



IRAQ XII. PERSIAN SCHOOLS IN IRAQ

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At the time of the 1905-11 Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) in Persia, local committees of Persians in Iraq created Persian-language schools with the backing of the leading, progressive religious scholars, including Ākūnd Mollā Moḥammad Kāzem Korāsāni (q.v.) and Shaikh 'Abd-Allāh Māzandarāni. The first schools were Oḵowwat, an elementary school for boys in Kāzemayn, founded in 1907 by the Anjoman-e oḵowwat-e irāniān, and two coeducational elementary schools, 'Alawi in Najaf, founded in 1908-09 by the religious establishment (see xi, above) there, and Ḥosayni in Karbalā', founded by the Anjoman-e mosāwāt-e irāniān. Another elementary school for boys, Šarāfat in Baghdad, founded in 1913 by the Anjoman-e šarāfat-e irāniān. These four schools would later expand their program to the high school level (in 1936, 1960, 1956, and 1943 respectively; al-Barāk, pp. 107-9). Two others also were founded in Najaf and Amara but closed during World War I. The atmosphere at the schools was relatively open. While the teaching of foreign languages and subjects, such as history and geography, constituted unbelief (*kofr*) in schools in Tehran and Tabriz, these subjects were freely taught in the Persian schools in Iraq (Yağmā'ī, personal notes).

During and after the war, the Persian schools endured financial hardship. They were about to close at the time when Rezā Khan Sardār(-e) Sepah



traveled to Iraq from Kuzestān in 1924. Asked by the Iranian community to turn these into public schools, he ordered the Ministry of Education (*Wezārat-e ma'āref*) to take over their administration and allocate a monthly allowance of 100 tomans to the schools, plus 29,000 tomans for furniture and student clothing and 80,000 tomans for other expenses. Subsequently three more schools were founded, Pahlavi elementary male school in Basra in 1936, and two elementary schools for girls in 1957, Šahrbānu in Kāžemayn and Ṭorayyā (changed to Faraḥ in 1966) in Baghdad. Aḥmad Amin directed the school system until 1940, Šādeq Naš'at from 1940 to 1956 (Yağmā'ī, personal notes).

The rise of the Ba'th party during the late 1960s led to the beginning of mounting hostilities and border clashes between Iran and Iraq—both aspiring for regional hegemony (see vi, above). This led to the deportation of 60,000 to 100,000 Iranian expatriates in the early 1970s, who were accused of being the Fifth Column for Iran (Wiley, p. 48). As a result, the enrollment in Persian schools dropped considerably: Oḳowwat from 651 male students at elementary level in 1970-71 to 115 in 1971-72, Ḥosayni from 729 male and 460 female students at elementary and high school levels in 1971-72 to 47 and 53 respectively in 1975-76, 'Alawi from 1148 in 1970-71 to 157 in 1971-72, Šarāfat from 404 at elementary level in 1957-58 to 38 in 1974-75, and from 390 at high school level in 1970-71 to 170 in 1975-76 (al-Barāk, pp. 110-12). Under these circumstances, Persian schools underwent a period of decline and harassment by Iraqi security forces.

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E. Yaḡmā'i, personal observations, interviews, and notes.