



FREEMASONRY III. IN THE PAHLAVI PERIOD

FREEMASONRY

iii. IN THE PAHLAVI PERIOD

Freemasonry in the Pahlavi era underwent three distinct phases: (1) The dormant phase from 1925-1950 under Reżā Shah and the decade following his abdication in 1941; (2) The revival of Freemasonry and the creation of the Lodge Pahlavi (Homāyūn; 1951-55); (3) The burgeoning of Freemasonry in the period of 1955-78, when dozens of regular lodges affiliated with French, German, and Scottish Grand Lodges were chartered and two Grand National Lodges were established. *A note on sources.* Although in recent years, and particularly in Europe and the United States, Freemasons have made some attempt to curb their proclivity for secrecy, there is still a lack of easily accessible and reliable data on their organization. Most of the sizable literature (about 4,000 books and thousands of articles) on the order fall therefore into two extreme camps: either defending the order uncritically or accusing it of opportunism and a host of other offenses against the society and humanity in general. In Persia, where Masonry had been more elitist and remained extremely secretive and, as such, the target of much deeper conspiracy theories than its Western counterparts, the issue of scarcity and reliability of the available information becomes even more critical. Given this paucity of scholarly works based on primary sources, an objective social



analysis of Persian Freemasonry is extremely difficult to achieve at present.

The bulk of the available primary information on Persian Freemasonry comes from information collected and disseminated by SAVAK (Sāzmān-e eṭṭelā'āt wa amniyat-e kešvar), the security organization of the previous regime, and by revolutionary committees and organizations in the post revolutionary period. The main work on Masonry in the Pahlavi period was compiled and published in the third volume of Esmā'īl Rā'īn's work, *Farāmūš-kāna wa Ferāmāsonerī dar Īrān*, first printed in 1968 in Rome. It contains useful information, including constitutions, regulations, agenda of ceremonies, Masonic appointments, some correspondence, and rosters of Masons with their affiliation to various lodges. It also presents the text of a number of criticisms of the order and conspiracies attributed to it, as well as generally hostile propaganda, sensational slogans, and grave accusations against Masons. The third volume of Rā'īn's work is based on the following sources:

1. Documents concerning the Lodge Pahlavī (Homāyūn; 1951-55), and some documents relating to the preparatory work for the formation of the Lodge Mawlawī (1955-56), which were presented in the first chapter of the volume (pp. 1-108). These documents came primarily from the personal files of Moḥammad-Ḳalīl Jawāherī, the founder and grand master of Lodge Pahlavi, and were purchased by SAVAK from his widow in 1963 (Hāšemī, pp. 261-62).
2. Information presented in other chapters on Scottish, French, and German Lodges (pp. 109-479) were primarily collected by SAVAK and made available to Rā'īn (see the following section on Rā'īn, the Court and Freemasonry).
3. Some of the information on the Lodge Mehr and the independent Grand Lodge of Iran (originally chartered by German Masonry, pp. 506-79) were given to Rā'īn by Moḥammad-Taḳī Eskandānī, the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge (Rā'īn, pp. 516-26).
4. Information gathered through personal interviews with a number of Masons, including Jawāherī and Eskandānī, as well as through correspondence with European and American lodges (Rā'īn, pp. 2-16, 61-63, 516-26).
5. A number of articles, transcriptions of Parliamentary speeches, newspaper editorials, and chapters from books criticizing Masonry, which were collected from various sources and inserted in various parts of the book, particularly in chapter eight (pp. 580-636). Rā'īn's work as a whole contains a mixture of very useful and important information along with much trivia and material taken



out of context, bundled together in a somewhat unsystematic manner. The second major primary source on Freemasonry in the Pahlavi period became available after the 1979 Revolution when the records held by Ja'far Šarīf-Emāmī (see iv. below) and some other Masons were confiscated by revolutionary committees. These records, which are now kept in the archive of the Institute for Persian Contemporary Historical Studies (Mo'assasa-ye tārik-e mo'ašer-e Īrān), are not yet open to the public although selections from them have been published in a number of articles. For instance, some of the documents concerning the formation of the Grand Lodge of Iran were published in a well organized article in the Institute's journal (see Ja'farī, also Faqīh Haqqānī).

Foreign sources. Other sources on Persian Masonry include a number of articles published in American Masonic journals on various occasions, providing the readers with some useful information (see, e.g., Boettjer; Carr; Payne; Richards). *Anti-Masonic literature.* There are also a number of books and many essays and editorials on Masonry in Persia prepared by conservative, nationalist, radical, and fundamentalist authors. These follow Rā'īn in his bitter anti-Masonic rhetoric, accusing Masons of all kinds of devious conspiracies against the Persian nation. Their recurring theme is the Masonic association with a presumed Anglo-Zionist world conspiracy. However, they add little to Rā'īn's book (see, e.g., Zāvoš; Rajabī; cf. Rā'īn III, pp. 84-90, 110-22, 154-68, 236-65, 580-636).

THE DORMANT PHASE: 1925 TO 1950 Freemasonry, like many other social and political organizations, suspended its activities when Reżā Shah rose to power and established his autocratic rule in the 1920s. The Lož-e bīdārī-e Īrān (Le Reveille de l'Iran; also known as Lož-e Tehran; see ii. above) which was the first Persian Masonic lodge ever chartered under a European lodge (L'Ordre Grand Orient de France), apparently disbanded itself voluntarily in the early 1920s to avoid arousing the suspicion of the Pahlavi regime (Payne, p. 204). Nevertheless, seven members of the suspended lodge served as prime ministers in this period (see Table 2). It should be noted, however, that there is no evidence of masonic fraternal relations and activities among these personalities in this period. The leading figure was Moḥammad-'Alī Forūḡī (q.v.; 1877-1942) the famous statesman and scholar who kept the records of the suspended Lodge in his own house (the records were transferred to Ebrāhīm Ḥakīmī, (Ḥakīm-al-Molk, q.v.) after Forūḡī's death in 1942 (personal interview with Maḥmūd Forūḡī, Princeton, 21 September 1994). Three regular Scottish



lodges, however, were operating in this period primarily with non-Persian members: “Light of Iran,” founded in Shiraz by the British and Indian officers of the South Persia Rifle (SPR) in 1919 (see [FĀRS v.](#)). It closed down in 1921 after the termination of the SPR but resumed its operation in Tehran for the benefit of the British and other foreign nationals in November 1922 (see below). Two other lodges were founded in Kūzestān for the employees of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (q.v.). They were referred to as “Pioneer Lodges,” and were chartered in 1923 at Ābādān and Masjed-e Solaymān by the Indian Grand Lodge (Payne, pp. 203-04; Carr, p. 267). As noted by a contemporary observer in the mid 1940’s “The absence of Iranian citizens among the membership of the Lodges in Iran is not due to any lack of hospitality on the part of the Lodges themselves, but is found in the expressed desire of the civil authorities that Iranians be not admitted” (Payne, p. 204). The dormant phase of Freemasonry continued for a decade after the forced abdication of Reżā Shah by the allied forces in 1941, when the opportunity for socio-political activities in a climate of comparative freedom led to the mushrooming of social associations and political organizations. However, given the anti-Masonic sentiments of the rising communist and nationalist forces, the Masters of the Lodge, several of whom were among prime ministers, ministers, and leading politicians of the time, thought it politically unwise to resume their Masonic activities.

THE PAHLAVI LODGE: 1951-55 Freemasonry was revived in Persia on 24 November 1951 when Moḥammad-Ḳalīl Jawāherī, a Persian resident of Syria and Lebanon and the editor of the newspaper *Etteḥād-e Eslām* (Unity of Islam) founded Lodge Pahlavi with the support of the Royal Court. The lodge was affiliated to an obscure grand lodge in Cairo, The Worldwide Ideal Grand Lodge (al-Maḥfel al-akbar al-meṭālī al-‘ālamī), which claimed to be chartered by L’Ordre Grand Orient de France. In 1952 the lodge founded Ḥāfeẓ Club (Bāšgāh-e Ḥāfeẓ), where its main events took place (Rā’īn, III, pp. 90-102). The Lodge Pahlavi was soon renamed Lodge Homāyūn. Yet in some correspondence of the Lodge the original name reappeared as late as 1955 (see a letter from Grand Orient addressing the “Grand Lodge Pahlavi,” published in Rā’īn III, p. 65). In the course of the first four years of its creation, its membership increased from a small number during the oil nationalization movement of 1951-53 to over 281 in the post 1953 coup d’état (q.v.), 233 in Tehran and 48 in Tabrīz, Isfahan, Ahvāz, and Ḳorramšahr lodges (Rā’īn III, p. 27). The social background of 226 members of Lodge Pahlavi (see [Table 3](#)) shows that the upper and upper-middle classes formed the bulk of the Lodge,



with over 51 percent coming from the governing elite. The report of William Koren, the First Secretary of the American Embassy in Tehran, tells of the significant political character of Lodge Pahlavi in the post-1953 coup d'état. "The Embassy has long been aware that the Grand Orient Lodge, because so many prominent Iranians are allegedly in its membership, has an important political character. The organization is popularly believed by many Iranians to be a powerful behind-the-scene political instrument generally subservient to the British interest. Owing to the secrecy which surrounds the Lodge, however, it is difficult to analyze the manner in which it operates as a political force. The character and prominence of the individuals allegedly constituting its membership, believed to include many Senators, members of recent governments, and other Iranian leaders, suggests that even as a purely fraternal organization, the Lodge would represent the locus of much political and economic power" (Koren). The timing of the formation of the lodge at the height of the oil nationalization crisis (coming six months after the formation of the nationalist Government of Moḥammad Moṣaddeq), led to renewed suspicion and hostility towards Freemasonry in its new phase among a large number of Persians of all persuasions. These suspicions were based in part on the lodge's obscure origin, its name and connection with the royal court (through Ernst Peron, a close confidant of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah, and Aḥmad Hūman, a deputy court minister, who were among its founding members), the encouragement and support by the leading members of the lodge itself for the widely held belief that the lodge had strong British connection, and its anti-Moṣaddeq stance (Rā'īn III, pp. 13, 61-62, 83-91; Samii, pp. 57-59; Cottam, pp. 235-36). Despite the widely held belief regarding British involvement, Lodge Homāyūn was not affiliated with the British Craft, and its alleged connection with the Grand Orient was resented by the British and American Masonry. In fact the disclosure of its affiliation with an obscure grand lodge in Cairo, the guarded attitude of the leading veterans of Lodge Bīdārī (Ebrāhīm Ḥakīmī, Ḥosayn 'Alā', and Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda) towards Jawāherī, and increasing mistrust of the royal court led to a series of internal conflicts, severe criticisms against the lodge in the Majles and nationalist newspapers, and its closure in 1955 (Rā'īn III, pp. 83-91; Boettjer, pp. 24-25).

the first regular masonry: 1955-78

The period of 1955-78 saw the formation and flourishing of regular Masonry in Persia, affiliated with the grand lodges of France, Scotland, and Germany. In the late 1960s some 31 lodges were operating under two national grand lodges, one independent with four lodges and 130 members, and the other affiliated with the World Masonry with some 27 lodges and about 700 members (Rā'īn, III, pp. 541-47, 640-680). In the late 1970s the number of regular lodges rose to



43 with about 1,500 members whereas the irregular lodges remained almost stagnant (Mīr, pp. 309-36; Šarīf Emāmī's note). *The French Lodges*. On 13 October 1955, nine masters of Lodge Pahlavi, Aḥmad Hūman, Maḥmūd Hūman, Admiral 'Abd-Allāh Zelli, 'Abbās-'Alī Ka'atbarī, Maḥdī Šawkatī, Moḥammad Sā'ed, Rašīd Hā'erī, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd Sanandajī, and Moḥammad-'Alī Emām Šūštārī were initiated into the Grande Loge Nationale Française as the founding masters of Lodge Mawlawī 49 (Rā'īn III, pp. 332-57). This event marked a drastic shift in Persian Masonry from an irregular, independent, and rebellious L'Ordre Grand Orient de France, which had never been accepted by the mainstream Anglo-American, French, and German Masonry, to an accepted French grand lodge. Grande Loge Nationale Française consecrated three more lodges, Sa'dī, Forūgī, and Hāfez, in 1960, which constituted, along with the Lodge Mawlawī, a District Grand Lodge with Sa'īd Mālek (Loqmān al-Molk) as its grand master (Carr, pp. 267-68). Until 1969, when the second Grand Lodge of Iran was founded, the number of Lodges under the obedience of Grande Loge Nationale Française increased to ten (Table 4). French lodges also established four front clubs: Anjoman-e Bū 'Alī Sīnā in 1959; Anjoman-e ḵoršīd-e tābān in 1964; Anjoman-e K'āwja Našīr Ṭūsī in 1968; Anjoman-e Fārābī in late 1960s. The latter club made an attempt to construct a Masonic temple in the Vanak-Evīn area of northern Tehran in the mid-1970s, designed by Moḥsen Forūgī (q.v.), the well-known architect (Rā'īn, pp. 418-45). [See Comments.]

The Scottish Lodges. The Scottish Lodge "Light of Iran" founded in 1919 in Shiraz for British officers, was the first regular lodge ever chartered in Persia. This Lodge was closed in 1921, but revived in Tehran in 1922 for foreign nationals and continued its operation into the 1970s. In 1969 it became the Senior Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Iran. The first Scottish Lodge for Persians, however, was chartered in 1957 with the formation of Lodge Tehran. The founders and officers of the Lodge included Ḥosayn Šaqāqī, the grand master; Ġolām-Rezā Kīān, the deputy grand master; Moḥammad Ḥesābī, the senior warden; 'Alī-Ašgar Kašāyār, the junior warden; and Major General Esmā'īl Šafā'ī, director of ceremony. Thereafter, until the formation of the Grand Lodge of Iran in 1969, 13 more Scottish Lodges were formed in Persia (see Table 5; see also Rā'īn III, pp. 110-330). Scottish lodges also established a front club, Bāšgāh-e Rāzī in 1961; the name was changed to Anjoman-e Ṭarafdarān-e Ḥakīm Zakarīyā Rāzī in 1964 (Rā'īn, pp. 254-70).

The German Lodges. Persian lodges affiliated with the United Grand Lodges of



Germany initiated their activities with the foundation of Lodge Mehr on 5 February 1960 in Tehran. The founding members of the Lodge included Ḥosayn ‘Alā’, Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīz’āda, Abd-Allāh Enteẓām (q.v.), Taqī Eskandānī, ‘Abu’l-Ḥasan Ḥakīmī, Moktār-al-Molk Ṣabā, and Theodor Vögel, a German Master Mason who served in the Kochs Company in Tehran, with ‘Alā’ as its grand master. They were all veteran nationalists, and participants in, or products of, the Constitutionalist Revolution. Conscious of British colonial reputation, and intent on avoiding suspicion of association with foreign imperial designs, their goal from the outset was to establish an independent Masonic order in Persia. With this in mind, they first sent a petition to the Lodge Alpina of Switzerland, which was an independent order, requesting affiliation. When the Lodge declined their request on the ground that it had never granted charter to lodges in other countries, they turned to the German order. The establishment of a Grand Lodge requires the formation of at least 3 lodges. Therefore, to achieve their goal of an independent Grand Lodge, they founded two more lodges in the same year named Āftāb and Setāra-ye Saḥar and informed the United Grand Lodges of Germany of their desire for independence. Following the acceptance of their petition, an independent Grand Lodge of Iran was formed in December 1960 with Ḥosayn ‘Alā’ as its grand master and Taqī Eskandānī as its grand secretary (Table 6; Rā’īn III, pp. 506-7, 516-24). According to Rā’īn (pp. 524-26) the formation of the independent Masonic order in Persia met with a mixture of disapproval, resistance, and obstruction from the French and Scottish Lodges in Persia. Eventually, in a counter move, Ja’far Šarīf-Emāmī, the grand master of Lodge Setāra-ye Saḥar and his colleagues, ‘Alī Ašraf-Aḥmadī and ‘Alī Amīr-Ḥekmat, broke with the independent Grand Lodge of Iran and sent a petition for reaffiliation to the United Grand Lodges of Germany. Considered as un-Masonic and severe treason, the action was deeply resented by the independent Grand Lodge of Iran. Following the split, Šarīf-Emāmī erected Lodge Nāhīd in 1964 and Lodge Keyvān in 1966 to become eligible to form a regional grand lodge. These lodges were accepted by the mainstream Anglo-American, French, and German Freemasonry and in 1968 were constituted into a District Grand Lodge under a charter granted by the United Grand Lodges of Germany, which appointed Šarīf-Emāmī as its district grand master (Table 6; Carr, p. 268; Rā’īn, III, pp. 526-28). Following the split of Setāra-ye Saḥar, the Grand Lodge of Iran formed two lodges of Šafā and Wafā in 1962 to maintain its status as a grand lodge. However, the grand lodges of Scotland, France, and Germany declined to recognize the independent Persian Grand Lodge and declared it an irregular order. These events seriously hampered



attempts made by veterans of the Bīdārī Lodge and such nationalist Mason as Moḥammad-Taqī Eskandānī to develop a decent independent Masonry in Persia.

The Grand Lodge of Iran. Meanwhile, Šarīf-Emāmī, the former prime minister and the president of the Senate, made an arrangement with the grand lodges of France, Scotland, and Germany to form the accepted Grand Lodge of Iran consisting of 14 Scottish, 10 French, and 3 German affiliated lodges, with himself as the grand master in 1969 (see Tables 4, 5, and 6). The extravagant ceremony for the erection and consecration of the accepted Grand Lodge of Iran was performed on 1 March 1969 with the participation of a large number of prominent European and American Masons and grand masters of the Grand Lodges of Scotland, France, and Germany (for a detail narrative of the ceremony see Carr, pp. 272-79). The number of lodges under the obedience of the accepted Grand Lodge of Iran (est. 1969) increased to 43 with some 1,500 members in the late 1970s (Šarīf-Emāmī's note on "Lož-e bozorg-e Īran," available in author's file; the roster presented in Mīr, pp. 309-36).

The Supreme Council for Iran. In 1965 a number of Persian masters submitted a petition to the Grande Loge Nationale Française requesting the establishment of a chapter in Persia for practicing the Scottish Rite, which grants higher Masonic degrees from 4th to 33rd. The Supreme Council for France granted permission and Maḥmūd Hūman, 33rd, was appointed "Deputy for the Supreme Council for France in the Valley of Iran." With the formation of the accepted Grand Lodge of Iran in 1969, the Supreme Council for Iran was formally founded and Hūman was "installed as Iran's first Sovereign Grand Commander and reigned until his death in 1980" (Boettjer, pp. 24-25).

ESMĀ'IL RĀ'ĪN, THE COURT, AND FREEMASONRY

The above chronological account of Freemasonry in Persia must be seen against a complex set of events focused around the publication of Esmā'īl Rā'īn's book, involving the court, and the different centers of power within the establishment, showing the ambivalence or even hostility felt towards Freemasonry by many members of the governing elite. Rā'īn was a member of a clandestine organization (COK; a random name) in the 1950s, which had been established by the Army Intelligence Unit (Rokn-e dovvom-e setād-e arteš; interview with General Ḥājī 'Alī Kīā, 21 October, 1985, in the Iranian Oral History Collection at Harvard University, as cited in Samii, p. 58). It was at



this time that Rāʾīn was working for Lieutenant General Ḥājī ʿAlī Kīā, the head of army intelligence and an influential member of Lodge Pahlavi. Kīā eventually became an instrumental element in the closure of the Lodge (Rāʾīn, p. 83) and thus, may have been the first person to provide Rāʾīn with the documents of the Lodge as well as arranging for Rāʾīn's access to the Lodge's mail box. According to Manūčher Hāšemī, a director of SAVAK from 1956-78, as early as 1956, when he was establishing a SAVAK branch in the province of Fārs, Rāʾīn collaborated with him in organizing its office at Būšehr. Meanwhile, he informed Hāšemī that he had used his position as an employee of Tehran's central post office to monitor and regularly spy on the mail box specially used by Lodge Pahlavi in the same post office (Hāšemī, pp. 261-62). In 1963, when Hāšemī served as the director general of counter intelligence at SAVAK, Rāʾīn suggested to him that the organization should acquire the Masonic documents held by the late Moḥammad-Ḳalīl Jawāherī from his widow. The documents were purchased for 2,000 tomans, classified, and submitted to the office in charge of Masons. Hāšemī relates that "after a while Rāʾīn told me that he was preparing a book on Persian Masons... When the book was published I realized that most of its content had been taken from Jawāherī's file" (Hāšemī, p. 263). Meanwhile, another controversial book, *Mīrāṭḡār-e este'mār* (The Inheritor of Colonialism), was published by Maḥdī Bahār, a close friend of Rāʾīn. The book was a rhetorical attack against U. S. imperialism, disclosing the names of "American agents" in Persia.

The publication of the two books caused a great stir in the late 1960s. It was widely rumored that the appearance of the books was the culmination of a long-standing rivalry between the British and the Americans—with Rāʾīn's work as an American ploy against British agents, and Bahār's as part of a British design against the United States. Although the books were published by two close friends and the rumor of the American and British design is farfetched, there seems to have been an element of truth in the allegation of an Anglo-American rivalry and in U. S. suspicion of secret Masonic activities (see, e.g., Koren; Cottam, 1988, p. 59). Meanwhile, the royal court took a supportive stance towards these revelations. Amīr Asad-Allāh ʿAlam, the court minister, commented: "The book on Masons has created a scandal. Most of the high ranking political elite are Masons. Of all prime ministers in the Constitutionalist period only Hażīr, Razmārā, Zāhedī, Amīnī, and myself were not included" (I, p.132; for an accurate list, see Table 5). In a discussion with the queen, ʿAlam reports that "She referred to a recent book on Iranian Freemasonry which cites virtually every leading official bar myself: PM



Hoveyda, Sharif-Emami the Speaker [President] of the Senate, Dr. Eqbal Head of the National Oil Company and Mr. Riazi the Speaker of the Majles among them. ‘One alternative is merely to accept Freemasonry,’ she said, ‘but I vote we reject it as undesirable; an instrument in the hands of foreign powers. Those who have thrown in their lot with the masons should be dismissed, every last one of them’” (Alam, tr., pp. 150-51).

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Amīr ‘Abbās Hoveydā, himself a Mason, had twice ordered Rā’īn’s detention but had been vetoed each time by the Shah. As ‘Alam noted on 27 September 1969 “the Shah ordered me to summon Rā’īn confidentially at home to find out why, once again, Prime Minister Hoveyda had given an order to arrest him” (‘Alam, I, p. 261). The important question often asked is why SAVAK chose to help in the preparation of Rā’īn’s accusatory book and its publication in the period of rapid growth of Masonry among the Persian political, commercial, and cultural elite and specifically on the eve of the formation of the accepted Grand Lodge of Iran (est. 1969), with 27 lodges and some 700 members, under Ja’far Šarīf-Emāmī, who served as the prime minister in the early 1960s and was then the president of the Senate. Two factors may have been decisive. First, the shah’s predilection for making the political elite feel insecure and hence even more submissive through traditional ways of character assassination and “divide and rule” policy. This attitude may have motivated the publication of the books by both Rā’īn and Bahār. In the former case, the shah’s deep-rooted suspicions of Masonry and his concomitant belief in their omnipotence may have also played a large part. These feelings can be traced back to the beginning of his reign in 1942 when he wanted Moḥammad-‘Alī Forūḡī dismissed as court minister on the grounds that as a Mason he was an internationalist, and hence not a supporter of national boundaries and the institution of kingship (Entezām, p. 177-79). By arranging the publication of Rā’īn’s book and appointing Šarīf-Emāmī as the grand master of the Grand Lodge of Iran, the shah established his firm control over Persian Masonry.

From the moment when Iranian Freemasons acquiesced to the shah’s will to appoint Šarīf-Emāmī instead of their own preferred candidate, Sa’īd Mālek, they in effect surrendered their autonomy to the shah (as related by Aḥmad Hūman, a prominent Mason and former President of the Bar Association, in a discussion with Ehsan Naraghi at Evīn Prison in early 1980; Naraghi, p. 195). Furthermore the diaries of Amīr Asad-Allāh ‘Alam, the close confidant of the shah and his court minister, also provide instances of the shah’s belief in



Masonic power and conspiracies. On one occasion, the religious urban riots of June 1963, he thought Freemasons might have been behind the troubles ('Alam, III, p. 387). Discussing the Watergate scandal, 'Alam suggested that "perhaps international Masonry is plotting to destroy Richard Nixon whose power and prestige on the international scene is on the ascendant." The shah, "pretending not to agree with my view, pondered for a while and asked me: 'Are you sure Nixon himself is not a Mason?'" ('Alam, III, p. 37). In addition to the shah, 'Alam, and Ardašīr Zāhedī, other members of the elite not affiliated to Masonry, as well as the leadership and rank and file of the SAVAK, were *inter alia*, suspicious of the order. On one occasion, discussing the philosophy of Masonry with the Shah, 'Alam argued that as confirmed internationalists, Masons could not believe in national sovereignty and monarchy. When the shah pointed out that Masons took the oath of allegiance in their own country, 'Alam retorted "Why did they then murder Louis XVI?" ('Alam, II, p. 225). In early 1969, when the Masonic connections of a number of Persian diplomats were exposed by Rā'īn, Ardašīr Zāhedī issued two confidential orders as minister of foreign affairs, calling for the resignation of those diplomats with affiliations to any party (*hez̄b*), organization (*ferqa*), or group (*dasta*) from those organizations within a month (Wezārat-e omūr-e k̄āreja, no. 7886 db, and no. 5898 db).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The major characteristic of Freemasonry in Persia is its predominantly elitist character, when compared to the predominantly middle class social base of its membership in most other countries. From the beginning of its introduction into Persia in the 19th century, a number of Persian princes, ambassadors, and high ranking officials were granted membership by the French and British lodges. When Malkom Khan founded his Faramūš-kāna in the 1850s a large number of courtiers and notables were initiated in the Lodge. An examination of the Masonic affiliation of Persian political elite in the 20th century shows that over 40 percent of prime ministers in the period of 1906-78 (Table 5), about 25 percent of ministers, 25 percent of senators, and about 23 percent of Majles deputies in the 1950s-1970s period were Masons. In contrast, most Masons in the late 1970s came from middle-class backgrounds and many were individuals who aspired to social and political advancement. A sample survey of 10 percent of the roster of 1,700 Masons in the late 1970s (presented in Mīr, pp. 309-36) shows that only about one-half were either registered in the *Who's Who of Iran* (1976) or were recognizable to a panel of well-informed persons.



With the weakening of traditional loyalty to guilds, city quarters, religious orders, ruling elements, and kinship networks, Persian elite and aspiring members of the middle-class felt an increasing need for a haven against external threats as a basis for self protection and political advancement. In the period of 1950s-70s, formal independent political and professional associations were not allowed to function, and the powerful, independent-minded politicians were replaced with more submissive aides. During this time when the political elite experienced a precipitous fall from power, the Masonic order functioned as a voluntary association in a society in which all other types of independent associations, particularly of a political nature, were either discouraged or suppressed. Furthermore, the illusory belief in the support of the world Masonry, advertised by the mainstream Masonic orders in Persia, served as a powerful vehicle for reassuring the membership and for the recruitment of new members (for politics of insecurity in Persia of this period, see Zonis; Bill; see also [CLASS SYSTEM V](#)).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See under [Freemasonry v](#).