



EDUCATION XIII. RURAL AND TRIBAL SCHOOLS

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Compulsory-education laws enacted in 1329/1911 and 1943 provided the legal framework for the extension of modern education into rural and tribal areas. Until the 1950s, however, the Persian government did not possess the resources necessary to implement these laws, and, in addition, landowners and tribal khans resisted such efforts, fearing that “dangerous ideas” might disrupt traditional agrarian relations (Siāsī, pp. 126-31). As a result, rural education underwent a sluggish growth in this period.

Tribal boarding facilities under Reżā Shah. The children of tribal khans had first been exposed to modern education in boarding facilities located in urban centers. In the western provinces, once security had been restored after tribal unrest in the 1920s, Reżā Shah (1925-41) sought to reduce tribal power drastically. Many tribes were forcibly relocated in distant regions, and several khans were imprisoned for long periods of time. A related measure was to place their children in city schools, in order to promote a settled way of life. For this purpose boarding facilities (Dār al-tarbīa-ye ‘ašāyerī) were established in Korramābād, Bandar-e Šāh, and Tehran between 1928 and 1930; the sons of tribal khans were forcibly installed in these facilities (Ḥekmat, p. 128).



The first such facility was opened by General Aḥmad Āqā Khan Amīr Aḥmadī, military governor of Lorestān, in Ḳorramābād in October 1928 (Amīr Aḥmadī, pp. 214-15; [Plate D](#)). Thirty-six boys, all children of area khans, were enrolled. A new two-story building (rare in Lorestān at the time) was leased and appropriately furnished; it contained two dormitories, two study halls, a dining room, offices for the staff (including a nurse), and quarters for cooks and guards. The students attended Pahlavī elementary school in town during the day and spent the rest of their time at the Dār al-tarbīa. Finances were administered by the Ministry of Education (Wezārat-e ma‘āref), which employed the principal and his assistant, but a junior military officer supervised the program at the facility. Discipline was strict, and students were severely punished for violations. The school uniform resembled that of the army, and the daily program included military drills from 6:00 to 7:00 a.m.; whenever Reżā Shah paid a visit to the province the students formed one of the military units assembled for review. The principal and his assistant helped the children with their studies, taught them manners and rules of conduct, and attended to their personal problems. The government considered the Ḳorramābād Dār al-tarbīa a success and soon opened other such facilities near tribal areas. In 1933 a modern building was constructed; it remained in use as a boarding facility until a teachers'-training college was installed on the premises in 1937 (Ḥekmat, p. 306).

Because there were no secondary schools in Ḳorramābād and other towns, a boarding facility was also founded in Tehran in 1928 to accommodate Kurdish, Turkmen, Lor, and Baluch children between the ages of eight and twenty years, who attended various schools in the city. The Dār al-tarbīa, under the direction of Šayḳ-al-Eslām Mehmāndūst was centrally located, on Šāhābād street. As in Ḳorramābād, strict discipline prevailed, and young men from certain tribes were watched closely by the police security force.

In early 1935 the Tehran Dār al-tarbīa was moved to the modern building constructed for Dānešsarā-ye moqaddamātī, the teachers'-training school (see xviii, below), on Roosevelt avenue. Later that year, however, the government decided to close the tribal boarding facilities, as tribal problems had subsided and there was no longer any need to hold the children hostage. Older students were offered government jobs, but the younger ones were kept at the Dānešsarā until they had finished secondary school. A few alumni of the Dār al-tarbīa pursued advanced studies, becoming physicians, lawyers, and military officers or government officials.



Rural schools under Moḥammad-Rezā Shah. In 1946, a basic program for rural education was initiated in the Varāmīn area by the American philanthropic organization, Near East Foundation; it was gradually introduced into some other regions in the 1950s (Hendershot, pp. 153-64). Progress was slow, however, until the 1960s, when the Literacy Corps (Sepāh-e dāneš), organized in 1963 along the lines of the American Peace Corps, began activities in the settled countryside. In the same period a special program for tribal education, originally launched in the 1950s, was expanded. The Literacy Corps was one of six programs included in the White Revolution of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah (1941-78). Secondary-school graduates were given the option of teaching in rural and tribal areas as an alternative to normal military service. There was a four-month basic training course, which included pedagogical instruction. The number of corpsmen, at first only male, increased from about 3,000 in 1964 to about 24,000 men and women in 1977; there were also more than 63,000 teachers in regular rural schools. In 1968 female secondary-school graduates began to be recruited for the Literacy Corps. In 1970 about 2,000 women also taught both male and female pupils in rural areas. By 1977 about 167,000 men and 34,000 women had served in the corps (Markaz-e āmār, p. 43; Menashri, p. 180). Owing to literacy classes and to the expansion of schools in rural and tribal areas, the number of students enrolled in elementary schools increased from 760,000 (about 42 percent of total Persian enrollment in elementary schools) in 1962-63 to 2.2 million (about 48 percent of the total) in 1975-76 (Table 1). As total rural population dropped from 63 percent to 53 percent of the total in the same period, the expansion of modern education in rural areas was even more significant than uncorrected figures suggest.

In the 1960s-70s secondary education was also expanded in rural areas (Table 2). Furthermore, the teachers in the Literacy corps also taught adults; about 767,000 students attended adult-literacy classes in 1963-77. Nevertheless, poorly trained teachers, a high ratio of students to teachers, and a high dropout rate, especially among women, limited the success of the corps (Menashri, pp. 178-83).

Tribal schools under Moḥammad-Rezā Shah. Tribal schools were founded and developed by the Qašqā'ī educator Moḥammad Bahmanbeygī in 1947-77. This development can be broken down into three phases. The first was establishment of *maktabs* (traditional elementary schools) in Qašqā'ī nomad camps in the late 1940s, with financial support from prosperous tribesmen. Initially the teachers were recruited from semiliterate rural dwellers who



accompanied tribal people in their wanderings. The second phase began in the early 1950s, when the U.S. Operations Mission provided tribal *maktabs* with white tents and educational materials (books, blackboards, maps, etc.) and the Department of Education of Fārs province began to provide in-service training for tribal teachers. By the mid-1950s there were seventy tribal *maktabs* among the Qašqā'ī, with 1,400 students. The third phase began in 1957, when the Bureau of Tribal Education (Edāra-ye āmūzeš-e 'ašāyerī) was established in Shiraz and a one-year normal school was founded in that city to train tribal teachers. This school graduated about 8,000 teachers in the period 1957-77. The number of *maktabs* increased from 227 in 1962-63 to more than 1,463 in 1972-73; in the same period the number of pupils rose from about 8,000 to 55,000 (Table 3). In the late 1960s and 1970s these programs were extended to other tribal groups. All these schools were closed after the revolution of 1979.

As a result of the expansion of rural and tribal education, the percentage of the rural population six years of age and older able to read a simple text increased rapidly (Table 4).

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