



# EDUCATION XXI. EDUCATION ABROAD

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## EDUCATION

### xxi. EDUCATION ABROAD

*The Qajar period.* Persian awareness of a need to learn from Europeans arose in the wake of major military defeats and territorial losses in two wars with Russia in the early 19th century. In 1226/1811 Crown Prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā (q.v.) and his vizier, Mīrzā Bozorg Qā’em-Maqām, sent two Persians to study in England, followed by five more in 1230/1815. They were to study engineering, medicine, and military technology. Among the second group were Mīrzā Şāleḥ Şīrāzī, who wrote the first detailed account of a parliamentary system published in Persia and in 1252/1836 issued the first Persian printed book and newspaper, and Mīrzā Ja’far Khan Tabrīzī, who as Mošīr-al-Dawla became a close adviser to Nāşer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96; Maḥbūbī, *Mo’assasāt I*, pp. 130-89; Mīnavī). Malkom Khan, the famous diplomat and advocate of constitutionalism, was a student in Paris from 1259/1843 to 1267/1851 (Maḥbūbī, *Mo’assasāt I*, pp. 189-95; Algar, *passim*; Nashat, p. 27). In 1261/1845 Moḥammad Shah (1250-64/1834-48) sent five students to Paris; they were there to witness the revolution of 1848. One of them was Ḥosaynqolī Khan, a student at the St. Cyr military school, who participated in guarding the French Assemblée Nationale against the “rioters” (de Gobineau, pp. 132-33). Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan, the influential reformist prime minister of the 1870s, was also



among these students. They returned to Persia after the shah's death later in the same year.

In 1267/1851 Dār al-fonūn (q.v.) was founded in Tehran, with a staff of European teachers assisted by a few Persians who had been educated in France. In 1275/1859 the government sent forty-two students, primarily drawn from the first graduating class at Dār al-fonūn, to France to study medicine and military and other modern technologies. Upon their return they received newly created government positions, particularly in the Ministry of Sciences (Wezārat-e 'olūm). Some of them eventually attained cabinet level. For about a century France thus continued to be the preferred place for Persians to receive modern education and therefore had the greatest influence on the spread of European ideas and culture in Persia. Between 1276/1860 and 1318/1900, however, the government did not send students to Europe, as Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah grew increasingly fearful of the subversive impact of modern education (Maḥbūbī, *Mo'assasāt* I, pp. 270, 321-38, 349-54; Arasteh, p. 29; Copeland, pp. 308-11).

The Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) accelerated Persian exposure to European culture, primarily through modern education. In 1328/1910 the Majles passed a law stipulating that each year thirty students would go to Europe on government scholarship, half of them to study education. Among the first group was 'Īsā Ṣadīq, later charged by Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-41) with establishing Tehran University, the first modern university in Persia (Ṣadīq, 1354 Š./1975, pp. 366, 372). By 1337/1919 there were about 200 Persian students in France, thirty-four in England, nine in Germany, and a few in Switzerland and other European countries. A survey of 350 students abroad between 1226/1811 and 1339/1920 indicates that more than 50 percent of the total studied in France, about 15 percent in Russia, and 5-10 percent in Germany, England, Switzerland, Istanbul, and Beirut. A small number studied in Egypt, India, and the United States (for fields of study, see Sarmad, pp. 160-62; [Table 1](#)).

*The period of Reżā Shah.* In 1925, when the Pahlavi dynasty was established, the total number of Persian students in Europe was about 1,000 (Copeland, p. 273). In 1928 a new law (Qānūn-e e'zām-e moḥaṣṣel be Orūpā) was adopted, providing that every year at least 100 students were to be sent to Europe on government scholarship (Ṣadīq, 1354 Š./1975, p. 371; Arasteh, pp. 29-30). Under this law 640 students were sent abroad between 1928 and 1933 (Morādī Neżād and Pažūm Šarī'atī, pp. 100-01; for family backgrounds of these students, see



Table 2). The distribution of fields of study suggests, in addition to family and individual ambitions, the pressing need for Persia to overcome its technological and scientific backwardness vis-à-vis the West (Table 3). In 1932 a state-sponsored project for educating Persians in the United States was inaugurated, but only a small group could afford to participate (Banani, p. 102). While secular public education in Persia was expanding under Reżā Shah the number of students abroad did not increase significantly. Between 1922 and 1938 about 1,500 students were educated in Europe.

Some of the most influential statesmen of the period of Reżā Shah, including ‘Alī-Akbar Dāvar, Noşrat-al-Dawla Fīrūz (qq.v.), and ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Teymūrtāš, were educated in Europe, as were most nationalist leaders of the mid-20th century, notably Moḥammad Moşaddeq, Ḥosayn Fāṭemī (qq.v.) ‘Alī Šāyegān, Karīm Sanjābī, Mahdī Bāzargān, and Możaffar Baqā’ī (Abrahamian, pp. 140, 254-55, 283; Menashri, pp. 134-42). The founding members of Taqī Arānī’s Marxist circle and the Tudeh Party were also largely educated abroad; Arānī, Īraj Eskandarī (qq.v.), Reżā Rādmaneš, and Moḥammad Yazdī had belonged to a Marxist opposition group during their student days in Germany and France in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Mahrād, 1979, pp. 77-122; “Negāhī”; see COMMUNISM i-ii). Fear of such student activism abroad was apparently one factor leading to the establishment of Tehran University (Menashri, pp. 141-42), but this one university could hardly meet the demand for modern education in Persia.

*The period of Moḥammad-Reżā Shah.* In 1946-47 there were about 2,000 Persian university students abroad and 6,000 at home. By 1960 the figures were about 20,000 students abroad and 20,000 at home. Despite the opening of a few new Persian universities after World War II, it was only in the mid-1960s that domestic enrollment figures began to exceed those of Persian students abroad (Baldwin, p. 264).

A sample survey of 388 Persians who went abroad to study from before 1338/1920 until 1959, shows that two-thirds went after World War II (Table 4). The figure for 1955-59 is low because most of those who left Persia in that period had not yet returned when the survey was conducted (Baldwin, p. 265). Overall the figures reveal the rapid increase in travel abroad for study in the postwar period (for distribution of fields of study, see Table 5). A comparison of Tables 3 and 5 reveals a change in emphasis on fields of study as well.

In the 1960s-70s the outstanding characteristics of the student population



abroad were increasing numbers and political activism. University students were, in fact, the most active opposition group in this period. In Persia the student wing of the National Front (Jabha-ye mellī) was the most militant organization of the early 1960s; from its ranks emerged the founders of the guerrilla underground of the 1970s (Chehabi, pp. 147-48; Abrahamian, pp. 480-81). Abroad the activities of the Confederation of Iranian Students (q.v.), National Union (CISNU), in the 1960s and 1970s were the expression of deep dissatisfaction with the academic and political situation in Persia. In 1973 the number of Persians officially recorded as holding student passports was 18,035, 93 percent of them males; 42 percent were in the United States, 24 percent in Germany, 10 percent in the United Kingdom, 6 percent in Austria, and 5 percent in France. Only 4 percent of these students were on government scholarship. The actual numbers of Persian students abroad have been estimated at twice the official figure, the total number of students in Persian universities at 115,311 (*Keyhān-e havā'ī*, 5 May 1973, p. 7; 26 May 1973, p. 10). The proportion of the student population studying abroad was thus of significant size. By 1975 Persians ranked first in numbers among foreign students in the United States, 8.9 percent of the total. By 1977 more than 40,000 Persians were studying abroad, a figure equal to more than a quarter of the total for all of Persia's institutions of higher learning. In 1978, although the Persian population was less than 1 percent of the world total (United Nations, p. 157), Persian students abroad numbered 67,000, slightly more than 8 percent of the total foreign student population of the world. Of this number, 54,340 were in the United States, 4,445 in the Federal Republic of Germany, 4,336 in the United Kingdom, 3,775 in France, 2,268 in Turkey, 2,335 in the Philippines, 1,268 in Italy, 1,081 in India, and unspecified numbers in Switzerland, eastern-bloc countries, Japan, and the Arab world (Menashri, pp. 216-19; Milani, pp. 113-14; Bozorgmehr and Sabagh, p. 10)

Despite incompleteness of the available statistics, two points are clear. First, there were sharp changes in the preferred fields between the period of Reżā Shah and the 1960s (Table 3, above; [Table 6](#)). These changes may have reflected both the development of universities in Persia and a shift in attitudes toward professions in a society in rapid transition. Significantly, medicine remained the most preferred field, attracting one-fifth of the total of students abroad. Second, an increasing number of Persians were studying in the United States, reflecting growing American domination of Persian economic life and the possibility of working part-time in the United States to finance their studies ([Table 7](#)). This latter possibility also existed in Germany, helping to explain the



number of Persians who chose to study there. It is also important to note that, whereas until the early 1970s Persian students tended to return home upon completion of their studies, after that increasing numbers chose permanent residence in the host countries.

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