



# JURĀBČI, ḤĀJJ MOḤAMMAD-TAQI

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**JURĀBČI, ḤĀJJ MOḤAMMAD-TAQI** (b. Tabriz, 5 June 1868; d. Tehran, c. 1920), a Tabriz merchant, constitutionalist, and author of an interesting and informative memoir written during the [Iranian Constitutional Revolution](#) (q.v.).

Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi was born into a family of mid-level Azeri merchants that was initially based in Tabriz and later branched out to Rasht and Tehran as well as to Istanbul. The family also had dealings with Baku and Mashad. He descended from a long line of merchants. His father, Ḥājj Ḥasan Jurābči (b. 1839) and his grandfather Ḥājj Abu'l-Qāsem (d. ca. 1795) were merchants. His mother, Zahrā Solṭān (b. 1846), was the daughter of Mašhadi Ḥasan (d. 1860), who was a baker (*Memoirs*, p. 77; Gheissari, p. 187), and his maternal grandfather, Mašhadi Ḥosayn (d. 1819), was a *šār-bāf* (maker of silk material) and originally came from Shiraz.

Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi was the eldest of five sisters and five brothers; all siblings were from the same parents (*Memoirs*, pp. 31-33; Moqaddam, *Šajara-nāma*; Gheissari, pp. 187, 206 n. 29). In due course all brothers, Naqi, Rezā, Šafi', and Moḥammad-Bāqer also went on pilgrimage to Mecca and became "Ḥāji." Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi first married in 1891. Some years after the death of his first wife, Belqays (daughter of Mirzā Esmā'il Jurābčiān-Ḥaqqi) in January 1908, he married 'Alawiya Ṭabāṭabā'i, the daughter of Ḥājj Mirzā 'Ali



Āqā Mojtahed Tabrizi Ṭabāṭabā'i (*Memoirs*, p. 133). We are also informed that his brother-in-law, Mirzā Moḥammad-Taqi (the eldest son of Mirzā 'Ali Mojtahed), was the leader of the constitutionalist society Anjoman-e Tabriz (q.v.; *Memoirs*, p. 151). In fact Moḥammad-Taqi Ṭabāṭabā'i was a principal member and the head of the revived Anjoman of Tabriz in the summer of 1908 (see ANJOMAN-E EYĀLĀTI-E TABRIZ; Rafi'i, pp. 42, 75, 177, n. 126). Prominent members of the Anjoman-e Tabriz included Ḥājj Esmā'il Amirkizi, Sayyed Ḥosayn Khan 'Adālat, Ḥājj Mir Moḥammad-'Ali Eṣfahāni, Sheikh Moḥammad Kīābāni, Ḥājj Mehdi Kuzakanāni, Mirzā Jawād Nāṭeq (Nāṣeḥ), Mirzā Esmā'il Nowbari, Mirzā Ṣādeq Khan Ṣādeq-al-Molk, Sheikh Salim, Mirzā 'Ali Ṭeqat-al-Eslām, Sayyed Ḥasan Ṣarifzāda, and Mirzā 'Ali Vijviyahi (for a roster of members, see Rafi'i, pp. 42-46, 75; Gheissari, pp. 188, 206-7, n. 38).

In the early 20th century, the Jurābči brothers traded mostly in consumer goods rather than undertaking capital-intensive ventures, a trend which at the time was common in the wider Middle East. In Rasht, besides their main line of business, hosiery (*jurāb*), they also traded in yarn and rope, and in cigarettes, which they rolled, boxed, and marketed. In 1905, one of the brothers, Ṣafi', ordered cigarette labels bearing the Jurābčis' own imprint; the new packaging was an instant success (*Memoirs*, p. 108). Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi's rented residence in Rasht also functioned as his tobacco processing workshop and storage (*Memoirs*, p. 69). The Jurābčis' association with Rasht continued in the 1930s, 'Abbās Jurābči (son of Ḥājj Naqi), together with Moḥammad-Ebrāhim Ṣan'at, ran a hosiery factory in Rasht (Floor, p. 50). In the period that followed World War I the Jurābči brothers continued with trading and retail of hosiery, mainly in Tabriz and Rasht, and also in Tehran. During the early Pahlavi period, the Jurābčis established a wool spinning, weaving, and wool carding factory in Tabriz which, by 1940, employed some 300 workers. They also had a yarn spinning factory, which was set up in 1936 in Tehran (Mahrad, p. 528; *Sāl-nāma-ye Pārs*, 1936, p. 214; Floor, pp. 53, 62).

During the period of the Constitutional Revolution (1906-11), Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi authored a volume of memoirs. This work is informative on the personal and social life of Tabriz and Rasht, as well as on Anzali, Baku, and the Caucasus, trans-Caspian travel, Eshqabad, Qučān, and Mashad, where he visited and lived in this period. It also provides information on Istanbul, Izmir, Port Said, and the pilgrimage routes to Mecca, and the Shi'ite centers in Iraq (the 'Atabāt; q.v.). Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi's initial decision to write the memoirs was caused by the emergency situation and in order to put the rapidly



transforming conditions into perspective. He began to write the first half of the memoirs after the outbreak of the Persian civil war in Azarbaijan (*Memoirs*, p. 60) and shortly before a major conflict in Tabriz, in April 1910, known as “Šām-Ġāzān.” The event culminated on Saturday, 9 April 1910, in the Šām-Ġāzān area in the western part of Tabriz. The civil war between Constitutional and anti-Constitutional forces first broke out in Azarbaijan and subsequently spread to Gilān and Isfahan provinces, lasting from the summer of 1908 to the summer of 1909 and culminating in the constitutionalist march on Tehran and the overthrow of Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah Qajar. The second half of the memoirs was written in late 1911 and early 1912. The *Memoirs* on the whole provides an insider’s narrative on the rise of the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) and ends with the events of December 1911 and January 1912 in Rasht and Anzali, in the period marking the Russian occupation and the end of the constitutional period in Azarbaijan (Gheissari, p. 187; for Russian interventions in Iran in general and Azarbaijan in particular, see, respectively, Aliev; and Clark, 2006a; for a social and political survey of Azarbaijan in the second half of the 19th century and during the period leading up to the Constitutional Revolution, see Clark, 2006b).

During the days of the revolution or the subsequent large-scale Russian occupation of northern Iran (January 1911-November 1917), Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taḳi persevered to find opportunities to trade domestically or trans-regionally. In these transactions he relied on an elaborate network of merchants whose common objective was the circulation of goods as a preferred way of protecting their business and securing profit (Gheissari, p. 187). The text of the *Memoirs* offers valuable information about the broader financial anxieties of merchants in general and their commercial networks, and is informative on how goods were shipped and accounts cleared in times of crisis or during the period of foreign occupation.

Following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, it became cheaper to ship cargo from Europe and the Mediterranean region to northern Iran through the Suez Canal and Bushehr than it was to Tabriz via Trabzon, a diversion which impacted negatively on Tabriz-Istanbul trade (see FĀRS iv). Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taḳi and his brothers had regular transactions with the Caucasus and also did limited business while on pilgrimage in the ‘Atabāt. Their business in Istanbul was mostly handled by a younger brother, Ḥājj Reżā Jurābčī (later Simnād), who first went there on 28 August 1908. In addition to commerce Ḥājj Reżā had also a keen interest in Persian literature and history,



and later became associated with Anjoman-e Sa'adat (q.v.), the Persian constitutionalist society in Istanbul (*Memoirs*, pp. 83-86; Gheissari, pp. 207-8, n. 42).

As with most merchants, business was a high priority for Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi; trade summed up his profession, skill, duty, and identity. It is clear in the *Memoirs* that, although he was a devout Twelver Shi'i Muslim, a nationalist (underscored by his association with the progressive Anjoman of Tabriz), and a responsible family man, effective pursuit of business was viewed by him as a necessary step to better fulfill those other criteria (Gheissari, p. 187). Nevertheless, Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi was curious and concerned about larger political issues, such as the constitutional movement and broader national and regional matters, both out of personal political allegiances and from concern for the potential short-term and long-term impact of such developments on local, regional, and international trade. On a daily basis, however, his business performance mainly revolved around immediate preoccupations such as the circulation of goods, safe dispatch of cargo, and timely collection of credit. In addition to information on the family and trade, a considerable portion of Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi's observations in the *Memoirs* relates to pilgrimage. He felt very content each time he went on a pilgrimage, be it to Mashad, to the 'Atabāt, or to Mecca. On such occasions he would attend sermons and listen to religious lectures, thus complementing prescribed set rituals with additional religious education and spiritual fulfillment. He details his passion for attending lessons given by the more commendable among the ulema whenever he was on pilgrimage or engaged in trade in various pilgrimage centers. His private pursuit of spiritual interests is an important dimension of the *Memoirs*. Like many other pilgrims, if he had the opportunity he would prolong his stay beyond the usual rituals associated with the pilgrimage, except in Mecca, where such extensions were not possible—partly because of the set rituals of Ḥājj and partly, perhaps, because of his Shi'ite faith. In 1905 Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi went to Mecca, and estimated the number of pilgrims to Mecca in that year at 280,000, including 12,000 Shi'ite pilgrims; he also pointed out certain tensions among the Shi'ite and Sunnite pilgrims in Mecca during the ceremonies (*Memoirs*, p. 121; Gheissari, p. 193; for a more detailed Iranian account of the pilgrimage to Mecca in the late 19th century, see Farahani). Besides occasional mentions of major political events, the *Memoirs* is also informative about public and private lives of merchants during the constitutional period. Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi's account of his private life includes passing references to the private sanctum of his household (the



*andarun*) and is indicative of his personal choices and lifestyle; but it also provides clues about the private life of a representative mid-ranking merchant—regional, ethnic, religious, and cultural variations notwithstanding.

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