‘Abbās there were



“above three hundred slaves whom the Persians bought in India: Persees, Ientews (gentiles [i.e. Hindus]) Bannaras [Bhandaris?], and others.” Black slaves, of course, continued to be supplied from East Africa by sea (for depictions of a black slave girl and a black *golām* see de Bruijn, pls. 89-90). Major upheavals were especially fertile in providing slaves; during the Afghan occupation (1722-30), for example, thousands were enslaved. The regular Baluch incursions in Southeastern Iran and those of the Uzbek in northeastern Iran also led to the captivity and enslavement of thousands of people. In these cases, Sunni Muslims enslaved both fellow Sunnis and Shi‘ites. In the Caucasus, Christians were the principal victims. In 1768, peasants and tribesmen of the Naḵjavān khanate petitioned Karīm Khan Zand to prohibit the Bīrzāda tribe from enslaving them (Perry, p. 212).

In addition to violence and outright purchase, gifts were another means of obtaining slaves. The shah both bought slaves and received them as gifts, e.g., on the occasion of Nowrūz (Anonymous, I, p. 48; Kaempfer, p. 128). The Armenians, who had to give tribute to their Iranian overlords inter alia in the form of maidens and youths, refused to do so around 1780 (Perry, p. 213). The shahs also presented others with slaves. Shah Ya‘qūb Āq Qoyunlū, for example, bestowed handmaidens (*jawārī*) and slave girls (*savārīd*) on the ‘*olamā*’ (Minorsky, 1957, p. 52). When Georgian ambassadors visited Shah Esmā‘īl, “a damsel was given them as a present” an Italian traveler noted (*Narrative*, pp. 207, 217; cf. Ebn Baṭṭūṭa II, p. 337).

Employment of slaves. Slaves were used for many purposes, mainly for domestic service and pleasure. In the *bāzār* of Tabrīz, Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (II, p. 344) saw a richly dressed beautiful slave boy showing precious stones in front of the jewelers’ shops to attract buyers. Young slave boys were used for acts of sodomy, while beautiful girls also served as sex objects (Barbaro and Contarini, p. 207). Slave girls also were prostituted by their owners (Naḵjavānī, II, p. 289). All dignitaries had large households with many slaves for display (Kaempfer, p. 136), and Europeans in Iran also kept a few slaves.

Eunuchs. A special and influential category of slaves were the eunuchs or *k̄vājas*, who were castrated at a young age (between 7-10 years) before being sold to their ultimate owners. They were mainly dark-skinned, though white ones also occurred; Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (II, p. 338) mentions a Greek eunuch. However, under the Safavids there were no white eunuchs until Shah ‘Abbās I, who himself performed the operation of castration several times; the chief eunuch (*k̄vājābāšī*) was the senior black eunuch (*rīšsafīd*) of the harem.



According to Chardin (VI, p. 42), the majority of the dark-skinned eunuchs were not Africans, but Indians, mainly from Malabar and Bengal, who were lighter skinned than African blacks. Around 1590, however, 100 Georgian *golāms* were castrated; the most esteemed among them was appointed as their chief *yūzbāšī* (commander of a hundred). At the same time, a *yūzbāšī* was appointed over the black eunuchs. Thenceforth power was shared between the chiefs of the black and white eunuchs. The shah was the only one allowed to own white eunuchs. Depending on their ages (usually 8-16) and levels of education, eunuchs sold at the very high prices of between 1,000 and 2,000 francs; Shah ‘Abbās II nevertheless owned some 3,000 eunuchs. Elite families, depending on their wealth, usually owned between two and eight eunuchs (*Tadkerat al-molūk*, pp. 56, 127; Chardin, VI, pp. 41-43). It would seem that white eunuchs suffered only the loss of their testicles, while black eunuchs had all their genitalia removed. If they wished to urinate they made use of a quill, which they were compelled to carry with them (Elgood, p. 180). Reports from state officials were passed on to the shah via the chief eunuch (*īšēk-āgāsībāšī*) of the harem, who had his own quarters within the complex. He also returned the shah’s reply to these state officials. A eunuch was also the keeper of the treasury, while his deputy, a black eunuch as well, was the keeper of the keys to the treasury. Only the black eunuchs had free access to the harem, which they seldom left. They did light housework, as well as guarding the shah’s women. It was believed that their blackness made them safe, because it was considered ugly and unattractive. White eunuchs could enter the harem only on the specific instructions of the shah. White eunuchs served as the shah’s bodyguards and guarded the royal palace, accompanying the shah wherever he went. The chief of the white eunuchs was called *mehtar* or “senior.” The latter was always with the shah; he lived in a palace of his own and was very influential (Chardin, V, p. 378; Thévenot, II, p. 102). The shah, always surrounded and served by eunuchs, “has some 50 male slaves, who take care of his menial needs, such as being dressed. They also have charge of the drapery, and the buttery” (Anonymous, I, p. 48). During public audiences “nine to ten small eunuchs of 10 to 14 years old are arranged behind the Shah; they are the most beautiful children whom one has seen, they are richly dressed, and form a semi-circle behind him; they seem to be marble statues such is their immobility, having their hands on their stomach, their heads high and their eyes straight” (Chardin, V, p. 470). When serving the shah they knelt down.

Slave soldiers. The slave soldiers (*golām*), who disappeared during the Mongol



period, became important again in the time of Ġāzān Khan (a.d. 1295-1304). Rašīd-al-Dīn (Jahn, p. 308) reports that a military *eqṭā'* whose holder died without heirs was to be given to one of his old *ḡolāms*. Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (II, pp. 302, 343) mentions the presence of *mamlūks*, i.e., slaves, in the Il-khanid court of Abū Sa'īd. *Ḡolāms* are also mentioned by Naḵjavānī (I, pp. 228, 234-35), who says that they were inter alia used to protect caravans. One of the Sarbadār leaders, Wajīh-al-Dīn (ca. 1350), also recruited a bodyguard of Turkic *ḡolāms* (Dawlatšāh, ed. Browne, p. 280). With the decline of the Il-khanids the *ḡolāms* again began to achieve prominence under the Chubanids (Aharī, pp. 70-74). The early Safavids, like their Qara Qoyunlū and Āq Qoyunlū predecessors, did not employ slave soldiers. The Safavid *ḡolām* corps was only created around 998/1590 as a result of Shah 'Abbās I's problems with the Qezelbāš amirs (q.v.). The corps was headed by the *qūllar-āḡāsībāšī* and was composed of *ḡolāms*, keepers of the armory (*yasāvolān-e qūr*), and *jārčī* armed with *jazā'erī* (large-caliber muskets) and served under *yūzbāšīs* (*Taḍkerat al-molūk*, p.73). At the same time, a separate vizier and finance officer (*mostawfī* for the corps) were appointed (Röhrborn, p. 32). The former was in charge of keeping records of their employment, their performance, and the manner and level of payment. The latter was in charge of the records of the *ḡolāms*. "He faithfully kept the individual files, mentioning dates of issue of *raqams* of employment, amount of salary, grants, *toyūl*, *hama-sāla*, claims and (periods of) absence from, and presence of duty." (*Taḍkerat al-molūk*, p.73). The *mostawfī* also kept records of dismissals and deaths, as well as all financial records.

The education of the young *ḡolāms* (both castrates and non-castrates) in reading and court etiquette was institutionalized under the shah. As long as the *ḡolāms* were beardless they had a special tutor. When they reached puberty, they entered the military and were placed under the *qūllar-āḡāsībāšī*. The young *ḡolāms* were housed in a small palace called *kāna-ye ḡāv* (cow's house; Chardin, VIII, pp. 38-39). According to Thévenot (II, p. 101) there were about 1,400 *ḡolāms*, while Chardin (V, p. 308) says there were 1,200. Under Šāhroḵ Shah (about 1750 a.d.) the *ḡolām* corps numbered at least 1,500 men (Ḥosaynī Monšī, I, fols. 95a, 96b).

Influence of slaves. *Ḡolāms*, whether eunuchs or not, had much influence and commanded much respect. The eunuchs especially were quite powerful because of their close association with the shah and their easy access to him (Chardin, VII, p. 472). Many of the *ḡolāms* obtained high rank and station. K̄vāja



Lo'lo', a Greek eunuch at Abū Sa'īd's court, was also one of his most powerful amirs (Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, II, p. 340). When Shah 'Abbās I died, of the ninety-two powerful amirs twenty-one were *gōlām-e šāh*. Many *gōlāms* were also governors of key provinces (see Röhrborn, pp. 33-37). The shah also allowed them to acquire property and wealth. "The reward which the king gives to the male slaves is that, according as they have served him well, the king lends one 20, another 30, another 60,000 ducats at 20 per cent [or some other rate], he receiving the interest from it from year to year, while they afterwards lend the money out at 50, 70, and 80 per cent to gentlemen of the Court against good guarantees such as goods and houses" (Anonymous, I, p. 48). If the borrowers did not pay the *gōlāms*, "they sell up the houses or property, nor is there any recourse for getting them back" (ibid., p. 49). The so-called "houseborn *gōlāms*" (*gōlām-e kānazād*) were especially influential, since they enjoyed the shah's favor more than any other servant (Ḥosaynī Monšī, I, fol. 131a). Not only did royal slaves occupy positions of responsibility, but also slaves owned by men of less exalted rank. Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (II, p. 285) visited a convent near Šuštar, which was completely managed by the four slaves owned by the shaikh.

2. The Qajar period (1800-1925).

Sources of supply. Slaves in Qajar Iran were obtained either through sale or through warfare. Poor parents also contributed to the slave pool by selling their children; these sales took place in Armenia, in southern Iran, and in Kurdistan (Polak, I, p. 248; Drouville, II, pp. 75-76). Bassett (p. 287) comments that "it might be thought that this sale is intended to be a form of marriage only; but the fact is that the girls are purchased to be domestics." Regular warfare, such as the Russo-Iranian wars, tribal incursions (*čapows*), slave raids, as well as punitive expeditions, especially against the Turkmen, were the major source of white slaves, mainly in northern Iran. In the first instance Armenian, Georgian, and Circassian slaves were obtained. Slave girls were "passed off by the Toorkmans and Khiva merchants as Kalmoecks, but generally they are Kuzzauks . . . purchased by the Persian" (Amanat, p. 20). In the second, the objectives were mainly Muslim Iranians captured in particular through Turkmen raids (see, e.g., Kinneir, pp. 26, 27; Amanat, pp. 39, 43f.; Ferrier, p. 81). The Turkmen felt little compunction in enslaving the Shi'ite population of Iran, whom they sold to the Kīva merchants, if they did not require them for themselves. However, they were not above capturing Sunni coreligionists either. Consul Abbott reports that the Ghoklans also raided the Yomūts and that those whom they took were usually disposed of to the



Iranians (Amanat, p. 50).

In the south the situation was slightly different. Slaves were mainly blacks, imported through the Persian Gulf by Arab and Persian traders or overland by pilgrims returning from Mecca or Karbalā'. (There were also some slaves coming in from Damascus; Sheil, p. 242; Jaubert, p. 286.) Because of this point of origin, Persians called slaves colloquially *ḥājī* (Mostawfī, I, p. 213). In southeast Iran, slaves were produced either by parents' selling their children out of poverty or by the raids of slavers. The market was both in Arabia and in Afghanistan; "most of the slave girls employed as domestics in the houses of the gentry at Kandahar were brought from the outlying districts of Ghayn" (Sīstān) (Bellew, pp. 252, 292). Around 1900, slave raids were mounted by some local chieftains in Makrān. The Muslim slaves were sold mainly to Arabia; 450 per year went through the port of Jāsk alone. By 1905, the export of slaves from Makrān seems to have come to a stop again. There were also parents who were forced to sell children into slavery in Kermān and the Bandar-e 'Abbās area toward the turn of the century (Lorimer, I/2, pp. 2510-11; see also Issawi, p. 126, n. 14).

Employment of slaves. Slaves were either used for domestic work or as pleasure objects, military men, administrative staff, or field laborers. Eunuchs were employed as harem guards. The main purpose of the Iranian élite's purchasing slaves was to display their wealth. The larger one's staff of servants and slaves, the more important one seemed. Moreover, the wives of the grandees demanded slave girls for domestic work in the *andarūn*. Beautiful slave girls could become their masters' concubines and even marry them. Boys also were used as pleasure objects (Polak, I, p. 238; Drouville, II, p. 79). Some Europeans, although not allowed by Iranian law, also kept slaves in their houses, who could leave any moment they wished, claiming that, as Muslims, they were not compelled to serve Christians (Polak, I, pp. 254-55).

Most authors maintain that slaves in Iran never had to do field labor and only did light housework (e.g., Polak, I, p. 248; Sheil, p. 241; Sykes, p. 68). However, that only held true for those owned by the urban élite; slaves owned by the Turkmen tribes, especially those of Bukhara and Kīva, were used to herd their flocks and till their land (Vambéry, pp. 192-93). In southeast Iran, in Sīstān, Baluchistan, and Kermān, slaves were almost exclusively held for agricultural labor. According to a British consul "in Beluchistan there are several hamlets inhabited by slaves, who till the Government's property around Bampūr" (DCR 1671, Kermān 1894-95, p. 2; see also Goldsmid, I, p. 234). Abbott reports that in



Sistān “the cultivators of the soil are, for the most part, Slaves both black and white,” while he also reports that a tribe near Jabal Bārez had many members who were “a cross race, between Black Slaves and the People of the Country” (Amanat, pp. 164, 172).

Slave soldiers. A special kind of slaves were the *gōlām-e šāh*, or the royal slaves. These formed the shah’s bodyguard, and consisted mainly of young white slaves from the Caucasus, intermingled with sons from élite families. In the first quarter of the 13th/19th century this body amounted to some 3 to 4,000 men. This function “being one of honour as well as of contingent emolument, it is eagerly sought even by the highest ranks” Fraser (p. 254; cf. Kinneir, p. 32) observes. These *gōlāms* also were used for other government work, and even reached the highest occupations in the country. Well-known examples are Manūčehr Khan Mo’tamed-al-Dawla, governor of Fārs, and Ẓosrow Khan, who was governor of several provinces (Kermān among them) during his lifetime (Polak, I, p. 260). After the influx of white slaves came to a halt, the *gōlām* corps was recruited from among freeborn Iranians.

Eunuchs. To guard a man’s honor, i.e., his wives, was the task of eunuchs, either natural ones or gelded freemen and slaves. In the latter case the slaves were already castrated when imported and mostly bought when young. Eunuchs were predominantly black, especially when it became more difficult and then impossible to get white slaves. The last white eunuch died in 1856, according to Polak (I, p. 256). However, at the end of the 13th/19th century Nāšer-al-Dīn Shah’s harem had more than ninety eunuchs, both black and white (Mo’ayyer-al-Mamālek, pp. 20, 21; this also contains pictures of both black and white eunuchs and further details on arrangements inside the harem). The eunuchs were called *k̄vāja* or *āgā*, and in the shah’s harem they were under a *k̄vājabāšī* or *āgābāšī*. Nāšer-al-Dīn Shah’s *k̄vājabāšī*, Bašīrbāšī, was very influential and took advantage of his position, which cost him his life (Polak, I, p. 259). Eunuchs, who had played an influential role in the early part of the century, lost their position of influence after 1860, according to Polak. This coincided with their dwindling number. However, the shah’s *k̄vājabāšī* was still a very influential person (Mo’ayyer-al-Mamālek, p. 21). Increasingly, élite families, due to the high cost of eunuchs, used old men to guard their wives. Even Nāšer-al-Dīn Shah used old men to serve as gardeners and doormen inside the royal harem (Polak, I, p. 261; Mo’ayyer-al-Mamālek, p. 21). Eunuchs occasionally came into being when a convicted criminal was condemned to gelding; if one survived the sentence, a bright future awaited



him, since his well-paid services were sought eagerly (Polak, I, pp. 256, 261). Inside the royal harem also, beautiful female slaves were employed, who were uniformly Turkmen and Kurdish captives of war. They lived in a separate courtyard and were under a female chief called *aqal* (*aḡūl*) *bega kānom*, who paid them wages. The slave girls served both as domestic help and as *ṣiḡas* (concubines; see *moṭ'a*). Finally, young boys (*ḡolām-bačča*) below the age of puberty were used as playmates and servants in the harems (Tāj-al-Salṭana, pp. 15, 17, 21, 52).

Classification of slaves. Black slaves were divided into two or three categories. According to Polak (I, p. 248). Zangīs and Ḥabašīs were the principal groups. The Zangīs were slaves imported from Zanzibar and its hinterland; the Ḥabašīs, or Ethiopians, were slaves imported from Abyssinia, Somalia and the southern Sudan. Sheil (p. 243) states that there are three kinds of black slaves: “Bambassees, Nubees, and Habeshees.” The origin of the term Bambassee is not known, but it refers to Polak’s Zangīs, and may be a mispronunciation of Mombassa, the port of origin of many of these slaves. The Nubees, or Nubians, were slaves from Nubia and Somalia, who were darker than Ethiopian slaves. “The Bombassees are in great disrepute as being ferocious, treacherous and lazy. The Nubees and Habeshees are highly esteemed as being mild, faithful, brave and intelligent” (Sheil, p. 243; Polak, I, p. 248). Wills (1886, p. 326), who confirms these Iranian sentiments, distinguishes between Habashis, Souhalis (Somalians), and Bombassis (cf. Kelly, pp. 414-18). There seems to have been no special classification for white slaves. The seemingly negative cultural image of the black slave (see Southgate) appears not to have been a social barrier in actual practice. Intermarriage took place, and the black slave had some marginal influence on Iranian culture. The popular and comical characters, Kākā Siāh and Mīrzā Fīrūz, of the Iranian theater are cases in point (Bayzā’ī, pp. 172ff.). In the Persian Gulf area, where blacks thrived relatively well in Iran, they kept their old African custom of exorcism (see *zār*) alive (Sā’edī, *Ahl-e hawā*). In general, however, slaves were well integrated into society; they spoke Persian (although with an accent) and forgot their own languages and adopted Islam, thereby completing the assimilation process (Polak, I, p. 251).

Prices of slaves. Kinneir (p. 26) notes that the price of a slave varies according to the supply of the market and that “while I was in Tauris, in 1810, a young and beautiful Georgian girl could be purchased for about eighty pounds sterling.” Unskilled male slaves were not expensive, according to Drouville (II,



p. 79), but female slaves were more expensive, sometimes up to 600 tomans. They were easy to get in Erevan, where beautiful virgins were 60 to 100 tomans per person. A female Yomūt slave was offered at 30 tomans, while Cossack slave girls were worth 30 to 60 tomans in Astarābād around 1845 (Amanat, p. 50). Around 1860, the price of a boy was 12-18 ducats; for a beautiful Ḥabašī girl it was 70 ducats (Polak, II, p. 254). The price of eunuchs was much higher, in general three times that of a normal slave, as the mortality rate as a result of gelding was high (Polak, II, pp. 255-56). Wills reports that around 1870 the price of a Bombassi boy was \$12 and that of a healthy girl of twelve a third more. As much as \$80 or \$100 might be given for a healthy young Ḥabašī girl (Wills, 1883, pp. 75-76; see also idem, 1886, p. 326, for other prices). At the turn of the century, one author observed that due to obstacles to the slave trade “negroes and negresses are expensive” (Sykes, p. 69). In Sīstān the price of a strong young male slave was on average between 50 and 80 tomans; female slaves were cheaper (Issawi, p. 126; Lorimer, I/2, p. 2511).

Number of slaves. According to Malcolm (II, p. 594), slaves were not numerous in Iran. Similar observations were made by Bassett (p. 287), who stated around 1840 that “at this time white slaves are rare . . . black slaves are the more numerous.” Lady Sheil observed that “slaves are not numerous in northern Persia judging by the few seen in the streets, doubtless there are more in the South,” particularly in the coastal areas. She estimated the number of slaves imported at 2 to 3,000 per year (pp. 241-42; for more estimates see Issawi, pp. 125-26). The fact that in their outward appearances slaves, in general, “cannot be distinguished from other people” (Malcolm, II, p. 594), as well as the fact that most observers had a limited geographical point of observation, may have influenced the estimates of the slaves. However, Polak (I, p. 252) states that often male slaves wore more colorful clothes than native Iranians. Also the fact that the slave trade was a low-key activity may have contributed to our lack of information on the prevalence of slavery. “Slave dealers frequent the principal cities, and buy and sell slaves, but the demand is not so great as to support a public market” (Bassett, p. 287). Slave traders took parties of slaves from one town to the other. In the south, Bushire and Shiraz were important clearing centers. The governor of Shiraz regularly sent slaves to the shah and important courtiers (Polak, II, p. 254; Wills, 1886, p. 326). Slaves were kept in private houses, where they were stripped naked and could be inspected by purchasers (Bassett, p. 288). Probably because of the low life expectancy of the black slaves (victims of tuberculosis, they seldom lived longer than thirty), the



importation of slaves continued at the same low, but consistent level throughout the 13th/19th century. Also marriage among slaves often did not produce offspring and the children often did not survive puberty (Polak, I, p. 248; see also Lorimer, I/2, p. 2494, on the state of health of slaves arriving in the Persian Gulf). Wills (1883, p. 74) says: “notwithstanding the careful patrolling of the Persian Gulf by our gun-boats slaves are imported at a rate which keeps abreast of the demand. There are no longer slave-dealers and no slave markets in Persia.”

Treatment of slaves. In general slaves were well treated in Iran. “Persia is the Paradise” for slaves according to Sykes (p. 68). Treatment in Afghanistan also seems to have been quite humane (Ali Shah, pp. 51-52). Because slaves were expensive, and in most cases a luxury, they were given light housework. Also, because they had no ties in Iran other than their masters, slaves were generally more trusted and more favored by their owners than other, free servants. Slaves, like servants, were often considered members of the family, and not despised on account of their servile condition (Malcolm, II, p. 594; Sykes, p. 68; Polak, II, p. 248; DCR 1671, p. 2). Slaves were set free on such family occasions as births or marriages or on demise of the owner. The owner saw to it that a male slave married one of his female slaves; children born from such a union were raised with the owner’s children and became very trusted slaves of the family (Polak, I, p. 248). When maltreated, slaves had the right to complain (Gasteiger-Chan, p. 151) and could demand to be sold to another. However, to sell a household slave was a blow to one’s dignity; even for the rare sale, it was difficult to find a buyer, who would be wary of buying a recalcitrant slave. It also happened, in cases of maltreatment, that slaves in the same town demonstrated in front of the house of the maltreated slave’s owner to demand justice (Polak, I, p. 248; Wills, 1886, p. 326). Nevertheless, maltreatment occurred “where there is unlimited power on one hand,” but it was rare (Sheil, pp. 243-44). Several slaves in the 1840s took refuge in the British legation to escape punishment. Slaves employed as field labor were in a less fortunate position. In southeastern Iran, “their condition is extremely pitiable as, having no rights, they are kept on the verge of starvation and in rags. Nominally they receive one-third of the produce of the soil, but even this meagre percentage is subject to considerable official reductions” (DCR 1671, p. 2). A similar condition was the fate of slaves of the Turkmen who were kept as chattel and “would be half-clothed and half-starved, and at night be tethered to a stout wooden staple by a chain which they were forced to drag about with them all day” (Sykes, p. 110; Ferrier, p. 80; Vambéry, pp. 192-93, 331, 337; Ross,



pp. 45, 47, 62, 65-66, 69, 82-85, 113, 122, 126). Polak (I, p. 248) is more positive about the treatment of slaves by the Turkmen, alleging that slaves would regain freedom after a few years and settle among them. There is conflicting evidence about the treatment of the slaves aboard the slaving vessels. Lorimer (I/2, p. 2494) cites a glaring case of barbarian treatment by Arab slave merchants; however, according to Issawi (p. 126), “almost all sources agree that the transport of slaves from Africa was relatively humane.” Slaves were allowed to acquire property, and often got considerable wealth. However, they chose not to buy themselves free, in most cases (Sykes, p. 69).

Suppression of slavery. The suppression of the slave trade took about a century. Because, according to the tenets of Islam, slavery is a lawful practice, even though Islam also favors emancipation of slaves, it was only through pressure from foreign powers that the slave trade was put down. The first phase of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus was immediately felt in the slave business. Russia forbade the sale of Caucasian (Armenian, Georgian, and Circassian) males and females to Iran. This trade was still continued in the Persian part of the Caucasus either through the sale of children by indigent parents or, more frequently, through Persian incursions (*čapow*) into “infidel” areas. Girls and boys were also smuggled out of Russian territory into Iran. The effect of the Russian interdiction was nevertheless felt, for Drouville states that the occurrence of slavery was less than before. He, however, also states that the level of sales was almost the same as before (Drouville, II, pp. 74, 76). A big change was brought about by the Treaty of Torkamānčāy of 1243/1828, which gave Russia total control over the Caucasus. Thenceforth slaves from the Caucasus became a scarce article. Moreover, most of the slaves who had been captured during the 1210/1796 Caucasus campaign by [Āgā Moḥammad Khan](#), as well as those soldiers captured during the Perso-Russian wars, were returned to Russia. This was the result of Article XIII of the treaty, which required the mutual return of captives. Implementation of this article led to the murder of the Russian poet and dramatist A. S. Griboyedov, sent as envoy to Iran, when he kept in the Russian legation two Georgian women from the house of Allāhyār Khan Āṣaf-al-Dawla who had embraced Islam and borne him children. A similar article had been included in the Perso-Ottoman Peace Treaty of 1747 to regulate the return of prisoners of war (Hertslet, p. 162). After 1210/1828, there was still some smuggling of slaves from Russian territory. But the Russian embassy would demand the immediate return of such slaves (Polak, I, p. 248). Russia also had a positive influence on the suppression of slavery when it extended its sphere of influence to the eastern



shores of the Caspian. Its naval base on the island of *Āšūrāda* enabled it to stop shipping and provided military support (Amanat, p. 39; Sheil, p. 243). Further Russian conquests in central Asia, culminating in the conquest of the Central Asian khanates, brought slavery on the northern Iranian border to a halt. Kidnapping in Iranian territory continued to be carried on by the Turkmen and Baluch due to lack of government control. A similar situation existed in West Azarbaijan, where Kurdish tribesmen robbed, killed, and captured people at will. This situation was brought under control by Reżā Khan, the future Reżā Shah.

In southern Iran the situation was not different. The effect of British efforts to stop the slave trade through its treaties with the sultan of Masqaṭ and other Persian Gulf rulers also was felt in Iran. (For detailed discussion of this issue see Kelly, chaps. 9 and 13; Lorimer, I/2, pp. 2475ff.) In 1848 Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah forbade the future transportation of black slaves to Iran by sea. In 1851, Iran and Great Britain signed a treaty, allowing British vessels to search Iranian ships for slaves. This treaty was extended till 1873 by Article 13 of the 1857 peace treaty between Great Britain and Iran.

These treaties, however, did not have a major impact on the level of the slave trade. It was only through more intense naval patrolling after 1870 that the slave trade decreased. In 1882, a new treaty gave Great Britain further rights. Slaves found on Iranian ships were to be set free, while the court case against the Iranian transporter had to be conducted in the presence of British consular agents. Iran also participated in the Brussels Conference on the suppression of the slave trade. As a result Iran forbade the trade in slaves, as well as the import of slaves either by sea or land in 1890 (Hertslet, pp. 12, 13, 40, 42, 54-56, 58). Despite these measures, “many slaves were still introduced by the pilgrims from Mecca” (Sykes, p. 69), as well as by sea with the connivance of the Iranian local authorities (Lorimer, I/2, pp. 2509-10). The slave trade had virtually stopped by 1910; some slavery continued to exist for a time but disappeared altogether by the end of the Qajar period. The Iranian constitutions of 1906 and of 1979 do not recognize the status of slave, while through its adherence to the 1926 Geneva Convention, as well as to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Iran has officially committed itself to the abolition of slavery.

In Afghanistan slavery traffic was quite active in the northwest, where 400 to 500 were sold annually in Qandahār, while in Šoġnān it was “the only article of commerce” at the end of the 19th century (Wheeler, pp. 102-03; Hamilton, p.



168). Slavery was abolished by Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān in 1895 (Hamilton, p. 169), although it still was carried on in some areas of the country. In 1933 a reformist Afghan noted with some pride that “slavery is no longer allowed and a transgressor is severely dealt with” (Muhammad Ali, p. 189). Afghanistan as a member of the United Nations also subscribes to the abolition of slavery.

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