



CLASS SYSTEM V. CLASSES IN THE QAJAR PERIOD

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In Persia under the Qajars (1210-1344/1796-1925) there continued to be a fundamental division between a narrow stratum of courtiers, state officials, tribal leaders, religious notables, landlords and great merchants at the top and the vast majority of peasants, tribespeople, and laborers in agriculture, traditional industries, and services at the bottom. In Qajar sources the distinction is often made between the nobles and notables (*a'yān wa ašrāf*), on the one hand, and the commoners or the masses (*'awāmm al-nās* or *'amma-ye ra'īyat*), on the other. Paired terms like *kawāṣṣ* and *'awāmm* (the elite and the commoners), *aḡnīā'* and *foqarā'* (the rich and the poor), and *aqwīā'* and *zo'afā'* (the powerful and the weak) show an implicit awareness of the three dimensions of inequality: social status, material resources, and power. Between those with privilege and power at the top and the masses there were several "middling strata" (*awsāt al-nās*), including local notables, headmen of urban neighborhoods and villages, local men of religion, small landowners and merchants, master artisans and shopkeepers, and the like (see, e.g., Ašraf, 1360 Š./1981, pp. 71-98; Lambton, 1987, pp. 87-107; Šamīm, pp. 285-97). Despite these class distinctions, the everyday life of the people in Qajar Persia involved a variety of face-to-face relations within the relatively small, self-contained,



and close-knit rural and tribal communities and urban neighborhoods, which tended to reduce the gap—at least at the subjective level—between the privileged and the deprived social strata.

Although no reliable population statistics are available for the Qajar period, it is estimated that of the country's total population of 5-6 million at the beginning of the 13th/19th century nomadic tribes constituted as much as two-fifths, villagers another two-fifths, and city dwellers the remaining one-fifth. By the mid-1300s Š./1920s, of a population of approximately 12 million, the relative proportion of the tribes had declined to about one-quarter, that of the urban sector remained unchanged at about one-fifth, and the proportion of the villages had increased to well over one-half the total (Issawi, p. 20; Bharier, 1968, p. 275; Gilbar, 1976, pp. 125-56). The long-standing trichotomy of tribal-rural-urban, therefore, continued as a predominant structural characteristic of Persian society under the Qajars, with significant differences among the three segments of the population in the nature of their economic activities, sociopolitical organization, class relations, life-style, and cultural orientations.

The dominant strata

The privileged strata in Qajar Persia included princes and tribal chieftains, governors and military commanders, upper-level bureaucrats, and the '*olamā*'. These groups were often interrelated through common interests, joint ventures, and marriage (Fasā'i, II, pp. 35-39, 43-44, 59, 73-79). They were also divided into rival groups and political factions within their local communities (Abrahamian, 1982, pp. 26-36). Not surprisingly, the internal conflicts among urban notables often involved the middle strata and commoners as well (*Waqāye'-e ettefāqīya*, pp. 28-30, 156-61, 466-67, 523-32, 608-68).

Members of the privileged strata paid no taxes and were often granted benefices (*toyūls*), salaries, pensions, and subsidies. By the early 14th/late 19th century such payments were a major component of state expenditures. Of the total government budget of 39.6 million *qerāns* in 1306/1888-89, for example, 26.8 percent was allotted to pensions and subsidies for the shah's court and harem, princes, Qajar tribes, and nobles; 45.7 percent to the armed forces; and 27.5 percent to salaries (7.3 percent) and pensions (20.2 percent) of officials and the '*olamā*' (Curzon, *Persian Question* II, pp. 482-83). Budgets for other years show that the pensions of the '*olamā*' and *sādāt* (descendants of the Prophet) accounted for about 6 percent of the total annual expenditure (see, e.g., U.K., Parliament, *Accounts and Papers*, 1867-68, 19, pp. 255-58).



Prominent Qajar princes and powerful tribal chiefs formed the backbone of the governing and military elite and often ranked among the country's largest landowners. With them should be included the new professional military commanders and bureaucrats.

The Qajar princes. The thousands of Qajar princes descended from the 700 surviving children and grandchildren of Fath-ʿAlī Shah (1212-50/1797-1834; ʿAzodal-Dawla, pp. 167-68, 301-25; Hedāyat, 1363 Š./1984, pp. 53-56; Curzon, *Persian Question I*, pp. 410-11), of whom the most powerful were the twenty-six sons and twenty-two daughters of the crown prince, ʿAbbās Mīrzā (d. 1249/1833; ʿAzod-al-Dawla, p. 277) and their descendants. Following Safavid custom the suffix *mīrza*@ was added to the first name of each Qajar prince, and prominent princes were addressed by the title *nawwāb-e wālā*.

The early Qajar rulers, following tribal customs, maintained a sharp distinction between the sword and the pen, prohibiting the “men of the sword” from using the pen and being reluctant to grant the “men of the pen” the privilege of governorship (ʿAzod-al-Dawla, pp. 5, 11). Fath-ʿAlī Shah, for example, declined to appoint his son Kayūmart Mīrzā Abuʿl-Molūk to the governorship of Qom when he learned that the prince had acquired some bureaucratic skills, declaring that “a prince who has learned how to prepare tax lists (*fard-nevīsī*) is no longer qualified to be a governor” (ʿAzod-al-Dawla, p. 115). The same monarch appointed his eight brothers and forty of his sons to governorships of provinces and districts (see Moʿtamad, p. 31). In the first forty years of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah’s reign (1264-1313/1848-96), of the 325 governorships (*wālīs* and *ḥākems*), 182, usually in major provinces, were granted to Qajar princes and khans; the remaining 143 were granted to other tribal chieftains and ruling notables and were usually in less important areas (Eʿtemād-al-Saltāna, 1307 Š./1889-90, pp. 29-36).

The status of a Qajar prince depended on the nature of his relationship to the shah, his father’s position, his mother’s family background, and his own achievements. These princes ranged from the most powerful, who ranked next to the shah himself, for example, Masʿūd Mīrzā Żellal-Soltān, Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrzā Walī-Ahd, and Kāmran Mīrzā Nāyeb-al-Saltāna during the reign of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah; to the prince-governors of provinces and districts; to the middle-rank princes who held no official position and lived off their more affluent relatives or acquaintances; to those who occupied humble jobs as clerks at the telegraph office, scribes, entertainers, and the like; to those who reaped no material benefits from their princely status and lived on the edge of



poverty (E'temād-al-Salṭana, pp. 861, 1000; Mostawfī, I, p. 156). "I know of more than one [prince]," remarked a contemporary observer, "who begged a member of the mission to give them two or three sovereigns to relieve them from actual want" (Sheil, p. 115). Similar misfortunes could befall the princesses: "[T]hey have been forced by destitution to marry persons of very inferior condition; and one lady in particular had taken for her husband a man who had been a cobbler" (Sheil, pp. 115-16). It was in response to such precarious conditions that the Qajar princes made a collective attempt to establish a philanthropic association (*anjoman-e kayrīya*) to help needy members of their clan during the [Constitutional Revolution](#) (*Šobḥ-e Šādeq*, 1325/1907, 1/12, pp. 1-2, 1/15, pp. 1-4, 1/40, pp. 1-3).

Most prominent princes sided with the anti-constitutionalists during the Constitutional Revolution of 1323-29/1905-11. When they refused to elect their representatives to the Majles, as they were entitled to do under the new election law, Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907) summoned them to the court instructed them to do so (Majles-e šūrā-ye mellī, pp. 7-8). Many privileged princes refused to join the political associations of other classes and formed their own *anjoman* (see, e.g., *Šobḥ-e šādeq* 1/50, 1325/1907, pp. 2-3). On the other side, many middle-ranking princes who were among the emerging intelligentsia participated in proconstitutionalist *anjomans* and actively supported the revolution (see, e.g., *Ḥabl almatīn* 2/39, 1326/1908, p. 1).

Tribal chiefs. In power and social prestige the chiefs of major tribes—the [Afšār](#), [Arab](#), [Baḵtīārī](#), Baluch (q.v.), Kurd, Lor, Qarāgozlū, Qašqā'ī, and Turkman—were second only to prominent Qajar princes. They constituted Persia's traditional military aristocracy. With the decline of the central power in the late- and post-Safavid era in the 12th/18th century, many tribal chiefs extended their domains to areas surrounding their traditional power bases and gradually increased their autonomy, especially those at the frontiers, who were assigned the task of protecting the borders. The Qajar shahs attempted to subordinate the tribal chiefs to their own appointed governors, but in the majority of cases this subordination was merely nominal. By paying tribute to officials or dignitaries under whose tutelage they had been placed as *sepordas*, the subordinate chieftains would continue to administer the affairs of their own tribes. Furthermore, the more powerful chiefs often served as district governors (*ḥokkām-e walāyāt*) and dominated major cities close to their tribal areas. The great khans of such powerful tribes as the Baḵtīārī and Qašqā'ī, the *ilḵānīs* and *ilbegīs*, who were hereditary leaders of their tribes, were nominally



appointed to their positions by the shah and ruled their tribal areas. Another strategy for controlling tribal leaders was to foster intra- and intertribal hostility and conflict, “making tribal feuds an instrument of state policy” (Lambton, 1987, p. 96; idem, 1977, pp. 108-29; see also [AŠĀYER](#); Beck, pp. 41-128; Garthwaite, pp. 62-144; Mostawfī, I, pp. 437-39; Oberling, pp. 21-147; Wezārat-e dākela, pp. 12-27; Żell-al-Solţān, II, pp. 575-80, 602-03, 614-15, 656-59, 679-80). Most tribal chiefs either remained indifferent to or opposed the Constitutional Revolution during its first phase (1323-26/1905-08). In the second phase (1327-29/1909-11), some tribal leaders, most notably the Bakţīārī khans, joined the constitutionalists in their struggle against Moḥammad ‘Alī Shah (1324-27/1907-09) and rose to prominence in national politics (Beck, pp. 104-28; Garthwaite, pp. 112-38).

Military commanders. At the beginning of the Qajar era, there was little or no distinction between the tribal chiefs and military commanders. The traditional military forces of the Qajars consisted of a loose amalgam of large bands of irregular cavalry led primarily by tribal chiefs, irregular provincial cavalry and infantry mainly of the musket-bearing volunteer militia (*čerīks*), and a small standing army. The semiregular army of musket-bearing soldiers, which had been founded by ‘Abbās Mīrzā with European officers in the 1230s/1820s (Donbolī, pp. 131-37), was expanded further by [Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr\(-e\) Kabīr](#) in the mid 13th/19th century, with the establishment of rural levies based on a quota system (*bonīčā*) in each village, tribe, and district (see Qā’emmaqāmī, 1346 Š./1967, pp. 64-92; Mostawfī, I, pp. 69-70; Curzon, *Persian Question* I, pp. 576-612). By the end of the century these forces, consisting of more than a hundred small semiregular regiments, formed the bulk of the defensive power of the central government (E’temād-al-Salţana, 1307/1889-90, pp. 6-26; Herbert to Nicolson, FO 881/5281, 11 August 1886, pp. 1-10). The establishment of the [Cossack brigade](#) under the direction of Russian officers in 1297/1879 gave the country its first modern standing armed force of significance (Kazemzadeh, 1956, pp. 351-63; Curzon, *Persian Question* I, p. 571; Kosogovskii, p. 31-32).

With the gradual extension of state authority and military power into the provinces during the 13th/19th century, the urban bureaucratic and military elites gained political and economic privileges at the expense of the tribal leaders. A significant factor in changing this balance of power was the newly formed infantry divisions under the authority of the central government; they were equipped with muskets, which were cheaper and easier to use than



horses (Christensen, p. 10; Inalcik, pp. 195-217). It was not until the first decade of Pahlavi rule, in the 1300s Š./1920s, however, that the regular army was able effectively to supplant the tribally based military aristocracy and cavalry (see vi, below).

The upper bureaucratic strata. The administration of the Qajar state was viewed as an extension of the shah's household, leading to the designation of the bureaucratic strata, including the military (*neẓāmī*) and administrative (*qalamī*) branches, as *ṭabaqa-ye nowkar* (the shah's servants; Mostawfī, I, p. 124). The core of the state bureaucracy comprised the *mostawfīs* (accountants) and *monšīs* (clerks), both with traditional education, and simple scribes (*moḥarrers*); they functioned under viziers (ministers) in the capital and provincial towns. Following the practice of the Safavids, the Qajars established the offices of *mostawfī al-mamālek* (minister of finance) and, later, *ṣadr-e a'zam* (grand vizier). The Qajar bureaucracy was gradually expanded in the later 13th/19th century. Thus, at the end of the Qajar period, the key bureaucratic positions were those of the prime minister; four major ministers of finance, the interior, foreign affairs, and war, other, less important cabinet ministers; provincial governors, *wozarā-ye eyālāt* (provincial ministers), heads of bureaus in the court and the ministries; and *bāšīān* (heads) of the royal *boyūtāt* (E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1307 Š./1889-90, pp. 16-29; Moṣaddeq, pp. 27-51; Mostawfī, I, pp. 380-420; see also [ADMINISTRATION vi. THE SAFAVID, ZAND, AND QAJAR PERIODS](#)). There was a strong tendency for the offices of the *mostawfīs*, who formed a powerful interest group, especially in the last decades of Qajar rule, to be passed down from father to son (see, e.g., Durand, p. 18). The *mostawfīs* were recruited for the most part from the Arāk region (the districts of Āštīān, Farāhān, and Garakān) and Māzandarān province (the districts of Nūr and 'Alīābād). Some *mostawfī* families achieved even greater prominence in the upper ranks of the bureaucracy by marrying into similarly privileged families. A good example is a clan that had originated in the Tafreš-Farāhān region and included such prominent officeholders as Mostawfī-al-Mamālek, Qawām-al-Dawla, and Mīrzā Hedāyat-Allāh Wazīr-e Daftar (Mostawfī, I, pp. 150-51). The descendants of Mostawfī-al-Mamālek occupied the office of minister of finance for three generations, and the last two (Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan and Mīrzā Ḥasan Khan) served as prime ministers as well. Other prominent members of this clan, Ḥasan Woṭūq (Woṭūq-al-Dawla), Aḥmad Qawām (Qawām-al-Salṭana), Moḥammad Moṣaddeq (Moṣaddeq-al-Salṭana), and Aḥmad Matīn Daftarī, served as both ministers and prime ministers in the first half of the 14th/20th century (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, pp. 94, 317-21; II, pp.



384-52; IV, pp. 422-27). The gradual institutionalization of bureaucratic positions in the course of the 13th/19th century helped to raise the relative status of “men of the pen” (Polak, I, p. 37). Thus, for example, major *mostawfīs* and *lašgar-nevīses* (muster-masters) were given honorific titles equivalent to those of high-ranking military officers (“Taškīš wa tarqīm-e alqāb,” pp. 50-61). Another indication of the bureaucrats’ ascendancy in the later 13th/19th century was their frequent promotion to governorships of provinces and districts (e.g., E’temād-al-Saltāna, 1307/1889-90, pp. 29-36; *Šobḥ-e šādeq* 1/2, 1325/1907, p. 2).

The dominant strata and landed property. Political power or social status gave members of the dominant classes the requisite means to acquire and control large landed properties. A man of rank who was also a the holder of a benefice (*toyūldār*) could acquire substantial amounts of landed property in the area of his *toyūl* or during his term of office in the provinces. For example, Mas’ūd Mīrzā Żell-al-Soltān and his sister, Bānū-ye ‘Ozmā, managed, during the former’s tenure as governor of Isfahan, to accumulate ninety-two large and prosperous villages, with a combined population of 150,000 (Nikītīn, p. 44). ‘Abd-Allāh Khan Amīr-e Neẓām (Sardār-e Akram, d. 1335/1916), a general (*amīr-e tūmān*) from the Qarāgozlū tribe, gradually acquired a vast agricultural estate. From this estate the inherited share of his younger son, Ḥosayn-qolī Sardār-e-Akram, alone was ninety-six villages, with an area of 500 m², each with a population of 150-2,000 and producing an estimated annual income of \$150,000 (Forbes-Leith, pp. 37, 54). Malek Maṣṣūr Mīrzā Šo‘ā‘-al-Saltāna (Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah’s son) is said to have usurped numerous state-owned (*kāleša*) villages and private estates in Fārs during his term of office (Majd-al-Eslām, I, pt. 1, pp. 96-97). Eqbāl-al-Saltāna, the powerful and wealthy khan of Mākū, owned 150 villages and confiscated 250 more in the early Constitutional period (Taqīzāda, pp. 160-63; Mostawfī, III, pp. 576-81). Shaikh Kaẓ‘al, the khan of the Arab tribes, extended his estates in Kūzestān to more than 100 mil in the early 14th/20th century and enjoyed considerable autonomy in his control of the region (Taqīzāda, pp. 344-45; Mostawfī, III, pp. 633-38). Mīr ‘Alam Khan Šawkat-al-Molk owned large estates in southern Khorasan and Sīstān and was the semi-independent ruler of the region (Ḥājj Sayyāḥ, pp. 143-45; Churchill, p. 104). For examples of prominent ‘*olamā*’ who used their religious offices and political influence to achieve similar ends, see below.

The sale of state lands and the properties of governing notables to large



merchants in the latter half of the 13th/19th century added a new group of merchant landowners to the propertied classes. They included Ḥājj Moḥammad Ḥasan Amīn-al-Žarb, Ḥājj Abu'l-Qāsem Ra'īs-al-Tojjār, Ḥājj Mo'īn-al-Tojjār Būšehrī, Ḥājj Kāžem Malek-al-Tojjār, Arbāb Jamšīd Bahman, and the Tūmānīāntz brothers (Picot, 1897, pp. 62-68).

In general, the larger his domain, the greater was the power of the landlord, the longer his absences from his property, and the more thorough the exploitation of the peasants by his overseers (*mobāšers*). By living in the cities, large landowners were able to maintain their ties to those in power and thus better to protect their properties. Some kept their own private armies. For example, Sardār-e Akram Qarāgozlū could mobilize a regiment of 800 cavalry from ninety-six of his villages in twenty-four hours, whereas a smaller landowner in the same region could raise a contingent of 100 men (Forbes-Leith, pp. 62-63).

The landowners continued to enjoy a relatively privileged position even after the Constitutional Revolution as is apparent, for example, from their control of the first five sessions of the Majles until the end of Qajar rule. The proportion of landowning deputies rose from 21 percent in the first session of the Majles (1324-26/1906-08), to 30 percent in the second session (1327-29/1909-11), to 49 percent in the fifth session (1302-04 Š./1924-26; see Šajī'ī, p. 180).

The religious hierarchy

In Qajar Persia the Shi'ite clerical establishment, the “men of the turban” (*arbāb-e 'amā'em*), comprised a broad spectrum of positions, ranging from the highest to nearly the lowest levels of the social hierarchy. The nature of their social functions and their presence within every stratum of society enabled the clerics to play a mediating role between the dominant strata and the popular classes, hence a significant part in the maintenance of the social order.

At the apex of the religious hierarchy were the jurists (*mojtaheds*), including the most learned (*mojtahed-e a'lam*). Equal in status to the *mojtaheds*, but lacking their political independence and popular base, were clerics appointed by the shah to such positions as leaders of the Friday prayers (*emām jom'as*) in the congregational mosques. Often these positions were hereditary; for example, the *emām jom'as* of Tehran and the *emām jom'as* and *šayḵ-al-Eslāms* of Isfahan, Shiraz, and Tabrīz had held their offices since late Safavid times



(Mo'allem Ḥabībābādī, III, pp. 820-27; IV, pp. 1324-25, 1341-43, 1378-79; V, pp. 1453-54, 1650-51, 1703; Fasā'ī, II, pp. 27-29, 61-64; Nāder Mīrzā, pp. 243-49). At the middle levels of the clerical establishment were teachers (*modarresīn*) in the religious seminaries (*madrāsas*), a much larger number of mullahs who served as prayer leaders (*pīšnemāz*, *emām-e jamā'at*) at mosques in urban neighborhoods, and learned or popular preachers (*wo'āz*).

Finally, at the very bottom of the clerical hierarchy were the lower "men of the pulpit" (*ahl-e menbar*), including reciters of the passion of the Imam Ḥosayn (*rawza k'vāns*).

By the end of the Qajar era in the early 1300s Š./1920s, the religious hierarchy of Tehran consisted of 108 *mojtaheds* and other prominent 'olamā', 103 *pīšnemāzes*, 18 *modarreses*, 90 *wo'āz*, 210 *ṭollāb* (students), 391 *rawza k'vāns*, 107 *maddāḥs* (eulogists), 85 *nawḥa k'vāns* (mourners), 92 *qārīs* (readers of the Qur'ān at funerals), 180 *motawallīs* and *kadamas* (custodians and servants) of holy places, and 55 others (see Šahrī, I, p. 86; for a detailed description of various ranks of the men of turban, see V, pp. 681-770, VI, pp. 1-11; Taḥwīldār, pp. 66-71, 80).

In terms of their socioeconomic position and political affiliations, the leading 'olamā' could be divided into three fairly distinct groups: those affiliated with the royal court, those closely associated with the provincial landowning classes and who themselves often possessed landed property, and those who relied on the urban middle and lower middle classes for their livelihood (see Zaryāb-e Ko'ī, pp. 161-62; Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 50-56). The prime examples of those in the first group are Ḥājj Mīrzā Ḥayn-al-'Ābedīn Ḥāḥīr-al-Eslām (d. 1321/1903) and his son, Ḥājj Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem (d. 1346/1927), from the hereditary line of the leaders of Friday prayers (*emām jom'as*) of Tehran, who married daughters of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah and Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah respectively. Many members of this clan became wealthy landowners and leading figures in national politics, enjoying a lavish lifestyle that included, among other things, private carriages. Not surprisingly, they supported the shah during both the Tobacco Rebellion of 1308-09/1890-91 and the Constitutional Revolution of 1323-30/1905-1911 (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, pp. 55-57, II, pp. 48-50; Mo'allem Ḥabībābādī, V, pp. 1650-51; *Tārīk-e bīdārī*, II, pp. 319, 349, 543).

The second group included many high-ranking clerics, particularly in the provinces, who used their religious and juridical authority to accumulate wealth and political influence. As religious judges and leaders of Friday



prayers, they forged close relationships with the governing notables and other powerful elements in their areas of jurisdiction. They participated eagerly in state ceremonies; paid visits to the shah, the viziers, and the governors; and were in turn visited by them (E'temād-al-Saltāna, pp. 225, 319, 875-76, 906-907, 947, 1058; Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 50-52; Lesān-al-Molk, III, pp. 238, 281-82, 290; Sayyāh, p. 129; *Waqāye'-e ettefāqīya*, p. 538). They also involved themselves in the day-to-day politics of the cities, and their ability to foment riots, especially against religious minorities, placed them in a powerful position in relation to the governing notables. Some became involved in usury (with interest rates as high as 40-50 percent), hoarded grain, and speculated in real estate. Hojjat-al-Eslām Moḥammad-Bāqer Šaftī (d. 1260/1844) amassed a vast network of properties that included 400 caravansaries, 2,000 shops, and numerous villages in Isfahan, Borūjerd, Yazd, and Shiraz. His residence consisted of several large units that housed his seven sons and their families and an entourage of 100 people (Tonokābonī, p. 141; Mo'allem Ḥabībābādī, V, pp. 161-420; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, pp. 304-07). Āqā Shaikh Moḥammad-Taqī Najafī (d. 1332/1913), the *ḥākem-e šar'* (religious judge) in Isfahan, was reportedly the richest man in the city after the prince-governor, Zell-al-Soltān and was prominent in city politics (Mo'allem Ḥabībābādī, V, 1662-66; Churchill, p. 61; Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 87-88; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, pp. 326-27; Majd-al-Eslām, I, pt., 2, p. 335). Ḥājj Āqā Moḥsen Mojtahed Soltānābādī (d. 1327/1909), another notorious cleric, had annual income from ninety-nine prosperous villages amounting to 60,000-70,000 tomans. Reportedly he was "a semiking in his estate," had 110 armed men, and exerted considerable influence with the court in the appointment and dismissal of governors in the area of his influence (Wakīlī Ṭabāṭabā'ī Tabrizī, pp. 449, 453-55; Kosokovskii, pp. 241-44; E'temād-al-Saltāna, p. 817; Dehgān, p. 142). Other examples of wealthy and powerful 'olamā' include Ḥājj Molīā Rafī' Šarī'atmadār (d. 1292/1875) of Rašt, Ḥājj Mollā 'Alī Kanī (d. 1306/1888) of Tehran, and Ḥājj Mīrzā Javād Mojtahed (d. 1313/1895), and Āqā Mīrzā Ḥasan Mojtahed (d. 1338/1919) of Tabriz. Most members of this group stood on the side of Moḥammad 'Alī Shah in his struggle against the constitutionalists (Mo'allem Ḥabībābādī, II, p. 402, III, pp. 696-99; E'temād-al-Saltāna, p. 138, 151; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, pp. 295-300, II, pp. 42-43; Kasrawī, *Mašrūta*³, pp. 360, 481-82, 489, 557; Rabino, pp. 6, 92, 100-04; *Tārīk-e bīdārī* II, pp. 99, 112, 169, 234).

The third group of the 'olamā' consisted mostly of pious *mojtaheds* and middle-ranking clerics in major cities, who depended on the urban *bāzārs* and middle-level landowners for social and financial support. Āqā Shaikh Hādī Najmābādī



(d. 1320/1902) and Sayyed Moḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1338/1920) of Tehran, Ḥājj Fāzel Mojtahed Ḳorāsānī (d. 1342/1923) of Mašhad, Mīrzā Moḥammad Taqī Hojjat-al-Eslām (d. 1312/1894) of Tabrīz, and Āqā Sayyed Moḥammad-Bāqer Doṛča'ī of Isfahan, widely respected for their knowledge, piety, and asceticism, were examples of this group (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, pp. 279-80, IV, pp. 218-19, 408-10; Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 50-51; E'temād-al-Salṭana, pp. 148-49, 949; Mo'allem Ḥabībābādī, IV, pp. 1376-77; Qūčānī, pp. 162-64). Many members of this group joined the emerging intelligentsia and actively participated in the Constitutional movement (Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 5-52; Kasrawī, *Mašrūṭa*³, pp. 247-48, 406-08; *Tārīk-e bīdārī* II, pp. 35-36, 71-72, 80-81, 345-49, 437; Zaryāb-e Ḳoī, pp. 161-62).

In addition to the groups already mentioned, the “men of the turban” (*arbāb-e 'amā'em*) in every city included a large “crowd of mullahs, who live by their wits, and have little of a priest but the name. They practice astrology, write letters and contracts for those who are ignorant of penmanship, and contrive by these means to prolong a miserable existence. Nothing can be lower than the character of these people; their hypocrisy, profligacy, and want of principle, are the subject of stories, epigrams, and proverbs without end” (Fraser, p. 352). Finally, according to many accounts, the majority of the students (*ṭollāb*) at the religious centers were semiliterate and unscrupulous men who lived off the income from religious endowments (*awqāf*) and charitable contributions from the community (see, e.g., Qūčānī, pp. 61-62, 367-70; Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 345-47; Sayyāḥ, pp. 45-46, 54-55, 86-87, 164-65).

The prominent *sādāt* and the *mašāyek* of the Sufi orders may also be considered part of the religious establishment, though not of the clerical hierarchy. In many cities the *sādāt* constituted a corporate body headed by a prominent elder, who sometimes held the old title of *naqīb al-sādāt* or *naqīb al-ašrāf*. The prominent *sādāt* were exempted from taxes and the corvée and were often granted stipends or benefices (*toyūls*). The ever-increasing number of claimants to this title in the latter part of the 13th/19th century, including many whose claims were based on forged genealogies, along with the destitution into which some of them had sunk, brought about an irreversible decline in what had once been regarded as the noblest status in Islamic Persia (Dawlatābādī, I, pp. 261-76; E'temād-al-Salṭana, pp. 116-17; Ġanī, I, pp. 1-19; Rawzātī, I, pp. 30-65).

The middle classes



The middle classes included the merchants, the middle-level *'olamā'*, the small landowners, the local *a'yān* (notables), and, at a somewhat lower level, master artisans and shopkeepers.

Middle classes in the bāzār. At the top of the social hierarchy in the *bāzār* were the wholesale merchants (*tojjār*), who, along with the guildsmen and the *'olamā'*, maintained traditional urban life-styles and values more fully than any other group in society. Despite their high status and considerable influence within the *bāzār* itself, merchants rarely attained the type of recognition in the eyes of governing notables that was accorded to high-ranking *'olamā'* or the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.

Below the merchants in social and economic status were the heads (*kadkodās*) and elders (*rīš-safīds*) of the various crafts and trades. Craftsmen and shopkeepers were organized into groups, which were arranged hierarchically according to a complex set of criteria, including the nature of their activities, the types and levels of their skills, the types of material used in their crafts, the relative importance of their output for society, and the relative worth of their trade measured by prevailing moral values. Members of each craft and trade usually worked within the same space in the vaulted *bāzārs*. They were represented by their elders and were often treated collectively by the authorities for purposes of tax collection and corvée. Mīrzā Ḥosayn Tahwīldār (pp. 93-122) described 168 groups (*jamā'ats*) of craftsmen, traders, and those who were active in various services in Isfahan in the 1290s/1870s (see [AŞNĀF](#)).

The middle-class *bāzārīs* played a major role in both the Tobacco Rebellion of 1308-09/1890-91 and the Constitutional Revolution of 1323-29/1905-11. The political significance of their contribution to the latter movement was recognized in the electoral law (*Neẓām-nāma-ye entekābāt*) of 1324/1906, in which merchants and master artisans were specifically designated as two of six groups to be granted the right to elect their own representatives to the first session of the Majles. Of the 161 deputies elected, twenty-eight were merchants and twenty-nine master artisans and shopkeepers (Ašraf, 1359 Š./1980, p. 119). The *bāzārī* deputies participated actively in Majles debates and decisions, particularly on issues like the accountability of cabinet members to the Majles, state finances, and the establishment of a new national bank (see, e.g., Majles-e šūrā-ye mellī, pp. 11, 20, 44, 48, 51).

Small landowners. The petty landowners were those who possessed either single small villages or shares in several villages. Many small landowners



(*zorrā*), like the peasant-proprietors, cultivated their own land, with the help of a few laborers. Lacking in political connections, they were vulnerable to the excessive demands of the governing notables, which, if not heeded, could lead to confiscation of their properties (see, e.g., Fasā'i, II, p. 45; Lambton, 1987, pp. 140-63; *Waqāye'-e ettefāqīya*, pp. 214-15). At times, in return for the protection of their property, petty landowners and farmers were forced to transfer a portion of it to a powerful patron, as in a village in Arāk, where 200 or so petty landowners were asked to provide fifty to ninety-four soldiers as their quota of conscripts (*bonīča*); finding it impossible to meet such a large levy during the famine of 1288/1871, they were left with no choice but to abandon their village. When, as a last resort, they called on Ḥājj Āqā Moḥsen Mojtahed for protection, he granted it but only in return for their relinquishing ownership of the properties in question to him (Dehgān, II, p. 142). As one observer noted, a petty tribal landowner would find it prudent to enter government service as a footman (*farrāš*), in order to be able to protect his small landed property (Majd-al-Eslām, I, pt. 1, pp. 190-91).

The commoners

The commoners (*āmma-ye ra'īyat*) included peasants, tribespeople, and lower-level workers in construction and urban and rural workshops and services, as well as such *déclassé* groups as poor dervishes, beggars, and bandits.

Peasants and tribesmen. The overwhelming majority of commoners were peasants and ordinary tribespeople (for the social structure of tribal communities, see Beck, pp. 163-250; Garthwaite, pp. 34-46). They were the principal producers of the material wealth of the country and bore the main burden of taxation and conscription. In settled villages there were two types of cultivators: a majority of sharecroppers and tenant farmers and a minority of wage laborers (*košnešīns*). Both sharecropping (*možāra'a*) and tenancy (*ejāra*) were sanctioned by Islamic canon law (*šarī'a*). In principle the sharecropper received a share of the crop (from two-fifths to three-fifths) based on the elements of production (land, water, labor, seed, and oxen) that he contributed. The tenant farmer paid a fixed rent either in cash or in kind. Both had usufructuary or cultivation rights, known as "root rights" (*ḥaqq-e rīša*, *ḥaqq-e nasaq*) over the plots of land that they cultivated. Those who operated in arid and semiarid areas were often organized by the landowners into small work teams known as *bona*, *ṣaḥrā*, *ṭāq*, and so on, an arrangement that made it convenient for the landowners to collect their share of the crops and assisted the farmers with irrigation and cultivation. Although peasants were not, in



principle, under the bondage of serfdom, their rights were often violated by landowners, particularly when the latter were absentee owners of high rank and power. E'temād-al-Saltāna, writing in 1307/1889, noted that "in previous times the peasants did not dare to emigrate to other places, because, when they were captured, the landlords punished them. Even though this dependence of the peasants was not as complete as the bondage of the Russian muzhiks, it led to the domination of the landlords over the peasants" (p. 108). Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah issued a decree that, at least in theory, granted the peasants complete freedom of movement.

The emergence of modern classes

The incorporation of Persia into the emerging world economy in the early decades of the 14th/closing decades of the 19th century caused important changes in the social structure of the country. The economy moved from a premercantile and highly fragmented exchange system, in which most production was for subsistence, to a market economy that encompassed a modest amount of foreign trade. The commercialization of agriculture (Nowshirvani, pp. 547-91), improved transportation and communications, and new small-scale industries helped to raise national income, state revenues, and urban living standards. These economic changes led to the rise of new classes alongside the traditional classes. Of particular importance were a small bureaucratic and professional intelligentsia within the state apparatus, a new group of great merchants and entrepreneurs, and a nascent industrial working class.

The emerging intelligentsia. In premodern Persia the intelligentsia, or "men of the pen," had encompassed two distinct groups, religious scholars and laymen (see iv, above). The lay intelligentsia were mostly bureaucrats, but they also included writers, historians, geographers, genealogists, astrologers, physicians, and poets whose livelihood depended on maintaining close relations with officialdom at various levels. Both religious and lay intelligentsia were educated in Persian and Arabic literature, traditional sciences and humanities, and Islamic theology and jurisprudence. The introduction of Western ideas in the late 13th/19th century initiated a cleavage between the religious and the lay intelligentsia. The return of students from Europe, the establishment of modern schools in Persia, international travel, and the presence of Europeans in major cities helped to introduce many Persians to European values and ideas. Graduates of foreign educational institutions and the *Dār al-fonūn* (Tehran polytechnic institute), founded by *Amīr(-e) Kabīr* in 1268/1851, and



later the Madrasa-ye 'olūm-e siāsī (School of political science, founded in 1319/1901) formed the nucleus of a modernizing class of professional men and bureaucrats in Persia (Maḥbūbī, *Mo'assasāt* I, pp. 122-95, 253-420; Mīnovī, *passim*; Nāṭeq, pp. 103-29). They played an important part in modernizing the state bureaucracy and the armed forces in the latter half of the 13th/19th century and were the ideologists of the [Constitutional Revolution](#) of 1323-29/1905-11; see, e.g., Ādamīyat, 1341 Š./1962, *passim*; idem, 2535 = 1355 Š./1976, *passim*).

The great merchants (tojjar-e bozorg). A group of “great merchants” exploited the new commercial opportunities of the late 13th/19th century to accumulate considerable merchant and finance capital through international trade. Some learned foreign languages, traveled widely, established agents abroad, and began to adopt such tools of modern commerce as the joint-stock company. Some engaged in mining, road construction, transportation, communications, and, to a limited extent, manufacturing. The most notable example of this new group of merchants was [Hājj Moḥammad-Ḥasan Amīn-al-Žarb](#). He was active in foreign and domestic trade, banking, industry, and mining, accumulating an impressive fortune of approximately 25 million tomans (Ashraf, 1359 Š./1980, pp. 73-88).

The state's chronic need for cash and its weakness after the Tobacco Rebellion of 1308-09/1891-92 led to an increase in the political influence of the merchants. They began to resist excessive taxes and customs duties, protested arbitrary decisions by officials, complained about dangerous roads, and demanded greater autonomy in managing their own affairs (Ashraf and Hekmat, pp. 739-43). For example, as a protest against the encroachments of the British Imperial Bank, a group of merchants and money changers founded a bank in Shiraz. Most of the Shirazi merchants immediately opened accounts there and stopped dealing with the Imperial Bank. This move alarmed the British, who forced the governor, Šo'ā'-al-Saltāna (the son of Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah, 1313-24/1896-1907), to issue, on 3 Rabī' I 1319/20 June 1901, an order replacing the notes of the local bank with those issued by the Imperial Bank (*Waqāye'-e ettefāqīya*, pp. 367, 381, 643). The merchants also became directly involved in politics. During the Tobacco Rebellion, for example, the merchants of Tehran, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Mašhad helped the 'olamā' to organize protest movements (*Waqāye'-e ettefāqīya*, pp. 374-76, 378-79, 390-99; *Tārīk-e bīdārī*, ed. Sa'īdī Sirjānī, I, pp. 19-60). A decade and a half later they played an even more significant role in the Constitutional Revolution (see [BĀZĀR iii](#)).



SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ROLE OF THE BĀZĀR; Gilbar, 1977; Ashraf, 1359 Š./1980, pp. 106-25).

The nascent industrial working class. Until the latter half of the 13th/19th century most wage laborers in Persia were employed in agriculture, in traditional handicrafts and services, and as unskilled labor. It was only in the last decades of the 13th/19th and early 14th/20th centuries that a modern industrial working class began to take form. These workers were drawn from among impoverished peasants, members of the settled and semisettled nomadic tribes, the urban poor, and skilled craftsmen who were losing their markets to mass-produced foreign products. The growth in foreign trade and the infusion of foreign capital had differing consequences for different segments of the traditional work force. For example, while the production of most textiles declined because of foreign competition and the importing of machine-made materials, the carpet industry underwent a phenomenal expansion owing to the opening of new foreign markets by European businessmen (see [CARPETS](#) i, xi, xii). Moreover, those crafts that had local markets and did not compete with foreign products did not experience a decline but in fact enjoyed modest growth (Taḥwīldār, pp. 100-02; Ashraf, 1359 Š./1980, pp. 55-56, 91-93).

Consular reports, travel accounts, and other sources indicate that, of some 126,000 workers in urban areas in the first decade of the present century, only 9,000 (7.2 percent) were employed in the newly emerging industrial sector: 7,000-8,000 in the [Anglo-Persian Oil Company](#) and fewer than 2,000 in various manufacturing industries. Of the remainder 60,000-70,000 were employed in rug-weaving establishments, 20,000 in textile workshops (wool, cotton, and silk), 10,000 in assorted traditional crafts (shoemaking, hat making, soap making, etc.), 4,200 in the Caspian fisheries, 4,000 in the Persian Gulf pearl fisheries, 5,000 in home-based workshops (mostly rug weaving and textiles), 4,000 as boat operators and dockworkers, 3,000 as porters, 3,000 in construction of railways, 2,000 in metal workshops (blacksmithing, coppersmithing, sword making, etc.), and 2,100 in mining, tanneries, printshops, lumbering, railways, and the like. Foreign workers included more than 5,000 from Russia: 3,000 who worked on construction of the Jolfā-Tabrīz railroad, 300 in road construction, 1,200 in the Lianozov fisheries on the Caspian, and the remainder in such enterprises as the “Khoshtari and Oleīnikov forestry and lumber company,” the Nobel Brothers oil firm, the Ramazanov oil company, and similar firms. Arabs and Indians, as well as a



few skilled workers from France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Canada, were also employed by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (for all figures given here, see Abdullaev, pp. 210-12; see also Ivanov, 1966, pp. 59-72).

Around the turn of the century deteriorating economic conditions in Persia and better job opportunities in the southern Russian provinces of the Caucasus and Turkistan induced tens of thousands of Persian workers to migrate to those regions, in order to work in agriculture, crafts, construction, the railroads, and the oil fields. In 1901 the Russian consulate in Tabrīz alone granted 26,855 visas to enter Russia and in 1903 32,866. In 1904 the number of visas granted to unskilled Persian workers in Tabrīz and Urmia was 54,846 (Abdullaev, p. 189). “In the first fourteen years of the present century, an annual average of 126,000 Persians went to Russia against the 101,000 who departed for Persia [A] total of 353,743 Persians seem to have remained in Russia during this period” (Hakimian, p. 446). Persian workers also emigrated to India (Karachi), Turkey, Herat, Muscat, and even Zanzibar (Abdullaev, p. 188).

Women and children formed a substantial part of the paid labor force in Persia, working for wages significantly lower than those of adult males, not only in the traditional industries, like rug weaving and textiles, in which they were a majority, but also in such modern enterprises as the silk factory belonging to Amīn-al-Žarb in Rašt (employing 150 workers, nearly all women), the Lianozov fisheries, the Mohammadov rug factory in Tabrīz (employing 500 children between the ages of six and fourteen years), and textile mills in Tabrīz, Lāhījān, and Kermān. Similarly, of the 4,500 workers employed at shawl (*šāl*) looms in mid-13th/19th century Kermān, the majority were children. A government ordinance, issued under pressure from the ‘*olamā*’ in 1322/1904, prohibited employment of women and children under the age of twelve years in foreign(Christian)-owned enterprises, but it was routinely circumvented by most foreign concerns through bribery (Abdullaev, p. 215; Amanat, p. 84).

The Persian working class began to organize itself into small labor unions, particularly the printers, tram drivers, and telegraph workers in Tehran and the shawl weavers in Kermān. These unions staged strikes of the printing shops and tramways in Tehran, construction sites along the Tehran-Khorasan road, and telegraph offices in Tehran and other cities (*Šūr-e Esrāfīl* 1/1, 1325/1907, p. 3; *Šobḥ-e šādeq* 1/51, 1325/1907, pp. 23, 1/54, pp. 3-4, 1/83, p. 4; Ivanov, 1977, pp. 18-19).



The changing life-style of the elite. 'A.-R. Kalāntar Żarrābī (pp. 246-51) provided a graphic description of the living standards and consumption patterns of the affluent (*aġnīā*), the middle classes (*motawasseṭīn*), and the poor (*foqarā*) in Kāšān in the last decades of the 13th/19th century, particularly the diet, clothing, and housing. It is clear from his account that inequality was not extreme in that period, and the similarities in the life-styles of the different social classes are vividly illustrated. This situation began to change in the early decades of the 14th/late 19th and early 20th centuries, when conspicuous consumption became widespread among the privileged classes. This change in turn marked the earliest emergence of a dualism in urban life, encompassing, on one hand, the traditional lifestyle, preserved in the alliance between *bāzār* and mosque, and, on the other, the modern life-style of the elite, the intelligentsia, and the new middle classes (see, e.g., E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1307/1889, p. 113; Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* II, pp. 494-98).

Patterns of association and social mobility

At least until the last decades of the 13th/19th century a number of factors helped to mitigate profound inequalities in the distribution of wealth, power, and status in Persia. First, the general standard of living was low, and truly opulent life-styles were relatively rare, not only in the countryside, where most people were poor and social differences fairly small, but also in the cities (Ġanī, I, p. 15; Kalāntar Żarrābī, pp. 246-51; Moṣaddeq, pp. 46-51; Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* I, pp. 496-98). Second, people lived in self-contained communities and neighborhoods, where face-to-face contact among different social strata and status groups was frequent. It was not unusual for the prosperous and the poor to live in the same quarter of a city. For example, in both Tabrīz and Shiraz, two cities for which sociodemographic information at the level of city quarters is available for the late 13th/19th century, although some quarters were certainly more affluent than others, all contained some representation of the different socioeconomic strata, including notable local families (Nāder Mīrzā, pp. 61-69; Fasā'ī, II, pp. 23-131; see also Ashraf, 1360 Š./1981, pp. 83-86; for Tehran see *Āmār-e dār al-keḷāfa-ye Tehrān*, passim). The only exceptions were neighborhoods in which all, or nearly all, the residents were members of religious minorities—for example, the Jewish neighborhoods in Hamadān, Shiraz, Isfahan, Mašhad, and Tehran or the Armenian quarters in Isfahan and Tabrīz (*Āmār-e dār al-keḷāfa-ye Tehrān*, pp. 632-33, 641-42; Loeb, pp. 35-51; Šafaqī, pp. 397-424).

Third, because most people shared the same religion and were quite devout,



all social strata participated in religious festivals, mourning rituals, religious recitations on Thursday evenings, fasting in Ramaẓān, and especially processions commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Ḥosayn in the first ten days of the month of Moḥarram. The memoirs of the royal harem by Dūst-ʿAlī Khan Moʿayyer-al-Mamālek (q.v.; pp. 97-114), a grandson of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, show that there were striking similarities in the observance of such rituals in the royal household and among the common people. The shah, the women of his harem, and other members of the court regularly attended the passion plays (*taʿzīas*) at Takīya-ye Dawlat, along with people from other social strata. During Ramaẓān “the mosques were filled, and people from all walks of life would say their noon and evening prayers together” (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* I, pp. 293-302, 327-34. Kalāntar Żarrābī (p. 242) reported similar intercourse among the middle and upper classes of Kāšān on New Year’s Day (Nowrūz): “On the first day of the New Year, following their morning prayers . . . officials (*ʿommāl*), merchants (*tojjār*), and guildsmen (*aṣnāf*) pay homage to two or three of the most prominent *ʿolamā*’ and then are received by the governor (*ḥākem*) in audience, after which they continue to visit the rest of the *ʿolamā*’ until dark. On the second day visits are paid to officials, on the third to merchants, and the fourth to the heads of guilds and farmers (*zorrā*).” Many neighborhoods had their own *takīyas* or *ḥosaynīyas*, which served as places of congregation for all residents during public ceremonies. It was also customary for more affluent families to receive all the residents of their quarters during religious ceremonies or functions: “The gathering of illiterate commoner (*āmmī*), the man of knowledge (*āref*), the nobles and notables (*aʿyān wa ašraf*), the middle classes (*motawasseṭīn*), and the poor (*foqarā*) at the same place, under the same tent, and for the same purpose raised the consciousness of the affluent class about the conditions of the poor, prompted them to charitable deeds, and allowed the lower classes in turn to share in their culture and etiquette (*farhang wa adab-e ejtemāʿī*)” (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* I, p. 315).

Neither religious nor cultural norms created insurmountable obstacles to social mobility in Qajar Persia. As one observer put it: “Caste does not exist in Persia. Men can readily change their social status. A ballet dancer was the favorite wife of Fath Ali Shah. The son of a fellah may be vizier tomorrow. Hajji Baba, the water-carrier, in Morier’s inimitable story, became minister to England. Lowly birth is not a bar to the highest position” (Wilson, p. 181). The Qajars came to power following nearly a century of social and political upheavals in the country, events that had a considerable leveling effect on the structures of privilege that had evolved under the Safavids (see [CITIES iii. AD-](#)



MINISTRATION AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION). Furthermore, the despotic nature of Qajar rule and the constant encroachments by the royal court and powerful state officials on the property of others made it extremely difficult for those without protection to accumulate private wealth (Abrahamian, 1974, pp. 3-31; Ashraf, 1970, pp. 321-27). Despite the precariousness of the social order, however, many did manage to amass enormous private fortunes (mostly in the form of landed property) and to pass them on to their children. Furthermore, although exceptional individuals did rise from humble backgrounds to the highest echelons of the bureaucracy (for example, several became prime minister: Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Khan Neẓām-al-Dawla [known as Ṣadr-e Eṣfahānī; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* III, pp. 379-81], Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr(-e) Kabīr, and ‘Alī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-Solṭān [[Atābak-e A’zam](#)]), the vast majority of those in the dominant strata, as well as in other status or occupational categories, inherited, rather than acquiring, their positions. For example, among notable families in Shiraz in the 1310s/1880s all the princes and tribal chiefs, as well as 81 percent of the administrative elite, 89 percent of the ‘*olamā*’, 42 percent of landowners, and 87 percent of prominent merchants, occupied the same statuses as their fathers (see Banuazizi and Ashraf).

In the last decade of Qajar rule, the gradual incorporation of Persia into the world economy, the commercialization of agriculture, the introduction of capitalist relations of production, and increasing contacts with the West generated significant changes in the social structure of the country and set the stage for the emergence of modern social classes. But the new classes—the bureaucratic intelligentsia, the modern bourgeoisie, and the nascent industrial working class were too small to challenge effectively the existing structures of power and privilege. Their attempts, often in concert with the traditional middle classes, to reform the rapidly disintegrating apparatus of the state within the framework of the new Persian constitution met with very limited success and were soon overwhelmed by external intervention and forces of domestic reaction.



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