



IRĀNŠAHR, ḤOSAYN KĀZEMZĀDA

IRĀNŠAHR, ḤOSAYN KĀZEMZĀDA (میرزا حسن کاظمزاده تبریزی), an ardent Iranian nationalist active during the First World War, prolific author on political, religious, and educational subjects, and the publisher of the journal *Irānšahr* (q.v.) in the 1920s (b. Tabriz, 11 Rabi' I 1301/10 January 1884; d. Degerheim, Switzerland, 27 Esfand 1941/18 March 1962; [Figure 1](#)). He was first known as Mirzā Ḥosayn and took the name Kāzemzāda when family names became mandatory in the early 1920s. It was after the publication of *Irānšahr* that he became popularly known as Kāzemzāda Irānšahr.

Life. Irānšahr was the son of Hāji Mirzā Kāzem, a well-known physician of Tabriz. He lost both his parents when he was still a child and was raised by his elder brother. He had his elementary education in two traditional schools (*maktab*) in nearby mosques, where a modern approach was used in teaching traditional subjects, and then in 1898 started his secondary education at Kamāl School, which had been recently established and was run on the model of schools in Europe. Here he learned French and, after a year, was given the task of teaching the remedial class. He was later appointed the school's accountant and librarian, while he was serving as the associate editor of the school's monthly newspaper *Kamāl* (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 3-5; idem, 1951, pp. 9-10).

He continued working there until 1902, when, following riots in the city



against schools teaching foreign languages, modernized schools in Tabriz, including Kamāl and Loqmāniya, were closed down by the order of Prince Moḥammad-‘Ali Mirzā. A few months later, using his personal library for the purpose, Ḥosayn opened a small bookstore called Kamāl in the bazaar of Tabriz, which became the meeting place for the city’s young liberal intellectuals (Irānšahr, 1950, p. 7).

In 1904, he published a teaching manual for instruction in Persian to Turkish-speaking children (*Zabānāmuz barā-ye yād dādan-e fārsi ba bačagān-e torki-zabān*). That same year in September, Ḥosayn went to the Caucasus, and in April 1905, he left for Istanbul in order to study medicine, but he found out that foreign students were no longer accepted at the university. To make a living, an old friend provided a menial job for him at the Persian Consulate, and a few months later he replaced his friend at the passport section when the latter resigned. He continued working at the consulate until 1911. The advent of the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) in Persia in the same period changed Irānšahr’s mind about medical studies and made him strongly interested in political and social issues. In cooperation with four of his young friends, he founded a secret society called Barādarān-e Irāni “Iranian Brothers,” which actively joined forces with Anjoman-e Sa‘ādat (q.v.), a society established by a group of progressive Persian businessmen in Istanbul in support of the Constitutional Movement (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 14-15). He entered the law school in 1909, after the ban on the admission of foreign students was removed, and finished the first two years before leaving for Belgium in 1911, where he was admitted at the University of Louvain and was able to finish the remainder of his law education in a year. A year later he went to Paris, where he used the opportunity to attend free lectures at Collège de France and Sorbonne University (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 15-16, 24-27; idem, 1951, pp. 92-96). Meanwhile, at the recommendation of Moḥammad Qazvini, Edward G. Browne invited him to go to Cambridge and work as his assistant and teach Persian at Cambridge University. He left for Cambridge in September 1913 and stayed there until early 1915, when, invited by Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda, he went to Berlin to join the National Committee for the Liberation of Iran (Komita-ye melli-e najāt-e Irān) and from there to Tehran to establish a connection between the Committee in Berlin and the Democrat Party (Ḥezb-e Demokrāt) in Tehran (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 28 ff.; idem, 1951, pp. 109 ff.; Taqizāda, pp. 184-85). His trip to Tehran coincided with the Russia ultimatum and the danger that the city might be occupied by Russian forces. Members of the Demokrāt and E’tedāl Parties were leaving the capital for Kermānšāh in



protest against the presence of the British and Russian forces in Persia and as a symbolic gesture of their support for Germany. Irānšahr joined them and, together with Sayyed Moḥamamd-‘Ali Jamālzāda and Ebrāhim Pur(-e) Dāwud, started publishing newspapers and arming the tribes of the area to oppose the occupying Russian and British forces. Discord between the provisional government of Neẓām-al-Salṭana Māfi and the Democrat Party, however, led to his arrest and imprisonment in Kermānšāh and Baghdad. He eventually returned to Berlin in November 1917 and worked with Taqizāda in publishing the journal *Kāva*, and in 1919 he opened up the Irānšahr bookstore in Berlin (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 35-39; idem, 1951, pp. 140-41).

After the discontinuation of *Kāva* in 1921, Irānšahr published four volumes of the magazine *Irānšahr* from 1922 to 1926 and replaced Taqizāda as the leader of the Persian intellectuals residing in Berlin. In the ten-year period of 1926-36, he published six books in the German language. In July 1936, Irānšahr left Nazi Germany and retired in a small village in Switzerland called Degersheim, where spent the rest of his life in contentment and modesty, guiding his followers (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 45-48).

In the mid-1920s, Irānšahr joined the school of Theosophy, which propagated the idea of divine gnosis through mystical intuition and revelation. In 1942, he set up his own school of spiritual cognition, called *Ecole Mystique Esotérique*, in which disciples received instructions for a period of three and a half years. In the same year he also started publishing the monthly paper *Harmonisierung des Lebens*. His followers, referred to as *chercheur de Lumière*, gathered once a week to review and discuss the instructions they had received, which were based on the idea of the unification of religion, science, and art. By 1951, twenty-nine such classes, called *Cercle de Lumière*, had been established across Switzerland (Irānšahr, 1950, pp. 47-48).

Political and nationalistic ideas. Irānšahr often criticized Western civilization in his numerous works, but without rejecting it, particularly in the articles published in the journal *Irānšahr*. He used in his analysis his solid understanding of the current political situation in Europe and the various ideologies (Communism, National Socialism, and Fascism) that dominated it, thereby warning his countrymen about emulating the West unconditionally. He strove to understand why Persia had been lagging behind in the effort to develop itself into a modern society with all its concomitant institutions and characteristics, and he eventually ascribed this sluggishness to some historical events and a decline in the national spirit and character. He, however,



believed, that the “Spirit of being Iranian” (*ruḥ-e irāniyat*) was still full of life and the nation had not yet lost its hereditary talent, sagacity, and Aryan character, and at the same time he suggested that salvation was contingent only on the awakening of this Iranian spirit. The nationalistic spirit had to be revitalized before the nation could have a chance to enter the circle of modernity (*dāyera-ye tajaddod*). Since this nationalistic spirit manifested itself best in politics, religion, linguistics, and morality, reforms must start and be carried out basically in these domains before initiation of any political, religious, or literary revolution. He maintained that the three stages of destruction, change, and re-creation (*takrib, taḡyir, ijād*) had to be crossed before those three revolutions could be carried out, and to bring them to a successful conclusion, many things had to be totally abolished: some were to be reformed and repaired, while many others had to be created anew. He wrote: “willy-nilly progress has to be made, and definitely one has to accept Western civilization and its modern achievements, but not together with all vices and shortcomings that go with it.” Rather, one must create a civilization that comprises the virtues of both the Western and Eastern civilizations. He believed that all the disorder and confusion seen in modern life had been caused by the discord existing between a materialistic disposition and a spiritual tendency, and that East and West have moved towards two opposite extremes. He further maintained that Iranian moral values must be made to join with Western advancements in order to create a desirable intermixture of the two. He certainly did not object to the conditional adoption of Western civilization, but did not agree with the extreme views of his friend Taqizāda. He was searching for a new identity for the nation of Iran, and considered the solidarity of all her people a prerequisite for the creation of a nationality in its true sense. He also believed that the idea of “Irān-šahr” as a land and the blood of the “Arian Race” (*nežād-e āriā’i*) were the two constructive elements for Iranian nationalism, which consequently led some critics to suggest that he had been influenced by the concepts (e.g., of *Blut und Bode* “blood and soil”) used by the German national socialists of his time.

Irānšahr believed that national unity will be realized only if it be based on the glories of the past, and, what is more, in particular national identity should replace that of religion; that is to say, religious identification must be replaced by nationalistic identification. He maintained that religion was a by-product of faith and a matter of personal conscience, reflecting the spiritual relationship of the individual with God. Thus, religion must be considered on a personal basis and made compatible with life in the modern world.



Irānšahr was convinced that Persia needed a spiritual movement and that the youths of Iran, like those in Turkey, must develop the feeling of national pride and strong patriotic sentiments, revolt against superstitions and delusive fanciful ideas, and build a new Iran based on national pride and patriotic convictions. Therefore, he showed devoted attention to Azarbaijan (q.v.), which, due to its Turkic Azeri language, had become a point of special interest for the Young Turks and the supporters of Pan-Turkism ideology. He insisted that Iran had to embark on an extensive campaign in this region to promote nationalistic sentiments and the principle of a solidified nation of Iran and to propagate there the literary and cultural heritage of the country. He and his friend Şādeq Reżāzāda Şafaq (*q.v) were demonstrating that the people of Azarbaijan were true Iranians, on whom the Turkish language had been imposed.

Irānšahr's main intellectual preoccupation early in his life was Iran, and he kept campaigning for the enlightenment of people's intellectuality and the growth of the country, but during the last years of his life he developed a cosmopolitan Weltanschauung and conceived the idea of creating utopia by producing equilibrium between materialism and spirituality. He thought that in this way one could create a world where all people would live in peace and compassionate concern towards each other.

Irānšahr has been called romantic, naïve, and a dreamer, despite the fact that he spent his entire life in endless strife and campaign to make his ideas effectively productive in political, social, and philosophical domains. He has also been referred to as a political activist, journalist, philosopher, and a specialist in education. The truth, however, is that, all in all, he was a unique and exceptional personality among the intellectuals of Iran in the 20th century. He also wrote some poetry on occasions; his small output is included in a collection of his works (Irānšahr, 1951, pp. 443-77).

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