



KĀZERUNI FAMILY

KĀZERUNI FAMILY, an entrepreneurial family based in Isfahan, best known for their role in the textile industry, above all the pioneering Waṭan factory. This entry is divided into three sections: Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kāzeruni; The Waṭan factory; After the patriarch.

MOḤAMMAD-ḤOSAYN KĀZERUNI

Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kāzeruni (b. Isfahan, ca. 1855; d. Isfahan, 9 May 1932), the clan's patriarch, was son of Moḥammad-Ja'far, who carried his southern appellation *kāko*, implying the recent migration of the family to Isfahan. Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn was also known as "Kāko Ḥoseyn," "Ḥāj Kāko," or "Ḥāj Kākā Hoseyn" (Jamālzāda, 1917, p. 98; idem, 1956, p. 65; Bāmdād, p. 394; Maḥbubi Ardakāni, p. 93).

Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn's biography is yet to be written; his life story is vaguely known from tracing his social activities, which are sporadically reported in literature. His early life coincided with the formative years of modern trade and manufacturing in Iran, particularly in Isfahan. In the closing years of the 19th century, when there was a surge in reform movements and entrepreneurial attempts, Kāzeruni held a reputation as a reform-minded capitalist. In this capacity he was a pillar of Šerkat-e Mas'udiya, a commercial company launched in Isfahan in early 1898, which was still in the business of "foreign trade and money exchange" nearly twenty years later, as reported contemporarily by Sayyed Moḥammad-'Ali Jamālzāda (1917, p. 98). This meticulous report renders incredulous the claim that



Mas'udiya was established to support the local tobacco farmers and merchants following the Rège rebellion (Askarāni, p. 34) as a measure against an 1890 tobacco concession (see [CONCESSIONS](#)) granted by the shah to the Great Britain.

Kāzeruni's fortune was made through his investments in the textile industry, which had long been a major industry in Isfahan but had lost ground to British and Russian cotton imports. Kāzeruni stood conspicuous among the nationalist merchants and landowners who launched new campaigns to revive Isfahan's cotton production and textile industry (cf. Arbāb Eṣfahāni, pp. 12, 122-23). To this end, the city's elite merchants with the support of the elite clergy, including Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din Wā'ez Eṣfahāni, Mirzā Naṣr-Allāh Malek-al-Motakallemin, and Majd-al-Eslām Kermāni, launched, on 26 Šawwāl 1316/26 February 1899, Šerkat-e Eslāmi or Eslāmiya (Jamālzāda, 1917, p. 98), or Kompāni-e mansujāt-e Eslāmiya, as announced by the newspaper *Ḥabl al-matin* (2 Jomāda II 1318/15 October 1900, pp. 12-13; see also Ašraf, pp. 100-101).

The leading investor and major visionary of the company was Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kāzeruni. Even before the manufacturing phase had become fully operative, Kāzeruni saw the need to promote consumption of native fabric by seeking the religious sanctioning of national industry against European imports. He thus commissioned, for 5 tomans monthly, Sayyed Jamāl-al-Din Wā'ez, who traveled to Shiraz and published the booklet *Lebās al-taqwā* with the goal of promoting the woven fabrics of Isfahan (Jamālzāda, 1954; idem, 1956, pp. 65-66; tr., p. 42; Yaḡmā'i, pp. 6-11). Eslāmiya began manufacturing cloth with several textile machines and a capital of 150,000 tomans divided into 15,000 shares. The company was run by Kāzeruni as president and Ḥāj Mirzā 'Ali Naqšina as manager, and was represented by four merchants, namely Ḥāj Mirzā Moḥammad Moški, Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ja'far, Ḥāj Mirzā Asad-Allāh Naqšina, and Ḥāj Moḥammad-Kāzem Meṭqāli (Jamālzāda, 1917, p. 98; cf. Mahdawi, II, p. 34). Šerkat-e Eslāmiya was among the first major large-scale business ventures in the country, and it evolved as the precursor to the rise of Isfahan's 20th-century textile industry, especially the Waṭan factory (see below).

Little is known about the political activities of Kāzeruni other than that he was an active constitutionalist and that he represented merchants, together with Moḥammad-Ebrāhim Malek-al-Tojjār, in the Isfahan Provincial Council ([Anjoman-e Velāyati](#); Riāḥi, p. 26), which was set up subsequent to the establishment of the Parliament to secure the aims of the [Constitutional](#)



Revolution. Kāzeruni launched in 1930 the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce (*oṭāq-e tejārat*) and served as its first president until his death in 1932 (Isfahan Chamber of Commerce; see also chamber of commerce, industries, and mines of persia).

Kāzeruni was also an active developer. In the early 20th century Isfahan had many ruins, within and without the city, that were once built environments under the Safavids. As the town began to prosper, some of the affluent Isfahanis sought to buy and build up the abandoned lots. Kāzeruni constructed bazaars and houses in Bāg-e Jazāyer-kāna and Bāg-e Farrāš-kāna, both near the palace of **Čehel Sotun**; and he purchased and developed large estates in Hazārjarib and Čahārbāg-e Bālā (Jāberi Anšāri, pp. 162, 167, 137). A masterpiece that became an urban landmark of Isfahan was a modern shopping mall in **Ķošk** (or **Ķvoš**, later renamed **Šāh** and **Āyat-Allāh Ṭāleqāni**) Street near Darvāza Dawlat (*Zāyandarud* 4/14, 24 Šafar 1332/22 January 1914, apud Rajā'i, p. 626; cf. Riāhi, p. 28). Kāzeruni also built and repaired several mosques, which were named after him but were renamed after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 (Riāhi, pp. 29-30). As a landowner, Kāzeruni showed interest in rural economy by reclaiming and establishing farms. He is reported to have attempted to grow tea (see **ČĀY**) as early as 1884 (Komisiōn-e Melli, II, p. 1647).

THE WAṬAN FACTORY

The best-known contribution of the Kāzeruni family is the textile factory Waṭan. Its purpose, as that of its precursor Šerkat-e Eslāmiya (see above), was competition with foreign products—hence its name Waṭan “homeland” (renamed, temporarily, Mihan, which was suggested by the media of the late 1940s out of zeal to purify the Persian language).

The Waṭan factory was initiated around 1921 by Mirzā Fażl-Allāh Khan ‘Atā’-al-Molk Deheš, a progressive industrialist of Isfahan who was associated with the British Lynch Company (on the activity of the Lynch Brothers, see **FARS iv. HISTORY IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES; KARUN RIVER iii. THE OPENING OF THE KARUN**). Deheš approached the British first, but he ended up importing most of the textile machinery from Germany, whose share as a trading partner of Persia was on the rise. The challenging task of transporting the machinery by mountainous tracks via Mesopotamia and Hamadān took several years, so that its production did not commence until 1925. The factory was known at first as Kārḳāna-ye Rismāntābi o Nassāji-e Haft Dast, named



after its site, the Safavid mansion of Haft Dast(gāh). In the course of establishment of the factory, Deheš ran out of assets, so he formed a joint venture with Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kāzeruni. But the two partners could scarcely get along, and a lawsuit was filed in the commercial court. The dispute finally came to an end in a meeting at the residence of Reżā Khan Sardār Sepah (the future Reżā Shah), attended by the two partners as well as notable figures including Sayyed Ḥasan Modarres, Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Khan Āyrom, Ḥāj Mo‘in Bušehri, and Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Amin-al-Żarb (see [ĀYROM](#), [BŪŠEHRĪ](#), and [AMĪN-AL-ŻARB](#), respectively). The meeting was conclusive, and ‘Aṭā’-al-Molk Deheš sold his share to Kāzeruni. To reassure Kāzeruni of the future of Waṭan, Sardār Sepah placed a substantial order with the factory for army uniforms (Dabiḥ; Jāberi Anšāri, p. 365; Maḥbubi Ardakāni, p. 95).

The growth of Waṭan took place in stages within a couple of decades. It was established with the initial capital of 5,000,000 rials on a lot of 80,000 square meters (Ābedi, pp. 109-10). A principal chief industrial designer of the factory was Max Otto Schünemann. He assisted with the importation and design of several other modern industries in Isfahan, including casting, carpentry, and ironwork, and he represented German industrial enterprises such as Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG, a supplier of electrical appliances) and Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg for diesel engines, which played a part in maintaining and expanding Waṭan and other textile factories (see below) owned by the Kāzeruni family (Anšāri; Rajā’i, pp. 613-14, 670). The Waṭan factory employed up to eight German technicians, who trained local technicians and were gradually replaced by them. The factory boasted of having sent a student to Germany on scholarship (*Aḳgar*, 23 Šahrivar 1310 Š./1931, apud Rajā’i, p. 621; cf. Dehdašti, pp. 71-72). By 1932, the number of workers of the factory had reached 1,200; they worked in two eleven-hour shifts (*Aḳgar*, 1 Farvardin 1310 Š./1931, apud Rajā’i p. 620). Nearly a third of the factory’s workers were women (Dehdašti, p. 75). By the 1950s, when the factory had fully developed, it had a capital of 60,000,000 rials and employed 1,340 persons, who now worked in three eight-hour shifts, thanks to the concessions won by labor unions a decade earlier (Abrahamian, pp. 354 ff.). The factory had 12,500 spinning wheels then and more than 100 weaving machines, working with a total mechanical drive of 1,200 horsepower. Annually Waṭan consumed 940 tons of cotton, 910 tons of wool, and 34 tons of dyes and chemical products; it manufactured 810,000 meters of woolen textiles, 40,000 blankets, and 150,000 cotton pieces known as *boqča*. Some of



its original German machinery had been replaced, and its cotton spinning wheels had been imported from England (‘Ābedi, pp. 109-10; on the technical aspects of the factory, see more in Dehdašti, pp. 71-77; Maḥbubi Ardakāni, pp. 96-97).

Aside from the initial pledge of Reżā Khan to Kāzeruni, the survival of Waṭan—like that of many other privately-owned textile factories in Persia—remained essentially dependent on state support through government subsidies and contracts. Waṭan was the first such factory to benefit significantly from the law of 7 Dalw 1303 Š./18 February 1925 that waived taxes on imported industrial machinery (Maḥbubi Ardakāni, p. 97). Another supporting law was that for promoting the consumption of domestic cloth (*Qānun-e este‘māl-e albesa-ye waṭani*) that passed in the Majles on 29 Dalw 1301 Š./19 February 1923; it was followed by intermittent governmental directives drafted to compel officials to wear clothes made of domestic fabric (Rajā’i, p. 609). On the anniversary of his coronation in 1930, Reżā Shah praised Kāzeruni for the fact that his factory was the source of the woolen clothes and military uniforms that the senior officials were wearing at the ceremony (Millspaugh, p. 264; Wilber, p. 134; Floor, pp. 16-17; ‘Ābedi, p. 87; Sayfūr Fāṭemi, p. 958). Even after Reżā Shah’s abdication in 1941, the government continued to promote the national textile industry by encouraging families to consume domestic fabric for their children’s school uniforms. The designation *kāzeruni* soon became a household name for the woolen flannel made in Iran, and the term stood in contradistinction to the rhyming *fāstuni*, the Persian equivalent of the British fabric known in English as “worsted.” Persian schoolboys of the 1950s remember that their uniforms were then called *kāzeruni*.

AFTER THE PATRIARCH

Ḥāj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kāzeruni died on 9 May 1932 (as reported in the next day’s issue of *Akḡar*, 20 Ordibehešt 1311 Š., apud Rajā’i p. 626), when he was about 77. His funeral procession and subsequent memorials attracted large crowds, which would sing the chant of lamentation: *Raft az jahān-e fāni, āqā-ye Kāzerāni / Šod kāk bar sar-e mā, zin marg-e nāgahāni* (“Mr. Kāzeruni has left the transitory world / Dust upon our heads at this sudden demise”), as reported by the traveling eyewitness Šādeq Hedāyat (pp. 101, 105). Kāzeruni was buried in Isfahan’s chief cemetery, Taḡtepulād, in the family’s mausoleum, Takya-ye Kāzeruni (Jāberi Anšāri, p. 275), but his corpse was exhumed in 1944 and transferred to the Shi’ite sanctuaries in Najaf (Riāḥi, p.



29). The Kāzeruni mausoleum in Isfahan was expanded in time and housed several pious men (Riāḥi, pp. 25 ff.). The mausoleum remains a unique source to verify death dates of the family members buried there.

Kāzeruni was survived by five sons and a daughter: Moḥammad (1897-1972), Kānom-kuček (1898-1976), Moḥammad-Bāqer (1899-1941), Moḥammad-Ja‘far (1901-79), Maḥmud, and Moḥammad-‘Ali (1912?-89; the dates are either provided by the family or copied from gravestones in Isfahan’s Taktepulād cemetery; some different dates are given in the literature, e.g., ‘Ābedi, pp. 109-10; *Iran Who’s Who 1976*, p. 254). The sons ([Figure 1](#)) all carried the designation *mirzā*, or *miz* or *āmiz* in Isfahani Persian (for these titles, see [ALQĀB VA ‘ANĀWIN](#)). Less than six months after Kāzeruni’s demise, Reżā Shah Pahlavi, during a royal trip, visited the Waṭan factory on 4 Ābān 1311 Š./26 October 1932, where he expressed his satisfaction regarding its progress, called the Kāzeruni brothers his own sons, and pledged full state cooperation (*Gāh-nāma* I, p. 105; *Akḡar*, 11 Ābān 1311 Š./1932, apud Rajā’i pp. 627-28; cf. Sayfūr Fāṭemi, p. 904).

The lucrative dividends that Waṭan paid to its shareholders, coupled with categorical support of the shah and Isfahan’s governor Afšār (*Akḡar*, 15 Dey 1311 Š./1932; Sayfūr Fāṭemi, p. 839), encouraged Isfahani merchants to establish companies and launch factories. It was particularly during the economic prosperity of the 1930s that a passion for textile factories began among Isfahan’s wealthy (see [ISFAHAN XIV. MODERN ECONOMY AND INDUSTRIES](#)). Consequently, the second major textile mill in the city, Risbāf, was launched in 1932 by Šerkat-e Sahāmi-e Risandagi o Bāfandagi-e Ešfahān, shared by Moḥammad Kāzeruni (CEO), Moḥammad-Ja‘far Kāzeruni, Ḥāj Zayn-al-‘Ābedin Amin, Sayyed ‘Abd-al-Raḥim Maḥmudiya, and Ḥāj Moḥammad-Karim Semsār (*Akḡar*, 2 Āḡar 1311 Š./1932, apud Rajā’i, p. 629; cf. Maḥbubi Ardakāni, pp. 112-13). The factory imported its machinery from England and employed 1,000 men and 150 women workers (Dehdašti, pp. 79-82). Next, the Kāzeruni brothers Mirzā Moḥammad and Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja‘far, together with their brother-in-law Sayyed ‘Abd-al-Raḥim Maḥmudiya, established in 1935 the Zāyandarud spinning and weaving mill (Dehdašti, pp. 83-88; Maḥbubi Ardakāni, pp. 112-13; Šerkat-e Sahāmi, pp. i-ii). Moreover, when other textile factories, such as Šahreżā and Šanāye‘-e Pašm, were economically troubled, the Kāzerunis are said to have helped restore their production (*Akḡar*, 7 Tir 1318 Š./1939, apud Rajā’i, pp. 681-83; cf. Dehdašti, pp. 89 ff.).

The most industrious among the Kāzeruni brothers were Mirzā Moḥammad-



Ja'far and Mirzā Moḥammad-'Ali. The former succeeded his father as the CEO and chairman of the managerial board of the Waṭan factory. These two brothers founded the large dairy farm of Golšahr on the highway from Isfahan to Najafābād; parts of it were open to the public as an amusement park, which housed a small zoo (interviews; cf. *Iran's Who's Who*, p. 254). Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja'far remained economically active up to the end of the Pahlavi dynasty.

This second generation continued to show an apparent interest in the sociopolitical affairs of Isfahan through their continuous presence in its Municipal Council (Anjoman-e Baladiya, later Anjoman-e Šahrdāri; *Akḡar*, various issues from 1932 to 1941). Although no philanthropic organization is known to have been founded by the family, charitable deeds are reported. As the Waṭan factory's main shareholders, the Kāzeruni brothers pledged to share with Isfahan municipality the rehabilitation costs of the Pol-e Čubi (spelled Jubi and Ju'i as well), a Safavid bridge that connected the factory with the city quarters north of the Zāyandarud river (*Akḡar*, 2 Āḡar 1312 Š./1933, 29 Šahrivar 1316 Š./1937, and 19 Ḳordād 1317 Š./1938, apud Rajā'i, pp. 221, 311, 167). To save the Zāyandarud river from excessive pollution, the major textile factories shared by the Kāzeruni brothers devised a sewer system that traversed the factories Šanāye'-e Pašm, Risbāf, Zāyandarud, and Waṭan along a channel that carried away the waste to the Šahrā-ye Kula-pārča in the wasteland east of the city (*Akḡar*, 9 Tir 1320 Š./1941). Moreover, Moḥammad Kāzeruni is said to have rebuilt the two spans of the historical Šahrestān bridge that had been destroyed by the flood of 1934 (*Akḡar*, 1 Ābān 1314 Š./1935, apud Rajā'i, p. 273). The Kāzeruni brothers also donated clothing to Isfahan's mental hospital (*timārestān*), and in 1942 they established a maternity clinic (*zāyešgāh*) with free services to the poor (*Akḡar*, 16 Dey 1317 Š./1939, 17 Farvardin 1321 Š./1942, apud Rajā'i, pp. 329, 598); by 1945 the clinic had grown to a hospital, which pioneered in introducing medical technologies, particularly radiology (Nafisi and Nafisi, p. 132). A report after the Revolution claims that Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja'far built numerous mosques and constructed several schools (*Eṭṭelā'āt-e haftagi*, Mordād 1358 Š./1979, p. 6). As a historical photograph ([Figure 2](#)) suggests, the young Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja'far sympathized with the Ne'mat-Allāhi Sufi order.

Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja'far and Mirzā Moḥammad-'Ali Kāzeruni married the daughters of Prince Homāyun Mirzā, the son of the Qajar prince-governor of Isfahan Mas'ud Mirzā Żell-al-Şolṭān. The third generation, however, showed



far less interest in entrepreneurship. A son of Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja‘far, Morteza Kazerouni became a Hollywood actor and played minor roles in: *Poppies Are Also Flowers* (1966), also known as *The Poppy Is Also a Flower* (Pers. *Gol-e šayṭān*), which was filmed in Persia (for more, see Šafā); *Triple Cross* (1966); and the thriller *The Jigsaw Man* (1983) (on Morteza Kazerouni, see Kāmšād, II, pp. 69-73). Other members of the family continued their dynastic entrepreneurship at less prominent levels, chiefly in Isfahan, where they enjoyed the reputation and prestige of nobility. This status did not survive the Revolution of 1979, during and after which the old sociopolitical system crumbled, many professionals and businessmen fled the country, and a new class of notables emerged from the lowborn.

Not long after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the fanatic members of the Revolutionary Court of Isfahan published a booklet titled *Sāvākihā-ye Komeyni-namā*, which targeted some notables of Isfahan, including Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja‘far Kāzeruni (Mir Moḥammad Šādeqi, p. 176). On 19 July 1979, Kāzeruni was shot by two motorcyclists in a baffling incident and died three days after (*Eṭṭelā‘āt-e haftagi*, Mordād 1358 Š., p. 6). The assassins were never identified.

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