



TADAYYON, SAYYED MOḤAMMAD BIRJANDI

TADAYYON, Sayyed Moḥammad Birjandi (b. Birjand, 1881; d. United States, December 1951), early 20th-century educationist and politician. Sayyed Moḥammad Birjandi was born in a village in the vicinity of the town of [Birjand](#) in Khorasan. He lost both his parents in infancy and was raised by his maternal uncle. At the age of nine he moved to Mashad and studied at the Madrasa-ye Mirzā Ja'far, a Shi'ite seminary, for eight years. He then moved to Tehran and established a traditional primary school (maktab-kāna) in one of the student chambers (ḥojras) of a religious school called Madrasa-ye Filsuf. Later he traveled to Najaf to continue his religious education, but he returned to Persia a little later and studied mathematics and the natural sciences with Mirzā 'Abd-al-Rezā Khan Bāgyeri, an educationist and the founder of K̄erad School. Sayyed Moḥammad then joined the classes of Nāẓem-al-Aṭebbā, taught by the latter's two sons Mo'addab-al-Dawla Nafisi and Sa'id Nafisi, becoming a classmate of Malek-al-šo'arā-ye Bahār (q.v.) and Mirzā Gōlām-Ḥosayn Khan Rahnamā, and began studying French as well as other subjects. He then found employment as a teacher at the Kamālia school, becoming a colleague of 'Isā Ṣadiq A'lam, whom he taught Arabic while they were working there together.

At the outbreak of the constitutional movement, Tadayyon left his studies and teaching and joined the rank and file of the revolutionaries. He was among the *mojāhedīn* defending the newly born constitutional system along with a number of his own students when the Moḥammad-'Ali Shah's Russian led



troops bombarded the parliament building (Āqeli, p. 494).

Shortly after the victory of the Constitutional Revolution, Sayyed Moḥammad founded a primary school named Tadayyon in the bazaar district of Tehran. Although it was located in one of the less affluent parts of the city, due to its efficient management, its relatively modern methods of teaching, and Sayyed Moḥammad's personal concern for the students, the school developed rapidly and became one of the most prestigious in the capital, attracting children from many wealthy families. Three years later, Sayyed Moḥammad established a special adult literacy class where reading and writing, secretarial skills, and French were taught. In the summer of 1921, he added three higher grades to the Tadayyon school, establishing a junior high school where tuition fees were waived for some students. It was during this period that Sayyed Moḥammad Birjandi became known as Sayyed Moḥammad Tadayyon, a name he kept for the rest of his life.

In 1918, when private schools began to face certain difficulties, Tadayyon, as the representative for all the private schools in the country, wrote a bitterly critical letter to the minister of education (vazir-e ma'āref) demanding the establishment of forty new elementary schools for needy children, admitting a number of private school principals in the Council of Education (šorā-ye ma'āref) as full members, preparing special programs for the education of female students, and revising the curriculum of the primary and higher schools. Under pressure, the minister of education acceded to some of these demands. When a number of school principals were selected as members of the Education Council, Tadayyon headed the list.

At the same time, Tadayyon was very active in politics. He became one of the leading figures of the Democratic Party and was elected to the parliament from Tehran in the fourth parliamentary session. At that time there were three major political parties in Persia: E'tedāliyūn-e 'Āmmiyūn, Ḥezb-e Demokrāt, and E'tefāq o Taraqqi. The first had won a majority in the elections, and the Democratic Party was in the second place. When World War I broke out, many Persian politicians supported Germany against Russia and Britain, the two powers that had long dominated the Persian political arena. When Russian troops invaded Persia, a large number of Majles deputies, including the most important Democratic Party leaders, quit the capital and transferred their headquarters first to Qom and later to Kermānšāh, where they established a rival government with nationalist and pro-German tendencies. Those who remained in Tehran were then divided into two factions: those who



believed that the party should cease all operations due to the absence of its principal leaders, and those who advocated continuing with party activities. The second faction, called the Taškili, included Mehdiqoli Khan Hedāyat, Malek-al-šo'arā-ye Bahār, and Sayyed MoḤammad Tadayyon. They had two affiliated newspapers: *Nowbahār*, which was published by Bahār, and *Setāra-ye Irān*, managed by Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Šabā. The Taškili group grew very rapidly and became one of the major political forces in the capital. During the debate about the provisional [Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919](#) in which many Persian political organizations demanded the abrogation of the treaty and denounced it as detrimental to the independence of the county, the Taškili Democrats staunchly supported the Agreement, and Tadayyon, as one of its principal leaders and the publisher of the newspaper *Šedā-ye Tehrān* (first appearing in 1916), boldly championed the treaty by writing a series of articles in his newspaper, and by delivering nightly speeches at one of the main Tehran mosques.

In 1925, during Reza Khan Sardār-e Sepah's premiership, Tadayyon was one of the most vociferous advocates of abolishing the monarchy and the creation of a republic. Later, when the clamor for a republic abated and was replaced by a campaign for the dethronement of Aḥmad Shah and the installation of Reza Khan to the throne, Tadayyon again assumed a very active role. He had been elected to the fifth parliamentary session, this time from his hometown of Birjand, subsequently becoming the deputy speaker of the Majles. Directing the debates as the acting parliament speaker, he zealously advocated the bill deposing the Qajar dynasty and entrusting the provisional government to Reza Khan. After the ratification of this bill by Majles (31 October 1925), Tadayyon became the speaker of the parliament.

In the winter of 1927, when Mostawfi-al-Mamālek became prime minister, Tadayyon who had been elected representative from Birjand once again, was appointed minister of education (vazir-e ma'āref). During his short tenure, he proved a bold and energetic minister and carried out a number of radical changes. The reconstruction of the Dār-al-fonun (q.v.) school building, the introduction of compulsory physical education in schools, the foundation of Dār-al-mo'allemin (teacher training college) and the drawing up of the constitution for this institution with the aid of 'Isā Šadiq, were some of the measures he took in this period. Tadayyon was also appointed minister of education by the next prime minister, Mokḵber-al-Saltāna, who took office in the spring of 1927.



During the next few months, Tadayyon began the construction of the facilities at Dār-al-mo‘allemin on a 24,000 square meter lot, incorporated the law, political science, and commerce schools into the ministry of education, established provincial branches for the Education Council, revised the higher education curriculum, founded a school of engineering in Tehran with a branch in the city of Shiraz, employed several foreign professors, began the writing of the constitution for a medical school, established some 200 new schools in Tehran and the provinces, and compiled twenty-five text books which were taught in Persian schools for years.

In December 1927, due to the opposition of some Majles deputies to his programs to award financial aid to needy music students and to establish a girls' school in Tehran, Tadayyon resigned from his post, but his resignation was not accepted by Reza Shah. Since the parliamentary opposition continued, however, he once again resigned in January 1928 and was replaced by Mirzā Yaḥyā Khan E'temād-al-Dawla.

After his resignation as minister of education, Tadayyon was appointed governor of the province of Kerman, a post he held for one year. In 1936, on the basis of the Constitution of the newly established Tehran University, Tadayyon wrote a treatise that was recognized by the University Council authorities as the equivalent of a doctoral dissertation in Persian literature. He was then employed by Tehran University as a professor of Arabic.

After the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, Tadayyon once again became minister of education. Some of his later posts were dean of the faculty of literature at Tehran University, minister without portfolio (1942), minister of supplies (1942), and minister of interior. In the summer of 1943 when Tadayyon was the minister of interior, the Allied occupation forces incarcerated a large group of Iranian citizens as pro-German suspects and deported them to the city of Arāk with the official support of Tadayyon. After the 14 parliamentary session elections, Tadayyon was accused by one of the newly elected deputies of rigging the elections in parts of the country. This led to his subsequent arrest and imprisonment in 1947. He was eventually exonerated and released from prison, and returned to teaching. In 1949, when the Iranian senate was formed for the first time, Tadayyon was elected senator from Mashad. He died two years later from cancer while undergoing treatment in the United States and his body was brought back to Tehran and interred in the family mausoleum in Šemirān, north of Tehran.



Sayyed Moḥammad Tadayyon was an outspoken and able debater who was not afraid to engage in polemics. Because of his vociferous support for the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 and his part in the transfer of the crown from the Qajars to Reza Shah, he has remained a controversial figure in modern Persian history.

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