



## IRAN II. IRANIAN HISTORY (2)

### ISLAMIC PERIOD (PAGE 5)

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#### IRAN ii(2), continued

##### THE QAJAR DYNASTY (1779-1924)

The Qajar were a Turkmen tribe who first settled during the Mongol period in the vicinity of Armenia and were among the seven Qezelbāš tribes that supported the Safavids. Shah Abbās I resettled them in different parts of Persia for defensive purposes. The branch that was settled in Astarābād province gained importance and began to play an increasingly important part in the time of Nader Shah and Karim Khan and the struggles that followed their demise. Aqa Moḥammad Khan (r. 1779-97), who had been castrated in childhood by the Afsharid ‘Ādel Shah, was brave and decisive, but merciless and miserly, and at times, like Nader Shah and Timur, cruel to the extreme. He soon brought the entire country under his control and had also some successes in the Caucasus, where in a Georgian campaign he ordered a massacre in Tbilisi. He was murdered on 19 June 1797 by some of his servants whom he had threatened with death in a moment of wrath. His nephew Bābā Khan succeeded him, taking the crown name of Fath-‘Ali Shah (q.v.) in August 1797.

The chief events of Fath-‘Ali Shah’s reign (1797-1834), after overcoming his internal rivals, were the disastrous wars with Russia, the increasing contacts with Western powers, the establishment of relations with the British



government, the inconclusive French attempts under Napoleon at securing the support of the shah against the British, the reform of the Persian army and improvement of its weaponry with assistance first from the British and later also from the French, the introduction of printing, the dispatch of students to Europe to study military and other sciences through the efforts mainly of his heir apparent 'Abbās Mirzā (q.v.), the deepening influence of the Shi'ite clergy, increasing interference of Britain and Russia in Persian affairs, and the recognition, by some Persians, that, compared to the European states, the country was lagging behind and required a thorough overhaul of its institutions and a critical re-examination of its cultural attitudes.

In 1814, following the diplomatic maneuvers of Sir Gore Ouseley (q.v. at *iranica.com*), the British envoy to Persia, a treaty was signed with Britain, according to which Persia was to cancel all commitments to countries that were at war with Britain, prevent the movement of such countries' armies on Persian soil, and declare war on Afghanistan should that country attack India. For its part, Britain agreed to assist Persia to achieve peace if a conflict should develop between Persia and a European power, and to send troops to assist Persia if the conflict should continue, a commitment that Great Britain did not honor in practice.

The war with Russia was motivated by contending Perso-Russian claims over Caucasian territories. From the time of Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725), Russia had begun a policy of expansion with the ultimate goal of reaching the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. It started by extending its protection to Georgia and also incited insurgence against Persia in some other regions of the Caucasus. The Persians attempted to reestablish their rule, and a series of wars ensued that lasted about nine years (1804-13). The Persian forces were eventually defeated, and 'Abbās Mirzā, who was conducting the war on the Persian side, had to submit to the humiliating conditions of the Golestān Treaty (q.v.) that ceded to Russia Georgia, Dāğestān, eastern Armenia, Širvān, Bāku, Darband, Qara-bāğ, Šaki, Ganja, and upper Tāleš. The defeat was caused partly by the superior Russian firepower and the poor pay and maintenance of Persian soldiers. The Persian court's scant knowledge of developments in Europe in the Napoleonic era (1804-15) prevented the Persians from exploiting the shifting alliances and the hostilities among the European powers for its own ends.

The second phase of the Perso-Russian wars (1826-28) resulted in an even more humiliating treaty, that of Torkamančāy (22 February 1828). According



to this treaty Persia also lost Naḵjavān, Eravān, and Ordubād. Persia was to pay Russia an indemnity equal to 10,000,000 gold tomans (art. VI; Eqbāl, p. 797) and was forbidden to have any fleet in the Caspian Sea; Persia also agreed to grant judicial immunity against prosecution to Russian residents in Persia, a capitulation which impinged on Persian sovereignty and became a model for other European powers demanding the same privilege. Furthermore, Russia was allowed to have a consul or a commercial agent in any Persian city it chose; the Russian subjects were allowed to purchase and own property and, if they engaged in trade, to own also storage space and shops; and no more than 5 percent tariff would be charged on imported Russian goods. As a concession, the Russians recognized the position of ‘Abbās Mirzā as heir to the Persian throne, which in fact implied interference in Persian internal affairs. In the meantime, disturbances in eastern Persia and problems with the governor of Afghanistan continued, while the government needed to dispatch contingents of the Persian army to several provinces, such as Yazd and Kermān, to reestablish order.

Faṭḥ-‘Ali Shah was famous for his long black beard, slender waist, and bejeweled garments and the paraphernalia seen in his many portraits. He was equally renowned for his harem, with fifty-seven wives, sixty sons, and forty-eight daughters (‘Azod-al-Dawla, pp. 301-35). The most distinguished of the sons were the capable and valiant ‘Abbās Mirzā and Dawlatšāh (qq.v.).

Faṭḥ-‘Ali Shah was succeeded by Moḥammad Shah (r. 1834-48), his grandson, a weak and sickly monarch who had his capable and reform-minded vizier, Qā’emmaqām II (Abu’l-Qāsem), murdered and gave the position to his former tutor Hāji Mirzā Āqāsi, a somewhat narrow-minded cleric with mystical tendencies. His reign was yet another chapter in Persia’s losing ground before the imperial powers of the West. The chief events of his reign were his siege of Herat and his failure to capture it as the result of British machinations; the revolt of Āqā Khan of Maḥallāt (q.v.), the Ismā‘ili leader, who was defeated twice, eventually taking refuge in British India (1841); and the appearance of the Bābi heterodox religious movement (1844; see [BĀBISM](#)). He died in 1848 and was succeeded by his 16-year old son Naser-al-Din (Nāṣer-al-Din, r. 1848-96).

The first three years of Naser-al-Din Shah’s reign saw a number of basic reforms carried out by his capable, reformist, and hard-driving chief minister Mirzā Taqi Khan of Farāhān, better known in history as Amir Kabir (q.v.). He attempted to organize the military and equip it with modern weapons; he



tried to balance the budget and replenish the exhausted treasury by cutting down on unnecessary expenditures such as pensions and payments to a large number of clerics, courtiers, and sycophants who surrounded the court; he sent students abroad to study Western techniques and sciences; he engaged foreign advisors and founded the first polytechnic school (Dār-al-Fonun, q.v.) in the capital, among other reforms. As a result he incurred the animosity of many courtiers as well as the shah's mother, who pressured the young Shah to remove him. He was dismissed and later murdered by the order of the shah, an indelible stain on his reputation.

Naser-al-Din Shah reigned for a little under fifty years. During his reign contacts with the West intensified, the intervention of the Russian and British governments in Persian affairs continued; and, even though under the premiership of Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Sepahsālār (1871-73) some of the reforms of Amir Kabir were pursued, the country suffered from backwardness, poor economy, the corruption of the ruling class, and the exploitation of the peasantry by greedy governors and tax-collectors. In the meantime, the idea of law and order and a keen awareness of the abuses of power were spreading, particularly among the educated classes, while the Persian press abroad maintained its criticism of the government and attacked its despotic practices. Amin al-Solṭān (q.v.), the powerful chief minister from 1883 to the end of Naser-al-Din Shah's reign, however, did not take such criticisms seriously and attempted to maintain the status quo as far as he could.

Among the major events of Naser-al-Din Shah's reign were the execution of the Bāb (q.v.) by the order of Amir Kabir and, later, the ordering of a massacre of the Bābis when they made an unsuccessful attempt on the shah's life; the hiring of an Austrian and later a Russian national to organize the Persian postal service; and introduction of telegraph lines in 1857. Concessions for building railways in Persia were granted to a British national together with a number of other concessions, which were cancelled by the Persian government as a result of popular pressure; the resulting dispute led to the granting of a new concession for establishing the British Imperial Bank (q.v.) in Tehran and its exclusive right to print and circulate paper bills. In 1872 the concession for the import, export, purchase, and sale of tobacco was given to a British company. It met with the opposition of the populace and the ulema. Under pressure, the shah canceled the concession, and the country suffered the financial consequences of the cancellation. This movement is often regarded as a prelude to the Constitutional Revolution as well as the first



instance in the modern period when the ulema managed to successfully rally the urban populace against the government (Lambton, pp. 223-76). Encouraged by his chief minister, Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Sepahsālār, the shah made a trip to Europe followed by two further trips, accompanied by a number of his courtiers. They resulted in some acquaintance with Western manners and methods, and some purchases, including a printing press. The basic problems of the country, however, remained unresolved, and the opposition to the status quo increased. On 1 May 1896 the shah was assassinated by Mirzā Reżā of Kermān, who had been inspired by the ideas of such reformists as Jamāl-al-Din Afġāni (q.v.) and Shaikh Hādi Najmābādi and had suffered governmental abuses.

Naser-al-Din Shah was a well-meaning king as long as his purse and pleasure were not involved. He attempted some reforms with limited success, including at one point establishment of a court of justice (*‘edālat-kāna*), and supported the sending of the graduates of Dār-al-Fonun to study abroad. His harem was only slightly smaller than that of his great grandfather, Faḥ-‘Ali Shah. He was keen on hunting and on French wine. He learned some French and enjoyed having historical and literary works read to him. His minister of publications Moḥammad Ḥasan Khan E‘temād-al-Salṭana (1843-96, q.v.), who was close to court life and in charge of reading to the shah, has left a detailed and telling diary for the years 1875 and 1880-96 (his journal is published as *Ruznāma-ye kāṭerāt-e E‘temād-al-Salṭana*, Tehran, 2nd ed. 1971).

The next Qajar king, Mozaffar-al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1907) was a weak, pleasure-loving, simple-minded, and considerate king. It was during his reign that liberal and clerical elements joined forces to oppose the despotic and harsh prime minister ‘Ayn al-Dawla (q.v.) and demanded a constitutional charter. ‘Ayn al-Dawla was dismissed, and his successor, the liberal Naṣr-Allāh Khan Mošir al-Dawla, managed to secure the signature of the sickly shah on the Constitutional Charter, which included the Constitutional Law (*qānun-e asāsi*, lit. basic or foundational law), a few days before the latter’s passing.

*The Constitutional movement.* A movement to liberalize the government practices and to place its operations on the basis of law rather than the whims of the shah and his agents gradually grew as a result of the encounter with the West and the increasing awareness of the backwardness of the country. Some half measures were taken from time to time from Naser-al-Din Shah’s time, but often poorly executed, and these did not satisfy the reformers. Writers such as Faḥ-‘Ali Ākundzāda (q.v.; 1812-78) Jamāl-al-Din Afġāni (q.v.; 1838-97),



Āqā Khan Kermāni (q.v.; 1854-96), and Mirzā Malkam Khan (1833-1908) kept fueling the fervor for a “just” government. A number of periodicals published abroad, but filtered into Persia, such as *Aktar* (q.v.) in Istanbul, *Qānun* in London, and *Ḥabl al-matin* (q.v.) in Calcutta, served as sources of encouragement for changing the arbitrary rule of the Qajar government. The ulema, interested in a more genuine application of Islamic principles and greater power for themselves, and also responding to popular appeal against governmental abuses, joined forces with the liberals, all leading, eventually, to the issuance of the Constitutional Charter by Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah. The first Parliament (Majles) elected by quotas from different estates and layers of society, including Qajar princes, met on 7 October 1906 and provided a legitimate platform for the reformists to air their views and grievances. Soon two factions took shape among the deputies: one, the Socialist-Populist party (*Ejetmā'iyun-Āmmiyun*), a radical group, among whose leaders the fiery Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizādeh, the deputy from Tabriz, distinguished himself; and the other the Moderate Party (*E'tedāliyun*), which represented some of the traditional interests and privileges and opposed radical changes in the government system and social or political conditions.

A major achievement of the first Majles was to formulate the Supplement (*Motammem-e Qānun-e asāsi*) to the Constitutional Charter (see [CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION iii](#)). Its 107 articles improved and defined the Constitutional Law by including a bill of rights; the division of the government power into legislative, executive, and judiciary; defining the powers of provincial and municipal councils, and the rights of the elected deputies to the Majles, the shah's rights, the ministerial responsibilities, organization of the judiciary and the independence of the judges, all more or less adopted from the Belgian Constitution. Thus the country was converted from an autocratic and arbitrary monarchy to a bicameral, constitutional one, even though the formation of the Senate was postponed and not instituted until the reign of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah Pahlavi.

Moẓaffar al-Din Shah's son and successor Moḥammad-'Ali Shah (1907-09) first feigned sympathy with the constitutionalists, signed the Constitution, and swore allegiance to it by the Qur'ān. However, being of an autocratic bent, he soon assumed an anti-constitutionalist posture and finally in 1908 had the Parliament shelled by Russian Cossacks in the service of the government. He also ordered a number of deputies arrested and executed, while imprisoning others. Outraged by the shah's fickleness, an alliance of the ulema and the



Constitutionalists took asylum in protest in a holy shrine near the capital (see [BAST](#)). Their supporters in several provinces, more particularly in Azarbaijan, but also in Gilān and Isfahan, took matters into their own hands and prepared to invade Tehran from north and south. Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah took refuge in the Russian embassy and, following an agreement worked out with the help of the British and Russian embassies, resigned his kingship and left for Russia. His later attempt to regain his throne (July 1911) failed, and he returned to Europe, where he died in San Remo, Italy, in April 1924.

His son and successor, Aḥmad Shah (q.v.; 1909-25) ascended the throne at the age of 12. The country was experiencing a rather chaotic mixture of the newly won freedoms and the traditional system of government, with shaky cabinets following one another and none being able to govern effectively. World War I occasioned the incursion of Russian, British, and Ottoman troops into Persia, adding to the disorder and economic problems of the country. The shah was inexperienced, lacked a strong personality, and was too fond of spending time in Europe. Political factions born of unwonted freedom were engaging in disruptive conflicts in the Parliament and in the press; endemic corruption was rampant. The interventions of British and Russian agents in Persian affairs were reaching new heights. In 1907 the two great powers had come to an agreement to divide the country into zones of influence, with the Russians receiving a free hand in the north and the Caspian provinces while the British were to enjoy the same privileges in the south, that is, Fārs province, Khuzestan, the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, with central Persia left to the Persians. In 1915 a new agreement between the two powers omitted even the central neutral zone. In 1917, however, Russia underwent a Bolshevik revolution and soon renounced its tsarist imperial policies and its privileges in Iran. The British, on the other hand, further consolidated their grip over the Middle East and India. In 1919, by making gifts of money to the prime minister and several other ministers, the British made an agreement with the Persian government that practically placed Persia under the tutelage of Great Britain. It gave rise to loud, nationalistic protests in the country and was also rejected by the League of Nations. The country was now thoroughly disappointed with the results of the hard won freedom, the incompetence of the successive cabinets, the inefficacy of the Shahs, and the corruption of the bureaucracy. The desire for a strong and stable government became a desideratum of the people.

*The Coup of 1921.* On 21 February 1921, following an understanding among a



few bold nationalists—Sayyed Żiā' al-Din Ṭabāṭabā'i (1888-1969), Reza (Reżā) Khan Mir-panj, a colonel in the Cossack brigade, Major Mas'ud Khan of the same brigade, and Kāżem Sayyāḥ, another Cossack officer—a division of the Cossack brigade marched on Tehran from Qazvin and occupied the capital without much difficulty. The leader of the coup, Sayyed Żiā' (Żiā'-al-Din), a journalist with radical and populist ideas, persuaded Aḥmad Shah to appoint him as prime minister. In a sweeping move he ordered a large number of men of influence and wealth arrested and jailed. His revolutionary government lasted, however, only three months and ended when Reza Khan, commander of the military and the real power in the cabinet, banished Sayyed Żiā' on account of differing views between them and embarked on reorganizing the Persian army and pacifying the country. In 1923 he was made prime minister and continued to consolidate his authority and advance his reforms. The Fourth Majles was dominated by Sayyed Ḥasan Modarres, an ambitious and self-centered cleric, and through the endless bickering and factionalism of the deputies people's disenchantment with the parliament was deepened. In 1924 Reza Khan, disgusted with the Majles and convinced of the necessity of establishing his authority unhindered by a multi-voiced and bothersome Majles, and with an eye on the developments in Mustafa Kemal's Turkey, advocated a republican regime, which was opposed by the clergy. In the following year, however, the conditions were ripe for his assuming royal power. After a series of smart maneuvers on his part, the Majles, considering Reza Khan's popularity and power, declared on 31 October 1925 the end of the Qajar monarchy and bestowed the governmental authority on Reza Khan. In December of the same year the Constituent Assembly elected him Shah.

#### REZA SHAH PAHLAVI (1925-41)

Reza Khan was a brave and intelligent leader with a forceful personality, authoritarian temperament, and a keen insight into the country's condition and the aspirations of its people. He embraced most of the ideals of the Constitutional Movement that fitted well into his strong sense of nationalism and his profound desire to improve the conditions of the country. He envisioned the future of Persia as a modern state, with a modern economy and industry, capable of eventually being ranked alongside European societies. Accordingly he set out to reform with great determination the military, administrative, educational, and juridical systems of the country and its social conditions.

*Military reform.* Reza Shah was the first monarch since Achaemenid times to



organize a standing army. He abolished all independent military units including the Cossack Brigade, from the ranks of which he had risen, and the South Persia Rifles (instituted by the British to counter German designs during the World War I). On 6 June 1925 the Majles passed the law of compulsory military conscription. It provided for two years of military service at the age of 21. He organized military schools to train officers and non-commissioned military personnel. With the help of the army that was totally loyal to him he succeeded in pacifying the unruly, rebellious tribes, enforcing a program of their settlement, and providing for the education of their children. His crowning achievement in this respect was his elimination in 1924 of Shaikh Ḳaz'al, the virtual sovereign of Khuzestan, in spite of the opposition of the British, who protected him as a safeguard for their oil interests in the region. He also started a modest navy and air force and sent students abroad to study military sciences and aviation.

*Administrative reforms.* Reza Shah also carried out a vast administrative reform of the state. The Qajar system of administration was vitiated by the fact that it was an oligarchy of the relatives of the shah and the court favorites who looked upon their office as a means of enriching themselves by various forms of exaction, with little care for the welfare of the people. Several previous attempts at reorganization of the administration failed on account of vested interests and lack of determination. On 12 December 1922, the Majles enacted the first law regulating civil service in Persia based on nationality, education, and character, following European models. It established entrance examinations, scales of promotion, and penalties for corrupt practices. According to laws passed in 1937 and 1938 the division of the country into *ayālāt* and *valāyāt*, i.e., major and minor provinces, was abolished, and instead ten geographically and economically viable *ostāns* were constituted, each with further divisions into *šahrestāns*, and *baḳšes*.

*Educational reforms.* A number of measures had been taken during the later Qajar period to introduce modern schools and training facilities, among them a school of medicine, a faculty of political science, and a teachers training college. In 1910 a Ministry of Education was created, charged with looking after schools and their sanitary conditions as well as sending students abroad to learn European technology, but the educational system remained as a whole under the control of the Shi'ite clergy attached to traditional curricula. Reza Shah realized the need for drastic reforms of the school system and educational institutions. In 1921 the High Council of Education (*šurā-ye 'ālī-e*



*ma'āref*) was created to carry out the necessary reforms, based mainly on the French system. In 1934 the Teachers Training Act called for the creation of teacher training schools on a large scale. The University of Tehran consisting of the Faculties of Medicine, Engineering, Sciences, Law, Humanities, and Theology was established, and its opening was celebrated in February 1935. Foreign scholars, mostly from France, were hired to teach and also to help organize the faculties. The Ministry of Education was charged to send abroad each year 100 students with state support, selected by competitive exams. In 1936 the Ministry opened 1,500 evening schools for adults to spread literacy. By the end of 1940 there were 157,194 adult students studying in 2,133 classes (Banani, *The Modernization of Iran*, p. 105). Textbooks for both elementary schools and adult students were provided. Technical schools were supported or encouraged by the state. An academy of music was opened, which became an effective means for acquaintance with Western music. Scouting, which had been introduced in 1925, was made compulsory in 1939 for all schoolboys from fifth to ninth grade and linked to the international organization.

The educational reforms, the introduction of new curricula, particularly new sciences, all adopted from the West, the appointment of foreign scholars or young scholars who had returned from abroad equipped with the kind of knowledge that had no precedence in traditional teaching—these were the most potent means of modernization in Iran and the introduction of Western science and technology, at least at the theoretical level, as well as Western attitudes and patterns of behavior. Educational reforms were the most effective means that reduced and gradually almost ended the clerical grip on the educational system and promoted secularism.

*Juridical reforms.* Another area of social life that was controlled by the Shi'ite religious establishment was the judiciary based on *šari'a* or Islamic Law, even though the royal court and provincial governors often arrogated to themselves the right to render judgement in cases where the government was directly involved, and to mete out punishment to offenders. Religious courts dealt with disputes arising from personal law such as marriage and divorce, inheritance, custody of children, guardianship of minors and orphans. Reza Shah and his reformist advisors decided early on to deal with the legal system, all the more so as he was intensely against the system of capitulation which placed foreign nationals outside the jurisdiction of Persian courts, and its cancellation required a proper and responsible juridical system that could be presented to foreign powers as reliable. The old Ministry of Justice was reshuffled in 1927



and equipped with new personnel, many of whom had had the benefit of European education. The energetic and dedicated 'Ali-Akbar Dāvar (q.v.), who was put in charge of the juridical reform, presented to the Majles a number of successive bills embodying new civil and penal codes modeled mostly on the French system, but also systematizing and harmonizing the *šari'a* in matters of personal law. The approval of these codes, the establishment of different courts, from County Courts (*dādgāh-e šahrestān*) to the Supreme Court of Appeal (*divān-e tamiz*), and the requirement of a degree from the Faculty of Law for judgeship, all helped to secularize the legal system and take it out of the hands of the clergy.

*Public health and sanitation.* Despite some earlier measures, the conditions of public health and sanitation were notoriously poor, with high infant mortality due to diseases. Reza Shah's administration took a number of steps to improve public health. Following a severe pandemic of influenza (q.v.) in 1918-19 that resulted in enormous loss of life, measures were taken in 1921 to establish the Pasteur Institute (see [INSTITUT PASTEUR](#)) in Tehran to deal with the need for bacteriology and vaccination. In 1927 and 1930 standards for the licensing of physicians were introduced. In 1941 the Majles approved a law for the combating and prevention of infectious diseases, and required compulsory vaccination against smallpox, and periodic inspection and certification of brothels. Clinics were established for the free treatment of students. A number of hospitals were built and equipped in both Tehran and the provinces. Full advantage was taken of European experts to carry out these measures, including the presidency of the Faculty of Medicine, which was given first to a French physician. One basic problem remained, however, and that was the necessary provisions for water supply and sewage disposal. Steps had been taken to install a water system in Tehran when Reza Shah fell.

*Economic development.* A series of measures were taken to industrialize the country and improve its economy and therefore its status. Installation of factories was encouraged by tax relief and granting of monopolies. Sugar, soap, cement, textile, and food processing factories grew rapidly. Heavy industries, however, were not seriously attempted. Transportation and building of roads were given serious consideration. The crowning achievement in this respect was the building of the trans-Iranian railroad, which connected Khuzestan in the southwest to Gorgān in the northeast, a remarkable feat of determination and efficiency when we consider that it was all done with domestic capital obtained from taxing sugar and tea imports



between 1925 and 1938. Postal communication was reformed and regularized in 1923. Power plants for lighting the streets and houses were initiated. Urban development and the two-year military service and its educational effects on young men tended to attract peasants to the cities. The tax system was revised with moderate success without, however, overcoming the endemic corrupt practice of graft and bribery. In 1928 the National Bank (*Bānk-e Melli*) was charged to perform duties incumbent on a national bank, such as the printing of paper bills and control of foreign exchange.

Agriculture also received some attention, and in 1937 the Land Development Act sought agricultural and land reform, but, as its execution was left to the landlords, not much came of it. Nonetheless, a number of positive steps were taken by the state, such as inauguration of the College of Agriculture in 1929 and an institute for production of serums and inoculation of livestock and an institute for veterinarian research in 1939, breed improvements, promotion of export crops, pest control, care of the forests, and establishment of an agricultural bank to assist worthy projects.

The need for foreign advisors and directors was felt for most reforms. They were hired mostly from countries like Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, and the United States that had hitherto no history of imperial policies in Persia.

In 1932, Reza Shah, well aware of the comparatively small revenue that Persia drew from the oil concession to the British Petroleum Company, tried to cancel the concession or receive a much larger share in the company's oil revenue. His cabinet held fast to this stand in protracted negotiations with the British, but in the end, apparently threatened by the British with military intervention, Reza Shah most reluctantly relented and, unlike Moḥammad Moṣaddeq 20 years later, who could not bring himself to enter into an agreement with the British no matter what the consequences might be, agreed to the latest British proposal with an increased share for Iran and an extension of the concession, to the despondent consternation of his cabinet.

*Reza Shah's character and achievements.* A tall, broad-shouldered man with handsome countenance and penetrating eyes, Reza Shah was a courageous, clever, and decisive man with an autocratic temperament, who rose from a low stratum of society to kingship. Motivated by a strong sense of nationalism and intent on achieving glory for the land that he came to rule, he accomplished by the dint of his forceful personality and his determination,



within a mere 16 years, a stunning record of reform and set the country on the road to modernization. He inherited a poor, backward, and disorderly country, where the greed and exactions of its feudal lords, the regressive hold of a powerful clergy, the corruption and factionalism of its politicians, the lethargy of its bureaucracy, and its lack of a unifying ideology or direction had robbed it of many opportunities for effective reform. The continuous interference of Russia and Britain in its affairs and their consular rights, exemplified in the 1907, 1915, and 1919 Agreements, were a constant source of national humiliation and impotent protest. It is difficult to find in the long Persian history another monarch, with the possible exception of Cyrus, Darius I, and the Sasanid Ardašir I, who achieved so much in so little time.

Reza Shah was not afraid to gather around him better educated men than himself but of proven patriotism and ability, like Mehdi-qoli Hedāyat (q.v.), Taqizādeh, Foruḡi (q.v.), ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Teymurtāš, ‘Ali-Akbar Dāvar (q.v.), and Firuz, and to relegate important responsibilities to them, at least until the later years of his reign, when his autocratic arbitrariness stifled free criticism and fear of him replaced the earlier admiration for him. The king’s arbitrariness is shown, among other instances, by the jailing and killing of Teymurtāš, the powerful court minister, and Sardār As‘ad Baḡtiāri, a tribal leader and minister of war, and the suicide of Dāvar, the reformist minister of finance, after they incurred disfavor. (Teymurtāš and Dāvar were known as the main architects of the Pahlavi state.) Regretfully, there were also errors of judgement committed by the king. For instance, in 1934 he made a formal diplomatic request that the country should be referred to as “Iran” rather than “Persia,” the traditional name with its long cultural connotations. Soon after his coronation he began to purchase property in Māzandarān, the province of his birth, ostensibly to modernize its agriculture and make it prosper, but the price that his agents paid proved little short of confiscatory. He lived a simple life, but his accumulation of property in Māzandarān as well as his increasingly dictatorial behavior that cowed the people into sycophantic submission marred his otherwise most remarkable record of accomplishments, and subverted the results of the Constitutional movement, paving the way for a leftist outlook among the educated classes after his downfall.

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