



# HEDĀYAT, MOḶBER-AL-SALTĀNA I. LIFE AND WORK

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## HEDAYAT, MOḶBER-AL-SALTĀNA

### i. LIFE AND WORK

Hedayat ([Figure 1](#)) belonged to a distinguished family, several members of which had served as ranking officials under the late Qajars and in early Pahlavi administration. His father, 'Aliqoli Khan MoḶber-al-Dawla (q.v.), a son of the literary historian and courtier Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat (q.v.), was director of the Telegraph and Post Office and held cabinet positions under NāsĀer-al-Din Shah.

### EDUCATION AND EARLY CAREER

Hedayat received his elementary education in Tehran and studied French with a private tutor; then, at the age of fourteen, he was sent with his elder brother, Mortazāqoli, the future Şani'-al-Dawla, to Berlin to study a scientific subject of his choice. There, he learned German from a private tutor for six months before he was fluent enough to attend a regular school, but he dropped out after just a few months, complaining that studying subjects such as Latin, Greek, and German history would be a waste of time for him (Hedayat, 1997, pp. 11, 20-21). Mehdiqoli Ḷān(-e) Ḷānān, the name he was known by at this time, stayed in Germany for about three years and returned to Persia in spite of the advice of his father, who wanted him to stay on and study medicine. He



mastered the German language, however. The deep interest that he developed in German culture remained with him throughout his life, and he was not shy about articulating it; he once referred to Germans as “our cousins” (Hedayat, 1997, p. 52). Upon his return to Persia in 1879, he was employed at the Telegraph Office, which was run by his father; and, at the same time, he continued his education with a private tutor at Dār al-Fonun (q.v.), studying Persian literature and Arabic (Hedayat, 1997, pp. xxvii, 27-29, 31, 32-33).

Hedayat entered the service of the Qajar court in 1894, when he and his brother were appointed as the private stewards (*piš-keđmat-e kāšš*) of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (Hedayat, 1997, p. 69), in which capacity he occasionally translated German texts for the monarch. He also served for a short time as the director of Post, Customs, and Telegraph Office in Tabriz and taught German at the Dār al-Fonun for eight months in 1885. He later became the director of the ‘Elmiya and the Military Schools (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 72-73, 149-51, 183-86) and accompanied Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah as his interpreter of German on the monarch’s second journey to Europe. While he was in Berlin, he managed to obtain permission to be an observer for forty days at the state printing house to improve his own skills in photogravure process, which remained a lifelong hobby of his (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 152 ff., 164; idem, 1997, p. 68; Maḥbubi Ardakāni, II, pp. 226-28). In 1903, Hedayat joined Mirzā ‘Ali-As’āgar Khan Atābak (q.v.) on a trip around the world. His intention, he would later write, was to influence Atābak’s frame of mind and prepare him for future reforms (Hedayat, 1989, p. 3). Hedayat remained a close confidant of Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah, who was especially interested in hearing Hedayat speak of the parliamentary system of Japan (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 142, 191).

The highlights of Hedayat’s political career include the role he played in the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.), his tenures as governor-general of Fārs and of Azarbaijan during the critical years of World War I and its aftermath, and finally his premiership in the early Pahlavi era.

#### ROLE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

During the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution, Hedayat served as the main intermediary between the shah and the Constitutionalists. He was familiar with the French Revolution and considered it to be without real substance (*bimāya*), although he liked its slogan of liberty, equality, and especially fraternity. He remained, however, rather skeptical about the concept of republicanism, which in his opinion “looked like a school without a



headmaster” (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 21, 385-88; Taqizādeh, p. 71; Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana, p. 628; Kasrawi, 1991, pp. 219-20). Hedayat, who worked on the committee that drafted the election laws for the Majles, believed that the British system of parliamentary government was better suited for Persia and was displeased that the constitution of Belgium was used as a model (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 188-90, 193). When the first Majles convened, its members demanded that Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah present them with an edict (*dast-kaṭṭ*), officially proclaiming his allegiance to constitutional government. Under pressure, Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah issued the edict, which was drafted by Hedayat and presented by him to the Majles and then read to a crowd gathered in the Bahārestān (Nāẓem-al-Eslām, II, pp. 82-86; Kasrawi, 1991, p. 223; Hedayat, 1950, pp. 194-96).

Hedayat was charged with conducting the election of Tehran deputies in the First Majles (Hedayat, 1997, p. 142) and also drafted a law guaranteeing freedom of the press, which he based on the French press laws. The bill was passed by the Majles, but it was not put into practice. The draft of a law prohibiting government officials from taking bribes was proposed in the Majles, but it was never voted on, since the government demanded a general application of the law to include everybody. According to Hedayat, the new Majles was hampered by the fact that the great majority of the deputies, not having any understanding of what a constitutional government meant, were engaged in pursuing their own personal interests. He charged that the most articulate deputies were either in secret contact with the royal house or were receiving instructions from a foreign power. Moreover, the government was facing the continuous protests of ambassadors representing the colonial powers (Hedayat, 1997, p. 152; Ādamiyat, pp. 233-34), personal intrigues of members of the royal household, the activities of numerous associations, which were trying to intimidate by threatening violence, and the rashness of ambitious Majles deputies trying to pose as leaders of the movement while having no concept of constitutional government (Hedayat, 1997, pp. 140-52; Ādamiyat, pp. 138 ff.).

Hedayat served in several cabinets during the constitutional period. At various times between 1906 and 1926, he held the ministries of Justice (*‘adliya*; 1907-08, 1914, 1918; also in 1917 according to Šajī‘i, which Hedayat denies; see Hedayat, 1997, pp. 345-46), Education and Pious Endowments (*‘olum wa awqāf*; 1896); Education (*ma‘āref*; 1908), Finance (*māliya*; 1920); Public Welfare, Commerce, and Agriculture (*fawāyed-e ‘amma wa tejā-rat wa falāḥat*; 1923,



1926), and Interior (*dākela*) (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 216, 441; Šaji'i, III, pp. 44, 45, 50, 55, 57, 96, 111, 121, 144, 160, 161 162, 163-70).

#### GOVERNOR GENERAL OF Azarbaijan AND FĀRS

Hedayat's statesmanship, political influence, prudent moderation, and tact were clearly demonstrated during his service as governor-general (*wāli*) of Azarbaijan and Fārs, both at a time when these outlying provinces, considered the domains of powerful foreign interests, were seething with disturbances.

*Governor general of Azarbaijan.* In April 1908, he was appointed the governor of Azarbaijan, but he resigned (he was not recalled, as in some sources) in July of the same year after the coup d'état of Moḥammad-'Ali Shah (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 219 ff.). Hedayat made his way to Europe, meeting in Paris and Istanbul with Persian exiles active in the Constitutional Movement (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 236, 238-41, 245). After the Constitutionalist forces recaptured Tehran in 1909, he was urgently asked by both the leaders of the new government and the provincial council of Tabriz to return and resume his post as governor of Azarbaijan. Hedayat was initially reluctant but eventually accepted the assignment. He arrived in Tabriz on 3 Ša'bān 1327/19 August 1909 to find the province in turmoil, while the Russians, who were against his re-appointment and were demanding his removal from Azarbaijan, already had a considerable military force stationed in the Tabriz suburbs (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 243 ff., 250-51, 256-58, 264-66, 271-74; Kasrawi, 1961, pp. 85 ff.; Amirkizi, pp. 204 ff., 453-56; Baširi, ed., p. 707). Hedayat was caught in the middle of factional conflicts in Tabriz. One faction earnestly demanded his removal in a telegram sent to the Majles and the cabinet, at a time when the Russian ambassador in Tehran was pressuring the central government for the same. Hedayat ignored the recommendation of his brother, Mortazāqoli Šani'-al-Dawla, a cabinet member, who advised him to resign. Later, after Šani'-al-Dawla's assassination, his other brother, Mo-ḥammadqoli MoḲber-al-Molk, also advised him to give up and leave for Europe. Hedayat finally submitted his resignation and left Tabriz for Europe toward the end of August 1911, having served for about two years (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 279-83, 287, 288, 295-97; Kasrawi, 1961, pp. 154-56).

He spent three months in Europe and returned to Tehran in December 1911, when the government was facing a political crisis and serious discord with the Majles, due to the Russian ultimatum of November 29 that demanded the dismissal of Shuster, the American financial administrator working for the



government (Shuster, pp. 166-67, 177, 181-82).

*Governor-general of Fārs.* In 1912 Hedayat was appointed governor-general of Fārs, where rivalry, conflict of interests, and blood feud between Esmā'il Khan Şawlat-al-Dawla, the powerful anti-British chief of the Qaşqā'i tribal confederacy, and the pro-British acting governor Ḥabib-Allāh Khan Qawām-al-Molk, leader of the Kamsa tribes, had thrown the entire province into a bloody civil war. Hedayat arrived in Shiraz on 16 October 1912. He abolished the road toll along the Shiraz-Kāzerun route and managed a working relationship with both Şawlat-al-Dawla and Qawām-al-Molk, officially re-appointing the former as the Qaşqā'i chief (*il-kāni*). Peace and order and the safety of commercial traffic were re-established in Fārs.

During World War I, the province of Fārs became the stage for a fierce Anglo-German rivalry and a brutal struggle between their agents and allies among tribal khans and local notables. On 8 August 1915 British forces occupied Būšeher, and five days later they stormed the deserted village of Delvā. Hedayat's disapproval of foreign intervention in Persian affairs, not to mention his pro-German sentiments, was a thorn in the side of the British and more than once prompted them to demand his removal. On 13 September he was recalled from Shiraz at the insistence of the British, and Qawām-al-Molk was installed as acting governor of Fārs (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 349 ff., 364-66; idem, 1994, pp. 963-66; Kaḥḥālzāda, pp. 219-20; Ghani, pp. 86-88).

Hedayat remained active in Persia's political life despite the dislike of the British, who had demanded that he would never again get any government job and whose representative would not even tolerate Hedayat's presence in the same room with him (Kaḥḥālzāda, pp. 219-20; Dawlatābādi, IV, p. 128). After leaving Shiraz, he remained aloof for a time, even avoiding friends and associates. He was approached, however, by the German Legation in Tehran to start a secret anti-British society (Kaḥḥālzāda, pp. 262 ff.), an event which may explain his resumption of active life in Persian politics. He was elected as the deputy of Tehran to the Fourth Majles and served in the short-lived cabinets of 'Ayn-al-Dawla (q.v.; according to Šajī'i, III, p. 110, denied by Hedayat) and Mirzā Ḥasan Khan Mostawfi-al-Mamālek (Hedayat, 1950, p. 400; Šajī'i, pp. 110-11, 31; Curzon, in Šayk-al-Eslāmi, pp. 218-19; Sykes, 1969, II, p. 499).

Shortly thereafter, Hedayat volunteered to go to Azarbaijan, where a group of dissidents under Shaikh Moḥammad Kīābāni (q.v.), a former Majles deputy from Tabriz, had risen in armed rebellion against the central government. The



prime minister Moṣir-al-Dawla appointed Hedayat as governor-general of Azarbaijan with full authority to curb the rebellious movement. The rebels had already taken control of the city, had changed the name of the province to Āzādīstān and issued stamps in the new name of the province, and demanded the formal recognition of the new name by the central government in Tehran.

*Governor-general of Azarbaijan.* Hedayat reached the vicinity of Tabriz in mid-August 1921, accompanied only by a few personal attendants. In order to avoid bloodshed, he tried to arrange for a private meeting with Kīābāni, but the latter refused. On 12 September 1920, the Cossacks attacked Kīābāni's strongholds and routed the defenders; the next day Kīābāni himself was killed or, according to Hedayat, committed suicide in his hiding place, which a child, or a street beggar, pointed out to the Cossacks (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 406-10, 435; idem, 1984, pp. 349-54; Raḥmat Khan, pp. 369, 380-81, 533-34; Barzegar, pp. 70-73; *Šarḥ-e ḥāl waeqdāmāt*, pp. 37-38; Šayḳ-al-Eslāmi, II, pp. 89-116).

In his next appointment, Hedayat was faced with the rebellion of a gendarme detachment that, under Major Abu'l-Qāsem Lāhuti, arrested the officer sent from Tehran to assume their command and marched in full force on Tabriz toward the end of January 1922. Taking control of the city, they arrested Hedayat and declared martial law in the city. Moṣir-al-Dawla, the new prime minister, preferred a negotiated settlement, as suggested by Hedayat in a telegram he had sent to Tehran at the request of his captors. The rebellion soon lost strength as a number of disillusioned gendarmes, who had thought, or had been led to believe, that the march on Tabriz was to claim the payment of overdue wages, deserted. On 6 February 1922, the government forces under Brigadier Šaybāni reached the vicinity of Tabriz and the next day, linking with the Cossack detachment in the city, overwhelmed the rebels in a brief but bloody battle. Lāhuti escaped with a company of about 300 of his comrades; he sought refuge in the Soviet Union and eventually settled down in Tajikistan. Captured officers were court-martialed and sentenced to death, but the new governor, Moḥammad Moṣaddeq, did not allow the sentences to be carried out in Tabriz. He sent them with a recommendation for clemency to Tehran, where their sentences were reduced to prison terms; and some of them were eventually enlisted in the new army (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 425-39; idem, 1984, pp. 370-84; Arfa, pp. 128-32; Bahār, pp. 174-80; Moṣaddeq, pp. 143, 157; Mostawfī, III, pp. 371-74; Makki, pp. 14-34; Cronin, pp. 145-51; Rypka, *Hist. Iran. Lit.*, pp. 376, 535-36, 564-66; Alamuti, pp. 210-14; Ṭolu'ī, pp. 98-101).

Hedayat left Tabriz and arrived in Tehran in early March 1922. A week later



he occupied his Majles seat as a Tehran deputy despite sharp criticism for his role in the violent suppression of the *Ḳiābāni* movement (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 428-35; idem, 1984, pp. 386-87). He twice held the post of the minister of public welfare and commerce, in 1923 and 1926, in the cabinets of his friend Mostawfi-al-Mamālek, and also served as the chief justice in the High Court of Cassation (*Divān-e ʿāli-e tamiz*). In the meantime the Qajar dynasty was deposed in favor of Sardār Sepah, who ascended the throne on 16 December 1925 as Reza Shah Pahlavi. On 2 June 1927 Mostawfi-al-Mamālek resigned; and four days later Hedayat, chosen by the new king as prime minister, presented his cabinet to the Majles (Hedayat, 1950, pp. 449-50, 469-70, 475; idem, 1984, pp. 388-89; Šajīʿi, pp. 143-44, 159-62; Ṭoluʿi, pp. 185 ff.).

#### PRIME MINISTER

Reza Shah, who did not tolerate the slightest disobedience from anybody and ruled with an iron hand, was determined to modernize the country and create a firmly controlled, centralized government. Hedayat, a popular elderly statesman with good reputation, was chosen (apparently on the suggestion of Teymurtāš) to be a ceremonial figurehead with no executive authority of any significance, as Hedayat himself admitted (Hedayat, 1997, pp. 376, 378, 386; Millspaugh, p. 26, n. 7, describes him as “spineless and benumbed”). Every policy suggestion had to be presented to and approved by Reza Shah before it could be brought to the cabinet to be promulgated. The true leader of the cabinet was the indefatigable, talented minister of court, ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Teymurtāš, who functioned as the instrument of the monarch in all non-military matters. At times Hedayat might act, however, to temper the extreme measures contemplated by Teymurtāš, such as the case of the protest of the clergy in Qom against the compulsory military service, when Teymurtāš threatened to use artillery fire against the city (Hedayat, 1997, pp. 373-74, 376-78, 397, 401, 402, 411; Dawlatābādi, IV, pp. 390-93; Makki, IV, pp. 425 ff.; ʿĀqeli, 2001, pp. 518-29).

Hedayat served as prime minister, and formed four cabinets, in the period 1927 to 1933, in which the country experienced administrative, educational, financial, and social reforms that transformed the face of the country in many ways. The most significant episode during Hedayat’s tenure was the unilateral cancellation of the D’Arcy oil concession (q.v.) by the Persian government in November 1932 by the direct order of Reza Shah, and the signing of the new agreement in September of the same year (see *ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY*). It is noteworthy that in the various accounts of the lengthy



international legal dispute that ensued (e.g., Ellwell-Sutton, Fāteh, Ferrier), Hedayat's name is hardly mentioned. On 21 Šahrivar 1312/12 September 1933, Hedayat was summoned by Reza Shah to the court and ordered to resign with his entire cabinet (Hedayat, 1997, pp. 401-3, 412-13; Taqizādeh, pp. 245, 247).

## WORKS

Hedayat, despite his heavy political responsibilities during a difficult transitional period of Persian history, was a productive scholar and musicologist. He had developed a keen interest in music since his early childhood (for his works on music, see ii. below). His political memoir, *Ḳāṭerāt o ḳaṭarāt* (1st ed., 1950), is a detailed record of personal experiences and observations of an astute eyewitness of the most turbulent period in the history of modern Persia, when its geographical integrity and even its very independence was at stake. Unfortunately, a critical edition is still wanting. Hedayat also wrote a memoir of his trip around the world, *Safar-nāma-ye tašarrof be Makka ...* (1st ed. 1951), and a history of Persia, *Gozāreš-nāma-ye Irān*, in four volumes (1st ed. 1938-54), of which two editions of the last section, dealing with the Constitutional Revolution and the last years of the Qajar dynasty (by M. Ṭolu'i, and M.-'A. Šawti), have been published. These books are written in an easy, fluent Persian, free of traditional embellishments and close to the spoken language, even when complex issues are discussed. Minor works include *Afkar-e 'omam* (on religion; 1st ed., 1946); *Toḥfa-ye moḳberi yā kār-e bikāri*, a small collection of his poems; *Toḥfat al-āfāq*, a travelogue on the history and geography of Europe; *Toḥfat al-aflāk*, on cosmography with illustrations and maps; *Bostān-e adab*, an anthology of poems; *Qawā'ed al-tarjomān*, used as a text for teaching French (Maḥbubi Ardakāni, I, p. 393); *Dastur-e soḳan*, on the grammar of Persian language; and *Toḥfat al-arib*, on prosody. He also wrote a textbook for children, which was used at elementary schools across the country (Hedayat, 1997, p. 4; Ḥabib Yaḡmā'i, pp. 227-28; Waziri's intro. to Hedayat, 1984, p. 9). Judging by the poems he included in his memoirs, Hedayat was a poet of some merit, but apparently his other responsibilities did not leave him enough time to develop his poetical talent. His best-known poem is the one with the refrain "*Bāz šod didagān-e man az ḳ'āb ...*" that was printed in the elementary textbooks.

## PERSONAL TRAITS

Hedayat was an intellectual and man of letters. He was described by Taqizādeh (pp. 331, 343) as the most learned Persian in German language and



literature and by a German diplomat as a man more fluent in that language than a well-educated (*adib*) native speaker (apud Kaḥḥālzāda, p. 263). According to Aḥmad-‘Ali Sepehr, he overlooked the anti-British activities in Fārs when he was serving there as governor-general, and, as the minister of interior in a cabinet with a pro-German attitude, he would telegraph messages to Fārs encouraging support for the activities of Wilhelm Wassmuss, the German spy among the tribes (Sepehr, pp. 76, 79). After his recall from Fārs, he was approached by Sommer, a member of the German Legation in Tehran, to use his popularity and influence to set up a secret pro-German society that would work for the downfall of Woṭuq-al-Dawla’s cabinet and his replacement by a new government headed by Hedayat himself. Hedayat considered the proposal and met with Sommer at least twice, first in his own house and the next time at the legation. There is no indication in sources consulted whether such a society was formed, although the existence of a similar pro-German group with connections to Hedayat is on record (Kaḥḥālzāda, pp. 96-97, 418-19; Dawlatābādi, IV, p. 128; Nāṭeq, pp. 100-101).

Hedayat was a traditional Muslim, who did not like some aspects of the modernization campaign that was pushed mercilessly forward by Reza Shah. After the latter’s fall, he had the occasion to criticize it for not having been adequately studied and carefully planned. According to him, Western modes of life were blindly adopted and forcefully imposed on the public without regard for, and often at the expense of, traditional and religious values of the land. He did not like the campaign for coining new Persian terms to replace their Arabic counterparts, which he thought was unnecessary and detrimental to the language. His sharpest criticism was directed at the campaign for the universal removal of the veil (enforced in January 1936; see ČĀDOR), which, he believed, would eventually lead to the reckless disregard for family life and the spread of prostitution (*takrib-e zendagi-e kāna-vāda wa tarwīj-e faḥšā*). He commented that, in the rush to Westernize the country, attention was focused only on the façade, while the real essence of Western civilization was ignored (Hedayat, 1997, pp. 411, 405-8, 412-13, 472-73, 476, 481, 492-93).

Hedayat remained a believer in constitutional government during most of his political life, although he evidently lacked the fervor of his more revolutionary colleagues such as Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizādeh. The rise of Reza Shah, whose autocratic rule eliminated any sign of a constitutional government and turned the Majles into the monarch’s rubber stamp, seem to have made him develop serious doubts about the validity of instituting such a government in Persia at



least in his own time, since, according to him, neither the public nor the Majles deputies had any clear idea of a constitutional government. He complained that governments changed in rapid succession on the basis of the deals made in private rather than on merits, and membership in the Majles had turned into a stepping stone for higher positions and self-enrichment, while the interests of the people were ignored. In expressing his disillusion, Hedayat went so far as to call democracy the Devil's inspiration (*elqā-ye Šayṭān*; Hedayat, 1986, pp. 330, 479-81, 487-91, 496-98; Ġani, IX, p. 671).

Hedayat's premiership (the longest of any under Reza Shah), his assumed role in the death of Kīābāni, and the controversial dismissal of Arthur Millspaugh, whose strictness in dispensing public funds had earned for him the nickname "Dr. Pul Nist" (Dr. No Money), all made him an easy target for sharp attacks as an accomplice in the "crimes" of the state in that period (e.g., see the so-called indictment drawn up by Eskandari, pp. 30 ff.). Qāsem Ġani, with obvious exaggeration, has described Hedayat as "one of the pure souls and gems and sources of honor for the human race" (*az arwāḥ-e mojarrada wa jawāher-e nofus wa māya-ye eftekār-e naw'ebašar*; Ġani, III, p. 56); but Ebrāhim Saṛfā'i, while admitting his reputation for honesty and lack of ambition (*dorost-kāri wa vārastagi*), accuses him of abuse of power for accumulation of wealth (Šafā'i, II, p. 467). Mehdi Bāmdad characterizes him as sagacious, honest, efficient, stubborn, energetic, well-informed, and ambitious, yet totally subservient to his superiors (Bāmdād, IV, p. 187). Although a man of strong religious convictions, Hedayat seems not to have harbored any prejudice against people of other faiths (e.g., Nāṭeq, p. 233).

Hedayat retired without pension after thirty-nine years of service in the government, because his positions as governor-general and cabinet member did not qualify him. For a time he lived in a distressed financial situation, but he eventually pleaded with his former colleagues and friends, 'Ali-Akbar Dāvar and Moḥammad-'Ali Foruḡi, who obtained the Majles approval for setting up a pension for him (Hedayat, 1950, p. 402). He built a hospital (still in operation as Bimārestān-e Hedāyat), a school, and a mosque in the village of Darrus, where he had his residence and owned a large acreage of land (Šafā'i, II, p. 468).



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