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STATE, SOCIETY AND LABOUR IN IRAN, 1906- 1941:

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF IRANIAN INDUSTRIALIZATION AND LABOUR WITH REFERENCE TO THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

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Prof. dr. Willem van Schendel (Universitet van Amsterdam)

Dr. Stephanie Cronin (Oxford University)

to my parents Akif & Ayşe Afacan

State, Society and Labour in Iran, 1906-1941:

A Social History of Iranian Industrialization and Labour with Reference to the Textile Industry

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Front cover photo: Emblem of the Guildsmen's and Workers' Union of Kerman, 1927

Back cover photo: A Petition by the Shoemakers, 1923

Library Museum and Document Centre of the Iran Parliament

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A Note on Transliterations and Currencies

For the most part, I followed the *Iranian Studies* scheme for transliterating Persian words, names etc. I have slightly modified the system for such popular names as Isfahan, Tehran and so on, which have not been changed. All transliterations are mine unless included in a quotation, or otherwise noted.

As for the currency, during the period under study the tuman, qran and shahi were the units of currency in Iran; a tuman equalled to 10 qrans and qran equalled to 20 shahis.¹ Qran was the main unit until it was changed in March 1930 to rial. By the turn of the 20th century the rate of pound sterling in qran was around 51.1 in Tehran while in the eve of the First World War it was about 55.5.² Until early 1920's it remained more or less the same and in 1923 it slightly rose to 56.56 but in 1929 it dropped to 54.76.³ By late 1930's the rate of pound sterling in qran it rose as high as 80.⁴

List of Abbreviations

LMDCIP: Library Museum and Document Center of the Iran Parliament

NLAI: National Library and Archive of Iran

FO: Foreign Office

ILO: International Labour Organization

¹ Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 387.

² Ibid., 344-45.

³ R. H. Hadow, *Report on the Trade and Industry of Persia 1923* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1923) , 4; E. R. Lingeman, *Economic Conditions in Persia March 1930* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), 18.

⁴ F. A. G. Gray, *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions in Iran 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), v.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In February 1922 the tanners of Kashan wrote a petition to the Iranian Parliament, henceforth the Majles, in which they complained about excessive taxes and their deteriorating business. In their supplication, the tanners referred to the gap between ‘high politics’ and their own humble concerns in the following words:

To the deputies of the sacred Majles, may God empower its pillars,

Our opinion as the helpless members of the tanners’ guild and of the felt-capped [kolay-namadi] and the ordinary people in general who are involved in trade and agriculture is that the honourable deputies and the ministers of the country should not only deal with foreign affairs but they should also pay attention to domestic issues. Political debates make sense to the clergy and to the wise men who enjoy dealing with such matters but as the common folk we lack that capacity.¹

It is as if the tanners were addressing later generations of historians. Iranian history-writing has, for a long time, been haunted by elitist perspectives and a top-down approach which stemmed from several causes two of which, I believe, are of particular importance. The first is the modernization paradigm which suggests that from the 18th but especially the early 19th century onwards, such Middle Eastern countries as Iran and the neighbouring Ottoman Empire entered a modernization process in which they adopted European military and administrative technologies as a solution to their military and administrative problems. Modernization served in this respect as an umbrella term used with a variety of different measures, the realization of which depended primarily on high-level politics. In such narratives the aspirations of the ruling classes and their projects were overemphasized, while ordinary people were considered important when and as much as their paths crossed with those of the elites. To put it differently, ordinary people arouse interest only when they were involved in major political processes. For the case of Iran, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution can be cited as an example. For instance, guilds, as major manufacturing and social entities, attracted the attention of historians for the period between 1905 and 1909,

¹ LMD CIP. d4/k49/j24/2/p62, “The complaint of the tanners of Kashan”, 4 February 1922. For the documents LMD CIP the numbers refer to the following: ‘d’ the parliamentary term; ‘k’ the folder where the documents is found; ‘j’ the file which contains the document; and ‘p’ the term from Emphases here and in any of the petitions used in this work are mine unless stated otherwise. Following an official request issued in 1935 to the countries with which it had diplomatic relations, ‘Iran’ became the generally accepted name of the country and ‘Persia’ fell into relative disuse. Yet, throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth the use of Persia was commonplace. In this chapter and other I use Iran and Persia interchangeably.

because of their active role in the making of the revolution, their representation in the First Majles, and the role they played in the civil war which was fought from 1908 to 1909 between Mohammad Ali Shah and the constitutionalists.² Nonetheless, with guilds no longer represented in the Majles starting in 1909, due to the new electoral law which was produced in 1909 and which abolished class-based representation, attention to guilds noticeably vanishes after this date.³ The second factor which, I believe, paradoxically reinforced a top-to-down perspective on Iranian history is the Iranian Revolution of 1979. To many, the revolution came as a surprise which called for an explanation. Attention was mostly paid, in the subsequent literature, to political parties, organizations and collective movements which arguably contributed to the making of the Revolution in various ways. When ordinary people were addressed, their experiences were often dealt with within the framework of revolutionary history, which resulted in the revolutionizing of Iranian historiography. Unsurprisingly, therefore, much of the scholarship on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 in the post-1979 period often strove to explain the 'roots' of the revolution which took place in 1979.⁴ One has the impression that at least from the Tobacco Protest (1891-1892)⁵ until the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iranian history steadily progressed towards the Revolution that

² The electoral law produced for the first elections in 1906 specified the following six classes (*tabaqat*) of the electorate who were to send to the Majles a certain number of deputies to serve for two years: Princes and the Qajar tribe; mullahs and theology students; the nobility; merchants; landholders and smallholders; and guild members. E. G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution, 1905-1909*, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966. 355. Among the 160 deputies 26 percent were guild elders while 20 percent were clergymen as opposed to 15 percent of merchants.

³ The following study is a notable exception: Hojjat Fallah Tootcar, "Social and Political Activities of Guilds and Artisans from the Iranian Constitutional Revolution to the Rise of Reza Shah, 1906-1925." PhD diss., (in Persian), Tarbiyat Modarres University, 2003. Based on numerous primary sources Dr. Tootcar cogently deals with the activities of the guilds during this period by also referring to the relationship between guild members and the broader Iranian working class.

⁴ The following are only a few and well-known examples: Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982; Said Arjomand, (ed.). *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam: Essays on Social Movements in the Contemporary Near and Middle East*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984; Nikki Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981. At times even when the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was not the main concern, links were established between this revolution and previous historical developments. For instance, writing in 1996 Janet Afary makes, in the Introduction to her seminal work, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, the following observation: "The Legacy of the Constitutional Revolution and the fight between [Shaikh Fazlullah] Nuri and the constitutional forces, is alive to this day. Ayatullah Khomeini, upon coming to power in 1979, declared Nuri the ideological father of the Islamic Republic and made every effort to rehabilitate him". *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

⁵ In 1890 Naser al-Din Shah granted a complete monopoly over the production, sale and export of all Iranian tobacco to a British subject, Major Gerald Talbot, for fifty years. The concession triggered a series of protests, some of them rather bloody, which took place in various cities of the country until the concession was finally abolished early in 1892 with a cost of £ 500,000 to be paid as compensation to the company which the government borrowed from the British owned Imperial Bank as the first Qajar foreign loan. This protest is regarded in much of the literature as a 'prelude' to the Constitutional Revolution. Ann K. S. Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, London, I. B. Tauris, 1987 P. 223.

was its ultimate destination, and that the developments which took place in between functioned as the components of the revolutionary machine. We need to de-revolutionize Iranian history and focus on its other aspects which did not necessarily and directly relate to the revolutions.

The insufficient attention paid to the experiences and perceptions of ordinary people may also result from a lack of sources, or their inadequacy. Social historians, particularly those who work on the Middle East, who venture to wrestle with questions regarding the experiences of ordinary people face many challenges from their source material, for the obvious reason that their subjects hardly leave an extensive trail of documents. In order to overcome this problem, many historians either choose not to risk such an adventure, or rely on sources recorded by those who were hostile, or at best indifferent, to the concerns of ordinary people. Or else, the uneven attention paid to the lower classes in Iranian history-writing could have possibly emanated from a controversial understanding of social history. It is tacitly, and somehow legitimately, claimed that social history can only be written if and when other histories, namely political and economic, have been sufficiently studied. However, I think it is truer to the dynamic of history to recognize social history as a method of writing about the past rather than categorizing it as an autonomous branch of the historian's craft. In other words, the history of any period is better understood when due attention is paid to social developments. Since the past was at least as complex as the present we should reconsider the previously held dogmatic and clear-cut division of history into political, economic, military, and social spheres, and so on, and should instead try to produce a more comprehensive narration of the past. This is certainly easier said than done, but it is worth trying.

Thus, my main aim in this research is to present a social history of Iranian industrialization and labour by referring, *inter alia*, to the textile industry and as such to enrich the scholarship on the period. I do so based on the petitions sent by workers which provide insights into the various dimensions of workers' perceptions and experiences that remained understudied in the existing literature. Thus, for instance instead of discussing structural political and economic developments at length, I try to examine how ordinary people, particularly the labouring people, perceived and participated in these processes. Further, especially in chapters 4 and 5, which deal with industrialization and labour issues respectively, I use petitions to present a rather complex engagement and interaction between the state and the society. Throughout the work but particularly in Chapter 5, petitions are used for questioning the validity and the scope of the narratives which almost invariably focus on formal labour organizations and

collective labour actions in investigating how workers coped with labour-related and other problems. By doing this I intend to enrich the existing scholarship on Iranian history by restoring the agency of those people who have so far remained peripheral to the main concerns of history—to get them out of the ‘waiting room of history’.⁶

Some Theoretical Considerations

When I set out to investigate the history the Iranian workers during the period under study, I encountered on more than one occasion the following perplexing question: ‘did any workers exist in early twentieth century Iran?’ Apparently, the question had its origins in a narrow understanding of “worker” and its reduction to factory labour exclusively. It was suggested that workers could only become subjects of historical inquiry if they were employed at factories, or else once they gained visibility by participating in labour organization and collective action. But I gradually realized that this misunderstanding was also caused by erroneously equating labour history with that of leftist movements—in Iran, and elsewhere. Supposedly, the Iranian modernization trajectory, which started in the 19th century and continued into the twentieth, resulted in the establishment of a state machine which imposed capitalist relations upon a passive and recipient society. This establishment was politically and economically hostile, or at best oblivious, to the interests of the wider population as it protected those of a small, privileged group. It was due to leftist parties and organizations that the deadlock was solved and state’s authoritarian tendencies were mended.⁷ Many studies of labour history promoted this idea in one way or another. This tendency was also the main reason for the incomparably higher attention paid to labour in the post-1941 period, when communist and socialist organizations were strongest in Iran. Paradoxically, by positioning

⁶ This metaphor, as I have encountered it so far, has been used on several occasions albeit in different contexts. It was used, for instance, by Tarık Zafer Tunaya, the famous Turkish historian, as a book title, *Medeniyetin Bekleme Odasında* (In the Waiting Room of Civilization), which was published in 1989. Interestingly enough the metaphor was used, in the same year, by the German playwright, Heiner Müller who used it of the ‘Third World’. See: Amit Chaudhuri, “In the Waiting-Room of History”, *London Review of Books*, Vol. 26 No. 12 · 24 June 2004. pages 3-8 (<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n12/amit-chaudhuri/in-the-waiting-room-of-history-last> access 2.2.2015). More recently and in a closer context to my usage, however, the metaphor was used by Dipesh Chakrabarty to describe how J. Stuart Mill, the 19th century British philosopher, consigned Africans, Indians and other ‘rude’ nations to an ‘imaginary waiting room of history’. See: D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Political Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8. For further discussion on the metaphor in Turkish literature see: Meltem Ahiska, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 38.

⁷ A similar teleological argumentation can also be observed in the nationalist and Islamist historiographies.

the struggle against the state's pervasive power at the official level, i.e at the level of formal politics, no space was left for informal politics and everyday forms of resistance.⁸

Consequently in addition to many puzzling questions, I am mainly preoccupied with three basic issues. First of all, I wonder how Iranian workers came to see themselves primarily as workers since 'workerness' was one of the several identities and affiliations that people had.⁹ What Katznelson observes for the French, American and German cases is true for non-Western cases as well. That is to say much of the variation between different working-class experiences 'consists of variations in the ways working people, confronting changes in the conditions of life [...], mapped and interpreted these changes at the level of dispositions'.¹⁰ This process can only be investigated by dealing with the discursive formation of the Iranian working-class as has been done for other working-classes, but which is insufficiently addressed in the existing literature.¹¹ Thus as Dipesh Chakrabarty remarks, "an analytic strategy that seeks to establish a 'working class' as the 'subject' of its history must also engage in the discursive formation that makes the emergence of such a subject-category possible."¹² The delineation of workers' discursive formation is or should be an indispensable part of any labour history but especially in non-Western contexts, for the following reason. Without due attention paid to how, in a particular non-Western context, workers—the 'flesh-and-blood human actors'¹³—came to perceive themselves as such, one not infrequently has

⁸ Barbara Misztal defines informality as "a form of interaction among partners enjoying relative freedom in interpretation of their roles' requirements.". Barbara A. Misztal, *Informality: Social Theory and Contemporary Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 8. James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985) provides a good illustration how everyday forms of resistance work among the weak groups. The book is a thoughtful and informed study of the social, economic and political relations and conditions of a Malay rice growing village in Kedah. Yet for years it stood as a landmark not only in South-East Asian or peasant studies but also in working class studies especially in understanding class consciousness.

⁹ I took 'workerness' from Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class Formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," *Poetics Today* 15, not. 2 (1994): 157-190. Here 161.

¹⁰ Ira Katznelson, "Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons", in *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, Ira Katznelson & Aristide R. Zolberg, (eds.) (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986), 18.

¹¹ Touraj Atabaki's following article is a notable exception: "From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 84, Fall 2013, pp. 159-175. By concentrating on oil workers employed in the Iranian oil industry in the south Atabaki attempts to trace the development of workers' self-consciousness as to their 'workerness'. For two other studies, on Egypt and Turkey, which stress the importance of the discursive making of the working class in the Middle East see: Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class Formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," *Poetics Today* 15, not. 2 (1994): 157-190; Yigit Akin "The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey: Language, Identity, and Experience", *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 54, Issue S17. 167-188.

¹² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History in Bengal 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 6.

¹³ Scott, James, C., *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), 43.

the impression that ‘worker’ is used as a cumbersome, author-imposed concept. It is as if the Western European trajectory is universally applicable, and the concept of worker denotes the same meaning irrespective of the socio-cultural, linguistic, political or economic variables which not only determines the course of the workers’ struggle but also their self-perception.¹⁴ To avoid these pitfalls and to challenge an objective understanding of class, the discursive formation of the Iranian working class should be adequately addressed. In short, as Katznelson succinctly puts it, ‘class is discursive’.¹⁵

Secondly, I want to go beyond the traditional concerns of what is known as ‘old labour history’ whose focus was on organized labour and labour institutions as well as on workers’ collective actions.¹⁶ While I was aware of the fact that even such aspects of Iranian labour remain understudied, the existing literature, despite its significant contribution to our knowledge of the subject, fell short of answering some basic questions which had preoccupied me. In much of the literature on Middle Eastern labour history a teleological role is attributed to the working classes. It is explicitly or implicitly claimed that workers in such countries as Iran, Turkey, or Egypt, as elsewhere in the world, acted as a progressive force in markedly reactionary political settings. It is further argued that workers would almost inevitably reach a point where they would overthrow the obsolete and exploitative productive relations for a just and egalitarian substitute. In this classical Marxist approach, factory workers, more than any other workers, were supposed to be the agents of this revolutionary mission. This not only resulted in what D. Quataert calls ‘the factory orthodoxy’,¹⁷ which refers to the excessive and disproportionate attention given to factory labour, but also distracted attention from those

¹⁴ I use “the Western European trajectory” only to refer to the familiar Eurocentrism problem and to an assumed universal model which portrayed factory workers as the agents of industrialization. Otherwise I am aware that such an unvarying model fails to describe even the diverse Western European experiences. In Europe too as a rule the development from artisanal labour to factory labour and the resulting development in the self-perception of workers took place gradually. For example, in his seminal work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, E. P. Thompson challenges the established idea that factory workers were the “eldest children of the industrial revolution” and instead suggests that they in fact were ‘late arrivals’. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London: V. Gollancz, 1963. 193. William H. Sewell, too, makes a similar observation for France. He argues an important ‘consequence of the French pattern of industrialization for French class formation was that artisans rather than factory workers long remained the overwhelming majority of the French industrial workers’. Sewell, “Artisans, Factory Workers and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789-1948”, in *Working-Class Formation*, Katznelson & Aristide (eds.), 49. Various chapters in this jointly edited volume describe the varying Western experiences in the making of working-classes and their discursive formations.

¹⁵ Ira Katznelson, “Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons”, *Working Class Formation*, Katznelson and Aristide (eds.), 34.

¹⁶ For a discussion on old and new labour history see: Marcel van der Linden, “Labour History: the Old, the New and the Global”, *African Studies*, 66, 2-3, August-December 2007, pp.169-180.

¹⁷ Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. 14.

aspects of labour history which did not necessarily relate to this mission. Evidence attests to the fact that ‘there has never been a working class with revolutionary consciousness in the fullest and most demanding sense of the term’.¹⁸ Motivated by my own methodological and analytical unease with such a teleological reading of labour history, this study employs the new labour history approach and is informed by a Thompsonian conception of the working class and its formation. Thus, instead of overemphasizing organizational developments, collective labour actions as well as political debates and leadership emphasis is put in this study on contextualizing workers’ struggles. The strength of Thompson’s approach for the current study stems from the fact that, to quote Meiksins-Wood, ‘it is capable of recognizing, and giving an account of, the operations of class in the absence of class consciousness’.¹⁹ Attempt was made, therefore, to seek the formation of the Iranian working class in more than merely objective and structural processes. In other words, class formations should be sought in circumstances when ‘men and women live their productive relations and experience their determinate situations, within the “assembly of social relations”, with their inherited culture and expectations, as they handle these experiences in culturally-specific ways’.²⁰ From my own understanding of social history I aim to show how this process worked in the Iranian context.

The third issue with which I am preoccupied is the establishment of a proper link between the workers’ agenda and political processes. I needed to relate workers’ experiences to the state, and vice versa, without necessarily suggesting a tug-of-war between the two. My experiences show that for the most part workers chose to avoid direct engagement with the state, at the central as well as local levels, unless they regarded it as necessary for their survival. Thus, I had to find a way to describe this cautionary engagement without suggesting either a blind political quietism or an imaginary revolutionism. This proved to be more complex than I initially assumed. In traditional labour historiography, formal labour organizations such as trade unions and syndicates have long served as a conventional means to link labour issues to politics, with politics being narrowly defined in such narratives. According to this narrow view, politics is what takes place within the government and state departments in which only politicians, government officials and members of the political parties participate. Thus, being

¹⁸ Ira Katznelson, “Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons”, *Working Class Formation*, Katznelson & Aristidi (eds.), 7.

¹⁹ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79.

²⁰ E. P. Thompson, “Eighteenth Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?”, *Social History* 3 (2) May 1978, p. 150. Quoted in Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80. Emphases are in the original.

a political actor simply required partaking in this predefined sphere as deferential participants to ensure its working, or as revolutionary actors to topple it. In either case, a dubiously narrow understanding of politics is the result.²¹ Alternatively, in connection with such a view of politics and the state, in some studies on the social history of labour, labour issues are virtually split off from political processes in order to claim an autonomous space for working people. By overemphasizing shop floor experiences or regional dimensions of labour without relating either to the broader range of working class experiences and political developments, labour is confined to an artificial cell which is almost entirely cut off from the outside world. It is as if the controversial state model is reproduced on a smaller scale in which the factory manager or the governor of a town acted as the supreme authority. Either of these approaches, I believe, needs to be challenged.

Furthermore, my impressionistic view of the erroneousness of looking at the state in Iran, as elsewhere for that matter, as, in Migdal's words, 'a stand-alone organization with firm boundaries between it and other social forces' was reinforced as I delved further into the experiences of working people.²² I argue instead that state-society relations in Iran were mutually transformative.²³ As far as state-society relations are concerned much of the existing literature on the first four decades of twentieth century Iranian history seems to suggest a clear-cut rupture between the pre- and post-1925 periods. Arguably while the first period is characterized by a freer political atmosphere tainted with a marked economic backwardness, the second period witnessed a rather repressive political environment which was accompanied by impressive economic growth. Such a clear-cut periodization is, needless to say, not without problems. Seen through the lens of working people, if the first two decades of the twentieth century were characterized by ever-increasing foreign economic domination, the economic policies adopted during the 1920's and 1930's made rapid industrial development a priority and paid insufficient attention to the working and living conditions of the workers. In both periods, however, workers negotiated their interests, in one way or another, with the ruling classes.

²¹ The reduction of labour struggle to a uniform labour movement can lead to quite problematic conclusions as that of Floor who argues that the primary goal of the Iranian labour movement 'was the *destruction* of imperialism and capitalism'. *Labour and Industry in Iran* (Washington: Mega Publishers, 2009) 30. (Emphasis added). Such a teleological role attributed to organized labour does not only miss different types of labour actions but also significantly obscures, if it does not altogether dismiss, other forms of labour activism. This point will be discussed below.

²² Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying how States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 250.

²³ *Ibid.*, 254.

From the beginning to the end of the period investigated in this study, the Iranian state remained open to negotiating with workers and with other social movements. However, the nature of this negotiation did not remain unchanged, nor did working people pursue unvaried interests and agendas. Generally speaking it is safe to suggest that from 1906 to the late 1920's the Iranian state was willing to regard formal labour organizations and collective labour actions as forms of negotiation while throughout the 1930's they were effectively suppressed and banned. Yet informal labour organizations and non-organized labour actions continued to exist.²⁴ For instance, throughout the period under study, the state encouraged and welcomed workers' petitions as yet another and more controllable form of negotiation. Also, in some cases while a group of workers were concerned about immediate labour-related problems, such as wages and unfavourable working conditions at their worksite, others could pursue more far-reaching and fundamental agendas such as siding with the wider working-class throughout the nation, or toppling the political establishment which they regarded as reactionary and exploitative. Jonathan Zeitlin touched upon part of this problem when he argued that 'the future of labour history should be sought in its redefinition as the history of industrial relations, understood as the changing relationships between worker, trade unions, employers and the state'.²⁵ To this one should also add civil society, which workers were a part of. For such a redefinition, labour historians should not only be more receptive to new theoretical orientations but should also get used to employing new types of documentation including those whose compilers 'were not deliberately and consciously recording for posterity'.²⁶

Petitions, as the principle sources of this study, belong to this type of documentation, and they have helped me to overcome, if only partially, the aforementioned problems. By using petitions I describe the discursive formation of the Iranian working class, in order to provide a

²⁴ "Formal" and "informal" are used in this work as analytical tools although the distinction between the two, as Van der Linden argues, is not always entirely clear. Based on Tom R. Burns and Helena Flam. *The Shaping of Social Organization: Social Rule System Theory with Applications* (London [etc.]: Sage, 1987) he makes the following remarks about the two types of labour organizations: "Some scholars think that an organization needs written rules to be "formal", but this would imply illiterates cannot constitute a formal organization. We might say that an organization becomes more formal, when it defines more specifically who is a member, and who is not; which *activities* are appropriate (useful and legitimate), and which are not; which *resources* are appropriate (useful and legitimate), and which are not; which *motives and purposes* are appropriate for actors to have, and which are not; which *outcomes* are appropriate, and which are not; in which specific *contexts* (when, where) the organizations' activities are or are not to take place." Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Towards a Global Labour History* (Brill: Leiden, 2008), 11 footnote 17.

²⁵ Jonathan Zeitlin, "From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations", *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. XL, 2 (1987), 159-184. Here 178.

²⁶ Jim Sharpe, "History from Below," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 30.

social history of Iranian textile labour and to discuss workers' relations with the state. Written by working people, as others, to the Majles and to other central and local authorities, petitions offer a genuine opportunity to trace the development of workers' self-perceptions, as well as an uninterrupted channel in state-society relations. Thus, before going into the use of petitions for the current study firstly a theoretical discussion of their use-value will be provided.

Blurring the Boundaries: Petitioners and their Addressees

To the Sacred Majles may God Empower its Pillars,

Before we begin our petition we entreat the retainers of the President of the Majles, may God make his power endure, and the honourable deputies to read this petition loudly in the Majles and to pay due attention to the situation of these craftsmen. Admittedly the purpose for the establishment of this national regime and the basis of the constitutional system is to attain the means of security and welfare for all as well as to obtain advantages and dispose of disadvantages to Iranians. This can only be obtained by making laws for the good of the country and for providing peace and revenues to people from which the general populace will benefit without discriminating between various crafts therein. You should not forget the principle of egalitarianism (*mesdaq-e vaqe'-e mosavat*). As shoe makers we have always made sacrifices and become forerunners for the establishment of the sacred constitution while at the same time we have, in the last years, significantly developed our craft and made our handiwork far more beautiful and attractive. However, in return for our efforts, some of the deputies totally disregarded this craft in their debates concerning the use of native fabrics and home manufactures and they were oblivious to our craft and showed a humiliating attitude towards us. Their pretext was that home-made shoes hurt and injured their feet [...]. Of course our words are about a number of deputies who wear foreign shoes and not those who from the beginning of their lives wore home-made shoes. In the meantime we urge those deputies who did not help us to study history in order to see what the Japanese Emperor did and said. You should have already heard that the Emperor, Mikado, declared that until shoes were produced in his country he would go around barefooted which he really did for a while until shoes were produced in his country. This is what great men and persons who are interested in promoting and developing a nation do. We would like to gain the attention of you gentlemen and request that you pay attention to native shoes like you did to native textiles. In this way we request that you add an article about native shoes to the supplement of the law, and promote this craft too.²⁷

Petitions can be defined as “demands for a favour or for the redressing of an injustice directed to some established authority”.²⁸ Petitioning, both in its written and verbal forms, is a

²⁷ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p14, “From the Shoe-Makers”, 4 March 1923.

²⁸ The definition is taken from: Lex Heerma Van Voss, “Introduction”, *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in Social History (2001): 1-10, here P. 1. The volume contains many articles on the use of petitions for studying social history. For instance, in “Voices from Among the ‘Silent Masses’: Humble Petitions and Social Conflicts in Early Modern Central Europe” Andreas Wiirgler discusses the use of collective and individual petitions for research on social conflict. In early Modern Europe while Cecilia Nubola deals in “Supplications between Politics and Justice: The Northern and Central Italian States in the Early Modern Age” with petitioning as a ‘privileged form of communication between subject and authority’ in early modern Italian states (p. 36). Also, in “The Power of Petitions: Women and the New Hampshire Provincial Government, 1695-

universal and centuries-old tradition which acted as a major channel between the rulers and the ruled in Iran as elsewhere.²⁹ Attending the petitions has been considered throughout the centuries as indispensable to just kingship. Many of the issues which people could not be openly express could be addressed through petitions. As such, petitioning served as ‘a privileged communicative space’.³⁰ There are several reasons why ruling elites took notice of

1700” Marcia Schmidt Blaine analyzes female agency by examining ‘the rights associated with petitioning, the procedure involved, and the variety of applications for petition use’. (p.57) while Oleg G. Bukhovets analyzes in “The Image of Jews in Byelorussia: Petitions as a Source for Popular Consciousness in the Early Twentieth Century” ‘the attitudes towards Jewishness’ (p.173) in Byelorussia where Jews made up to 54 percent of the urban population.

²⁹ Petitions remain an underexploited source in the Middle Eastern historiography in general and in Iranian history writing in particular. Yet, there are a number of good studies which analyse petitioning and petitions or else use them as their source material. The following are the works which I located: Irene Schneider, *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006). Focusing on 19th century petitions from Iran Schneider deals in this study with petitions sent between 1883 and 1886 to The Council for the Investigation of Grievances (*Majles-e Tahqiq-e Mazalem*) founded in 1882. As Schneider also points out some of these petitions had previously been published in Fedirun Ademiyet and Homa Natek, eds. *Efkar-e Ejiemai va Siyasi-va Eqtesadi dar Asar-e Montasher Nashodeh-e Dowran-e Qajar* (Essen: Nima Verlag, Essen, (n.d). Mansoureh Ettehadiyeh Nezam-Mafi also has an article which focuses on The Council for the Investigation of Grievances: Mansoureh Ettehadiyeh Nezam-Mafi, “The Council for the Investigation of Grievances: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century Iranian Social History”, *International Society for Iranian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1989): 51-61. On the Constitutional Period I have come across two articles both in Persian: Ali Tatari, “Bar rasi-ye Jayghah-e Arizehdar Pajuhashha-ye Asnadi”, *Payam Baharestan* 2, no. 4 (2009): 465-476; Siavash Shohani, “Ghozari bar Arayez-e Eanat”, *Payame Baharestan*, 2, no. 3 (2009): 315-329. While Tatari analyses petitions in terms of their place in conventional documentations categories Shohani investigates demands, financial and otherwise, as a specific type of petitions; in “From Amaleh (Labour) to Kargar (Worker): recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry”, Atabaki also uses petitions especially to discuss workers’ self-perception.

³⁰ ‘A privileged communicative space’ is taken from D. Zaret, “Petitions and the ‘Invention’ of Public Opinion in the English Revolution”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 101 (1996), pp. 1497-1555. Here 1512. Quoted in Ken Lunn & Ann Day, “Deference and Defiance: The Changing Nature of Petitioning in British Naval Dockyards”, in Lex Heerma Van Voss, ed., *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in Social History (2001): 131-150. Here 132. Petitions are sometimes dealt within a perspective of popular protest of which the following edited volume is a good example: *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi* Eleni Gara, M. Erdem Kabadayi and Christoph K. Neumann (eds.) (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2011). In “Coping with the State’s Agents “from Below”: Petitions, Legal Appeal, and the Sultan’s Justice in Ottoman Legal Practice” Eyal Ginio examined the petitions dated between 1694 and 1768 from Salonica to demonstrate how Salonicans used petitioning to further their interests. Also, in “Popular Protest and the Limitations of Sultanic Justice” Eleni Gara investigates the popular protest which occurred in Veroia in 1627 among a groups of Christians and shows how the petitioners successfully involved with the official discourse which presented the sultan as ‘protector of the common people and guarantor of justice’ (p.103). More importantly in “Petitioning as Political Action: Petitioning Practices of Workers in Ottoman Factories” M. Erdem Kabadayi examines workers’ petitions in order to questions the general understanding of strike in the literature and calls to widen our perception of what constitutes labour resistance (p. 66). For this, he *insightfully examines Ottoman workers’ petitions from late nineteenth century. Kabadayi’s PhD dissertation* (“Working for the State in a Factory in Istanbul: The Role of Factory Workers’ Ethno-Religious and Gender Characteristics in State-Subject Interaction in the Late Ottoman Empire”, Munich University, 2008) is also mainly based on petitions of the workers at Feshane Factory which was one of the earliest Ottoman state-owned factories. Gorkem Akgöz too bases her investigation of an early Republican state factory on workers’ petitions. See: “Many Voices of a Turkish State Factory: Working at Bakirkoy Cloth Factory, 1932-1950”, Ph.D Dissertation, Amsterdam University, 2012. As for the Egyptian case: Juan Ricardo Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt’s ‘Urabi Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), which deals, especially in chapter 2, with this movement of the late 19th century based on petitions; John Chalcraft “Engaging the State: Peasants and Petitions in Egypt on

the opinions brought forward by petitioners. Two reasons are of particular significance. Firstly contemporary statesmen were informed through petitions about the opinions and feelings of the general population which even the most authoritarian governments took seriously.³¹ Petitions sent directly to the central authorities, especially, provided central governments a chance to by-pass local intermediaries and to take action, before a source of popular distress, which might have been swept under the rug by local administrators who wanted to avoid putting their posts at risk, turned into overt acts of resistance. Secondly, there was always the threat of a revolt if a justified demand went unattended to. "The right to petition thus worked as a safety valve."³² If petitioning provided people with the opportunity to express their demands and grievances it at the same time enhanced the legitimacy of the rulers. After the Constitutional Revolution in Iran this privilege was claimed by the nascent parliament as the new basis of legitimate power.³³ The number of petitioners, as well as spectators, pouring into the newly established parliament was so high that Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, a deputy and a leading constitutionalist, commented: "here not even *rowzeh* can be recited".³⁴ During Reza Shah's reign, too, petitioning remained an encouraged practice. Thus upon his rise to power Reza Khan unsurprisingly made the following declaration: "I am obliged to look after the oppressed and to liberate them from the oppressors. I will permit all my countrymen to bring their complaints directly to me and to request redress directly from me."³⁵

A typical petition presented to the Majles starts with a display of respect to the authority in question often in a rather obedient and deferential language. Then the petitioner introduces

the Eve of Colonial Rule" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37 (2005), 303-325. This study discusses how during the 19th century Egyptian peasants engaged with the Ottoman rulers.

³¹ Van Voss, "Introduction", 4.

³² K. Tenfelde and H. Trischler (eds), *Bis vor die Stufen der Throns. Bittschriften und Beschwerden von Bergarbeitern* (Munich, 1986), p. 14. Quoted in Van Voss, "Introduction", 4.

³³ Mansureh Ettehadiyeh Nezamfafi, *Majls va Intikhabat* (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1996), 23.

³⁴ Feridoun Adamiyat, *Idi'uluzhi-yi Nahzat-i Mashrutiyyat-i Iran*, (The Ideology of the Constitutional Movement) (Tehran: Payam Press, 1977), 371. *Rowzeh khani* is a ritual sermon often organized, particularly within Shiite communities, with the participation of large numbers of people recounting and mourning the tragedy of Karbala incidence of 680 AD where one of the grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, Hosayn the son of Ali, was murdered along with some of his family members and supporters.

³⁵ Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, Syracuse (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 12. This held true for such countries as Turkey too. For a discussion on petitions during the Republican years in Turkey see: Yigit Akin, "Reconsidering State, Party and Society in Early Republican Turkey: Politics of Petitioning", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 39 (2007), 435-457. In this article by using petitions sent to the Republican Turkish Party by people from various social groups Akin discusses state-society relations in Turkey and powerfully challenges the established view of an imposing state against a passive and recipient society. For a comparative analysis of the petitions from Iran and Turkey during 1930s as sources of social history see: Serhan Afacan, "Devletle Yazismak: Turkiye ve Iran Sosyal Tarihciliginde Dilekceler" (*Corresponding with the State: Petitions in Turkish and Iranian Social History*), (in Turkish), *Turkiyat Mecmuasi*, Vol. 21/Spring, 2011, pp.1-29.

himself or herself, a part which at times provides detailed information as to petitioner's environments and social as well as political settings in which he or she lived. This part usually provides historians invaluable information which can help reconstruct many of the details regarding the lives and working conditions of workers. This part is followed by the statement of the request or complaint in question. In order to prove the accuracy of their claims the petition sometimes includes a supporting document called a Letter of Testimony (*Esteshhad Nameh*). This could be a letter from a prominent person, a leading merchant, governor, a cleric etc., or a photograph which was infrequently used as a testimony to demands for financial aid due to physical disability.

Workers' petitions almost unexceptionally employ a carefully balanced wording sophisticatedly stated so as not to outrage the authorities in question, while at the same time making the point sufficiently clear. During the constitutional period workers often referred to the merits of the constitutional regime and the sacrifices they made for its realization while after Reza Shah's coronation in 1925 they use a rather patriarchal language by emphasizing the protective role of the Shah over his people as well as his supremacy as their just King and father. Similar to Chalcraft's remarks about Egyptian peasants, Iranian workers too 'made strategic use of the figure of the just ruler and lodged sometimes assertive appeals to the rule of law and new and old rights in a dangerous and power-laden context'.³⁶ For their conflicts with their managers or factory-owners or for their complaints about local authorities they apparently knew how to draw the Shah or the Majles into their disputes, though they were not always successful. Yet, in some cases petitioners did not hesitate to use rather sarcastic language. In other cases workers use decidedly aggressive wording, such as the above-quoted petition of shoe-makers dated 1923 that criticized "the law for the use of national clothes" (*qanun-e este'mal-e albaseh-e vatani*) passed by the Majles in February 1923. The law made it compulsory for all state employees, including the military, to wear clothes produced using native fabrics, and of Iranian make. Shoe-makers were disappointed by being left out of the law, and they sarcastically put this point in their petition. The petition, which is only one example of this sort, most clearly shows how skilful labouring people were in their discursive engagement with rulers. They were apparently disappointed by the privileged position given to the textile industry, but at the same time clever enough to not accuse all deputies, by distinguishing between those who wore native shoes and who did not. We see sometimes that these kinds of petitions were sent anonymously, but this particular one, and several others,

³⁶ Chalcraft, "Engaging the State", 304.

had tens of stamps on it. Apparently, the authoritarian Pahlavi government tolerated such criticisms as long as they did not turn into outward collective action. Thus, workers' petitions call for a reconsideration of the boundaries between state and society as well as to rethink the limits of the authoritarian nature of the state in Iran, as elsewhere.

Petitions provide first-hand information about many of the details of workers' lives and living conditions which can rarely be found anywhere else. They also display the changing self-perceptions of workers and their changing attitudes toward the ruling classes. But there is a reliability problem involved in petitions. Since petitioners' top priority was to ensure responses to their cases they may at times use dissimulation. That is to say, petitioners may manipulate certain facts and 'adjust' them to fit their cases. Thus, petitions should always be cross checked by other sources, official and otherwise.

A Brief Assessment of the Current Literature on Iranian Labour History

Among the existing studies of this subject, Willem Floor's *Labour Unions, Law and Conditions in Iran, 1900-1941* is the most important work in English.³⁷ By using a wide range of primary and secondary sources in various languages, Floor cogently describes labour organizations, strikes, unions and the Parliamentary discussions regarding labour regulations in Iran. He also touches upon such labour issues as working hours, occupational safety and health as well as wages and costs of living. Floor's study is particularly important for providing an ample analysis of the situation of various industries in Iran between 1850 and 1941 and the attempts at industrialization especially during the 1930's. For example, he discusses in detail Iranian craft industries, the challenge posed to them by European ready-made imports as well as the factories which have been erected in different periods. However Floor does not dwell on the discursive formation of the working class and bases his analysis on a deterministic conception of class formation and a predefined class consciousness. Thus, unsurprisingly Floor's workers tended to fall short when it came to acting as a class. For instances he remarks: 'the workers in general had neither the time and energy, nor the understanding and capability to organize labour activities let alone a labour movement'.³⁸ Thus according to him it was the Marxist intelligentsia who 'considered labour problems as

³⁷ Originally published in the Occasional Paper Series of the Centre for the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies of the University of Durham in 1984 this work was published in 2009 in a single volume with three other studies of the author: *Labour and Industry in Iran* (Washington: Mega Publishers, 2009).

³⁸ Ibid., 30.

being an integral part of the socio-economic and political system'.³⁹ Paradoxically, although Floor makes repeated references to non-factory workers, which as he admits outnumbered factory workers, he does not recognize the same diversity when it comes to the labour movement. Floor seems to attribute a teleological role to the Iranian working class and to the labour movement whose 'primary aim', he argues 'was the *destruction* of imperialism and capitalism'.⁴⁰ Floor's study provides an ample top-down analysis of Iranian labour by also emphasizing regional differences and similarities. His book continues to be an influential and pioneering study in the field.

Habib Ladjevardi's, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* is another study which should be mentioned.⁴¹ This ten-chapter volume is primarily concerned with the post-1941 period and only the first chapter, The Genesis of the Labour Movement, deals with the period prior to 1941. As is clear from its title, the book is mainly concerned with organized labour. Ladjevardi, too, overstates the political aspects of labour and labour organizations and leaves hardly any room for other and non-confrontational forms of labour struggle. Yet, Ladjevardi not only overemphasizes the role of the labour organizations but also seems to disregard non-organized labour and the workers who did not participate in collective actions. It is mainly for this reason that he draws the following conclusion about the period between 1906 and 1941: '[...] without political power – as exercised in independent trade unions- the workers could not influence the content of economic and social reform programs nor could they ensure that they would receive their appropriate share in the fruits of progress.'⁴² This analysis is based on a recognizably reductionist perception of politics as well as on a narrow understanding of labour struggle.

Mention should also be made of two studies written in Persian, namely, Farhang Qasemi's *Sandikalism dar Iran* (Trade Unions in Iran 1905-1941);⁴³ and Jalil Mahmudi and Naser Sa'idi's joint study, *Shuq-e Yak Khiz-e Boland* (Towards a Subtle Rise).⁴⁴ Qasemi's study, like those of Floor and Ladjevardi, mostly deals with factory-based organized labour but he too, like Floor, touches upon such important issues as nutrition, sanitary conditions and wages. Mahmudi and Sa'idi's book consists of seven chapters along with an introduction and a conclusion. Although they refer to extra-factory labour more often, their work is also

³⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 30. Emphasis added.

⁴¹ Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, Syracuse, N.Y : Syracuse University Press, 1985.

⁴² Ibid., 27.

⁴³ Farhang Qasemi, *Sandikalism dar Iran* (Paris: Bonyad-e Musaddeq, 1985).

⁴⁴ Jalil Mahmudi and Naser Sa'idi, *Shuq-e Yak Khiz-e Boland*, 44, Tehran: Qatreh, 2002.

another example of the old labour history paradigm written from an institutional perspective. Neither in these two studies nor in the other two mentioned above can we hear the voices of the labouring people of Iran. When workers do appear it is almost exclusively in the programs of leftist parties and organizations or in the lists of demands of striking workers. At any rate, they provide a solid groundwork upon which new studies dealing with previously understudied aspects of labour and using previously unexploited new sources can be undertaken.

The Focus of the Study

This study deals with the social history of industrialization and labour in Iran from the inception of the Constitutional regime in 1906 until the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941. Along the way, special attention is paid to the textile industry and textile workers. This study aims to show how workers negotiated their demands and grievances with the state and how petitioning functioned as the main channel of this interaction and negotiation. Although references are made throughout the study to workers who were employed in various industries, emphasis is placed, to the extent possible, on the textile industry. This was the largest manufacturing sector, both in terms of the total output and the workforce involved, in Iran, and it remained so well into the twentieth century. With the exception of the nascent oil industry in the south, the textile industry was among the most developed industries in Iran. Also, the textile industry provides a suitable case to study and question the process of transformation from craft industry to factory-based manufacturing. Although formal labour organizations and organized labour activities are discussed in this study, unlike in much of the existing literature on Iranian labour history, emphasis is put on informal types of labour organizations as well as on labour which was not organized in the format of unions. Also, workers' self-perception and their perceptions about and engagement in political and economic processes are dealt with in this study.

The periodization of this study calls for justification too. The starting point was defined by the source material used in this work, namely, petitions. Although petitioning, both written and verbal, was a centuries-old and accepted tradition in Iran, it was with the opening of the First Parliament in 1906 that it was established as a legal right and received relatively systematic treatment. The decision to end this research with the forced abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 stemmed from two interrelated reasons. First, the political, social and economic landscape in

the post-1941 period was recognizably different from the period prior to it. Roughly from 1906 to 1925, Iran remained a non-industrialized country, but workers, as well as other classes, enjoyed relative freedom, while from 1925 until 1941, things started to develop in the other direction. Thus when Mohammad Reza Shah replaced his father in 1941 Iran had made significant progress towards industrialization, but more than a decade had passed with highly authoritarian policies which left little, if any, space for open protest and collective labour action. However the post-1941 period witnessed an immense proliferation of political and labour organizations. It is because of the great quantity of sources produced by and about the organizations and movements which flourished during this period that it happened to attract the greater part of attention from historians who concentrated on Iranian labour history. And this constituted the second reason to stop at 1941.

The Plan of the Study

The study consists of four chapters. Chapter-2 presents an historical background of the 19th century, insofar as it relates to the period investigated in this work. Here, mention is made of the reform movement which mainly started in the military sphere as a reaction of successive defeats at the hands of Russia, but then extended, in the following decades, to include the political, economic and social spheres as well. The economic and social aspects of the reforms are particularly emphasized here. It is argued in this chapter that the popular support for the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 was due to epidemic diseases, famines, unpopular economic policies of the Court as well as stifling foreign economic domination. A coalition of merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen, religious groups and intellectuals were responsible for the uncompromising movement against arbitrary Qajar rule. This was most clearly reflected in the Tobacco Protest of 1891. The significance of this protest for labouring people stemmed from the fact that the craft workers experienced or witnessed for the first time the possibility of affecting the Government's policies through resistance.

Chapter-3 deals with an overview of the period extending from the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 to the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941. Here attention is especially paid to the emergence of a new political community in Iran, particularly among labouring people, in its shifting forms. In the First National Assembly opened for the first time in country's history in 1906, six classes (*tabaqat*), including guild members, were represented in the Parliament. Their parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities are discussed in this chapter. The class-

based election system was abolished before the elections for the Second Parliament in 1909. This however did not mean the end of the participation of the labouring people in the making of the political community in Iran. To this end, mention is also made of petitioning a peculiar channel of state-society interaction in Iran from the Constitutional Revolution onwards, although petitioning as such had been a centuries-old established tradition in the country. Also, the failure of the constitutional experiment in 1911 and the emergence of authoritarian modernization within about a decade are analysed from a grassroots perspective. In the main, it is argued in this chapter that, disillusioned by the constitutional experiment's failure to provide employment, establish security and form a national economy with minimum foreign influence, Iranian subaltern groups, along with other classes, had become receptive to a strong, though not necessarily despotic, state. The steady rise to power of Reza Khan from 1921 until his coronation as the Shah in 1925 partly met some of these expectations. However his uncompromising centralization policies claimed the previously more or less autonomous realms from which Iranian subalterns made their living with little state intervention. Combined with the mechanized factory-based economic policies from the mid-1925s on, Iranian subalterns increasingly felt uneasy with the new regime and enjoyed almost no betterment in their living and working conditions.

Chapter-4 examines Iranian industrialization between 1906 and 1941. It first analyses popular perceptions of economic development and reactions to foreign ready-made imports. Following this, Iranian industries until the industrial leap-forward of 1903s are discussed by emphasizing small-scale and artisanal industries. The tension between promoting the craft industries and introducing factory-based industrialization is referred to in the chapter. It then discusses the factory-based industrialization which started in the late 1920's and gained unprecedented speed during the 1930's. Along the way, however, attention is paid to how workers, as well as other classes, were involved in this process and how they perceived industrialization policies. Throughout the chapter, emphasis is put on the textile industry, while other industries are also mentioned when relevant. Chapter-5 deals with the discursive formation of the Iranian working class and labour issues. The chapter first examines how workers came to see themselves primarily as workers and how they gradually developed a language of their own. Following this discussion, such issues as the nature of Iranian labour, labour legislation and working and sanitary conditions are also discussed in this chapter. Throughout the chapter not only central politics, but also provincial politics are considered. In the process, attention is paid to workers' impact on and reactions to the labour policies

adopted by the state. Chapter 6 contains some concluding assessments and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: From the Consolidation of the Qajar Monarchy to the Constitutional Revolution: Iran in the Nineteenth Century

Introduction

Political, economic and social developments which took place throughout the 19th century in Iran paved the way for the Constitutional Revolution at the turn of the 20th century and played major roles in shaping the subsequent history of the country. It is thus necessary to provide an overview, albeit a brief one, of this period. This chapter outlines the 19th century historical background of Iran, emphasizing its economic and social and political aspects. In the following pages, economic developments are handled with a special emphasis on the crafts industries and their development in the context of European economic penetration. Following this discussion is a consideration of social developments and the state of Iranian society at the turn of the 20th century, when our narrative of the social history of Iranian textile labour begins. The chapter ends with concluding remarks about the 19th century.

Under Qajar rule, the foundations of modern Iran were laid. Thus, ‘the history of nineteenth century Persia forms a bridge between the medieval and the modern periods’¹. The century was marked by political, economic and social developments out of which several ideological currents emerged. Due to both internal circumstances and external influences, several ideologies emerged in Iran which ranged from nationalism to socialism and from Islamism to anti-clericalism. Yet it was, above all else, constitutionalism that changed the course of the Iranian history. Rather than being a distinct ideology, constitutionalism was an amalgam of many ideologies, and it brought together otherwise conflicting groups. The outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution in 1905 significantly weakened the Qajar monarchy, which was to disappear at the end of the first quarter of the century. All of these developments had important societal consequences and significantly transformed Iranian society.

Reforms under the Shadow of Arms: Military, Politics and Reforms in Iran 1813-1848

With the decline of Safavid rule in 1736, a period of tribal conflict ensued in Iran during which several tribes struggled for power. Throughout the period, the country remained disturbed and fragmented and the main power bases changed hands at relatively short

¹Ann K. S Lambton, *Qajar Persia* (London, I. B. Tauris, 1987), viiii.

intervals between the Afsharids, Zands and Qajars. The instability ended a few years before the turn of the 19th century, with Agha Mohammad Khan's rise to ultimate power in 1796 as the founder of the Qajar dynasty. The Qajar tribe had been one of the original components of the Safavid Qizilbash confederacy.² Having remained a hostage of Karim Khan Zand in Shiraz, the capital of the Zand dynasty (1751-1794), for almost twenty years, Agha Mohammad Khan closely observed the advance of Zand power which he was soon to replace with his own. The turning point was in 1779, when upon Karim Khan's death Agha Mohammad Khan escaped from Shiraz to his homeland, Mazandaran. After gradually consolidating his power in the Alborz region he moved further to central Persia and captured Fars and Kerman. He reached to the peak of his rule by extending his control over Georgia and Khorasan. Soon after he became the almost undisputed ruler of Iran, Agha Mohammad Khan was stabbed to death by his servants in 1797. In 1798 Fath Ali Khan, Agha Mohammad Khan's nephew, crowned himself Shah and became the second Qajar Shah, after his uncle, who had been castrated in boyhood by the enemies of his father and thus had no male heir.

By the time Fath Ali Shah died after his nearly four decade-long reign, the country had suffered the devastating consequences of two bitter defeats at the hand of Russians, and the burden of subsequent treaties. The first war between Iran and Russia started with the Russian invasion of the Caucasian parts of Iran in 1804 and lasted, though intermittently, for nine years until 1813. Even though Fath Ali Shah personally took part in the battles, the greater part of the war was commanded by Abbas Mirza, the heir apparent and the prince-governor of Azarbaijan. He was deservedly regarded by many European observers 'as the one man capable of initiating a national revival'.³ In 1809 the Shah obtained a fatwa from the mullahs who declared holy war (*jihad*) against the Russians and proclaimed that 'the king of the Muslims is in this battle a ghazi fighting the Holy War' and urged Muslims to take part in this war claiming that the participants in the war would merit remission of their sins on the Day of the Judgement.⁴ The war was not a complete military disaster for Iran from the beginning until the end. Quite to the contrary, Iran proved successful from time to time during long-lasting fights. However in 1812, the defeat of Napoleon, whom the Russians had been fighting for some time, enabled Russia to allocate greater resources to the Caucasian front.

² Gavin R. G Hambly, "Agha Muhammad Khan and the Establishment of the Qajar Dynasty", in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, *From Nader Shah to the Islamic Republic*, eds., Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly & Charles Melville (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104.

³ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴ Hasan Fasai, *History of Persia Under Qajar Rule*, trans. Heribert Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 127-28.

The difference between the modern, well-equipped and disciplined Russian troops and the tribal forces of Iran was decisive. In the end, Iran had to accept a humiliating peace treaty known as Treaty of Golestan signed in 1813. According to the treaty Iran lost many of its Caucasian provinces: Qarabagh, Ganja, Shirvan, Baku, Georgia and parts of Talesh. Also, Russia gained the exclusive right to have warships on the Caspian Sea, which left Iranian shores vulnerable to Russian attack. In addition to these conditions, Russian recognition would be necessary for legitimate succession to the Persian throne.

The treaty satisfied none of the parties and Abbas Mirza, who did not consider it as a definitive settlement, prepared for the next war. News about Russian misconduct against Muslims in the lost territories drove large numbers of Muslims, and even Georgian Christians, into exile in Iran.⁵ Finally in 1826 a new fatwa was issued which declared that opposition to the jihad was a ‘sign of unbelief’.⁶ Abbas Mirza was confident in his newly organized army, under the *nezam-e jadid* (The New Order). Yet, Iranian troops could not hold out for long against the Russians who secured a decisive outcome after a short struggle. The subsequent Treaty of Turkomanchai signed in 1828 only added to the disaster brought about by the previous treaty. On top of the previous territorial losses, the khanates of Erivan and Nakhchivan were lost to Russia. Iran had to pay Russia a huge sum, 20,000,000 roubles, as a war indemnity. Further diplomatic and economic privileges given to Russia were also among the terms of the treaty. The economic aspects of this treaty will be dealt with in the following sections. Suffice it to say, however, that the treaty determined for a long time the basic frames of Russo-Iranian economic relations. In political terms, the wars fought against Russia and the two treaties dealt major blows to Iran and its newly founded dynasty. The last but not the least important consequence of the post-Turkomanchai status quo was the ever-increasing influence of Russia over Iran, a phenomenon which was to bring about far reaching consequences in the political, economic and cultural spheres in the decades to follow.

Despite his ambitious military reforms, Abbas Mirza’s army fell short of expectations during the fights against the Russians. The defeats at the hands of the Russians were both the reason for and the result of the strikingly inadequate attention given by Qajar Shahs to the creation of a modern military force similar to those created by the neighbouring Ottomans from late 18th century onwards, or by Mohammad Ali of Egypt in early 19th century. Russian-officered

⁵ F. Kazemzadeh, “Iranian relations with Russia and the Soviet Union to 1921”, in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, 336.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 336.

Cossack Brigades, formed rather late in the century, remained the only serious and disciplined military force for a long time. Nonetheless, Abbas Mirza's reform program was not restricted to the military sphere and his legacy was to leave its mark on the rest of the century. He was the first Iranian ruler to send students abroad. Their goal was to professionalize mostly military-related affairs and institutions, but the graduates also brought back with them European ideas and material culture, such as the printing press and the newspaper. Westernization had made its way into Iran, but how it could be accommodated to the native culture was yet to be determined. Fath Ali Shah's death and that of the heir apparent one year earlier secured Mohammad Mirza a peaceful accession to the throne with the support of the British and the consent of Russia. Mohammad Shah reigned from 1834 until 1848. Russia had already made their power felt in Iran and Britain was soon to join it. With the two treaties signed in 1836 and 1841 between Iran and Britain, the British gained the same privileges previously conceded to the Russians, plus the status of one of the 'Most Favoured Nations'. The rivalry between the two Great Powers of the time for exercising influence on Iran brought about two diverse consequences. On the one hand it prolonged the life of the Qajar dynasty, whose ruling elite came to excel in balancing one power against the other.⁷ Although Iran has never officially become a colony of either of the two powers the degree of the foreign presence in this country made its independence, especially in economic terms, questionable. Consequently the Qajar dynasty fell further into disfavour once the patriotic, and later nationalist, feelings merged with heightened anti-imperialism amongst the higher and lower classes of society. This paved the way for a number of major political, social and economic developments which characterized Naser al-Din Shah's reign (1848-1896).

⁷ Nothing could illustrate this policy better than the words of Hosayn Khan, a nineteenth century Persian diplomat. In an interview with Prince Metternich he held in Vienna on the way back from his mission to Britain to congratulate Queen Victoria on her accession in 1838, Hosayn Khan described the attitude of Muhammad Shah as follows: "The Shah is sovereign of his country and as such he desires to be independent. There are two great powers with whom Persia is more or less in direct contact—Russia, and the English power in India. The first has more military means than the second: on the other hand England has more money than Russia. The two powers can thus do Persia good and evil; and in order above all to avoid the evil the Shah is desirous of keeping himself with respect to them within the relations of good friendship and free from all contestation. If, on the contrary, he finds himself threatened on the one side he will betake himself to the other in search for support which he shall stand in need of. That is not what he desires but what he may be driven for he is not more the friend of one than of the other of those powers: he desires to be with them on a footing of equal friendship. What he cherishes above all is his independence and the maintenance of good relations with foreign powers". Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 88.

From Reform to Revolution: The Age of Ambivalent Reforms and the Coming of the Constitutional Revolution 1848-1905

Naser al-Din Shah's reign, particularly in its early years, was marked by a series of reforms mainly launched by his prime-minister Mirza Taqi Khan, who was also known as Amir Kabir. During his tenure between 1848 and 1852 Amir Kabir undertook a series of reforms similar to those of Abbas Mirza which the former had personally witnessed during his early career in Tabriz.⁸ He opened modern schools, and in 1851 founded the *dar al-fonun*, (the House of Sciences), and took several initiatives to promote native industries.⁹ Amir Kabir's reforms were multidimensional and included almost every aspect of the political, military, economic and cultural spheres. In many respects he was a typical ambitious modernist Muslim statesman like Sultan Mahmud II in Istanbul or Mehmed Ali Pasha in Egypt. The implementation of his far reaching reform program required the adoption of sound economic measures to ensure economic development and directing extra revenue to the state treasury. In the mid-19th century another important development took place in Iran and it brought about many important long term consequences. A young merchant from Shiraz named Sayyid Mohammad Ali using reinterpretation of Traditions concerning the Hidden Imam, proclaimed the coming of a new age and himself as the Bab (Gate) to the Hidden Imam, the Twelfth Imam in Twelver Shiism, whom he promised was soon to arrive.¹⁰ Despite clerical opposition, Naser al-Din Shah did not take any attempt against the movement in the beginning. The Bab was executed in 1850, yet the turning point came in 1852 when a few of his followers were accused of an assassination plot against the Shah. Babis were persecuted and many were executed, including the female poet-leader Qorrat al-Ayn. Out of Babism emerged Bahaim, preached in 1860s by Baha-Allah, who claimed to be 'He whom God shall make manifest' as promised by the Bab. In some respects, the movement had reformist ideas but from an Islamic point of view their teaching triggered severe criticism.

When Amir Kabir was first dismissed in 1851 and then executed in 1852, his reform program was also set aside. The unpopular Mirza Agha Khan Nuri was appointed as prime minister until 1858 when he was dismissed by the Shah, who was dissatisfied with his lax conduct in office. From this time until the early 1870s Naser al-Din Shah ruled without a prime minister,

⁸ The following is a classic study on Amir Kabir: Fereydon Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran* (Amir Kabir and Iran) (Tehran: Khawarezmi, 1985/1362).

⁹ Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir*, 354-367 & 387-401.

¹⁰ For an ample study on the Babi movement see: Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca and London Cornell University Press, 1989).

first through a number of ministries and then through a consultative body he established in 1859 which included princes, notables, mullahs, clerks and officials.¹¹ In 1871 the Shah appointed Mirza Hosayn Khan, Moshir al-Dawleh the Sepahsalar as prime minister. Coming from a successful career at the Iranian Foreign Service he had closely observed the Ottoman reform movement from 1856 onwards and was in close contact with such reformists as Fath Ali Akhundzadeh and Malkom Khan. A true successor to Amir Kabir, Moshir al-Dawleh undertook a series of reforms, mostly administrative, in order to secure a rational administration and end corruption that was very common both in the centre and the provinces. His reform program faced resistance from courtiers as well as from the clergy, and his opponents finally succeeded in having him dismissed in 1873. Following the dismissal of Moshir al-Dawleh, a period of more arbitrary rule by the Shah started.

Unpopular policies, particularly those related to the economy, further alienated diverse segments of society and intensified discussions about restricting the despotic powers of the monarch. A number of concessions granted to foreign nationals from the early 1870s onwards were what pulled on the trigger. In fact, this economic policy was not the creation of Naser al-Din Shah alone. After the attempts to promote native industries by Mirza Abbas and Amir Kabir failed to amount to much, a period began when the main financial policy was to secure as much cash as possible from customs duties and foreign investment. This policy was the major point of contention not only between Abbas Mirza and Naser al-Din Shah, but also between the two reformist chief ministers, namely Amir Kabir and Moshir al-Dawleh. As Nikki Keddie observes, although Amir Kabir believed in and acted to provide a development policy independent of Britain and Russia, Moshir al-Dawleh favoured British involvement in Iran's protection and development.¹² He was a strong supporter of the famous Reuter Concession, granted to the British subject Julius de Reuter, which he helped persuade the Shah to sign in 1872.¹³ This concession described by Lord Curzon, himself an economic and political imperialist, as "the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that had probably ever been dreamed of".¹⁴ He was hardly exaggerating. As a matter of fact the concession mainly granted Reuter the right to build a railway from the Caspian ports southward, but it also included exclusive rights to the erection of factories, processing minerals, undertaking irrigation works, launching agricultural

¹¹ Nikki Keddie, "Iran under the Late Qajars 1848-1922", in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, 183.

¹² Keddie, "Iran under the Late Qajars", 186-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁴ Nikki Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981), 58-9.

improvements, and developing new forms of transport.¹⁵ Internal opposition, Russian hostility, and the lack of British support brought about the end of the concession. Apart from political and economic implications, the movement against the concession was in a sense a dress-rehearsal of the Tobacco Protest which was to take place less than two decades later. Maybe for the first time in modern Iranian history a heterogeneous group ranging from the notables to mullahs and from intellectuals to common people united, though on a small-scale, for a common cause.¹⁶

A similar oppositional coalition came on the scene again in early 1890s. This time the Shah granted in 1890 a complete monopoly over the production, sale and export of all Iranian tobacco to a British subject, Major Gerald Talbot, for fifty years. This concession was not essentially different from the previous concession attempts of the Shah. Yet the ensuing mass opposition movement, which is justifiably described as ‘a prelude to the Constitutional Revolution’¹⁷ was not only broader in scope than the movement against the Reuter concession, but was also operationally more effective. The concession was kept secret for a while until late in 1890, when the newspaper *Akhtar*, published in Istanbul, disclosed the agreement. Tobacco was widely grown in Iran, profiting many cultivators, landlords, shopkeepers, and exporters, along with mullahs who had close contacts with many of these groups. On the strength of the Treaty of Turkomanchi, Russia protested against not only this particular concession but any concession to be given to foreigners.¹⁸ From early 1891 onwards a series of protests, some of them rather bloody, took place in various cities of the country. Clerical opposition was further emphasized by a subsequent fatwa by Hajj Mirza Hasan Shirazi, a prominent mullah, which denounced the concession in the following words: “In the name of God the Merciful, the Forgiving. Today the use of tobacco in whatever fashion, is tantamount to war against the Imam of the Age [the Hidden Imam], may God hasten his glad advent.”¹⁹

With protests already underway, the fatwa further contributed to the agitation. Smoking was abandoned altogether, reportedly even by the wives of the Shah and by non-Muslims too, and the bazaars closed down. The concession was finally abolished early in 1892 with a cost of £ 500,000 to be paid as compensation to the company which the government borrowed from the

¹⁵ Nikki Keddie, “Iran under the Late Qajars”, 187.

¹⁶ Ibid., 189-90.

¹⁷ Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 223.

¹⁸ Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 227.

¹⁹ Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 247.

British-owned Imperial Bank as the first Qajar foreign loan. The Tobacco Protest of 1891-92 was a turning point in many ways. From a societal viewpoint, Iranians were once again convinced that ‘the Shah and his government were selling the country to unbelievers’ and thus they should keep an eye on the government's policies.²⁰ Besides, the common ‘enemy’ — the foreigner—became more manifest than ever, a phenomenon which was to become one of the main components of the oppositional discourse in almost every major disturbance in Iran in the decades to follow. Finally, although a relatively quiet period followed the protests, the government’s tobacco policy further paved the way for constitutionalist demands and the success of the protests reinforced popular perception as to the utility of collective action. Naser al-Din Shah was assassinated in 1896 and his son Mozaffar al-Din succeeded him to the throne. The discontent accumulated especially during the last decades of the 19th century could find during Mozaffar al-Din’s reign a rather favourable atmosphere for collective action, which brought about the Constitutional Revolution in 1905.

Economy and Society in 19th Century

Geographical factors had an immense influence on Iran’s demographic and economic development. A lack of navigable rivers and lakes, shortage of rainfall, and a vast central desert surrounded by four formidable mountain ranges—the Zagros, the Alborz, the Mekran and the Uplands—fragmented the population into secluded villages, isolated towns and nomadic tribes.²¹ Although there are no reliable demographic statistics on 19th century Iran, it is estimated that while the population was around 5-6 million in the beginning of the century, by the early 20th century it had increased to some 10 million.²² It is obvious that greater part of the population lived in rural areas and the nomadic portion of the population was significant. Tribal nomadic population, on the other hand, fell from perhaps as high as 50 percent in 1800 to 33 percent by 1850 and to 25 percent by 1914.²³ In the absence of any significant transportation or communication facilities, geographic and demographic factors had important political and economic consequences. They prevented the emergence of a high

²⁰ Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 90.

²¹ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982), 11.

²² Nikki Keddie, “Iran under the Late Qajars”, 174; Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 20. Also, while in 1807 General Gardane estimates the population of Iran to be nine million at most, this seems to be an over-estimation. Sir John Malcolm give an estimate of six million. Ann K. S Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 44.

²³ John Foran, “The Concept of Dependent Development as a Key to the Political Economy of Qajar Iran (1800-1925)”, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2/3 (1989), pp. 5-56. Here p. 24

degree of centralization similar to what took place in the contemporary Ottoman Empire or Egypt.²⁴ This left tribal elements enough space not only to manage their own internal affairs but also to rule over the villages within their territories.²⁵ Geographic fragmentation also made the creation of an efficient country-wide market impossible. Thus even at the turn of the twentieth century ‘Iran could in no way be regarded as a single economic unit’.²⁶ The most disastrous consequences of the physical isolation of the region were to be seen in the catastrophic famines during which while, in one region, thousands lost their lives to hunger, another region enjoyed relative prosperity.

Iran remained an agricultural economy well into the twentieth century. The population was divided into various classes, mainly the landed upper class, propertied middle class, urban wage-earners, and rural population.²⁷ As for the third and the fourth classes, and for the second also to some extent, major dislocations took place throughout the century for several reasons. Most importantly the increasing commodification of agriculture displaced many peasants from their lands and deprived them of even the essentials for their living. On the other hand, in the absence of any effective tariff protection or any notable economic policy to promote native production, increasing European economic penetration destroyed many handicrafts industries and native manufactures. As a result, the number of the urban unemployed increased during the century.

Land, Industry and Labour

Nineteenth century Persia is sometimes loosely described as feudal. Although it was, strictly speaking, a medieval European phenomenon, the term feudalism is used for Persia because it effectively explains the power structure based on the possession of land and the fragmentation of authority, leading to disorder, that was common in Qajar Iran. Yet Iran’s feudalism was more apparent than real. In principle “feudalism is a form of clientage that has been given sanction *in law*”.²⁸ Therefore, although the Qajar Iran did carry some of the characteristics of a feudal society it was not feudal in the technical sense.²⁹ Nonetheless, both the economy of

²⁴ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 1.

²⁵ Keddie, “Iran under the Late Qajars”, 174.

²⁶ Julian Bhariar, *Economic Development in Iran: 1900-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 7.

²⁷ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 33-4.

²⁸ Steven Hause & William Maltby, *Western Civilization: A History of European Society* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2004), 143-3. Emphasis added.

²⁹ Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, P. xi

the country and the livelihood of the populace continued to be land-based. Suffice it to say that more than four fifths of the total population was engaged in agriculture.³⁰ Four main categories of land were recognized according to the nature of ownership or the mode of its exploitation. The first was private property (*melk*, *pl. amlak*), second was the crown land (*khaleseh pl. khalesat*), the third category was the land immobilized for charitable or other purposes (*waqf*, *pl. awqaf*) and the fourth and the last was dead land (*mavat*) with no owner or abandoned land (*bayerat*) which was fallen out of cultivation.³¹ Unsurprisingly, the changes in the land regime as well as the shifts in the cultivated crops had remarkable economic and social consequences. Also large landowners, whether they inherited or purchased their land, or obtained it by dubious means, played important roles throughout the century and later. Peasants worked the land and paid a rent in cash or kind. Or otherwise, they cultivated it under a crop-sharing agreement (*mozara'eh*) details of which were largely determined by local customs. If a landowner rented his land or farmed it on a *moqata'eh* contract or he was granted a *toyul*, without tax-immunity, he was responsible for the payment of the government tax. Otherwise the taxes were collected by provincial governors.³²

Throughout the nineteenth century considerable demographic fluctuations occurred in Iran. Cholera and plague, which appeared several times in several regions during the century, along with other epidemic diseases, famines and other natural calamities were both the causes and results of poor agricultural methods.³³ They in turn resulted not only in the depopulation of many villages and districts, but also severely hurt non-agricultural activities, particularly those based on agricultural produce. Thus, the workforce released from agriculture fell into further misery without any viable prospect in urban industries, which did not fare any better.

The concept 'industry' is, at least in the Iranian context, far from self-explanatory. If we follow the division of industrial vs. pre-industrial we should then be cautious as to how to describe Iranian manufacturing before the introduction of factory-based production to the country, which took place through the end of the period covered in this study. Generally speaking, in Persian literature, the native manufacturing was called *san'at*/industry or *herfeh*/craft. Iran had a historically and technically well-established system of traditional artisanal industry, mainly concentrated in such cities as Isfahan, Yazd, Shiraz, Kashan,

³⁰ Ahmad Seyf, "Technical Changes in Iranian Agriculture, 1800-1906", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jul., 1984), 142-154. Here 142.

³¹ Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 51.

³² *Ibid.*, 62-3.

³³ For an ample discussion of agricultural methods in 19th century Iran see Ahmad Seyf, "Technical Changes".

Kerman, Tabriz, Hamadan and Rasht. Production mostly took place in enterprises employing less than 10 persons³⁴ using manual power or very simple equipment. The workforce consisted, almost as a rule, of a master, a few journeymen, and some young unskilled assistants. The product was usually sold where it was produced. This type of manufacturing was organized around guilds (*senf- pl. asnaf*) which can be defined as “group[s] of townspeople engaged in the same trade or craft, who elect their own chief and who pay guild taxes; this group having economical, social, fiscal and political functions”.³⁵ The main characteristic feature of a guild is the guild tax or collective tax which a guild’s members collectively paid to the Government. As Willem Floor also points out, despite their significance, there is not adequate literature on guilds compared to, for example, the Egyptian or Ottoman cases, even though guilds attracted the greater part of attention given to Iranian manufacturing history.³⁶ Furthermore, as Donald Quataert rightly observes for the Ottoman case, in their study of Ottoman manufacturing most observers considered only two forms of industrial activities. “To them”, says Quataert, “manufacturing was visible only when it was urban-based and either guild-organized or located in a factory setting.”³⁷ The same holds true for Iran. Leaving aside the discussions of factory-based manufacturing for later sections, one can argue that the reason for and the consequence of this approach was the underestimation of the manufacturing capacity of rural settings which, needless to say, is very hard to investigate.

A comprehensive analysis of guilds falls outside of the scope of this study, as do the technical aspects of manufacturing history in Iran. Nonetheless, the crises in industrial manufactories had significant social, economic, and political consequences, requiring a further discussion of this transformation. It is important to emphasize from the beginning that when guild-based production was gradually losing ground to foreign ready-made imports especially from the mid-19th century, manufacturing as a whole found survival strategies via different avenues. Before moving on to the analysis of these strategies we should first investigate the nature of this foreign economic penetration.

It is often stated that European economic penetration was the main cause of Iran’s economic misfortune and the further decadence of its native manufacturing. Although the genesis of this

³⁴ Willem Floor, *Guilds, Merchants and Ulama in Nineteenth Century Iran* (Washington: Mage Publishers, 2009), 99.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁷ Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2.

penetration is hard to determine, the assertion seems to have gained universal acceptance.³⁸ Not only did later generations of historians hold this view but also, as Charles Issawi states, contemporary accounts attest to it.³⁹ In order to be able to judge European impact on the 19th century Iranian economy as a whole and on the traditional crafts in particular we should first draw a picture of economic activities during the century. As a matter of fact, determining the European impact is important in order to trace the production capacity of artisanal manufacturing in Iran during the 19th century. This latter point is usually dealt with in terms of the decline of Iranian crafts. A perception of decline in the face of European imports seems to exist among the contemporary Iranians. Thus, European economic penetration gradually produced some sort of an anti-foreigner attitude amongst Iranians who in time came to accuse Europeans (*farang*) for the economic misfortunes and later for the political evils befalling them. This perception became widespread, and endured through the rest of Iranian history. Nevertheless instead of looking for the traces and the effects of economic decline, it is better to investigate how Iranian manufacturers survived this increasing European economic penetration. The fact that Iranian crafts continued to exist well into the 20th century calls for special attention to the survival strategies of craftsmen who somehow maintained their position in the domestic market.

Iran's economic contact with Europe did not start in the 19th century, nor was it a peculiarity of the Qajar era. Yet, following the relatively chaotic atmosphere of the post-Safavid period, the country achieved some stability under Qajar rule in a time which coincided with the increasing economic role of Europe worldwide. The European economic impact was consolidated with the Treaties of Golestan and Turkomanchai, which provided that both Russian imports into Iran and exports from it would pay a 5% ad valorem duty. These treaties determined the administrative framework of the expansion of Iran's trade.⁴⁰ Russia was soon followed by Britain which with the two treaties signed in 1836 and 1841 gained the same privileges, and furthermore became one of the 'Most Favoured Nations'.⁴¹ Along with their

³⁸ Keddie "Iran under the Late Qajars" , 192; Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 167; Charles Issawi, "European Economic Penetration: 1872-1921", in *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 7*, 604; Ahmad Ashraf, "Historical Obstacles to the Development of a Bourgeoisie in Iran", in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day*, ed. M. A Cook (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). 308-332. Here P. 325; Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500-1925* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999), 108-13; Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 59.

³⁹ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 258.

⁴⁰ Charles Issawi, "European Economic Penetration", 956.

⁴¹ The Treaty did not literally make Britain 'the most favoured nation'. Instead the first article of the treaty read as follows: "The merchants of the two mighty States are reciprocally permitted and allowed to carry into each other's territories their goods and manufactures of every description, and to sell or exchange in any part of their respective countries; and on the good which they import or export, custom duties shall be levied, that is to say,

economic aspirations in Iran, both Russia and Britain did not hesitate to block Iran's development in order to curb each other's influence over the country. For example, when the famous Reuter concession had to be cancelled by Naser al-Din Shah due to Russian and Iranian opposition, the British in return used this cancellation as a pretext to block Russian railway concessions. The Russians then signed a secret agreement with Iran blocking the construction of railways in that country for ten years.⁴²

Although European imports did not take control of Iranian markets overnight, and for a time Iranian merchants benefitted from the low customs duties on imports, especially to Russia, Iranian handicrafts were soon to be badly hurt by the increasing inflow of ready-made goods. Tariff protection could no longer be used to shelter native manufactures against the unequal competition of European machine-made goods. During the rest of the century a sharp rise was experienced in imports. Textiles came at the top of the list of imports, particularly cotton goods which by the 1850s accounted for some two-thirds of total imports.⁴³ Both Russian and British, and later on Indian, merchants increasingly adapted themselves to Iranians' demands and started to produce manufactures to local taste, while on the other hand, "a taste for European goods [was] but arising" as Fraser observed as early as 1820s.⁴⁴ Since textiles were most affected by European competition, it is useful to analyse the state of the industry during this period.

on entering the country the same amount of custom duties shall be levied, once for all, that is levied on the merchandise imported *by the merchants of the most favoured European nations*; and at the time of going out of the country, the same amount of custom duties which is levied on the merchandise imported by the merchants of the most favoured European nations shall be levied from the merchants". J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East: A Documentary Record 1535-1914*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), 124, emphasis added. Practically speaking the treaty put Britain on equal footing with Russia which meant a five percent custom duty ad valorem on British imports to and exports from Iran. A comparison of this treaty signed between Britain and Iran in 1841 with the one signed between the former and the Ottoman Empire in 1838 gives interesting insight into the economic mentalities of the two neighbouring Islamic states. Being a product of the post-Napoleonic era when Britain became the major political actor in the Middle East, the 1838 treaty, or Balta Limani Treaty as it is known, reconfirmed and added to the already major economic role of Britain in the Ottoman Empire. After stipulating in the first article that all the rights and privileges granted by the Ottoman administration to the ships or the subjects of any foreign power would also be enjoyed by British ships and subjects, the second article read that: "If any article of Turkish produce, growth, or manufacture, be purchased by the British merchant or his agent, for the purpose of selling the same for internal consumption in Turkey, the British merchant and his agent shall pay, at the purchase and sale of such articles, and in any manner of trade therein, the same duties that are paid, in similar circumstances, *by the most favored class of Turkish subjects* engaged in the internal trade of Turkey, whether Mussulmans or Rayahs [the non-Muslims subjects]". Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, 110-11. Emphasis added. The interesting difference between the two treaties was that against the Persian five percent custom duties ad valorem both on imports and exports the Ottomans agreed on a five percent custom duty on imports ad valorem while on exports twelve percent was the agreed custom.

⁴² Nikki Keddie, "The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914 and its Impact: An Overview", *Iranian Studies* Vol. 5, no.2/3 (Spring-Summer, 1972), pp. 58-78. Here p. 61

⁴³ Issawi, "European Economic Penetration", 597.

⁴⁴ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 98.

Textile Industry during the 19th Century

Textile basically refers to any industrial activity that involves spinning, weaving, or both. The textile industry, with its various branches, has historically been among the most widespread and the most developed industries in Iran. It was not only a source of livelihood for professional craftsmen but it also provided a substantial additional income for many Iranian cultivators. Wool and linen were the fibres that have been used in the Iranian textile industry for ages, whereas cotton was a relative newcomer to the industry, coming into widespread use only in the early medieval period.⁴⁵ The finest of all fibres used in the Iranian textile industry, however, was silk.⁴⁶ Each fibre had its own phases of processing until it was spun and became ready for weaving.⁴⁷ Once a fibre was spun into thread it was then dyed by either natural or by aniline dyestuffs. The transition from natural to aniline dyestuffs late in the 19th century was at first a painful one which reduced the quality of Iranian textiles. Yet, with the improvement of synthetic dyestuffs and the increasing ability of Iranians to use them properly, synthetics became more and more widespread.⁴⁸ Between 1500 and 1925 some 90 textile crafts were operative in Iran.⁴⁹ Kashan, Yazd, Isfahan, Tabriz, and Mashhad were the main textile centres as far as urban production is concerned.

Based on the Bourgin model of production activities in pre-industrial Europe, Floor classifies each type of manufacturing activity for Qajar Iran as follows:

- a. The small, mostly, family operated workshop which was the most frequent industrial activity that one found in Qajar Iranian cities. These workshops usually had one master with 2-3 journeymen and some unskilled helpers. There was neither division of labour nor specialization in the process. All parts of a product were made inside the workshop and put together to make a final product. Often the workshop was not only the site of production but also the location of sale of the product. In Isfahan, in the 1850s, there were many hundreds of workshops located in the covered bazaars, the total length of which was 3 miles.
- b. Scattered, but interconnected, workshops. Here there was specialization of process and one artisan produced only an intermediate product, for another artisan, and the last one

⁴⁵ Hans E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia: Their Development, Technology and Influence of Eastern and Western Civilizations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts a& London: The M. I. T Press, 1966), 177-8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁷ For the technical details of these processes see Ibid., 179-188.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 188.

⁴⁹ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 30.

in the production line would make the final product. The textile industry is a good example of this type of workshop. After the wool (or cotton or silk) had been purchased, it was carded, spun, washed, dyed, and then woven. Finally, the cloth would get a final processing such as printing or tailoring.

- c. Concentrated manufactories were less prevalent in Iran. This type of manufacture was basically a large building where all parts of the production process and its labour force were brought together. This allowed an increase of productivity and better quality control. Also, the use of mechanical devices such as water or animal operated mills/machinery was possible. This applied, for example, to the leather industry where all processes were as a rule carried out in the same workshops.
- d. Finally, factories that were equipped with machinery that allowed even higher productivity and better quality control than the previous industrial categories. In fact they allowed, comparatively speaking, mass production of the final product. As of the 1850s, we see that a number of such factories were established in Iran.⁵⁰

These four categories coexisted during the 19th century. Besides, although the first two were the oldest forms of production, the fourth category was an innovation of the mid-19th century.⁵¹ The textile industry was among the few in which division of labour prevailed as a crucial principle. The industry was organized around guilds in towns. Despite regionally and professionally variant features, guilds commonly enjoyed some fundamental characteristics. Namely, a guild protected the monopoly of its members' occupation, with certain rules being established for those who practiced this occupation. A newcomer held his training within the guild and workmanship was standardized in a certain way. Also, there was a sense of solidarity among the members of a guild, who assisted each other in times of need. Apart from these professional functions, a guild also was a channel of communication between its members and political bodies. Lastly, socially speaking, guilds played religious and ceremonial functions in Iranian society.⁵²

The internal structure of a guild was based on certain rules which were not always clear, and thus showed variation. For example, a master would receive the right to set up a shop (*haqq-e bonicheh*) from a city's mayor (*qalantar*). The Kalantar held monthly meetings with the head of certain crafts such as bakers, butchers and grocers to set the minimum prices of the

⁵⁰ Floor, *Guilds, Merchants and Ulama*, 100.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 103.

products sold by these guilds. The elders of a guild (*rish safidan*) were responsible for the smooth functioning of guilds. Throughout the nineteenth century guilds maintained a tenuous and fluid position in the face of political and economic developments to which they proved highly vulnerable. On the one hand, they continued their regional economic activities, while on the other hand wider economic developments, such as increasing foreign imports, developed among guildsmen a certain sense of common action. However, the more federated the guilds became, the more political their roles turned out to be. During the early twentieth century, for example, guilds constituted themselves into *anjomans* which were to play important political roles during the Constitutional Revolution and for a short while in its aftermath. In Tehran alone seventy *anjomans* were established by guilds and later formed into a central council (*anjoman-e markazi-e asnaf*).⁵³

The observations of E. K. Abbot in the mid-19th century show not only that Iranian handicrafts were not in a state of decay despite the setbacks caused by increasing imports, but also that textiles played a major role in urban handicraft industry.⁵⁴ Main artisanal Iranian towns enjoyed, at that time, a relatively lively economic atmosphere. The following examples from his report suffice to illustrate this point: Kashan with its 30,000 inhabitants had 27 caravanserais, 770 shops, 130 merchants; 80 coppersmiths, 800 silk looms; ‘a great deal’ of cotton twist spun, 1,500 mule-loads having been sent to Astrakhan alone in 1848. Isfahan had 28 caravanserais, 340 traders; 200 silk looms, ‘the manufacture of cotton goods is carried to a great extent, and affords occupation to many of the inhabitants of the town and surrounding villages’.⁵⁵ Yazd with its 35,000-40,000 inhabitants had 250 merchants; 2,200 shawl manufacturing looms, 220 woollen looms, producing £40,000-45,000 worth of goods “exclusive of that about 325 looms belonging to 9 villages around, valued at Tomans 15,000 (£7,000) more”.⁵⁶

Also, writing in 1889, Curzon states that there were in Mashad 650 silk looms and 320 shawl looms and in Tabriz 116 caravanserais and 3,922 shops while in 1870 Kerman had 80 cotton factories and 6 “really good carpet factories” and in the mid-nineteenth century had had “as

⁵³ Willem Floor, “Asnaf”, in *Encyclopaedia Irania*, Edited by Eshan Yarshater, (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987),. Pp. 772-8; here 777.

⁵⁴ “Notes of the Trade, Manufactures and Productions of Various Cities and Countries of Persia”, FO 60/165. Quoted by Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 167-8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 167

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

many as 1,800 silk factories employing 9,000 hands ...”⁵⁷ At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth there were 1,000 shawl looms in Kerman with an annual export of 300,000 tumans; 200 woollen looms in Nain and 300 in Kerman. Kashan had 200 silk looms with a monthly output of 400 pieces while there were in Yazd 400 workshops with 2,000 looms. Mashhad had 100 shops with 200 looms. Nishapur had 16 shops with 3 to 4 looms in. As for cotton weaving, Yazd had 800 workshops with 2,000 looms while Kashan 100 workshops.⁵⁸

We need detailed monographs on the history of guild-based labour about which we currently know only a little. It is safe to suggest, however, that generally speaking their living conditions escalated during the nineteenth century and many guildsmen lost their jobs and turned into labourers.⁵⁹ For example in Yazd in 1895 the bulk of weavers received from ½ qran to 2. ½ qrans for a twelve-hour working day.⁶⁰ Thus, the average purchasing power of a worker was as follows:

Table 1.1: The Daily Purchasing Power of a Weaver in Yazd in 1895⁶¹

	Daily Wage	
	½ qran	2. ½ qrans
Rice	0.5 lb. [0.23 kg.]	2.7 lb. [1.22 kg.]
Bread	2 lb. [0.91 kg.]	10 lb. [4.54 kg.]
Meat	0.8 lb. [0.36 kg.]	4 lb. [1.81 kg.]
Sugar	0.35 lb. [0.16 kg.]	1.8 lb. [0.82 kg.]
Cheese	0.65 lb. [0.29 kg.]	3.25 lb [1.47 kg.]
Eggs (no.)	20	100

Source: J. R Preece, CR ‘Isfahan and Yazd’, in PAP 1869 lxxxviii, quoted by Ahmad Seyf, “Iranian Textile Handicrafts”, 56.

Apart from urban-based production the manufacturing of textiles in rural settings was also significant, and was gradually integrated into more organized and disciplined manufacturing processes via putting-out networks. Yet, considering the inadequate documentation of guilds there is little chance of finding any notable data on rural manufacturing activities. Thus in

⁵⁷ Curzon, Persia, I: 167, 521 and 2: 242, 245; see also Tomara pp. 26-27. Quoted in Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 268.

⁵⁸ Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 268.

⁵⁹ Keddie, Nikki, *Roots of Revolution*, P. 63

⁶⁰ About 2.5 old pence and about 12 old pence or one shilling respectively. Ahmad Seyf, “Iranian Textile Handicrafts in the Nineteenth Century: A Note”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2001), pp. 49-58, here P. 56

⁶¹ Kgs are added by me and 1 pound is calculated at 0.454 kilo grams.

most cases we have to base our arguments on impressionistic evidence rather than sound hard data. However, bearing in mind the predominantly agrarian nature of Iranian society which endured throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, mention should be made of this production. Quite late in the 19th century a report by the British political agent in the Gulf shows the critical role of textile manufacturing as non-farming employment for many cultivators. Writing in 1899 he says: “poverty of the cultivators who are the principal customers of cotton goods, caused transactions to be limited. The failure of the crops for three successive years on the Persian coast led many cultivators to resort more largely to weaving for a livelihood, a demand thereby created for yarn and twist.”⁶² Cultivators did not necessarily spin or weave as an income producing activity but they also did so for their own use. In Tabriz for example, Consul Jones reports in 1873, “the lower classes make use of the produce of their domestic looms”.⁶³ When threatened by cheaper imports, Iranian textile industries could maintain their position and reduce expenses by largely employing the workforce in waiting in rural areas. Even in the carpet industry, rural spinning and weaving hands played an important role. Persian carpets were already among the export items of Iran by the early 19th century. Yet, interest in Persian carpets increased in Europe after the World Trade Fair in 1851. The World Trade Fair in Vienna in 1873 substantially added to the demand for Persian carpets.⁶⁴ Carpet industry was important mainly for two reasons. Firstly, rather than solely relying on modern methods of manufacturing, the carpet industry functioned to a great extent through a putting-out system where an extended chain of village production played an important role.

Iranian entrepreneurs played a decisive role in the functioning of this system. For example Tabrizi merchants took almost complete control of carpet trade in Kashan, which was the main carpet weaving centre.⁶⁵ Some merchants even specialized in the trade of peasant and tribal rugs. Secondly, the carpet industry constituted the major field of direct foreign investment which contributed to the development of the industry in Iran. To realize sustainable and high quality production, foreign companies, such as the British-Swiss Ziegler&Co. and the Dutch Hotz&Zoon, directly invested in the carpet weaving business. Soltanabad near Farahan district is a good example of this type of investment. While there were in the region some 40 looms around 1870, ten years later the number of the looms in the

⁶² Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 20.

⁶³ Seyf, “Iranian Textile Handicrafts”, 54.

⁶⁴ Willem Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran* (Washington: Mega Publishers, 2009), 7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

town reached 1,200 and 5,000 with weaving villages around it. 10,000 persons were employed in their operation.⁶⁶ By the turn of the 20th century 65,000 persons were employed in carpet weaving, whereas the number had been a mere 1,000 around 1860. The rising production was also reflected in the volume of output. While in the 1870s estimated total exports of carpets was about £ 75,000, it was estimated to be around £ 100,000 in 1889. In 1903 the value increased as high as £ 500,000 and in to £ 1 million or 12% of Iran's total export.⁶⁷

The integration of the urban and rural types of manufacturing brought about a more intricate industrialization process in Iran. As Rudolf Braun observes:

When an urban and bourgeois industry spreads out from the city into the surrounding countryside, it penetrates an unfamiliar environment and economy which receives industrialization on its own terms. For those involved in the industrialization process it meant that the country inhabitants experienced industrialization not merely as passive recipients but also by actively shaping it.⁶⁸

Information regarding the details of this integration is lacking. Neither do we know how peasants living in 19th-century Iran received this transformation and how they actively shaped the process in their own way. At any rate, throughout the 19th century, European economic penetration became increasingly visible by either challenging the existing manufacturing methods or by adding new dimensions to them. This was a slow and gradual process. For the simple fact that throughout the 19th century, and for some time into the 20th, a country-wide market did not exist in Iran but rather the country consisted of isolated provincial markets, the effects and the extent of this penetration was not the same throughout Iran. The textile industry provides the best opportunity to investigate the varying effects of imports in Iran. Ahmad Seyf states that the fact that the areas more easily accessible to foreign imports such as the Caspian shores, Azarbaijan and the Persian Gulf shores produced few or no cotton and silk goods attests to the effect of foreign competition as the chief contributing factor to the decline of Persian handicrafts.⁶⁹ Yet, even at the end of the 19th century in Isfahan—a favourite centre of importing companies, especially British ones—artisans could produce a particular cotton product, *qalamkar*, for export, as the business escalated thanks to the use of cheap aniline dyes.⁷⁰ Therefore, if urban production appears to decline, we should look for

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁸ Rudolf Braun, *Industrialization and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10.

⁶⁹ Seyf, "Iranian Textile Handicrafts", 51. Emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 108.

other production methods, mainly to putting-out industry, to see how Iranian industries coped with imports. However, this in no way implies a complete denial of the negative role imports played in the fate of Iranian crafts. What is important here is to see that the process was more complex than how it is often depicted.

After providing statistical information on Iranian handicrafts in several cities, Abbot refers to the great injuring role of European competition on the crafts. He also mentions the increasing numbers of shops selling foreign goods.⁷¹ On the other hand, writing about the Persian industry which he cautioned was not comparable with that of most European states, Jakob Polak observed that it was “not insignificant and meets domestic needs.” He makes the following important point:

When one considers that nothing is done by the government to raise the level of industry that on the contrary an irrational tariff system encourages import of foreign goods to the detriment of domestic products, that roads and means of communication are lacking, that metal deposits lie buried in the womb of the earth and that all iron must be brought in from abroad, at high prices; when one contemplates the imperfection of tools and machines, the shortage of capital, the high rate of interest and the lack of development of credit facilities – one must truly wonder how many domestic products manage to compete with foreign.⁷²

Several factors added to the undermining of the Iranian economy and its crafts industries in the 19th century. First, natural conditions were unfavourable. While the northern parts of the country enjoyed abundant rainfall, the southern and central regions were blessed with only a little. Additionally, despite the relatively stable political atmosphere of the Qajar era, the country was still far from centralized and a country-wide market was absent. Irrational tax policies also severely hurt economic activities. A dispatch from the British Consul in Tabriz in 1851 attests to this. According to the dispatch, whereas a European merchant paid 5% on his imports, an Iranian had to pay 7,7% on textiles and 14% on sugar plus he paid *rahdarlik* (road tax) every time his goods passed through an Iranian town.⁷³ Also, the insecurity of private property and the absence of proper protection impeded creativity and demotivated investment in production techniques.⁷⁴ The situation was further complicated by increasing imports of foreign goods into Iran. From the early 19th century onwards, economically speaking Iran found itself in an unequal competition vis-à-vis European, mainly Russian and British, states. Apart from such products as sugar and tea, textiles were the most desired

⁷¹ Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 167.

⁷² Ibid., 268.

⁷³ Issawi, “European Economic Penetration”, 600.

⁷⁴ Seyf, “Iranian Textile Handicrafts”, 49.

imports. Nevertheless, dressing habits and traditions were difficult to change. Thus, foreign firms tried to adopt to Iranian taste while Iranians showed in time a certain interest in foreign costume. Fraser observed in mid 1820s that “a taste for European goods is but arising”.⁷⁵ By the end of the century the change became more visible and foreign imports were now almost everywhere in the country.

The ever-increasing imports drew attention very early in the century. In the subsequent decades two main attitudes prevailed: protectionist and developmentalist. The first groups argued that foreign goods, especially luxury articles, should simply be prevented from entering the country. They used two different supporting arguments. According to some, Iran had enough productive capacity to meet domestic demand. Therefore there was no need for foreign goods. Others argued that Iranians did not need those imported items, simply because they were unnecessary and created bad consumption habits among the populace. This view was particularly voiced by some in the early twentieth century, and its supporters held big merchants responsible. Developmentalists on the other hand admitted, though grudgingly, that Iran did not have enough productive capacity, which caused the inflow of foreign goods. However, as far as a remedy was concerned, they divided into two camps. Some of them argued that Iranian craft industries could meet domestic demand if promoted and supported by sound protective measures. Yet, others opted for factory-based large scale industrialization and claimed that traditional methods of production were obsolete and unable to meet even domestic needs properly. These two attitudes were not mutually exclusive, and as a matter of fact throughout the nineteenth century neither approach produced the desired outcome: the curtailing of imports. Still, considering the diverse and heterogeneous segments involved in the discussions, they provide us invaluable insights into popular perceptions of the economy and politics, and enrich our understanding of state-society relations in Qajar Iran.

Roughly until the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, the protectionist attitude was favoured, the only exception being Abbas Mirza’s attempt at pursuing developmental economic policies. From Naser al-Din onwards some steps were taken to industrialize Iran, especially by Amir Kabir, and the Constitutional Revolution furthered hopes in this regard. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, in the aftermath of the First World War protectionist voices were again raised though to no avail. With the consolidation of the Pahlavi dynasty in the 1930’s, developmental policies, mixed with protectionist measures, were pursued and a period of

⁷⁵ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 98.

industrial leaping forward was launched. Leaving the constitutional and Pahlavi periods to the second part of this dissertation, here I will analyse the period up to the early twentieth century.

Already during Fath Ali Shah's reign manufacturers are reported to have petitioned the Shah for the prohibition of further imports.⁷⁶ Likewise, in 1836 Mohammad Shah commanded his subjects to wear cloths of Iranian make. Furthermore he instructed all his courtiers to adopt a new style of dress consisting of European trousers and redingote. His intention was to disseminate this change to the rest of the population. The attempt soon ended in failure and the Shah gave up the effort, but the merchants did not.⁷⁷ In 1844, merchants of Tabriz petitioned the crown prince to prohibit European imports "on the ground principally of the ruin Persian manufacturers are reduced to by the constant and immense importation of foreign goods".⁷⁸ In the same year the traders and manufacturers of Kashan presented a memorial to Mohammad Shah Qajar in which they prayed "for protection of their commerce which they presented as suffering in consequence of the introduction of European merchandise into their country".⁷⁹

Already in the 1810's, Abbas Mirza sent groups of Persian students to Great Britain declaring that "they shall study something of use to me, themselves and their country".⁸⁰ They studied, among other things, chemistry, engineering and gunsmithery. However, Abbas Mirza's attempts were mainly aimed at military modernization. In the following decades, further efforts to introduce modern industries were made. For example in 1829, the Persian ambassador in London was instructed to engage a superintendent of iron works, two furnace men, a glass worker, two miners, and a cloth manufacturer, and a steam engine was sent from England to Iran.⁸¹ Amir Kabir's economic reforms provided the first country-wide attempts at economic development. The main components of his economic policies was "to end the economic regression in the country, the establishment of small industries for this purpose, the development of agriculture, decreasing the imports and increasing the exports as well as preventing the outflow of 'the golden suns' [gold coins] in his own words".⁸² Yet, being well-aware of the industrial developments in the West his economic program, like those of many of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁸ Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 259.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 259.

⁸⁰ Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 10.

⁸¹ Mirza Abul Hasan Khan to Castlereagh, 9 January 1820, and Ouseley to Planta, 23 November 1820, FO 60/19, quoted in Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 260.

⁸² Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir*, 387.

his successors, also included the significant and explicit objective of “introducing new industries” to the country.⁸³ The tension and the gap between promoting crafts industries on the one hand and introducing European-type factories on the other remained, from this period on, one of the main challenges of modernist economic policies in Iran. At any rate, Amir Kabir’s economic policies provided in Iran the first organized attempt at import-substitution.

In the second half of the century a number of factories with varying capacities and financed by both domestic and foreign capital were erected in Iran. A series of popular ventures should be mentioned alongside the developmentalist efforts. In 1897 the *Anjoman-e Sharqi* (Oriental Society) was founded in Isfahan with the explicit aim of promoting the consumption of Persian goods. Likewise, in 1890 the *Anjoman-e Eslami* (Islamic Society) was founded for the same purpose. The two societies established a company named *Sherkat-e Eslami* (Islamic Company) and produced a cloth named *Parcheh-e Eslami* (Islamic Cloth).⁸⁴ In order to promote the use of the home-made textiles Seyed Jamal al-Din Va‘ez Esfahani, a cleric and promoter of the *Sherkat-e Eslami*, wrote a treatise in 1900 titled *Lebas al-Taqla* (Cloth of Abstinence) by using the Quranic metaphor of ‘the cloth of abstinence’ Esfahani calls on his fellow countrymen to wake up from the heedless sleep and to unite in order not to depend on foreigners for their textile needs.⁸⁵

Especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, several large-scale industrial projects were undertaken.⁸⁶ However, we lack any reliable statistical data on these initiatives. The lists available on some sources not only display a fairly poor industrial scene for a country of such magnitude as Iran, but should also be met with a certain degree of suspicion since many of these industrial enterprises had to shut down after some time, for a variety of reasons. Poor planning, high transport costs, inability to compete with imports, and inadequacy of raw materials were the main causes of the failure of early industrial enterprises. Moreover as far as textiles were concerned, such additional factors as the use of aniline dyes, manufacturing of

⁸³ Ibid., 387.

⁸⁴ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, p. 119

⁸⁵ Seyed Jamal al-Din Va‘ez Esfahani, *Lebas al-taqwa*, ed. Homa Rezvani (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1985), 10-11. The original verse in Quran goes as “O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness - that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.”, Quran, 7/26. Vaez’s work will be dealt with in the following chapters.

⁸⁶ For a list of them see: Abdullayev 1974, 114-120; Issawi 1971, 258-310 (and literature quoted and translated); Haqiqat Rafi’, 1352, 439; Hedayat 1363, 129-131; E’temad al-Saltaneh, 12981300, vol. 3, 107, 222, 232, 246, 271, 281; Ibid., 1306, 82, 93-126; Ibid. 1368, Vol. 2, 1245, 1348, 1390, 1392. All compiled and quoted in Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 13-15.

inferior products, and change in fashion, further handicapped national industries.⁸⁷ Thus, unsurprisingly, the following pessimistic judgment about industrialization in Iran could be made by a British mission as late as 1905:

It is hopeless for any Indian or English manufacturer to think of establishing works in Persia at present. If he embarks on such an enterprise, he will but add another item to the long list of industrial ventures that have failed in that land. The difficulties that stand in the way of such enterprises are at present too great. There is first the Government. No foreigner is allowed to own land or house in Persia except under very stringent rules and if he becomes a Persian landholder he must, as a rule, first become a Persian subject. If he becomes a Persian subject he must expect continually to be “squeezed”. Then there is the cost of transporting machinery, which is prohibitive, and at present no heavy machinery could be got up at all. Labour, too, in Persia while fairly cheap (though dearer than India) is inefficient and undisciplined to a degree hard to conceive.

Lastly, any factory setting up would have to be on a small scale, only large enough to use local supplies, for once you have to carry raw material any distance the present cost of transport renders it prohibitive. This means hopelessly expensive working as having small factories scattered all over the country would make the cost and task of supervision prohibitive.⁸⁸

Factory-based production was regarded by many contemporaries as an extension and prerequisite of modernization, i.e. westernization, in the industrial realm. It was believed that the rationalization of production along European lines would sooner or later replace the ‘obsolete’ methods of production. Put differently, modernization required a country to modernize its military forces on European terms. This in turn necessitated equally modernized industries. Such a country would be able to withstand its enemies—particularly Russia, in the case of Iran—and would protect its sovereignty. Several Iranian and foreign contemporary observers refer in their writings to the lack of factories in Iran, their observations usually being accompanied by derogatory remarks about the country and its inhabitants. In what follows, a sketch of the late 19th-century Iranian society will be provided by referring to the effects of the political and economic developments discussed above.

Iranian Society on the Eve of the Constitutional Revolution: A People in Flux

The nineteenth century was a period of transformation for Iran, in various ways. Caught between the two rival superpowers of the time, namely Britain and Russia, the country

⁸⁷ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 108-113.

⁸⁸ Issawi, *Economic history of Iran*, 260.

developed its economic and political path within a context of semi-colonialism. At first the British were particularly interested in Iran in political terms, i.e. securing their interests in India and preventing any Russian advance to the south. Later on however, both Britain and Russia developed economic interests in the country which initially entailed the supply of raw materials from it but later on evolved into regarding it as an open market for their industrial products. It is hardly an exaggeration that "Iran thus had all the disadvantages of being a colony without any of the few advantages, such as the creation of industries either to the direct benefit of the colonizers or for their military purposes, improvements in the juridical system, and so forth."⁸⁹ The military defeats at the hands of Russia and the ever increasing influence of both this northern neighbour and the southern, Britain, in time paved the way for a series of military, economic, and political reforms. Once the practical-minded reforms in these fields failed to produce the desired outcomes, a perception prevailed among intellectuals and dissatisfied groups that the problem actually lay deeper in the political system, which should be thoroughly reformed. This gradually paved the way for the Constitutional Revolutions of 1905-1909.

Throughout the nineteenth century, epidemics, mainly cholera and plague but also small-pox, malaria and typhoid fever, were prevalent all around the country; so were famines. Recurring epidemics had disastrous consequences. Several factors contributed to this. Ahmad Seyf lists five such factors.⁹⁰ Firstly, the country had almost no hospitals and public health administration during the entire century. Secondly, the quarantine arrangements to isolate the sick from the rest of the population were insufficient. Thus, epidemics travelled freely from town to town, adding to the number of casualties. Thirdly, flowing water was believed to be always safe, and this contributed to the spread of disease. Fourthly, the dead, even those who perished in epidemics, were carelessly washed before burial, and this polluted the clean water. Fifthly there was the custom of temporary burial which was particularly practiced by wealthy individuals. Out of a desire to be buried in such holy towns as Mashhad, Qom, Najaf, and Karbala, the body of a wealthy Iranian, even if he died in an epidemic, would be removed from his temporary grave where he would stay for a few months to be carried on mule back to

⁸⁹ Bausani, *The Persians*, 172 quoted by John Foran, "The Concept of Dependent", 22-3.

⁹⁰ Ahmad Seyf, "Iran and the Great Plague, 1830-1831", *Studia Islamica*, No. 69 (1989), 151-165, here 151-2.

his eternal grave in one of these towns. Between 1800 and 1905 twenty six outbreaks of cholera and ten outbreaks of plague seem to have taken place in Iran.⁹¹

The plague of 1830-31 was the most devastating epidemic of the century in terms of the casualties it caused. Spanning almost the entire country with the exception of Khorasan and Kerman, the plague hit the northern regions particularly hard. For example, after the plague, Mazandaran was in a state of ruin, with some the cities being largely depopulated. According to Fraser, Rasht, a prominent trade and handicraft center, which had more than 60,000 inhabitants in 1822, contained around 15-20,000 people including non-residents.⁹² Again, about the Caspian province at large, he observed that "... of all districts which have been visited in Persia... I knew that Gilan and Mazandaran had suffered most, and I was prepared to find a diminution of population in both provinces, but I was not prepared for what I did see here..."⁹³ According to Abbot, a full two-thirds of the population of Gilan have apparently been carried off by the calamity.⁹⁴ Also the most destructive cholera epidemic broke out in the last decade of the century between 1892 and 1893. As many as 1,037 people are reported to have died in Tehran alone, with an average of 148 deaths per day. The average number was, according to E'temad al-Saltaneh, a contemporary Iranian, 200 per day.⁹⁵ The cholera claimed thousands of lives outside of the capital too. In Gilan, for example, 20,000 people are reported to have died from cholera.⁹⁶

Apart from epidemics, famine was another ultimate cause of death in nineteenth century Iran. Caused mainly by inadequate rainfall and partly by unplanned agrarian practices, once it occurred, the disastrous consequences of a famine would be doubled by the inhospitable landscape of the country in the absence of insufficient transport facilities. To illustrate this point, suffice it to say that "even at the end of the [19th] century the important road between the southern port of Mohammereh (Khorramshahr) and Tehran was so slow that to get from the latter to the former it was quicker to travel from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea by boat, from Erzerum to the Caspian Sea by land, from Baku to Enzeli (Pahlevi) by boat again and finally from Enzeli to Tehran by land."⁹⁷ Not infrequently, therefore, while some parts of the country suffered severely from a famine, other parts could enjoy relative prosperity. The

⁹¹ Ahmad Seyf, "Iran and the Great Plague", 153; Seyf, "Iran and Cholera in the Nineteenth Century", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Jan. 2002), 169-178, here 171-2.

⁹² Ibid., Seyf, "Iran and the Great Plague", 158.

⁹³ Ibid., 159.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 160.

⁹⁵ Both numbers are taken from Seyf, "Iran and Cholera", 172.

⁹⁶ Seyf, "Iran and Cholera", 173.

⁹⁷ Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 14

greatest of famines in modern Iranian history was experienced between 1870 and 1871. Almost no rain had fallen during the previous year and this continued to be the case during 1870-71 with the exception of the western and southern regions. Khorasan, Isfahan, Yazd and Fars suffered particularly from the drought, which brought about a sharp rise in grain prices and bread riots in several towns. In Mashhad, for example, the price of wheat reached 100 tumans per kharvar which was more than twenty times the former price.⁹⁸ The famine and the enormously rising prices of essential foodstuffs produced horrible consequences in people's daily lives. Reportedly, those who failed to afford bread ate dogs, cats, rats and even dung and grass. There were also reports of cannibalism in some towns where ruffians are said to kill women and eat them and in some cases parents were even reported to have eaten their own children.⁹⁹

Concluding Remarks

The Constitutional Revolution broke out in 1905 against this historical background. Economic dissatisfaction, internal disorder and recurring calamities deepened the sense of dissatisfaction among the populace. This dissatisfaction was to be formulated within the vocabulary of the spirit of the age: the call for a constitution and a parliament. The underlying objective, however, was rather simpler: to secure justice. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the greater part of the Iranian population who supported the establishment of a parliament, even the bulk of the clerical support in favour of it, came from equating it with the House of Justice, an institution associated with the culture of kingship.¹⁰⁰ Safeguarding the lives and property of the subjects were the main pillars of kingly justice. As long as these were secured, Iranian society cared little about central policies, let alone risking an open confrontation with the authorities. Dissatisfaction started and disseminated once increasing numbers of Iranians

⁹⁸ Shoko Okazaki, "The Great Persian Famine of 1870-71", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 49, No. 1, In Honour of Akk K. S. Lambton (1986), 183-192, here 183. A *kharvar*, or a donkey load, equals one hundred kgs.

⁹⁹ Shoko Okazaki, "The Great Persian Famine", 185. In the rest of the article, Okazaki discusses in detail the reasons for this famine and challenges the established view that regarded the conversion from grain cultivation to cash-crops as the main reason for it, as stated by N. Keddie, among others. See Keddie, "The Economic History of Iran", 69. After showing in numbers that even the main areas of cotton and opium production, as two main cash-crops, were not monocultural, and that grain production did not decrease enough to be the cause of the famine, Okazaki then brings into consideration other possible reasons of the famine. He concludes that "the abnormal increase in grain prices and consequent shortages that led to deaths by starvation and to cannibalism were not caused by drought alone, but were artificially induced by hoarding and market manipulation". 191

¹⁰⁰ Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 338.

felt threatened by the existing political and economic developments. After all "... when the shah's urban subjects (and perhaps others too) were displeased with him, they cared not for divine grace, hereditary right nor the epithet of Pivot but for his duties as an Islamic ruler to regulate, equalize and maintain the balance."¹⁰¹ Such diverse classes as the mullahs, merchants, princes, intelligentsia and subaltern groups were involved in constitutional uprisings. The revolution was in this sense a collective action of various social strata, but the traditional structure of Iranian society was to transform in its aftermath.

¹⁰¹ Venessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in Nineteenth Century Persia* (London, I. B Tauris, 2005), 12.

Chapter Three: Iran from the Constitutional Revolution to the End of Reza Shah's Reign: 1905-1941

Introduction

Demanding a constitution with established rights and duties was a common reaction at the turn of the twentieth century in despotic regimes in various parts of the world, and in the Middle East in particular. The constitutional revolutions in neighbouring Russia (1905) and the Ottoman Empire (1908) were the two examples which were most relevant to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909.¹ The Iranian Constitutional Revolution should be analysed within this context. Notwithstanding the apparent commonalities with other similar revolutions, however, Iran had distinct characteristics which originated from its social structure and historical development and which in turn determined the course of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution as well as subsequent developments. This chapter investigates this revolution by emphasizing the roles played by various social groups and by analysing the consequences of this revolution for working people in Iran, and the changing class positions during this period. I then proceed to discuss the Pahlavi modernization initiatives in the same framework. For a complete discussion of the revolution and the decades following it, the roles and the perceptions of such classes as trade guilds, intellectuals, the labouring poor, merchants, and the clergy will also be addressed. Overall, the chapter aims at exploring the grassroots dimensions of these developments during this period of nearly four decades.

From Mobilization to Revolution: The Making of the Constitutional Revolution

The first part of the above title is borrowed from Charles Tilly's book which deals with social movements and revolutions.² Apart from the title, his conceiving of revolution in terms of collective action provides a useful framework for investigation of the making of the Iranian

¹ The effects of these two revolutions deeply influenced the Iranian constitutionalists. An eye-witness reported that "the Russian Revolution [had] had a most astounding effect" among the protesters gathered in the garden of the British Legation in 1906. E. G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution, 1905-1909* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966), 120. On the other hand, largely owing to the existence of many bilingual constitutionalists, the developments in the Ottoman Empire were closely watched and admired. Both the literature produced in such Ottoman cities, like Istanbul and Cairo, and abroad, mainly Paris which was at that time an important centre for Young Turks, were followed with great interest by Iranian constitutionalists. For an ample discussion of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in comparison with the Ottoman case see: Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 335-426.

² Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978).

Constitutional Revolution. Tilly suggests five major components which he regards as necessary for the analysis of a collective action: interest, organization, mobilization, opportunity and finally collective action.³ While interest is simply put as “the gains and the losses resulting from a group’s interaction with other groups”, by organization Tilly refers “to that aspect of a group’s structure which most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests”.⁴ Mobilization starts once a group reaches an interest-based coalition and the various elements which constitute it bring together their resources, such as manpower, goods, weapons etc. Nonetheless, these can only produce the expected outcome if the third component, i.e. opportunity is present. According to Tilly, opportunity “concerns the relationship between a group and the world around it”.⁵ Once the above components are materialized they produce a collective action which “consists of people’s acting together in pursuit of common interests”.⁶ The process of the making of a collective action is obviously not as neat and schematic as the above illustration might suggest. Quite to the contrary, not only are the steps not strictly sequential, but also, there are ideological, personal and other factors involved. Nonetheless, the model is useful for a structural analysis of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.

The outbreak of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution cannot be explained only by the despotic rule of the Qajar monarchs, even given the deep dissatisfaction it created especially among the urban and educated classes. The existing scholarship on early twentieth century Iranian history aptly emphasizes the significance of the political and ideological processes on the path to the Revolution. Notwithstanding their significance, however, the larger population was rather concerned with economic developments and their deteriorating living conditions for which ‘the foreigners’ and the ever-increasing European economic penetration were blamed. Moreover, guild members, merchants and labourers, and other social groups, were frustrated by the unpopular economic policies of various Qajar governments in the face of distressing economic conditions. Against the background of arbitrary concessions granted to foreigners and the excessive ready-made European imports, the new tariff treaty signed with

³ Ibid., 7

⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵ Ibid., 7. Tilly’s cautionary remarks about ‘opportunity’ is particularly important for the analysis of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. After emphasizing the difficulty of studying the opportunity since ‘it is hard to reconstruct the opportunities realistically available to the group at that time’ he states that ‘knowledge of later outcomes make it too easy to second-guess a group’s action, or inaction’. Ibid., 7. Indeed the involvement of diverse classes which ultimately had varying goals from the Constitutional Revolution makes the analysis of interests and opportunity rather complex. As will be seen in the following pages they were both subjects to changes during the period.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

Russia in 1903 furthered the unrest. The treaty brought new tariff rates on certain articles. Accordingly, Russian sugar would pay 2 percent ad valorem determined by weight, while petroleum and matches would pay 4 percent each.⁷ As Entner suggests, the treaty had a positive impact on Iran's unfavourable trade balance due to the new tariffs on exports of raw materials and foods. However it damaged non-Russian enterprise even though "this was not necessarily its sole purpose".⁸ Textiles were among the crafts most severely hurt by the new regulations.

Russia was soon to be followed by other countries, primarily Britain, which also revised its customs treaty with Iran. The treaty had various negative consequences but two proved to be particularly significant. First of all, Iran was no longer able to unilaterally revise its customs tariffs, so that it practically lost control over much of its foreign trade. Secondly, Iranian industries were further damaged, for Russia was interested in importing raw materials from Iran and exporting industrial products.⁹ There were reports regarding the protests organized by artisans and guilds members in order to "force the government to encourage home industries, and to protect them against growing competition from Russian industrial products".¹⁰ Mullahs reportedly agitated against the employment of non-Muslim foreigners for collecting land-taxes from Muslims.¹¹ Protests took place in several cities such as Tehran and Yazd. Agha Seyyed Ali Yazdi, a leading cleric from Tabriz, was arrested and banished for preaching against the treaty and inciting people to resistance.¹²

Along with the treaty the Prime Minister Amin al-Soltan Atabak and Joseph Naus, the Belgian Director of the Customs was harshly attacked 'for selling' the country to Russians, and their dismissal was requested by the protesters. Amin al-Soltan resigned and was replaced by Ain al-Dowleh. The opposition insisted on the dismissal of Naus too. However, not only

⁷ Marvin L. Entner, *Russo-Persian Commercial Relations, 1828-1914* (Florida: Douglas Printing, 1965), 54.

⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁹ Hojjat Fallah Tootcar, "Social and Political Activities of Guilds and Artisans from the Iranian Constitutional Revolution to the Rise of Reza Shah, 1906-1925." PhD diss., (in Persian) (Tehran: Tarbiyat Modarres University, 2003), 36.

¹⁰ Gad. G. Bilbar, "The Big Merchants (*tujjar*) and the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906," *Asian and African Studies* 11, no. 2(3) (1976): 275-303. Here p. 301 quoted by Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 35.

¹¹ Fereyduun Adamiyat, *Idiuluzhi-ye Nehzat-i Mashrutiyat-e Iran*, (Tehran: Payam Press, 1977), 117.

¹² Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 106. Also again in Tabriz Hajj Mirza Hasan Tabrizi, another mojtahed, claimed to have received letters from the great mullahs of the Atabat (i.e Karbala and Najaf). The letters which, as it turned out, were not genuine, authorized a movement against the new customs dues and trade regulations. Thus he urged the Governor of Tabriz to dismiss the Belgian custom-house officials as well as to abolish the new tariffs. Although the letters produced some effect for a brief period and even M. Priem, the Belgian Chief of Customs, fled the city, the fact was discovered and resulted in the banishment of Hajj Mirza Hasan and his followers from the city while the new tariff remained in force. Ibid., 107.

that he was not dismissed but quite to the contrary his influence increased even further during Ain al-Dowleh's premiership. Naus had practically assumed the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs as he also became High Treasurer, Head of the Passport Department, and Member of the Supreme Council of State.¹³ Apart from these developments increasing critiques of Iran's backwardness and corrupt officials were written and circulated, which contributed to popular agitation. Fath Ali Akhundzadeh (an Iranian-Azari intellectual living in Russian Caucasia), Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, Zayn al-Abedin Maragha'i, Jamal al-Esfahani and Malek al-Motakallemin were among the most prominent figures of this growing literature. Akhundzadeh's *Kamal al-Dowleh va Jalal al-Dowleh* (Kamal al-Dowleh and Jalal al-Dowleh); Maraghai's *Siyahatnameh-e Ebrahim Beg* (The Travel book of Ibrahim Beg); and *Ruya-yi Sadeqeh* (True Dream) co-authored by Jamal al-Esfahani and Malek al-Motakallemin were among the prominent examples of such literature.¹⁴

Thus, the elimination of the arbitrary rule constituted the common interest which brought diverse groups together. The close relations between the bazaaris and the clergy provided the organizational groundwork of the opposition. A number of developments which took place in 1905 created a suitable atmosphere and the pushing factors for mobilization. The first one was the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The victory of an Asian constitutional power, Japan, against a European absolute monarchy, Tsarist Russia, had significant consequences in Iran. For many reformists Japan was believed to have all the graces of progress by at the same time preserving their genuine national identity and traditions. By their victory they allegedly showed that a European Great Power could be defeated by an Asian power. On the other hand Japan being the only Asian constitutional power while Russia was the only major European non-constitutional power further reinforced the message as to the advantages of a constitutional regime.¹⁵ Apart from its political significance, the war further deteriorated Iran's economy and increased inflation in the country.¹⁶ Protests broke out again. On the night of 9 Muharram 1323 (16 March 1905) Seyyed Abdollah Behbehani, a prominent mojtahed of the period, gave a harsh sermon against Naus and Ain al-Dowleh. By showing a picture of Naus and his colleagues in a mullah's attire taken at a costume party two years earlier he called him 'corrupt'

¹³ Ibid., 112.

¹⁴ Nikki Keddie, "Iran under the Late Qajars 1848-1922", in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, *From Nader Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 174-212. Here P. 201-202.

¹⁵ Keddie, "Iran under the Late Qajars", 202.

¹⁶ Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 51.

(*haramzadeh*) and ‘cursed’ (*mal’un*) and demanded his dismissal.¹⁷ He then added that despite the insistent demand for issuing a fatwa for the killing of Naus he did not consider it necessary since, he argued, by his disrespect to the Prophet and mullahs he already deserved to be killed by any Muslim.¹⁸ The protesters insisted on the dismissal of Naus and took sanctuary (*bast*) in Abd al-Azim Shrine near Tehran. Reportedly the number of *bastis* reached five hundred.¹⁹ Upon the arbitration of Mohammad Ali Shah, the heir apparent, who promised the *bastis* that once the Shah arrived back from his European tour he would try for the dismissal of Naus, they left the Shrine and ended the sanctuary.

Nonetheless, arbitrary rule continued in both the capital and the provinces. In such regions as Fars, Mashhad and Qazvin, among other, news of oppressive rule added to the existing dissatisfaction.²⁰ Yet, the move to trigger the discontent in Tehran came from the Governor Ahmad Khan ‘Ala al-Dowleh. Due to the rising sugar prices caused by the Russo-Japanese War the Governor asked in 1905 two prominent sugar merchants, Seyyed Hashemi Qandi and Hajj Seyyed Isma‘il Khan, to reduce their prices. In response, Seyyed Hashemi told the Governor that the rising prices came as a result of the reduced sugar imports caused by the Russo-Japanese war and the revolution in Russia. ‘Ala al-Dowleh insisted, but Seyyed Hashemi did not retreat. The governor consequently ordered these two respected merchants bastinadoed.²¹ As a matter of fact such arbitrary disciplinary actions were not exceptional in contemporary Iran. Yet, for bazaaris and the clerics associated with them this penalty was the straw that broke the camel’s back, and they reacted decisively. Backed by the two prominent mullahs, Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba’i and Seyyed Abdullah Behbehani, the protesters took sanctuary in the Shah Mosque in the city of Tehran, but the *bastis* were dispersed by ‘Ain al-Dowleh. At the suggestion of Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabai a number of mullahs, including Behbehani and the influential cleric Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri, decided to retire to the shrine of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Azim in the south of Tehran where two thousand theology students joined them.²² This is known in Iranian history as *Hejrat-e Soghra*, i.e. the Minor Exodus. When increasing numbers of bazaaris supported the *bastis* and began to join the sanctuary, the Prime Minister ‘Ain al-Dowleh threatened any shopkeeper who shut his shop and joined the

¹⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸ Adamiyat, *Idi`uluzhi*, 153.

¹⁹ Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political Activities of Guilds”, 36.

²⁰ Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 112.

²¹ Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political Activities of Guilds”, 38. Fallah-Tootcar adds that according to some eyewitnesses Hajj Ahmad Qayseriyeh, Agha Seyyed Hosayn Lajavardi and several other individuals were also punished.

²² Keddie, “Iran under the Late Qajars, 202.

sanctuary with a legal sanction permitting people to plunder his workplace. A few shops were indeed plundered, but the *bastis* refused to obey. Their major demands were the dismissal of Naus along with the governor of Tehran and the establishment of an *adalatkhaneh* or a House of Justice.

The Shah dismissed the governor and agreed to the *adalatkhaneh* upon which action the sanctuary-seekers returned to Tehran. However, the Shah did not keep his promise. Towards the end of April the mullahs sent a letter to the Shah requesting that he enact his promised reforms. Yet, the petition produced no effect. Besides, people were no longer allowed to go out into the street after three hours following sunset.²³ Also, several prominent opposition leaders were arrested or exiled. For example, Seyyed Jamal al-Din Va'ez was expelled to Mashhad, while Majd al-Eslam Kermani was arrested. When Sheikh Mohammad Soltan al-Va'ezin was imprisoned in the Soldiers' Quarters, the building was attacked by theology students by the order of Seyyed Abdollah Behbehani. In the incident a young seyed (presumed descendent of the Prophet) student was shot to death. During his funeral another fifteen, including another seyed, were killed too.²⁴

This consequently gave way to the *bast* in the Masjed-e Jame', the main mosque in the city centre, from where the *bastis* moved to Qum, a town near Tehran. This was the start of what is known in Iranian history as Great Exodus or *Hejrat-e Kobra*. Fearing another government intervention the protesters decided to take sanctuary in a safer place. There was among the protesters a deliberate conviction about the British sympathy for a constitutional movement in Iran while Russia was largely believed to be hostile to it. This point was reported in later years by C. Spring-Rice, the British minister at Tehran during 1906 and 1908.²⁵ This was expressed by the following lines written on the top of cobblers' tent: "In the Embassy of His Britannic Majesty / Iranian people came together weeping and asking for justice".²⁶ Consequently after some correspondence with Evelyn Grant Duff, Secretary of the British Legation and the acting charge d'affairs, the protesters obtained permission to move to the legation compounds in Tehran. This should be regarded, to follow Tilly's model, as part of

²³ Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 115.

²⁴ An incident that occurred only about a month before this event suffices to explain the influence of the killing of a seyed. In June 1906 a young seyed is reported to have thrown a stone at the Dutch Minister in Tehran while he was driving. The Minister was seriously wounded and he nearly lost his eye. When he made a formal complaint to the Prime Minister, Moshir al-Dowleh, the latter apologized for boy's action but stated that in the present state of the town the Government dared not to cause a seyed to be beaten. The boy was imprisoned not more than a few days and was then released. FO 371/111 "Situation in Persia, July 1906".

²⁵ FO 881/8870 "General Report for Persia for the Year 1906".

²⁶ Fallah-Tootcar, "Social and Political Activities of Guilds", 48.

the opportunity for restive unrest. On the one hand there was the rivalry between Britain and Russia for the control of the region while on the other, the personal enmity among prominent figures such as ‘Ain al-Dowleh and Amin al-Soltan provided an advantageous atmosphere for the opposition. Based on his correspondences with the eyewitnesses E G. Browne provides a lively description of *bastis* and their organization in their stay in the legation garden. *Bastis* were organized along guild-lines with each guild having its tent. The number of tents was reportedly more than five hundred.²⁷ There are varying estimates as to the number of *bastis* but evidently they were more than a thousand.²⁸ The basic needs of the *bastis* were provided for by wealthy merchants. Faridun Adamiyat names intellectuals, mullahs and merchants as the three principal elements of the constitutional movement.²⁹ According to him students of modern and classical schools, guilds members and ordinary people later on took part in the agitations. However although the movement was first launched by the merchants and the mullahs, guild members played more than marginal roles in the process and in its outcome.

At first there was much confusion about the protesters’ basic demands. Adamiyat argues that the mullahs were primarily concerned with the dismissal of the Prime Minister, ‘Ain al-Dowleh, while theology students asked for the “establishment of a House of Justice which would implement the Muhammadan laws”.³⁰ Security and confidence about the future were among their basic objectives.³¹ Such demands were in time translated into a call for a National Assembly. The legation premises turned into a school where many issues but especially politics were discussed. The poems written on the top of almost each tent provides valuable insight about the popular perception of the protests and its expected outcomes. There were in their slogans an emphasis on promoting Islam and compliance with its principles along with a request for a House of Justice. The sock weavers, for example, foretold the good news that “out of His justice the Shah of shahs will soon erect a House of Justice”.³² Yet the *bastis* appear to have paid special attention to not to outrage the Shah and make a clear distinction

²⁷ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 56.

²⁸ The number varies between 12,000 and 16,000. According to Browne a number between 12,000 and 14,000 is nearer the truth: *The Persian Revolution*, 199. Sohrabi, however, gives estimates their number at between 14,000 and 16,000. Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 344. In his reports about the developments Cecil Spring-Rice also estimates the numbers of *bastis* to be at 14,000 by 2nd September 1906. See: FO 881/8870 “General Report for Persia for the Year 1906”..

²⁹ Adamiyat, *Idi`uluzhi*, 147.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 168. Based on his conversation with Seyyed Hasan Takizadeh, a prominent Azari intellectual and politician, Browne writes that when the Shah promised to dismiss the Prime Minister some of the *bastis* wished to end the sanctuary. However, a commission formed to formulate rather fundamental demands. They convinced the *bastis* to stay and the calls for a House of Justice in time developed into the demand for a National Assembly or Majles-i Melli. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 122.

³² Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political,” 49.

between him and the oppression they complained about. This is put by tailors as follows: “In order to obtain justice Iranians put their tents in the Embassy. To praise the just Shah people hastened to come together. We are not querulous towards our Sultan, may the glorious God bring him help and victory”.³³ In the face of these determined protests, Mozaffar al-Din Shah finally proclaimed the constitutional system a short time before his death in 1906. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution has been the subject of various studies which emphasized various aspects. Instead of providing a standard account of the revolution and its aftermath, this chapter will concentrate on its neglected dimensions by emphasizing the perceptions and attitudes of the wider population throughout the process. Petitions, along with printed media, memoirs etc., provide us with invaluable insights into subalterns' reflections on the constitutional system, its performance and later developments. Therefore, the coming section deals with the history of petitioning in Iran and concentrates on how petitions functioned as an uninterrupted channel of interaction of state and society in Iran.

“Do You Want me to Go and Present this to the Majles?”: Petitioning in Iran

Petitioning, both written and verbal, has a long history in Iran and it has been considered throughout centuries an indispensable part of a just monarchy, as it was in other parts of the world. In pre-Islamic Iran the king would personally appear before the public, mostly in bazaar squares, at periodic intervals to attend to people's grievances and demands. Islam further reinforced this practice and petitions continued to be one of the most effective channels between the rulers and the ruled. Yet it was during the 19th century, particularly during Naser al-Din Shah's reign (r. 184-1896), that several measures were taken for the institutionalization of petitioning. In 1860 the Shah declared by a decree that he saved Mondays exclusively for giving audience to the aggrieved and to those with demands. It was further added in the decree that the Shah would not meet any of his ministers on those days to attend exclusively to the issues of his subjects.³⁴ Apparently this practice did not last very long. Thus in 1874 another decree announced the establishment of the Box of Justice in Tehran in which supplicants would drop their petitions and the practice was, one year later, enlarged to cover the provinces too.³⁵ These boxes were protected by special guards to secure

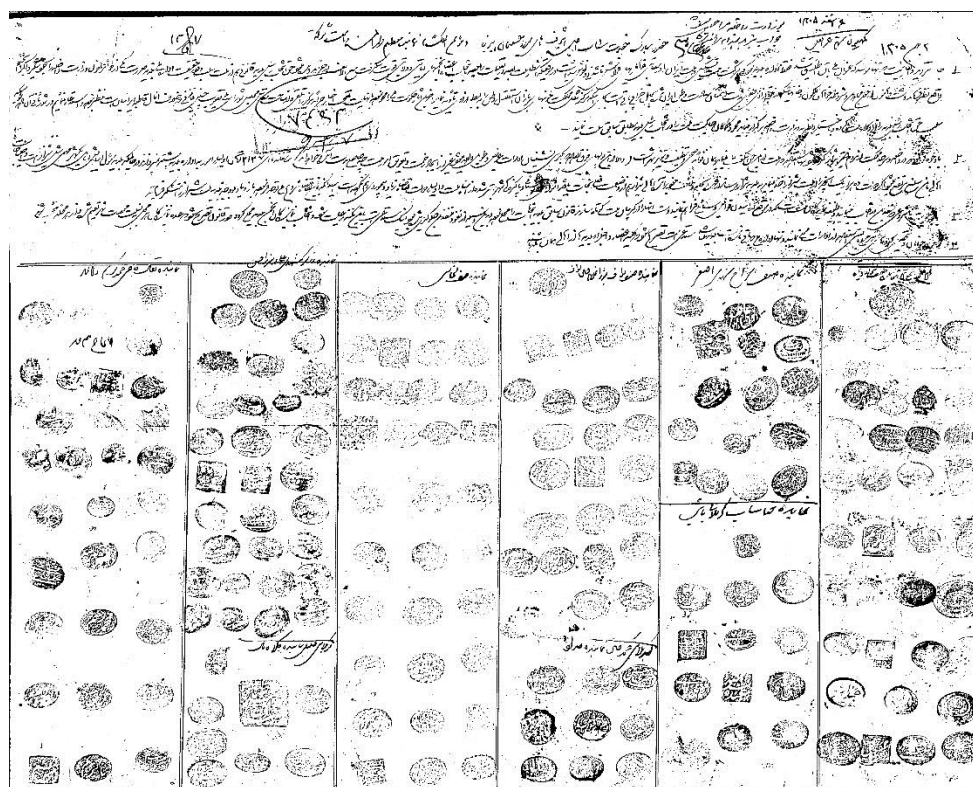
³³ Ibid., 53.

³⁴ Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 297.

³⁵ Ibid., 297. Schneider gives 1864 as the date of the establishment of these boxes both in Tehran and in the provinces. Schneider, *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 35.

the necessary comfort and trust for the supplicants and they were to be emptied twice a week by a trustee of the Shah who would deliver him the petitions in a sealed bag. The guard would even suffer the death penalty should he deny access to petitioners.³⁶ So too any petitioner submitting false petitions would suffer the death penalty.³⁷ In 1882 the more institutional and structured Council for the Investigation of Grievances (*majles-e tahqiq-e mazalem*) was founded for the administration of justice.³⁸ The petitions from this council provide invaluable information about late 19th century Iran particularly regarding the social issues aspects of the period. Yet they are mostly summaries of the original letters which apparently have not survived to this day. This is the main difference between them and the ones sent to the Majles following the Constitutional Revolution.

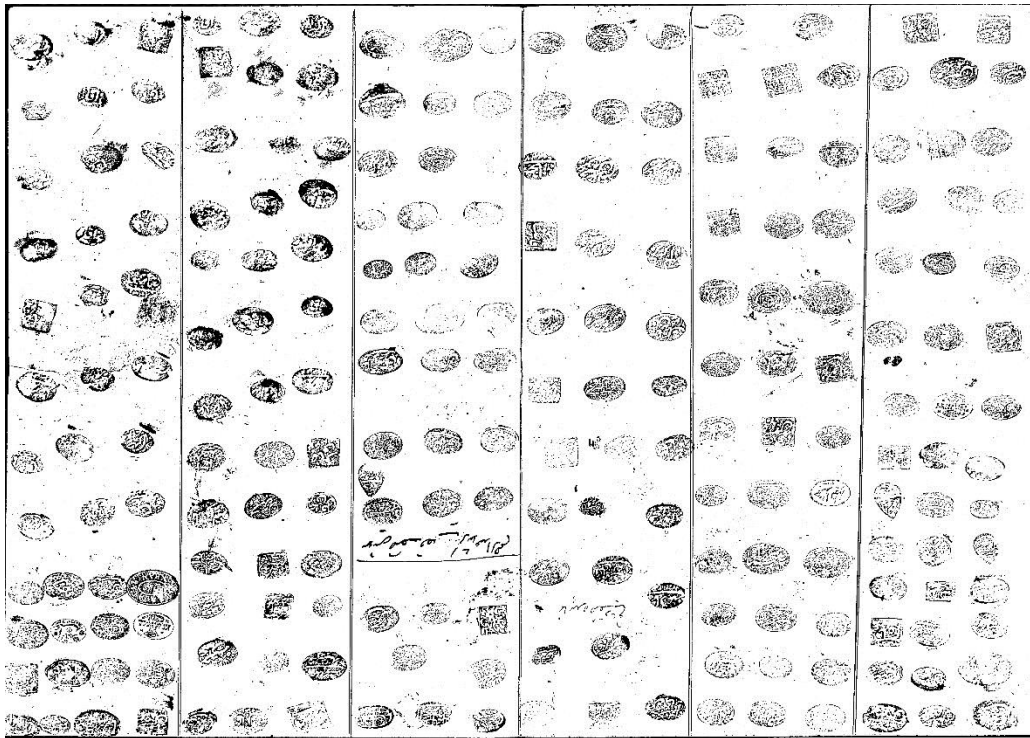
Figure 1: A collective petition from Shiraz dated 27 February 1927 requesting an increase in the municipal budget.



³⁶ There are constant violations of this rule. For example, Lord Curzon reports that the governors in the provinces “ordered a watch to be kept on those boxes; the bastinado was freely administered to any indiscrete person dropping in a petition.” Schneider, *The Petitioning System*, 35.

³⁷ Ibid., 36.

³⁸ Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi, “The Council for the Investigation of Grievances: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century Iranian Social History”, *International Society for Iranian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1989): 51-61”. Here p. 52.



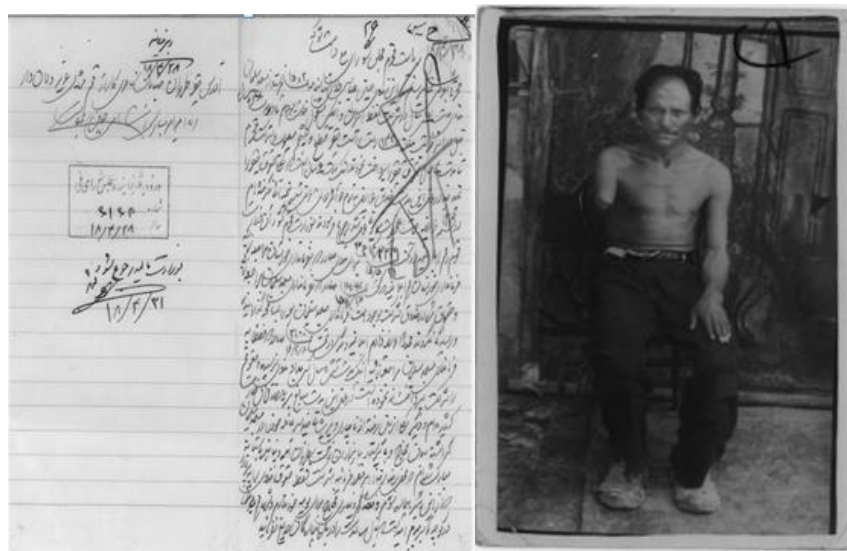
Source: LMDCIP. d6/k31/j17/ p97, 'To the Ministry of Interior'.

When petitioning was established as a legal right in the Constitution of 1906 the Majles found an enthusiastic public who eagerly presented their cases to the extent that “even the grocer and greengrocer thought himself a Commander, and everybody has problems with everybody and wants to scare him by saying: ‘do you want me to go and present this to the Majles?’”.³⁹ It is not always clear who actually wrote a petition. Those who did not show up personally sent their petitions directly to the Majles even though the issues concerned specific ministries or directories. To this effect several announcements were made urging the petitioners to address their grievances and demands to the relevant state department but apparently to no avail. The amount of petitions soon reached such numbers that the Commission of Petitions was founded exclusively to administer supplications and to forward them to the relevant ministries and other state departments. Sent by men and women, rich and poor, workers and employers, peasants and urban dwellers, petitions can be individual or collective with more than one, in some cases tens or even more than a hundred names, signatures or stamps on them. (see Figure-1) They typically started their petitions by showing their respect to the authority in question, often the Majles, where they emphasized their obedient and deferential attitude. They then introduced themselves, a part which at times gives detailed information as to the

³⁹ Mansureh Ettehadiyeh-Nezamma’i, *Majles va Entekhabat* (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1996), 23.

environments and social as well as political settings in which they lived, and then, stated their cases. This is finally followed by the statement of the request of a favour or the redressing of an injustice. In order to prove the accuracy of their claims and increase their chance of attendance to their cases petitioners sometimes included a supporting document called Letter of Testimony (*esteshhad-nameh*). As this could be a letter from a prominent person, a leading merchant, governor, a cleric etc., attaching a photo of, for example, a disabled person was also an option though not a frequently used one. (See figure 2). These petitions provide insight not only into the experiences of ordinary people but also their perceptions regarding the political processes and the issues discussed at the Majles.

Figure 2: The Petition and the *esteshhad-nameh* (a photograph) of Hosayn ‘Abbas, a former worker at AIOC (APOC), in which he asked for financial help for not being able to work after he lost his right arm in a work-related accident, 20 July 1939.



Source: Documents of the Eleventh Parliament, 20 July 1939, National Library and Archive of Iran.

Parliamentary Politics: The First Majles, 1906-1908

It is safe to argue that the opening of the Majles fundamentally altered the political realm in Iran. Politics had in this era become a popular topic and the court politics of the absolute monarchy was replaced by parliamentary politics. The reforms which have been launched in Iran during the nineteenth century determined the course of the Constitutional Revolution as

well. Unlike the neighbouring Ottoman Empire or its quasi-independent province, Egypt, the reforms undertaken in Iran throughout the nineteenth century failed to sufficiently strengthen the central government and to produce well-established institutions. Apart from the Cossack Brigades which had troops only enough to protect the capital, the country had no notable armed forces, with the exception of armed tribal groups. Not only were the tribes practically autonomous in their tribal and regional affairs but also other social groups like the clerics enjoyed extraordinary financial and political powers. Therefore, on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, “Iran could be characterized as having a weak state that coexisted with a strong society where the clerics, merchants, statesmen and other social groups were serious challengers to the state’s authority”.⁴⁰ Thus, while the relatively well-organized and trained Ottoman armed forces played a decisive role in the inception and the consolidation of the Ottoman Constitutional Revolution of 1908, the revolution in Iran was a result of urban social protests. As Nader Sohrabi rightly argues, “the ambiguities in the reformist political discourse of the early twentieth century provided a chance for broad mobilization”.⁴¹ This ambiguity along with inadequate institutional support for the revolution came to play a decisive role in its fate. The First Majles opened in October 1906 and lasted until 1908. This Majles deserves a separate mention not only because it was the first in Iranian history but also it was the one with the highest representative capacity of the Constitutional Era.

The electoral law produced for the first elections in 1906 specified six classes (*tabaqeh pl. tabaqat*) of the electorate which consisted of the princes and the Qajar tribe; mullahs and theology students; the nobility; merchants; landholders and smallholders; and guild members.⁴² Each *tabaqeh* was to send the Majles certain numbers of deputies to serve for two years. Also, the electorate was supposed to possess the following qualifications: to be Persian subjects; to be at least twenty five years old; to be known in their locality; to possess at least a thousand tumans (about £200); merchants and guild members were to have a definite office and to belong to a recognized guild.⁴³ Women, criminals, foreign subjects, and those ‘who are notorious for evil doctrine, or who live in open sin’ were among those who were debarred from electoral rights.⁴⁴ Some of the prerequisites for candidacy were as follows: the candidates should be able to speak, read and write Persian; they should be aged between thirty and seventy years old; they should not be employed in government service; and they should

⁴⁰ Sohrabi, Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism*, 288.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 288-9.

⁴² Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 355.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 355-6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 356.

be renowned persons. Overall while Tehran obtained 60 seats; the provinces together received only 96. Also among the 160 deputies 26 percent were guild elders while 20 percent were clergymen as opposed to 15 percent who were merchants. The First Majles has been subject of various studies. The intellectual debates during this period; several organizations, called *anjomans*, established in various cities in order to monitor elections but which continued their existence even afterwards; and external factors determining the future of constitutional experiment in Iran have been dealt with in several works. In what follows, the presence of guilds in this parliament and their activities will be analysed.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution did not originate as a result of a class-oriented struggle. Quite to the contrary, the otherwise-conflicting groups such as the clerics, merchants, aristocracy, guild members, intellectuals etc., made an ambiguous and ‘populist alliance’ for overthrowing the absolute monarchy.⁴⁵ This alliance was emphasized by some contemporary observers as well as later historians.⁴⁶ The fact that guild members sided with big merchants calls for explanation, since they hardly shared common interests. Guilds’ participation in the constitutional agitation clearly reflected its economic aspects. The negative impact of foreign economic presence drew guild members to anti-imperialist and even anti-foreign lines.⁴⁷ The ambiguous discursive engagement of constitutionalists’ and guilds’ ties with mullahs and merchants led them into revolutionary cadres. Therefore the class-based structure of the First Majles was more apparent than real even within the confines of the Persian word for class (*tabaqeh*). The nobility was largely represented by state officials or politicians; among the

⁴⁵ The phrase “populist alliance” is taken from: John Foran, “The Strengths and Weaknesses of Iran’s Populist Alliance: A Class Analysis of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911,” *Theory and Society* 20, no. 6 (Dec., 1991): 795-823. Here, p. 795. The Constitutional Revolution and the coalition which brought it about has preoccupied scholars. While some focused on the leading role of certain classes, mostly of the mullahs and modern intelligentsia, others tried to reveal the ideological bases of the struggle. None, however, underestimated its multi-class character. This latter point, I think, is best formulated by John Foran who argued that the movement leading to the Constitutional Revolution was “fought by a pre-capitalist class in decline (the artisans), and two small capitalist classes in formation (the intelligentsia and the working class), and led by two classes/groups that were divided (ulama and merchants). Foran, “Strengths,” 803. (Italics in original). Despite its explanatory power, however, the formulation fails to sufficiently emphasize the internal divisions within each class. Also, although class-based interests, hence conflicts, did exist in Iran quite early on, it is not always clear what is meant to constitute a class in the literature dealing with early twentieth century Iran. As will be discussed in the fourth chapter, the struggle against absolute monarchy and the ever-increasing foreign economic domination overshadowed real class positions in Iran, roughly, until 1930s. It seems more promising, therefore, to investigate the Constitutional Revolution as a breaking point for the making of new classes out of traditional structures. This last point will be analysed in chapter four.

⁴⁶ Browne’s correspondent in Tehran, allegedly Walter Smart who was the vice-consul at Tehran between 1906 and 1908 (see J. Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, P. 56) shared with him ‘the remarkable phenomenon’ of ecclesiastical participation in the Constitutional Revolution which, he commented ‘[was] unexampled in the world’s history’. Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 123. Adamiyat also attempts to explain this diversity and its reflection in the First Majlis. See: Adamiyat, *Idi’uluzhi*, 359-69.

⁴⁷ Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political,” 28.

representative of landholders and smallholders there were those who fell outside this category; the representative of bath-attendants and ice-sellers was a school teacher, just as some guilds were represented by the clergy.⁴⁸ That ‘the electors [were] not absolutely compelled to elect (a deputy) out of their own class or guild’ allowed for this flexible representation.⁴⁹ The comments of Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, a leading constitutionalist and a deputy to the Majles, on the First Majles should be read against this background. He argues that “political parties did not exist in the First Majles but there were Radicals and Moderates with the former having ideas similar to socialism”.⁵⁰ Thus Adamiyat observes that “within each social group different and at times conflicting political ideas existed”.⁵¹

The First Majlis was a Constituent Assembly and the constitution drafted by it remained in effect throughout the Pahlavi period. The Majles had the final say on all laws, decrees and any economic decisions from treaties to monopolies.⁵² An Upper House (*Majles-e A'yan*) was also proposed consisting of sixty senators, thirty of whom would be nominated by the Shah. The functions of this house, however, were to be determined by the National Assembly. The Shah was virtually reduced to a figurehead. Even his right to determine half of the proposed sixty senators did not mean much since no senate was convened during the Qajar period.⁵³ Mohammad Ali Shah, who ascended the throne upon his father's death, quickly made it clear that he would not easily submit to the new situation. He successfully manipulated frictions in the capital as well as in the provinces to undo many of the constitutional achievements. The Supplementary Fundamental Laws produced in 1907 provided him the proper opportunity for his anti-constitutional manoeuvres. This also marked the beginning of the disintegration of the ambivalent alliance among constitutionalist forces.

The proposed oath made by the deputies suggested that every deputy would swear on the Quran that they would “with the utmost truth, uprightness, diligence and endeavour” discharge the duties conferred on them.⁵⁴ The position of the Sharia, or Islamic law, was not clear especially as far as the legislative process was concerned. The Supplementary Fundamental Laws brought some clarification on this point. Accordingly, five members of the clergy, to be elected by the Majles from a list of twenty, would scrutinize all legislative

⁴⁸ Adamiyat, *Idiuluzhi*, 359-60.

⁴⁹ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 357.

⁵⁰ Adamiyat, *Idi'uluzhi*, 361.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁵² Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵⁴ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 364.

attempts no prevent any law which contradicted the Sharia.⁵⁵ Alienated by the constitutional forces, Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri became the outspoken leader of *mashru'eh* (rule according to Sharia) as opposed to *mashruteh* (rule according to the constitution). As the Shah, meanwhile, refused to ratify the Supplementary Laws he also denounced such leading constitutionalists as Malek al-Motekallem, Jamal al-din Esfahani, Mirza Jahangir Khan of *Sur-e Esrafil* and Mohammad Reza Shirazi of *Mosavat* as 'heretical Babis' and 'republican subversives'.⁵⁶ The assassination of Amin al-Soltan, however, shook the Shah who ratified the laws and expressed his reluctant respect for the constitution. Once the opportunity arose, however, he was to launch his final attack on the Majles.

Another notable aspect of the First Majles was the high degree of representation of the trade guilds. Thirty two deputies, both from Tehran and provinces, represented the trade guilds in this majles.⁵⁷ (Appendix 1). Defined as "group[s] of townspeople engaged in the same trade or craft, who elect their own chief and who pay guild taxes; this group having economic, social, fiscal and political functions"⁵⁸ guilds (*senf- pl. asnaf*) have historically been an integral part of the Iranian society. Although their economic importance showed more or less a steady decline during the nineteenth century, they largely maintained their political and social position.⁵⁹ By the electoral law of 1906, they attained a prominent position in central politics between 1906 and 1908 for the first and the last time. According to Adamiyat such representatives of the trade guilds as Mashhadi Mohammad Baqer Baqqal and Mirza Ebrahim Khayyatbashi were known "for their sound understanding and progressiveness".⁶⁰ Taqizadeh, too, credits Baqqal, Hosayn Tehrani Saqatforush, Mohammad Taqi Bonakdar, Mohammad Khunsari Ketabforush and Hosayn Borujerdi "as the most consistent supporters of the majles".⁶¹ Yet not everyone agreed on this point. The historian Kasravi, for example, criticizes the presence in the Majles of such guild representatives as Hajj Ali Akbar Parviz and Baqqal.⁶² Indeed it is safe to suggest that like many of the deputies in the First Majles,

⁵⁵ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 90.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 90.

⁵⁷ Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashruteh-e Iran* (Tabriz: Akhtar, 2006), 190.

⁵⁸ Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh*, 111.

⁵⁹ The decline in the economic position of guilds continued during the early twentieth century too. Nonetheless, as will be discussed in the 3rd chapter, this decline in economic activities organized around guilds does not necessarily entail an overall decline in crafts or 'traditional' industries. Quite to the contrary, it originated from the fact that the putting-out system organized largely in rural settings and large scale 'modern' manufactures were responsible for the declining economic significance of guilds.

⁶⁰ Adamiyat, *Idi'uluzhi*, 369.

⁶¹ Afary, *Iranian*, 72.

⁶² Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh*, 191. Also one of the contemporaries, Moghis al-Saltaneh, makes similar negative observations on two other guild representatives, namely Mirza Mahmud Ketabforush and Me'marbashi.

guild representatives too lacked any notable political experience and were hardly informed on theoretical issues such as constitutionalism and parliamentary rule. However, their background and their ties with their electoral districts can shed important light on the social dimensions of politics in this period. Also, in terms of their demands and activities, guild members were the closest to the working class and most attentive to labour issues.

Backed by the Central Committee of Guilds, the guilds played a major role during this period. The Central Committee was a typical one in its advertised aim of reinforcing the constitutional form of government. Yet, in addition to this, it regulated guilds' affairs, attended to the needs and the demands of craftsmen, and organized charity activities.⁶³ *Anjoman-e Asnaf* was the official organ of the Committee of which no issues are available. After a while the name of the newspaper was changed to *Bamdad* but from that too only three issues are available.⁶⁴ From an analysis of the available issues it appears that *Bamdad* was rather preoccupied with the prevalent concerns of the period such as the consolidation of the constitutional system, comments about the parliamentary discussions, education of girls, reforming the bureaucracy etc. For example, the editorial of the ninth issue titled "A Petition to His Excellency may His Reign be Infinite" and authored by Yahya al-Hosayni (Dowlatabadi), the alleged compiler of the Committee's code,⁶⁵ the typical distinction between the Just King and his corrupt entourage is highlighted. The Shah is requested not to give credit to those "ignorant and ill-intentioned" persons who tried to provoke the Shah against His people. He is instead advised to read the well-intentioned newspapers whose only goal was to give good advice to the Shah as well as to the public, and awaken them.

The relationship between guilds and the emerging Iranian working class is unclear. The electoral law made no mention of workers as a distinct class with a privileged right to vote. This was a result of, more than anything, the traditional structure of Iranian society. As will be discussed in the Fourth Chapter, in the early twentieth century many of the contemporaries equated workers with those labouring in large-scale industrial establishments, of which Iran

He criticizes the former for not being able to do anything but publish the books of Sa'di, a master of Persian literature who lived in the 13th century, and others, while the latter is blamed for being an incompetent architect whose buildings are collapse one after another. He then questions what benefits this kind of person could bring to state affairs as they would only occupy the floor and prevent others from speaking. Ettehadiyeh Nezami, *Majls*, 287 footnote 126.

⁶³ Fallah-Tootcar, "Social and Political," 73.

⁶⁴ No issues of *Anjoman-e Asnaf* are available. Of *Bamdad*, only the 9th, 13th and 20th issues are available. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Fallah-Tootcar for providing me with copies of these three issues.

⁶⁵ Fallah-Tootcar, "Social and Political," 71.

did not have many at that time. Although the assumptions as to the existence of fatherly and egalitarian relations between the guild masters and their employees are problematic enough, among the constitutionalist forces workers seem to regard guilds as their closest allies. To understand the course of the relations between the two it is important in order to be able to follow the trajectory of Iranian the working class.⁶⁶ Guilds have historically been an important social group who not only took active part in social projects but also functioned as an important actor in local politics. Their representation in the First Majles had added to this role. In this way, they exercised political power both in the capital and the provinces.

The link between the capital and the provinces is illustrated by an incident which occurred in Hamadan in 1906. Hoarding of food staples, especially of grain, constituted one of the main causes of sporadic famines in Iran. When Hamadan suffered from a scarcity of wheat, in 1906, guild members who were backed by the governor, Zahir al-Dowleh, along with the population of the town, attacked the landlords they considered responsible for hoarding. To this effect they sent a petition to the Prime Minister Moshir al-Dowleh in which they stated that while Hamadan had an annual wheat production of two hundred thousand kharvars and while the annual need of the town was only twenty five thousand kharvars the landlords horded grain, pushing people to hunger.⁶⁷ A few days later on 11 September 1906 they sent another petition this time to the Shah in which they complained that “mercy is removed from the hearts of wheat dealers”.⁶⁸ In the ensuing meeting between the Governor and the landlords the latter insisted on a free price system for wheat. Zahir al-Dowleh, on the other hand, read the telegraph of the Prime Minister which also contained the order of the Shah as to the release of necessary wheat to the market. Yet the landlords proved reluctant to comply with the order. Subsequently two hundred guild representatives sent another petition to the Shah which read as follows:

Our khans need money to spend in the theatres of Paris and other cities of Farangestan, [Europe] while our beloved children paled out of hunger. Where is the Sultan of the Muslims and their

⁶⁶Willem Floor states that guilds cannot be considered a true representative of workers. W. Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran* (Washington: Mega Publishers, 2009), 29. On the other hand, Farhang Qasemi argues that workers’ electoral alliance with guilds in 1906 was a result of the lack of any other viable alternative, or put differently workers’ voted for guilds’ representatives because they had to. Farhang Qasimi, *Sandikalism dar Iran* (Paris: Bunyadi Musaddiq, 1985), 57. Both arguments are based on the assumption that there already was an Iranian working class which accommodated itself against other societal groups. They also overestimate the distinction between guild-based and non-guild types of production although, at least as far as the early twentieth century is concerned, such a clear cut distinction is problematic. As will be discussed in the fourth chapter, it is true that an industrial working class was emerging during the period, but they had not yet defined their interests in a way that was essentially different from those of the guilds.

⁶⁷ Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political,” 100. A *kharvar*, or a donkey load, equals one hundred kgs.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 100.

Honourable Ruler? Where is the justice of Anushirvan⁶⁹ which passed to the ruling dynasty of Iran? How can justice allow for the hungry people to cry out of hunger in spite of this benevolence of glorious God, and how can it allow an 'ashura⁷⁰ to take place in this city? How can the Excellent Shah of shahs of the Muslims enjoy ten different foods in his meal while we are hungry and miserable?⁷¹

Their demand was the release of each kharvar at ten tumans and Zahir al-Dowhleh promised them that he would ensure the release of twenty five thousand kharvars at that price.⁷² However, no viable solution was reached and the guilds members closed their shops in 5 October and took sanctuary in the telegraph office. They sent Hajj Sheikh Taqi Vakil al-Ro'aya to Tehran to discuss the issue with the Prime Minister. Subsequently he acted as a deputy in the First Majles. The incident is important in several respects. First of all, it clearly shows the local power centres, the landlords, guilds, the notables, the governor, and the relatively weak authority of the central governments in the provinces. Secondly, it adds to our understanding of the already problematic class-based representation in the First Majles. Vakil al-Ro'aya was a leading merchant and later the head of Hamadan Union of Merchants. Therefore, there is a disagreement as to whether he represented the guilds in the First Majles or not.⁷³ It is safe to suggest then that even if we leave aside the ambiguities of the Persian word *tabaqeh* for class, the pattern of representation in this Majles was determined by subjective class identification more than objective class positions. Therefore one should first reveal the specific class structure inherent in a given class habitus to disclose the structural dimension of what are seemingly inexplicable alliances. The third point concerns the issue of free-price system versus protectionism or some sort of self-subsistence. The last point endured through the Qajar period and well into the Pahlavi years. In the lack or viable of transport facilities, the free-price system was not regarded a suitable option since it could lead to famines in one region while another enjoyed a good harvest. Yet, on the other hand the country was long under foreign economic domination and the treaties signed with various states rendered price control practically infeasible.

⁶⁹ The Sassanid King Khosrau I who is accepted as an exemplary just King in Iranian history.

⁷⁰ The tenth day of the Hijri month of Muharram. In hijri year of 61 Hussein, son of Caliph Ali and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, and several members of his family were killed in Karbala deprived of water and food. The petitioners compare their hunger with that of Karbala martyrs.

⁷¹ Fallah-Tootcar, "Social and Political," 101.

⁷² Ibid., 102.

⁷³ While Fallah-Tootcar, for example, counts him as a representative of guilds (see: "Social and Political," 104) Afary does not (see: *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 73).

The twelfth article of the Fundamental Laws stated that “no one, on any pretext or excuse, shall have any right, without the knowledge and approval of the National Consultative Assembly, to molest its members”. Furthermore, even if a deputy committed a crime he could not be arrested or punished without “the cognizance of the Assembly”.⁷⁴ Mohammad Ali Shah, however, did the unthinkable and subjected the parliament to bombardment in 1908, badly shaking the basis of the ‘populist alliance’. Thus started what is known in Iranian history as Lesser Despotism which ruled for almost a year between 1908 and 1909. It once again became clear that the Iranian Majles, unlike the Ottoman one, lacked any substantial armed backing in the capital, hence it dissolved rapidly. Iran was now the arena of provincial politics and forces. A full-fledged assault on the constitutionalists was launched, leading to the execution of several of them such as Jamal al-Din Va‘ez and Malek al-Motekellemin, to name two prominent figures, and to the exile and escape of many others. Royalism mixed with a discourse based on reaction against the so called *bed‘at* or reprehensible innovation in Islam constituted the core of the anti-constitutionalist movement. Although the resistance, mainly centred in Tabriz, against Mohammad Ali Shah’s absolutism was to restore the parliament in less than a year’s time, the revolution had lost much of its fervour. Anti-constitutional religious clamour was easily reacted to and condemned by the leading constitutionalists, but in the wider public, particularly among the merchants and artisans, some were left baffled. To this were added some unpopular economic and political developments. For example, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which divided Iran into a southern British sphere of influence and a northern Russian one, along with a neutral zone including Tehran, added to the anxiety over the integrity of the country, although parliament was not to blame for this. Besides, since the exorbitant court expenditures had always been a major concern for many of the constitutionalists, they sought ways to curtail it. To this end, in 1907 a budget was drafted which not only targeted the extravagance of a few courtiers but also threatened the livelihood of thousands who made their living in the royal palace, in its various workshops.⁷⁵

With the termination of the first phase of the constitutional experiment, the political significance of Iranian guilds in the capital was also lost, and they were never to recover it. This shift was largely a result of a process during which a new political setting was emerging, which rested on new types of social groups using new discursive tools. Also, deprived of their

⁷⁴ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 364.

⁷⁵ Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 94.

former economic strength, once they lost their political ground, trade guilds did not hold on very long to their social position. The ambiguous relations within guild organizations between the master, and the journeymen and apprentices, were in time replaced with a more rational and interest-based understanding. Many former craftsmen having gradually turned into wage labourers accelerated this process. Thus the gradual disintegration of the guild structure was a major step in the making of the Iranian working class.⁷⁶

The Crisis of Parliamentary Politics: The Second Majles and the End of an Era

The constitutionalists who were centred in Tabriz ultimately gained victory and succeeded in restoring the constitutional system by capturing Tehran and banishing Mohammad Ali Shah from the country. Iran now entered a new phase of parliamentary politics. A number of factors played a determining role in the shaping of this period which continued until mid-1920's when the Qajar dynasty was replaced by the Pahlavi. First of all, the Electoral Law produced for the elections to the Second Majles brought about major changes. Secondly and in conjunction with the first, ideological differences which were already there from the turn of the century onwards became more pronounced, making it possible to talk about party politics during the Second Majles as indicated in many studies on the period. Thirdly tribal forces, particularly the Bakhtiari in the south, proved decisive in restoring the parliamentary system. Thus, from 1909 onwards they played major roles not only by occupying ministerial posts but more importantly, in regional politics. Fourthly, having already strengthened their position in Iran in 1907 Russia and Britain became more involved in the country's politics both in the capital and in the provinces. These and other developments seriously influenced state-society relations in Iran during the period and formed the bases of later transformations. Now each of the above points will be discussed separately.

The new Electoral Law drafted through the end of the Lesser Despotism abolished the *tabaqeh*-based electoral system and introduced a two-stage method throughout the country including Tehran.⁷⁷ This meant that in the quarters of a city or in the towns of an Electoral Division the electorate would elect those persons, called the Elected, who would in turn go to the centre of the Electoral Division to elect the requisite number of deputies to the Majles.

⁷⁶ Many of the aspects and developments of Iranian guilds remain understudied. Furthermore, how to approach to labour employed in guilds is also far from clear.

⁷⁷ For an English translation of the law see: Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 385-400. The following details regarding the law is taken from there.

The electorate were supposed to be Persian subjects and at least twenty years old, as opposed to twenty five years old in the former law. Also if they were not natives of their districts they should have settled there for at least six months prior to the election. Property qualifications were also modified. Accordingly, the electorate should fulfil one of the following three prerequisites: they were supposed to possess property amounting at least to 250 tumans (fifty pound sterling) or have a yearly income of fifty tumans (ten pound sterling); otherwise, they should annually pay at least ten tumans (two pound sterling) as tax. Those barred from right to vote were: foreign subjects, women, “persons whose apostasy from the orthodox religion of Islam has been established in the presence of a duly qualified representative of the Holy Law”, thieves, murderers and members of the naval and military forces actually in service.

The following qualifications were looked for in the candidates: they were supposed to be Persian subjects aged between thirty and seventy with adequate reading and writing skills in the Persian language. In terms of faith they should be Muslim unless they represented Christians, Jews or Zoroastrians; and to be locally known and trustworthy. Those who failed to fulfil necessary qualifications for candidacy and those persons barred from the right to vote were barred from being elected along with the sons, brothers and paternal uncles of the Shah. Each of the Bakhtiari, Qashqais and Ilat-e Khamseh (Five Tribes) of Fars, Turkomans and Shahsevans of Azarbaijan would send one representative to the Majles. The number of the deputies was reduced from 160 to 120. According to the new law, Tehran which formerly sent sixty deputies would send fifteen while the provinces obtained more seats than before. Most notably Azerbaijan was given as many as 19 seats. It is argued that the law was not based on sound knowledge of the populations of the provinces and cities and the decision as to the numbers of deputies relied on estimation. Also, getting to the electoral divisions was another challenge due to the long distances. Such obstacles, and the ambiguities in the Electoral Law, caused several complaints.⁷⁸

In the end the composition of the Second Majles came to be substantially different from the First. According to Dowlatabadi “the Second Majles had an air of wealth to it. It was filled with the members of the nobility and the wealthy. No attention was paid to the choice of the

⁷⁸ Ettehadiyeh Nezamafi, *Majles va Entekhabat*, 132. This lack of sound geographical knowledge along with the two-stage election method constituted the basis of the critiques about the Electoral Law of 1909. For example the Isfahan Union of Trade Guilds in June 1911 argued that these two factors turned the elections against popular will. It was further argued that this law was prepared during Muhammad Ali Shah’s despotic rule and harmed the utmost important issue of equal representation. Raziye Yoozofi Neyi, *Asnad-e Tejari-ye Advar-e Avval ta Panjom-e Showra-ye Melli* (Tehran: Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, 2009), 273-4.

masses of the nation. The seeds for this change were planted at the time when a two-stage election procedure was decided upon'.⁷⁹ The Second Majjles commenced on 15 November 1909 with the participation of only sixty one deputies out of 120. The structural changes laid the groundwork for ideological fragmentation too. Unlike the First Majles party politics was in play. The political atmosphere in the capital also played a role in this regard. First of all along with Mohammad Ali Shah prominent anti-constitutionalists were either exiled or executed, such as the high-ranking cleric Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri who was hanged following the Civil War in Tehran. This in turn resulted in the consolidation of the constitutional form of government despite the internal conflicts amongst constitutionalist forces which mostly originated in bids for greater power. Yet, the elimination of the common enemy in turn brought the already-existing but somehow postponed ideological differences to the fore. The main cliques were Democrats and Moderates while smaller groups such as Accord and Progress and The Progressives of the South were also formed.⁸⁰ Here a brief analysis of the two main parties, the Democrat Party and the Moderate Party, will be provided.

Socialist ideas had already gained ground in Iran from the early twentieth century onwards. Such figures as Haydar Khan Amu Oghli and Narim Narimanov had founded in 1905 the Social Democratic Committee of Iran whose members were known as Social Democrats (*Ejtema'iyun 'Amiyyun*) in Baku where many Iranians lived and laboured. They consequently founded cells within Iran and the Iranian Social Democratic Party was founded in 1905. Social Democrats presented themselves as Democrats in the Second Majles for fear of negative reactions.⁸¹ Led by Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh the central committee of the party consisted of Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh, Solayman Mirza Eskandari, Mirza Baqer Agha Qafqazi, Mirza Abd al-Hosayn Khan Vahed al-Molk, Seyyed Mohammad Reza Mosavat, Mirza Ahmad Qazvini and Mirza Mahmud Khan.⁸² According to the Democrats, the twentieth century carried the same significance for the East as the seventeenth century carried for the West in the sense that the 'outmoded feudal system' was to be replaced by the overwhelming power of capitalism.⁸³ Iran would also join this inexorable current of history. The party also expressed its determination to preserve the constitutional system and the rule of the parliament. Also according to the program of the party all of the members of the nation were

⁷⁹ Quoted in Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 262.

⁸⁰ Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, *Kaveh*. 15 July 1918.

⁸¹ Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 264.

⁸² Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Demokrasi-ye Ijeimai dar Nahzat-e Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* (West Germany: Noupad, 1985), 136.

⁸³ Mansureh Ettehadiyeh-Nezamafi, *Maramnamaha va Nezamnamaha-ye Ahzab-e Siyasi-yi Iran dar Dovvomin Dowreh-e Majlis-e Shura-yi Melli*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1982), 4.

equal before the state irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. Freedom of the press, organization and movement were also stressed in the program.⁸⁴ About economic issues the program was rather detailed. Apart from financial matters such as direct and indirect taxes, the program also touched upon the following labour issues: no child under the age of fourteen could be employed; the workday should not exceed ten hours; workers must have one day of the week week off; factories should have certain necessary facilities for work and meet standards of sanitation.⁸⁵

Two points in the program deserve separate mention as far as labour and class issues are concerned. First, in the texts from early twentieth-century Iran the standard Persian equivalent of class was *tabaqeh pl. tabaqat*. The Democrats, however, stated that ‘the wellbeing of the country can only be obtained through a unity of the *senf* of the masses’.⁸⁶ The term *senf* has historically been used to refer to a single trade guild such as *senf-e dabbagh* (tanners’ guild). Here however, it was used to mean class. Also, Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh, a prominent Democrat and the editor of *Iran-e Now*, the Democratic Party organ was ‘the only distinguished thinker in the party’s ranks’, used the same word in his *Critique of the Moderates’ Party or Social Moderates* which was one of the first detailed discussions on socialist ideas.⁸⁷ In this work, he mentions *senf-e karegaran* (working class) and *mobarezeh-e senfi* (class struggle). On the other hand, although apparently Rasulzadeh makes no clear-cut distinction between *tabaqeh* and *senf* he repeatedly uses *tabaqat-e momtazeh* (privileged classes) and places *senf-e aksariyat* (the popular classes) against them.⁸⁸

According to Adamiyat the preamble of the Democratic Party’s program which contained the theoretical issues regarding socialism and class was also authored by Rasulzadeh.⁸⁹ This makes the connection between the two texts clearer. Also as mentioned earlier unlike the First Majles trade guilds did not directly partake in the Second Majles and this made this shift of meaning possible. Secondly, the program was based on a clearly linear and progressive understanding of history and an objective perception of classes. Accordingly, as the world progressed, it was suggested, industrial tools and implements would also progress.⁹⁰ Therefore unsurprisingly no mention was made of the non-factory labour which doubtlessly

⁸⁴ Ettehadieh Nezamafi, *Maramnamaha*, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁷ The full text of this work appears in Ettehadieh Nezamafi, *Maramnamaha*, 59-82. Also for an analysis of it see: Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Demokrasi*, 95-126.

⁸⁸ Ettehadieh Nezamafi, *Maramnamaha*, 63 and 72 respectively.

⁸⁹ Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Demokrasi*, 281.

⁹⁰ Ettehadieh Nezamafi, *Maramnamaha*, 3.

encompassed the greater part of the labour force in Iran. Although most of the articles included in the Democratic Party's program, particularly those related to labour issues, were largely to remain on paper, they were revolutionary in many respects. *Iran-e Now* started publications as an independent daily in August 1909 but was edited by several leading Democrats. Many of the social issues from the criticism of class society to the position of women and to ethnic and religious prejudices were discussed in this journal for the first time.⁹¹

Revolutionary or not, the ideas expressed by Democrats infuriated more conservative circles both within and outside the Majles. Gradually the Moderate Party was formed. Led by Murteza Qoli Na'ini, Mohammad Sadeq Tabataba'i, son of the prominent mojtahed, a high ranking Shiate Islamic theologian, Tabataba'i, and Ali Mohammad Dowlatabadi, younger brother of the democrat Yahya Dawlatabadi, Moderates gained a wide support from various classes. Compared to that of the Democrats their program was far from coherent.⁹² It stressed the importance of Islam as a uniting bond amongst Iranians. It then summarized the Party's main perspective under seven articles where emphasis was made on progress, centralization, obligatory education, improvement of the armed forces as well as of the foreign relations in order to develop trade. In the third and fourth articles, attending to the situation of those who toil (*ranjbaran*), and improving their living conditions are stressed. Moderates regarded Democrats' ideas as a source of 'devilry and corruption' and a cause of disorder in state affairs.⁹³ Behbehani, a leading Moderate, severely attacked Taqizadeh and even obtained a fatwa from the leading ulama in Najaf as to his apostasy from Islam.⁹⁴ Islam was again at the core of the clash between the two parties and their supporters. Democrats' emphasis on the separation of religion and state apparently resented not only the ulama but also other conservative groups including a good part of the members of the trade guilds. Generally speaking, the lower classes were rather conservative and under the influence of the clergy. Thus any allegedly anti-Islamic move or idea provoked them. For example agitated by an article published in *Habl al-Matin* of Tehran trade guilds in the city pressed for and secured the banning of the newspaper as well as the imprisonment of its editor Mirza Hasan

⁹¹ For a detailed analysis of *Iran-e Now* see: Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 273-283.

⁹² For the full text of the program see: Ettehadieh Ettehadieh Nezamafi, *Maramnamaha*, 89.

⁹³ Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Demokrasi*, 145-6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

Kashani.⁹⁵ The assassination of the leading cleric Behbehani further escalated the tensions and resulted in the closing of *Iran-e Now* and the exile of Taqizadeh.

Another significant development of this period was the ever-increasing influence of tribal elements in Iran. Their influence both on the capital and in the provinces was furthered through their participation in restoring the constitutional government in 1909 and continued roughly until mid-1920's. The political instability in Tehran provided a suitable atmosphere for Turkomans in north Khorasan, Shahsevans in Azerbaijan, and Kurds in Lorestan to disregard the central authority and expand their own to neighbouring towns and villages. The position of the Bakhtiyari chiefs was particularly impressive in mid-1911. As Samsam al-Saltaneh presided over the government in Tehran, the palace guard and the War Ministry were under different branches of this tribe while Sardar Asad, the former minister of war, continued to be a prominent figure in the capital. Also from 1909 on all of the governors of Fars were from the Bakhtiyari tribe. This escalated both inter- and intra-tribal conflicts. Furthermore, the six leading chiefs of the Ilkhani and the Hajj Ilkhan families of the Bakhtiyari tribe signed agreements with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for the protection of the company's installations in return for a 3 percent share of the profits.⁹⁶

This political instability and fragmentation stimulated further foreign intervention in the country. While the British were busy strengthening their position in the south, the Russians were alarmed by the policies of the Majles and regarded them as contrary to their interests. The appointment of the American, Morgan Shuster, as treasurer-general of Iran and his economic and political policies brought about the Russian ultimatum of 1911. Having already occupied Anzali and Rasht in the north, the Russians delivered an ultimatum to the Majles with the following conditions: Shuster would be dismissed; no foreign adviser would be hired without a mutual consent from the British and Russians; and an indemnity would be paid to cover the expenses of the expeditionary forces in Anzali and Rasht. The Majles at first rejected the ultimatum but the Russians marched to Qazvin, and open confrontations took place between the Russian troops and Iranians, who suffered many casualties. Widespread public demonstrations for the rejection of the ultimatum reached a peak with this move, and Russian goods were boycotted. The boycott was a part of a larger issue of excessive imports

⁹⁵ Fallah-Tootcar, "Social and Political," 253-4. The ideas which invoked such groups were repeatedly expressed in *Iran-i Now* which functioned as the official organ of the Democrat Party. Starting its publication in August 1909 it continued, albeit a short interim in 1910, to be one of the most influential newspapers until 1911 when the Second Majles was dispersed.

⁹⁶ Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 107.

and a result of the already existing opposition to Russian economic penetration. The following petition sent from in 1911 provides a good illustration of the anti-Russian feelings and the popular disillusionment from the Majles:

How long should we, the oppressed and helpless people, bear the merciless transgressions and unlawful violence of the northern neighbour [Russia] which each and every day produces new and countless transgressions and removes our security by various tricks? Does international law not apply in Iran? [...] Do you not pay attention to the future of this country? Will you not question the groundless existence of the troops of the northern neighbour? [...] Do you not consider ourselves accountable in before God and people?⁹⁷

Yet the protests and boycott failed and ultimately the Majles accepted the ultimatum and submitted to the Russian demands. This brought the end of the Second Majles in 1911. After the first constitutional experiment between 1906 and 1908, parliamentary politics failed once again. This time the final blow came mainly from external factors. The new era was predominantly characterized by local politics, security crises and a quest for order.

Constitutionalism without a Parliament: Local Politics and the Rise of Reza Shah

In Iran there was much disparity between popular expectations from the constitutional system and what it actually brought about. For the masses, constitutionalism entailed dignity for themselves and the homeland, stability and political as well as economic growth. For many it was like a magic wand which could heal any of Iran's problems. Yet the subsequent developments largely lagged behind these expectations. The Revolution was successful in creating a political community in Iran but its achievements were overshadowed by its failures. The Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 and the Russian Ultimatum of 1911 disillusioned people, and the constant confrontations between royalist and constitutionalist forces seriously exhausted them, further deteriorated their living conditions and stripped them of security.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ "From Isfahan to Tehran, March 1911", in Yusofi Neya, *Asnad-e Tejari*, 206. Apparently, such feelings did not always materialize affective boycotts. Thus, the extent and the popularity of the boycotts were not the same in every corner of the country. Although in the north and in the capital the enthusiasm was rather high but in such cities as Isfahan the situation seems to be different. A report on the trade of the town in 1911 states that being under the pressure of the clergy the merchants boycotted Russian sugar and other goods but in march 1911 this did not bring about any apparent effect on trade. FO 248/1029, 1911, "The Trade Report for the year 1910-1911".

⁹⁸ There were several reports to in this regard. For example, in Mazandaran, northern Iran, Consul Rabino informed the Legation in 1911 that "the nationalists and ex-Shah's supporters between them have robbed the unfortunate inhabitants of Mazandaran of all they had". Quoted in Muhammad Ali Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics and Economic in Mazandaran, Iran, 1848-1914* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 191. In the same year, G. Grahame, the British consul in Isfahan, made the following observation: "Now that clerical pressure has relaxed,

From 1911 onwards Iran entered the Naseri Period when Naser al-Molk, who had been acting as a regent to the under-aged young Ahmad Shah since the beginning of this year, ruled without a Majles. This period was marked by rising provincial powers rather than parliamentary politics. The First World War added to the disintegration of provinces from the centre. Although Iran remained neutral during the war, the country was partly invaded by the Ottomans and Russians in the north along with the continued presence of the British in the south.

The political instability in the capital and the inability of governments to resist foreign penetration widened the gap between Tehran and the provinces. Britain and Russia had substantially consolidated their position in the country. While they played decisive roles in the capital they were also influential in the provinces. In March 1915 Britain and Russia signed the Constantinople Agreement. Accordingly, while the British extended their sphere of influence to the central neutral zone Russians obtained full freedom of action in the north. Besides, the Third Majles which met in 1914 was, in less than a year, dismissed by the Russians again. In the provinces they exercised their influence through their political missions. Apart from being a popular location for *bast*, the foreign legations were also involved in local matters. The following letter written by an 'unknown party' and entitled 'collective appeal to the ambassadors of all governments' summarizes the general feeling against foreign powers. Allegedly intercepted at post office in Qazvin on its way from Tehran to Tabriz, the letter is worth quoting at length:

Although we are certain that Their Excellencies [sic.], the ambassadors are well aware of all events that have occurred in this country, and possess full knowledge of the hardships and sacrifices sustained by the Persian nation, in her effort to attain liberty and establish a constitutional system of government, nevertheless perceiving in the actions of the present Cabinet, which pretends to have the support of the British Government – such acts, as closing our newspapers and meetings – a danger and menace to the constitutional system of our country. We hereby appeal to you, in the name of the defence of freedom and law, to come to our assistance.

It is evident to all those who are informed of the history of our country during the last twelve years that, from the very beginning of the revolutionary movement in our country, the sympathies and the hopes of the nation were turned toward the English, whose previous representatives, in the face of the oppressive and aggressive measures of the tyrannical Russian government, had rendered considerable assistance, and displayed goodwill to those who were striving for the freedom of their

the merchant classes are said to be expressing the view that foreign intervention will be a blessing. There is great curiosity in the bazaars to know whether the Russian have actually taken possession of Tabriz and whether they have established a Governor of their own there". FO 248/1049, 1912.

country. Since the treaty 1907, however, and the change of representative, namely from the time the British Government, in spite of all the awful blows dealt on Persia by the Tsar's Government, assumed an attitude of silent watchfulness and withdrew all assistance from the struggling democracy of Persia, and gradually, as it appeared that the British Legation was showing moral assistance and encouragement to the oppressive steps of the Tsar's Government, the same general dislike and hatred which were felt against the Russian Government now reverted to the British Government.

At the outbreak of the European War and the appearance of a third diplomacy in Persia [i.e. Germany], the general feeling and sympathy of the liberty-loving were turned to Germany, with the hope that seeing this, the English would renew their previous views of and defend the national and legitimate rights of the Persians and their independence. Great efforts were made in this direction until finally the Government at London, perceiving the results of the ill-behaviour of their former representative, rekindled a great hope in the hearts of the Persians by recalling their Minister and replacing him by Sir Percy Cox. From the moment of the latter's arrival all eyes were turned to him and great were the hopes laid on him. But regretfully in view of the conduct and course of the present Cabinet, which is definitely anti-constitutional, anti-democratic and which moreover pretends to be backed up by the British Legation, the hopes of Persians have turned into despair.

We therefore consider it necessary to invite the attention of the diplomatic representatives to the following:

If the pretensions of the present Cabinet are true, and H. E. the British Minister had, through such traitors and unprincipled men revived the operations of the despotic Russian Government, then he should answer the following questions in order that the Persians may know their position and duty prior to the assembly of the peace conference.

Are the declarations of the British Government and the English Press concerning non-interference in Persian affairs sincere or not?

Does the democratic Government of England permit of violation of liberty and lawless acts in Persia?

Had England any aim other than commercial speculations in Persia?

Does the independence and progress of Persia interfere with the commercial plans of England?

Is it possible now to deceive and blind-fold the Persians as usual with absurd and tinted phrases?

Is it supposed that the Persians will continue to be silent in the face of all illegal interference?

Is not [sic.] the support and encouragement of tyrants and criminals in this era of socialistic ideas a shame and disgrace?

Are the losses and damages incurred by Persia and the Persians through various intrigues and devices sufficient?

Is Persia guilty in happening to be a neighbour of England?

Are the robberies and crimes perpetrated by the members of the present Cabinet and their treachery to Persia unknown to the diplomatic representatives and do they require confirmation?

There are these and many other questions which cannot be inserted here.

If in fact there is not mutual understanding between the British Legation and the Cabinet and they (the English) prefer general sympathy and good feelings then they should openly declare this and their non-interference in the internal affairs of Persia and thus lift off the minds of the people the general anxiety and distrust.⁹⁹

The disillusionment with foreign powers elaborated in the above letter was a widespread phenomenon in Iran during the 1910's. The Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 added to the sentiment. The agreement, which was never ratified by the Majles since there was none in place for the previous four years, "gave the British a free hand, to the virtual exclusion of others, in the affairs of Persia".¹⁰⁰ The British would lend required advisors to Persia and supply munitions and equipment for a national army which was to be trained by British officers. Also two million pounds sterling would be provided to Persia for necessary reforms, customs tariffs would be revised and assistance would be provided for railway construction.¹⁰¹ The British and the Premier Vosuq al-Dowleh came under fire both inside and outside the country. The political turmoil and unpopular decisions raised the provinces to prominence in national politics once again. Generally speaking, provinces had already become of great political importance during this period in two different ways. On the one hand tribal elements extended their influence and hence political power as indicated above. Also, there was dissatisfaction from governors in various parts of the country. On the other hand, nationalist uprisings took place, particularly in the north. In 1920 Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani and his Democratic followers took control of Tabriz with a great part of Azerbaijan which they now named Azadestan (The Land of the Free). In Gilan Mirza Kuchak Khan had already triggered a rebellion which is known as the Jangali (Forester) Movement in Iranian history for the first group of *Jangalis* took to Gilan's forests (*jangal*). Backed by the Red

⁹⁹ FO 248/1259, 1919.

¹⁰⁰ Denis Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians During the Qajar Period 1787-1921* (London: Heinemann, 1977), 178.

¹⁰¹ Wright, *The English*, 178.

Army troops by 1920 the *Jangalis* sized control of the region and proclaimed the Soviet Republic of Gilan.¹⁰²

Economically speaking, several important laws, with major economic and social consequences, were passed by the Majles between 1906 and 1911. In 1907 a committee was appointed in order to examine financial reform which was directly linked to the issue of land tenure. Subsequently four measures were adopted: pensions and grants paid to a large number of individuals were either greatly reduced or completely abolished; revisions were made in provincial revenue assessments; the *toyul* system was abolished; and the conversion rates, were abrogated.¹⁰³ Also due to the disastrous effects of the First World War and its aftermath a number of measures were taken to support the poorer classes which will be discussed in the Third Chapter. Yet, lack of viable infrastructural facilities and political problems impeded any sustainable economic growth which would positively affect the lives of the larger population. Taken as a whole, Iran was wedged between the two superpowers of the period, Britain and Russia, and therefore its economic policies were made in a context of semi-colonization, with the full ramifications of this in both the political and economic realms. Although the constitution theoretically remained in effect after 1911, it only existed on paper. Following the bombardment of the First Majles it had taken 18 months until the second one was convened. Once the Second Majles was dissolved, Iran had to wait almost for three years for the Third Majles, which survived for only eleven months. It was only by the end of the First World War that the Fourth Majles commenced in 1919, to remain in force for two years, after which it took another eight months for the Fifth Majles which crowned Reza Khan as Reza Shah Pahlavi and ratified the change of dynasty in 1925. Overall, between 1906 and 1925 the Majles remained in force for only seven years in total.¹⁰⁴

The history of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution is, in a sense, a history of centralization on different levels. The fragmentation of the armed forces, mostly tribal, the lack of any viable national market and the chronic inability of an efficient tax-collection system had long stoked demand for the establishment of an effective central government. Constitutionalism at

¹⁰² About the Jangali Movement see C. Chaquèri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-1921: Birth of the Trauma* (Pittsburgh: Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies 21, 1995).

¹⁰³ Ann K. S Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 178-9. *Toyul*: the term covers a variety of land grants in Qajar Iran. In some cases it was a grant attached to certain offices. In other cases it was a grant of *khaleseh* (crown land) as a salary. In some instances, particularly in tribal contexts the *toyul* holder was underobligation to provide military contingents. Sometimes it simply referred to tax-farming right of a given land. Ibid., P. 139. A *toyul*'s conversion rate is the assessment of the revenue of a piece of land and its conversion into cash at a fixed rate. Lambton, *Landlord*, 152.

¹⁰⁴ Ettehadiyeh Nezamafi, *Majles*, 5.

first provided a necessary stimulus for the increasing integration of the provinces with the centre. Local power bases were more or less well-represented in the First Majles. Yet, from the Second Majles onwards, provinces, or at least the have-nots residing therein, were further pushed to the margins of the constitutional system. One paradoxical feature of centralization during this period was that the material means to bring it about were largely absent. Communication and transportation facilities were insufficient. The following illustrates the unfavourable situation of transportation in Iran:

A British firm shipped a consignment of piecegoods from Manchester in October 1909. Reforwarded from Bushire for Tabriz on the 22nd December 1909, these goods were abandoned at Dashtarjin (about 40 miles south of Shiraz) in January 1910, the muleteer refusing to proceed further on account of the insecurity of the road. Eventually, i.e. in May 1910, the goods reached Shiraz and were reforwarded from there for Isfahan in July but got no further than the first stage, Zarghan, about 24 miles north of Shiraz, the road further north being blocked. Brought back to Shiraz on 6th December 1910 they were reforwarded on 6th January 1911 and arrived in Isfahan in March 1911, having taken approximately 19 months from the date of their despatch from Manchester to that of arrival at their destination.¹⁰⁵

The Constitutional Revolution brought diverse social groups into the political sphere in Iran and contributed to the making of a political community which was underway especially from late nineteenth century onwards. Nonetheless, it ultimately failed to rid Iran of its chronic problems of economic deterioration and political instability. In a sense, the Constitutional Revolution had “destroyed the traditional centre of despotic power without producing an adequate substitute.”¹⁰⁶ As the well-to-do felt insecure about their property, the lower classes were disillusioned by instability and external oppression. A widespread belief emerged in the need for a strong government which, according to many, was important above all else. The military coup launched in 1921 took shape in such an atmosphere. Henceforth Reza Khan, later on Reza Shah, would ensure much of the desired leap-forward in terms of territorial integrity, political independence and economic growth at the expense of undoing much of the achievements of a genuine parliamentary experiment, albeit of a much precarious nature, of the preceding two decades.

¹⁰⁵ FO 3 dec. 1911, (248/1029) “Isfahan Trade Report” by G. Grahame.

¹⁰⁶ H. Katouzian, quoted in Gavin Hambly, “The Pahlavi Autocracy: Rize Shah, 1921-1941,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 7*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melvilla (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 244-296. Here 214.

From Freedom to Security: Reza Shah and the Period of Pragmatist Modernization

The two decades of Iranian history between 1921 and 1941 have largely been dealt with in a manner heavily laden with the modernist paradigm.¹⁰⁷ Industrialization, secularization and nationalism are often presented as the main triumvirate of Pahlavi modernization.¹⁰⁸ What distinguished Pahlavi modernization from the “renovation” (*tajaddod*) of previous generations was its radical attitude both in its form and content. The Pahlavi modernization was selective in the sense of giving immediate priority to certain issues while postponing, and even dismissing altogether, certain other issues. Centralization, accompanied with a nationalist outfit, and industrialization, equated with large-scale industrial establishments were the two most immediate priorities of this modernization. Pahlavi modernization was not only selective but also had several contradictory features. The parliamentary guise of the system was preserved and the constitution remained intact throughout. Yet from the Fifth Majlis in 1925 onwards while the Majlis lost much of its real power, and the constitution was often ignored. Also while such grand military and economic projects as universal male conscription and the Trans-Iranian Railway Project were undertaken, they usually added to the burden of the poorer classes, rather than improving their living and working conditions. This feature struck contemporary observers such as Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British Minister in Tehran, who in 1935 criticized the Pahlavi modernization project for being “progress for progress’ sake”, because of the implementation of policies allegedly without too much consideration for whether they suited the conditions of the country.¹⁰⁹ The following is a discussion of Pahlavi modernization in the context of centralization, which I present in order to provide a backdrop for the next two chapters.

In February 1921 two men, Reza Khan who was a commander of the Cossack Brigade based in Qazvin and the Seyyed Zia Tabataba’i, a liberal journalist, launched a relatively uneventful military coup. Seyyed Zia was soon appointed as Prime Minister but shortly after had to leave the country and was replaced by Qavam al-Saltaneh. Acting after the coup first as the

¹⁰⁷ This is often reflected in the titles of the existing literature although in many other works titled otherwise the modernist approach dominates too. The following are only a few examples: Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961; Donald N. Wilber, *Riza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran* (New York: Exposition Press, 1975); Touraj Atabaki and Eric J. Zürcher eds., *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Ataturk and Reza Shah* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Stephanie Cronin, ed. *The Making of Modern Iran Riza Shah, 1921-1941* (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ However, to refer to the particularity of this process in Iran, “modernization” is at times preceded with other words like “authoritarian”, which apparently refers to the lack of individual autonomy in this type of modernization unlike the European one (Atabaki and Zürcher, *Men of Order*, 2), and “pseudo”, by which mainly lack of “a proper understanding” of modern scientific and social development is meant. Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: 1926-1979* (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1981), 103.

¹⁰⁹ FO 371/20052. “Annual Report, 1935”.

Commander in Chief (*Sardar-e Sepah*) from 1921, then the Minister of War from 1922 and finally the Prime Minister from 1923, Reza Khan was by mid-1920's the undisputed leader of Iran even before his coronation as Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925. He owed his early prestige largely to a number of operations he launched against local power bases which had accumulated an immense material wealth that translated at the same time to political power. This in turn paved the way for greater foreign influence as foreign powers found it more reasonable to negotiate with actual local power holders than with the weak central authority. For Reza Khan and the ruling elites around him, centralization was of utmost importance, and this could only be achieved by dismantling local power bases. Furthermore foreign influence was an equally discernible hindrance to progress and modernization. Thus they saw in every move towards political or economic progress a blow to foreign domination. In a series of military operations between 1921 and 1925, he had suppressed, often in a bloody manner, his opponents and regional uprisings. By terminating the Jangali Movement in 1921 he at once eliminated a major internal threat and checked Russian influence in northern Iran. The same was true of the campaigns he launched against several tribal leaders, most significantly against Sheikh Khazal who was the Sheikh of Mohammereh and a British protégé.¹¹⁰

The literati and the ruling classes celebrated this not merely as yet another step towards territorial integrity but more importantly as halting the overwhelming influence of the British. In the meantime a number other revolts such as the one against Mohammad Taqi Khan, a gendarme colonel in Khorasan and against Esma'il Agha Semko, a Kurdish tribal leader in northwest Iran, were also crushed and the state authority was restored in these regions too.¹¹¹ In the face of these significant achievements little room was left for his opponents to disfavour Reza Khan in the eyes of the public. The following remarks of Seyyed Hasan Modarres, a staunch opponent of the Minister of War and vice president of the Fourth Majles, aptly illustrate this ambivalent attitude:

“We have no fear of Reza Khan. Why should we speak with reserve? We must speak frankly. We have the power to dismiss and to change the government, the Shah and everyone else. We can also dismiss Reza Khan if we so desire, and nothing is easier... This authority of the Majles is supreme... However, the good qualities of the Minister of War outweigh his bad ones... He is a

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of the tribal politics during the First Pahlavi Period see: Stephanie Croning, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).

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mere fly on the face of our nation. In my opinion the Minister of War had major merits and minor defects.”¹¹²

Not only did the ‘supreme authority’ of the Majles come to be more apparent than real, but it also appeared that Reza Khan was, for many Iranians, more than ‘a mere fly’ on the face of the nation. He had already turned into a hero in the eyes of an increasing number of people owing to his promising moves towards the consolidation of security in the country and the relative flourishing of mercantile activities. This point was expressed by some two hundred merchants in 1922 in a letter where they displayed their gratitude to the Minister of War in the following manner: “before our beloved commander saved us, the Islamic Empire of Iran was disintegrating. The army had collapsed, the tribes were looting, the country was the laughing stock of the world. Thanks to the commander, we now travel without fear, admire our country, and enjoy the fruits of law and order.”¹¹³

Yet, Reza Shah’s real show of strength came following his resignation as Minister of War in October 1922 shortly after Modarres’ above remarks. The first reaction came from his officers who went as far as parading through the streets of Tehran in support of their commander. More importantly, however, petitions poured into the Majles from the provinces for the rejection of his resignation. In some cases petitioners were rather aggressive and even threatening. Because of their significance in shedding light on popular perceptions of the political process, these petitions deserve to be analysed at some length. The following observations are based on thirty six petitions which were sent in support of Reza Khan upon his resignation.¹¹⁴ Although the crisis continued for about only ten days, the echo it created in the provinces was immense, as was the speed with which the news spread. Until the end of October 1922, apparently even after the crisis settled down and Reza Khan withdrew his resignation, the Majles kept receiving letters from all over the country, including Anzali, Isfahan, Astarabad, Khorasan, Golpayagan, Mashhad, Rasht, Yazd, Kermanshah, Malayer, Rafsanjan, Shiraz, Kerman and Borujerd. The petitioners ranged from guildmen to merchants and from the clergy to ordinary people, whose opinions have so far been underrepresented in the current literature. The letters started by expressing their respect for the Majles and praying for its perpetuation. Then the supplicants shared their dissatisfaction with resignation by adding in some cases that people took sanctuary in telegraph offices and even stopped work to

¹¹² Donald N. Wilber, *Riza Shah Pahlavi*, 58-9.

¹¹³ Ibid., 67.

¹¹⁴ LMDICP. d4/k28/j15/p44. “Kanareh Giri-yi Vezarat-e Jang”.

which they would only return once the crisis was solved. They then emphasized the services undertaken by Reza Khan, often called *Vazir-e Mo'azzam* (the Glorious Minister) and *Hazrat-e Ashraf* (the Honorable Presence) in the letters, in restoring peace to the country and paving the way for its progress. The telegraph sent from Golpayagan, a town close to Isfahan, in 17 October 1922 openly targeted the opponents of the 'beloved' Minister of War who, the petitioners argued, was the First Man of the country (*shakhs-e avval-e mamlakat*). The letter criticized the opponents of Reza Khan for not having seen the plunder and looting committed by the Bakhtiari. An intense concern for security and peace dominated the discourse of the petitions. They made repeated references to the plight of the country which, they argued, the patriotic Reza Khan reversed. The letter sent from Rasht on 15 October 1922 adequately summarizes the prevalent popular feeling about the crisis:

To the Sublime Majles, to the Prime Ministry, through Hojjat al-Islam Behbehani to all the ulama and through Hajj Amin al-Darb to all merchants and guilds member and to Iran Newspaper.

If the Majles is to be influential in the country and if the nation is to possess laws and gain respect before other nations, this will only be attained through the Majles. The creation of disciplined troops and military divisions jealous for their country will provide the Parliament its first and foremost protector. [...] The Minister of War is renowned for his effort to form a government in Iran, and to revive thousands of troops under the flag of Iran and he is well-known for his love for the independence and progress of his country. Through various struggles he restored security in Gilan, Azerbaijan and Khorasan. [...] Because of his resignation people in our town stopped working and gathered at the telegraph office. Thus we request you to block the ways to seditious elements and to cut the hands of the devious people and work and fight for the protection of laws and order which are the first task of the Majles and the military forces. We ask the Minister of War to withdraw his resignation and inform us on the matter so that we go back to our jobs.¹¹⁵

Following this incident Reza Khan followed a steady rise to greater power and was finally crowned in 1925. In this he was celebrated by a significant part of the population and supported by modernist nationalists. In the Fourth and the Fifth Majles he was supported by certain groups. These groups were formed from four parties: the conservatives of *Hezb-e Eslah-taleban* (Reformers' Party); reformers of the *Hezb-e Tajaddod* (Revival Party); and the radicals of the *Hezb-e Susyalist* (Socialist Party).¹¹⁶ In the first group Modarres, Firuz Farmanfarmaian, Qaval al-Saltaneh, and Seyyed Ahmad Behbehani, son of the famous mojtaheds who had been assassinated in 1909, were among the leading figures. The Revival

115 LMDCIP. d4/k28/j15/p44. "Kanareh Giri-ye Vazir-e Jang".

¹¹⁶ The following information is based on Abrahamian's study unless otherwise mentioned. Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 120-128.

Party was formed by young Western-educated individuals such as Abd al-Hossayn Teymurtash, a major Khorasanian landowner, Prince Firuz Mirza, a Qajar prince and a lawyer and Ali Akbar Davar. Such prominent constitutionalist figures from the previous generation as Taqizadeh, Bahar, Mustowfi al-Mamalek, Ali Zoka al-Molk (Forughi), and Shahrokh Arbab Kaykhosrow were also associated with the Revivalists. The Socialist Party was led by Mirza Sulayman Eskandari, Mosavat and Qasem Khan Sur, the editor of *Sur-e Esrafil*. They were also allied with the Communist Party. They have published: *Paykar* (Battle); *Nasihat* (Exhortation); *Sada-ye Sharq* (The Voice of the East); *Faryad-e Kargaran-e Azerbaijan* (Cry of the Azerbaijan Workers); and *Banvor* (Worker) in Armenian.

The Revival Party was highly influential on Reza Shah and its ideas were largely in line with Pahlavi modernization. The following were among the principle publications of the Revivalists: *Iranshahr* (Country of Iran) published by Hosayn Kazemzadeh in Berlin between 1922 and 1927; *Farangestan* (Europe) edited by Mostafeh Kazemi in Germany between 1924 and 1926; and *Ayandeh* (The Future) edited by Mahmud Afshar in Tehran in 1925. The creation of a centralized state was among the main concerns of the Revivalists. They called for “separation of religion from politics, creation of a well-disciplined army and a well-administered bureaucracy, an end to economic capitulations, industrialization, replacement of foreign capital by native capital, transformation of nomads into farmers, a progressive income tax, expansion of educational facilities for all, including women, careers being open to talent, and replacement of minority languages throughout Iran by Persian.” Through these measures the power of the tribal forces, the financial and judicial powers of the clergy, the autonomy of minorities, and foreign influence would be broken, which would in turn lay the ground for the establishment of a modern centralized state. Furthermore such moves would also remove ‘disunity’ which, in Ahmad Kasravi’s words, was “the worst calamity that [could] befall a nation”. He formulated the bases of disunity as follows:

Factionalism is one of the worst maladies afflicting Iran. Factionalism is caused by religious sectarianism: I can count fourteen separate sects, each with its own separate goals, interests, and leaders. Each in fact is a state within a state. Factionalism caused by tribal and linguistic differences: there are innumerable tribes and at least eight major linguistic groups. And factionalism caused by wide social differences – between the city and the country, the young and the old, the modern educated elite and the traditional-minded masses.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 126.

A number of measures were adopted for the creation of a nationwide market and further territorial integrity. In 1927 the Trans-Iranian Railway project, which linked the Caspian Sea through Tehran to the Persian Gulf, was launched, to be completed more than a decade later. Overall the two thousand miles of roads which existed in Iran in 1925 had multiplied to 14,000 by the end of the Reza Shah period.¹¹⁸ Infrastructural measures were accompanied by a number of economic legislations such as the following; the law exempting industrial and agricultural machines and instruments and their component parts from import duties for ten years (1925); a law for the establishment a state monopoly on sugar, sugared goods and tea (1925); the establishment of the National Bank; abolition of guild taxes on 216 guilds; and the abolition of capitulations in 1927. During this time Arthur Millspaugh, the American Administrator General of the Finances, was in control of finances until he was dismissed in 1927 and in 1928 tariff autonomy was attained. The policies concerned macro projects and paid little, if any, attention to the subaltern classes. Thus the following remarks written in 1929 by R. H. Clive, the British Minister in Tehran, hardly exaggerated the situation:

Although there is perhaps a growing consciousness in responsible circles that the needs of the poorer classes of the population will have to be attended to sooner or later there is no doubt that window-dressing is still the order of the day. Apart from the questions of security and communications one looks in vain for any indication of real value in the so-called reforms of the Pahlavi regime. Even the ambitious railways project is the child of national sentiment rather than that of material necessity. Tehran must have more water, better lighting, wider street, because Tehran must be counted an up-to-date capital. But no thought is given to the unhappy poor whose houses are ruthlessly pulled down, the compensation voted by the Majlis accruing as everyone knows to the benefit of the municipal authorities whose destructive propensities consequently pass all rational bounds. Venereal disease is said to affect 80 percent of the urban population; the infantile mortality in Tehran is estimated at 60 percent; yet these vital problems claim far less attention than that of the dress, and monies which would be spent in attempts to solve them continue to be wasted on the external trappings of civilization.¹¹⁹

The 1930's were the golden age of grand projects. The economic depression during these years called for more bureaucratic control over the national economy. Especially during the Eighth Majles which commenced in 1930 further economic measures were adopted resulting in the consolidation of the state's control over economic development. Reza Shah had declared that "we wish this Majles to be known in the history of the country as the 'Economic

¹¹⁸ Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and the After* (London: Longman, 2003), 53.

¹¹⁹ R. H. Clive, FO 371/13799, Annual Report, 1929. The economic performance of Pahlavi modernization and its social consequences, especially in the sphere of labour, constitute the themes of the following two chapters.

Parliament` (*Majles-e eqtesadi*).”¹²⁰ In 1931 a law was passed which established state monopoly over foreign trade. Taken as a whole the state had filled in the vacuum left by the gradual removal of local power bases and it did so to an unprecedented extent through the newly established ten ministries. These ministries were the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Post and Telegraph, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Roads and Industry and they employed 90,000 civil servants living on government salaries.¹²¹ In 1937 the previous division of a few large provinces (*iyalat*) and a large number of small districts (*velayat*) was replaced by a more elaborate arrangement which established: eleven provinces (*ostan*) governed by governor-generals; forty-nine countries (*shahrestan*) governed by governors; numerous municipalities (*bakhsh*) governed by manors; and large districts (*dehestan*) governed by officials appointed by the Ministry of the Interior.¹²² Increasing centralization also attracted opposition since the traditional means of production, transportation or arbitration provided a source of livelihood for large numbers of people. Industrialization policies or the modernization of transport and communication facilities or the centralization of judicial affairs inevitably evoked resentment from these groups as in the case of the carriage drivers of Rasht. Reza Shah and his entourage paid particular attention to the northern provinces of Iran which received the lion’s share of attention from modernization policies. In January 1931 the drivers sent a petition, with twenty two stamps on it, to the Majles in which they complained about the deterioration in their business due to the increasing numbers of motorcars. Their reaction to the decision illustrates a typical response to the centralization policies of the state. They wrote:

In the past when there were no cars the business of this weak people was good and we used to pay 12 qrans as a monthly tax. When the tolls were cancelled we had to give 17 qrans and two shahis. [...] Later we were ordered to give three tumans although because of the increasing number of automobiles we work from the morning until four at night to only earn our bread. What we earn is not enough for our horses, the stablemen and our families since each have us have ten or twelve persons in our family to provide for. Despite all difficulties we have so far complied with the order

¹²⁰ Willem Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 127.

¹²¹ Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 136-137.

¹²² Ibid., 137. From this Abrahamian concludes that “for the first time in the modern era, the hand of the state reached out from the capital into the provincial towns, counties, and even some large villages” (p. 128). Although the extent was this time was beyond any previous attempts, this is clearly an overestimation of the above arrangement since several similar arrangements have been made particularly during the WWI and its aftermath. Also it appears from the petitions that a version of the above division was more or less in effect even in early 1930s.

and paid three tumans. But we humbly request the sacred Majles to take pity on us and reduce the taxes so that we increase our prayers for you.¹²³

In March a new petition arrived to the same effect containing more details about the bitterness of their living conditions. Apparently achieving no tangible results, the drivers sent a third petition in November 1931 which added new dimensions to the issue. After repeating their complaint about the spread of motorcars in Iran, particularly in Gilan which, argued the petitioners, seriously hurt their business, the decision of the Municipality to strictly forbid the passage of carriages from the bazaars dealt yet another blow to their business. People were no longer able to reach the drivers easily when they needed. The drivers asked in the end the removal of the ban on the carriages and the restoration of “order”. Following internal correspondence between the Majles and the Ministry of the Interior the latter informed the former in December 1931 that the ban in the bazaars was for the safety of pedestrians and at the large streets and districts the carriages could move freely. The same kind of complaints arose about the trade monopoly law and similar new legislations.¹²⁴

The ever increasing penetration of the state power and the growing bureaucratization constituted a major turning point in state-society interactions in Iran. Besides, apart from these ‘material’ aspects the Pahlavi modernization included a wide range of cultural dimensions such as the dissemination of education, imposing certain dress codes and ‘language engineering’.¹²⁵ The main aspiration behind such policies was to further the centralization of authority and constructing and penetrating the ideological pillars of it to the wider population. With regard to the language issue there have already been several attempts in the late Ottoman Empire and Iran to simplify the language and the alphabet. Yet, the radical attitudes taken towards language by the early Republican elites in Turkey or by the ruling elites during the Reza Shah period in Iran were substantially different. Now, the unification of linguistic groups under one exclusive language constituted the core of the linguistic policies rather than the simplification of the alphabet. Put differently, language was instrumentalized in order to

¹²³LMDCIP. d8/k5/j20/p1-50-gilan, “Complaint from the stagnation of their business due to the increase of motorcars”, 10 January 1931.

¹²⁴ It appears that the unrest was particularly concentrated in Khorasan province. See for example: LMDCIP: d8/k178/j13/p51-100-khorasan-sistan, “Complaint about the transgressions of monopoly officials”; d8/k179/j13/p101-150-khorasan-sistan, April 19312, “Complaint about the transgressions head of the local finance department about the amount of opium”; d8/k180/j13/p151-200-khorasan-sistan, “Complaint about the customs administration of Zahedan regarding the prohibition for certain amount of mercantile goods”, August 1932; d8/k184/j13/p351-400-khorasan-sistan, “Complaint about the manner of inspection of monopoly officials and request for punishment”, August 1932; d8/k185/j13/p401-460-khorasan-sistan, “Complaint about the ill-treatment of the monopoly officials of Ghonabad”, November 1932.

¹²⁵ John R. Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran”, in *Men of Order*, ed. Atabaki and Zurcher, 238-259.

achieve a higher degree of centralization. The following case vividly illustrates how such policies influenced state-society relations in Iran during the period in question. The Deputy of Armenians in Tabriz sent a petition in 1931 in which he complained about the linguistic policies and the attitude of the Head of the Directory of Education in the city. He complained about “the unprecedented negative attitude towards the Armenian language, singing in Armenian and the Armenian schools”.¹²⁶ According to the petition, the American school in Tabriz invited the Deputy to deliver a speech in its fiftieth anniversary celebrations since two hundred Armenian boys and girls studied there. But he was prevented from speaking in Armenian and was told to speak either in Persian or in English. Also Mademoiselle Shahgelan [?] was invited to give a concert but she also was told by the Directory that she could sing in Persian, Italian, Russian and French but not in Armenian. Armenian schools were banned from organizing events and so were the Armenian artists from using the Armenian language. To this effect announcements were written in Armenian and posted on the street. Finally the Deputy stressed the adverse consequences of this kind of measures which would “separate the Armenian nation (*mellat-e Arameneh*) and Iranian people (*ahali-ye Iran*)”. The main and the larger agenda behind such policies was the submission of all social groups to state authority. Ethnic groups, linguistic groups, tribal elements and finally social classes, primarily workers, should be seen as parts of this policy.

Once more or less confident as the absolute ruler of the country, Reza Shah took steps to concentrate power in his own hands by eliminating the powerful men around him. Yet the parliamentary guise of the system was preserved and the constitution remained intact. His modernizing policies fundamentally transformed Iran. By the end of Reza Shah’s reign thousands of miles of roads and railways had been constructed, hundreds of schools, including the highly influential Tehran University, had been established, an immense bureaucracy had been created. In addition, tens of large-scale industrial establishments employing hundreds of thousands of workers had been erected. Forced by the occupying British and Russian forces when Reza Shah abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, judged by the outer standards of modernization, left behind a modern country, but with all the inherent complications of top-down modernization. It was within this political context that the Iranian working class was made and negotiated its interests.

¹²⁶ LMDCIP. d8/k187/j14/55-azarbaiejan, “From the Deputy of Armenians”, Mach 1931.

Concluding Remarks

The proclamation of the constitution by the ailing Mozaffar al-Din Shah in 1906 contributed to the making of a political community in Iran. Diverse social groups participated in the making of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909. Initially the most popular demand voiced by the masses and the elites alike was the formation of a House of Justice which would ensure a just order and remove arbitrary rule. Although the low level of large-scale industrialization determined the course of urban-based collective labour activism, labour became in this period an issue of unprecedented importance. For this development, not industrial workers, but those who were employed in craft industries were responsible. Also, the development of a distinctive worker identity also took place in this period. This development was a result of a complex process where the majority of workers found their livelihood threatened first due to the European economic domination and then because of the factory-based industrialization which paid little, if any, attention to anything other than the materialization of macroeconomic development and grand industrial projects. As will be discussed in the following chapters, confrontational labour activism carried little chance of success due to the weakness of state control over economy or the tightened state grip over economic development—which constituted two directly contradictory processes. The majority of workers, however, chose non-confrontational means of labour activism and developed sophisticated and sustainable discursive means to work the system ‘to their minimum disadvantage’, to use Eric Hobsbawm’s phraseology.¹²⁷ This and other labour issues will be discussed at greater length in Chapter-5. However, first the development of industrialization in Iran will be investigated in the next chapter which lays the groundwork for a discussion on labour issues.

¹²⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “Peasants and Politics,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1 (1973): 13.

Chapter Four: Industrialization and the Textile Industry in Iran: 1906-1941

Introduction:

Economic development and industrialization have always been among the primary concerns of Iranian reformers and of the larger population, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. As Chapter-2 illustrated, several steps had been taken during the 19th century in order to obtain factory-based industrialization and to promote craft industries. Nonetheless, the treaties signed with foreign governments, especially Russia and Britain, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries determined the basic framework of Iran's foreign trade. Although in the beginning the aim of Russia and Britain was to provide cheap raw materials from Iran they gradually came to treat it as an open market for their ready-made products. Especially from the late nineteenth century onwards, foreign imports began to dominate the Iranian markets to the detriment of domestic production. This subsequently prompted a popular protest against foreign goods and the resulting trade deficit. The subsequent protectionist and developmentalist tendencies which emerged during the 19th century proposed various solutions to the economic escalation which persisted well into the 20th century. It is safe to suggest that the increasing penetration of European commercial and political power into Iran substantially added to the complexity of economic development. On the one hand, crafts industries dominated the manufacturing scene of Iran and they were in need of protection and promotion to curtail the increasing imports of European commodities. On the other, the existing production capacity was, according to some, unable to counterbalance the ready-made imports which made factory-based industrialization a central economic policy. Nevertheless, in either case, European economic domination was the main question. While the government tried to secure as much cash as possible from customs duties and foreign investment, and a number of big merchants made huge fortunes from foreign trade, the popular classes, especially native manufacturers, had thoroughly negative perceptions regarding the foreign economic presence in Iran. Although these perceptions and the resulting debates on economic development played major and varying roles in the economic policies of several governments in Iran during the period under study, they have largely been insufficiently addressed in the existing literature.

Therefore, in the following section I will examine popular perceptions of economic development in Iran by referring such issues as trade balance, trade deficit and large-scale industrialization vs. crafts industries. This will demonstrate the complexity of the economic realm in Iran as a major field of state-society interaction. Following this, industrialization from the beginning of the twentieth century until the end of Reza Shah's reign will be discussed as two distinct periods. The first period which extends from the early twentieth century to the late 1920's was characterized by minimum tariff autonomy, lack of an industrial working class, and the coexistence of crafts industries with large scale industrial establishments. During the second period, late 1920's and 1930's, Iran largely reclaimed its tariff autonomy and experienced an industrial leap forward. Industrialization policy during this second period was almost invariably based on factory-based industrialization. Although other industries will be addressed throughout the chapter, the emphasis is on the textile industry.

Foreign Goods and Native Consumption: Popular Reactions to Foreign Economic Domination

To the Honourable Ministers of the Majles may their Fortune Endure. Since we Iranians must do everything forcibly I present the following petition. As a humble servant [bandeh] I am not a shroud-seller or a *karbas*¹-seller and I am presenting this only to help the unemployed and the poor. How long shall we continue to shroud our corpses in foreign fabrics? Besides, when mister draper recognizes that the fabric will be used for shrouding he gives one of a lower quality. Instead of a prayer there are Jewish or foreign words on the shroud: no. 17 from Manchester.

I request my proposal to be implemented if approved by you. When we are alive we do not use home-made clothes (*lebas-e vatan*) and we go around on foreign shoes. At least let our corpses be buried in Iranian fabrics (*lebas-e Iran*). Each year one million (*do karvar*) Iranians pass away and one shroud costs fifteen tumans (approx. £3). This way we can annually save one and a half million tumans. We do not need the foreign fabrics, Iranian *karbas* is enough. All we need is a law similar to the Registration Law.² If such a law is put into effect neither the gravedigger can bury the body nor can the gentlemen [the clerics] perform the prayer [if the law is violated]. I hope if Allah wills the use of *karbas* as shroud will soon be implemented. Mohammad Shafi' Nili.³

By the turn of the twentieth century the greater part of the foreign imports into Iran consisted of consumption items, of which textiles, tea, and sugar were the leading articles and only one percent could be classified as capital goods, which were mostly of minor significance.⁴ The

¹ Karbas is a white cotton fabric extensively produced in Iran at that time.

² He is referring to the laws of 1920-29 which required the registration of land and property. See: Nikki Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 96.

³ LMDCIP. 8/7/20/3/102-Gilan, "Mohammad Shafi' About Shrouds", 10 October 1931.

⁴ Julian Bharier, *Economic Development in Iran: 1900-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 9-10.

challenges posed by the inhospitable landscape were doubled by the low customs duties, lack of a nation-wide market, as well as unpopular economic policies. In the early 19th century the Treaties of *Golestan* (1813), and *Torkomanchai* (1828) signed with Russia after the two bitter defeats had set up a standard amount of 5% *ad valorem* duty for imports and exports between Russia and Iran. Britain soon obtained the same privileges in 1841 and in this it was followed by other countries during the next few years.⁵ Against this 5% customs duty for foreigners, an Iranian was supposed to pay 7,7% on textiles and 14% on sugar while he was also subject to a road tax (*rahdari*) every time his goods passed through an Iranian town.⁶ By the mid-19th century Iranian craft industries recovered from the shock created by the growth of imports and managed to find alternative ways to compete with ready-made European products by employing an inexpensive female and child workforce and using aniline dyes and yarns. Nonetheless, Iranian producers were still in acute need of effective protective measures.

Although foreigners enjoyed the lion's share in Iran's foreign trade through their offices and agents in the country, Iranians especially, but not exclusively, non-Muslims partook in foreign trade too. The British were active in the south while the northern regions were largely dominated by Russian firms. On British commercial influence Lord Curzon reports, for example, that in the late nineteenth century in southern Iran six large British firms were actively involved in mercantile activities.⁷ He reports that "a good deal of trade is done by native merchants; but the bulk of mercantile transactions passed through the hands of what may indisputably be described as English firms, whose activity here is in pleasing contrast with the apathy that has been displayed in other parts of Central Asia".⁸ The foreign domination over Iran's foreign trade in time reached such an extent that "many prosperous Persian traders were converted into the agents of Russian and British commercial firms, and lost their independence".⁹ Regarding the Russian commercial presence in Iran E. Grant Duff, the Secretary of the British Legation in Tehran, anxiously commented in 1906 that "the end of Persia as an independent state is not far off".¹⁰ He argued that such northern regions as

⁵ Charles Issawi, "European Economic Penetration: 1872-1921", in *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 7*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 596.

⁶ Issawi, "European Economic Penetration", 600.

⁷ George. N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1892), 13.

⁸ Curzon, *Persia*, 41.

⁹ Ahmad Ashraf, "Historical Obstacles to the Development of a Bourgeoisie in Iran", in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day*, ed., M. A Cook (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 326.

¹⁰ FO 371/111 "Situation in Persia, July 1906"

Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazandaran, and Khorasan lied “within the shadow of Russia, and commercially are practically part of that Empire.”¹¹

Along with foreigners non-Muslim Iranians greatly benefited from their contacts with Europe and were involved in foreign trade at high volumes. For example, in the early 20th century, Iranian Jews were prominent in the import of cotton textiles from Manchester through Baghdad and it is reported that at least eighty percent of the trade in Kermanshah and Hamadan was in the hands of Jewish traders.¹² In a few trades, however, Muslim Iranians dominated. For example the tea trade was almost entirely controlled by Muslim merchants.¹³ This was largely true for the export of carpets and opium, too. In particular, the carpet trade, Iran’s main export item during late nineteenth century, was almost completely controlled by Tabrizi merchants.¹⁴ Towards the end of the nineteenth century Iranian merchants started purchasing directly from Europe instead of buying from foreign firms established in Iran.¹⁵ Some Muslim merchants, such as Hajj Hasan Amin al-Zarb, the famous 19th century Iranian merchant, made huge fortunes from foreign trade.

Importers, whether foreign or native, were the immediate targets of those who opposed foreign goods. The foreign and non-Muslim shops which sold foreign products were regarded as the agents of European economic hegemony.¹⁶ In various occasions, such as the Russian ultimatum of 1911 against the Iranian Majles, foreign goods were boycotted but not always successfully. The curtailment of imports and the development of native industries preoccupied diverse classes of Iranian society. From the beginning there has always been a popular attention to and demands about curtailing imports in order to counteract the dismembering of crafts industries. As the Chapter 2 illustrated several attempts had been made during the nineteenth century to promote craft industries and to introduce factories in Iran. Yet, notwithstanding the extensive human and material capital mobilized for these nineteenth-century projects, they had fallen behind expectations. Many of the state-owned or private factories had to shut down not long after their erection. Thus when Curzon wrote in 1890 that

¹¹ FO 371/111 “Situation in Persia, July 1906”

¹² MacLean Report, A and P 1904, pp. 36-39 quoted in Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 62.

¹³ FO 248/1029 (1911).

¹⁴ Willem Floor, *Guilds, Merchants and Ulama in Nineteenth Century Iran* (Washington: Mage Publishers, 2009), 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶ For example, based on an unauthenticated letter allegedly arrived from the great mullahs of Atabat (Najaf and Karbala) in 1903 Hajj Mirza Hasan of Tabriz urged the Governor of Tabriz abolish the tariffs and close the European and Armenian shops. The forgery soon became clear and Hajj Mirza Hasan of Tabriz was expelled from the city. E. G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution, 1905-1909* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966), 107.

“factories as the term is understood and used in Europe do not exist in Persia and the multiplication and economy of labour-force by the employment of steam power or even water-power is hardly known” he was hardly exaggerating.¹⁷ Similar remarks were made by Iranians too. For instance, at a meeting between the Shah and a group of merchants in 1893 Amin al-Zarb pointed out the lack of industries in Iran and the country's dependence on Western imports in the following words: “what do we have for manufactories and industries that we can say: we don't want European commodities?”¹⁸ Apparently, crafts industries were simply incapable of meeting domestic demand. Besides, new consumption habits had developed in Iran, and people preferred more colourful and relatively cheaper foreign goods, particularly textiles, over native manufacturers. This, according to some contemporaries, was the main reason for the decline of the craft industries. For example Mirza Hosayn Tahvildar, a contemporary observer and the author of *The Geography of Isfahan*, makes the following observation about the weavers' guild in Isfahan in the 1870s:

For the past few years the cheap red and yellow European fabrics have been popular. Whenever their textile fabrics have had a new design, and have appeared different to the eyes, the people of Iran have given up their body and soul and have pursued the colour and scent of others. In doing this they have incurred losses which they do not realize. Especially now they are crazy about inexpensive clothes which, looked at wisely, are not at all economical or lasting. On the other hand when the merchandise of the weavers' guild lost the market, it began imitating European wares. Weavers paid more attention to appearance than to Quality. It was for the sake of elegant appearance and easy handling that they employed European yarn in weaving qadaks.¹⁹ Their work became ugly and, as a result of mixing European and Iranian materials, it became progressively defective and tore and went to piece while worn: it also lost its stiffness, fluff, and durability. Spinners lost their jobs and gradually perished.²⁰

For the bazaars ‘the foreigner’ had become a mutual enemy.²¹ To this the ‘traitorous’ native merchants who, in the words of a petitioner from Azerbaijan in early 1920’s, “import into our glorious country the kinds of articles which are domestically produced on a scale great enough to meet people’s demands and by whose production craftsmen are saved from misery” were added.²² Foreign imports persisted but industrialization attempts remained largely

¹⁷ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 13.

¹⁸ Quoted by Willem Floor, "The Merchants (tujjar) in Qajar Iran," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 126 (1976), 131.

¹⁹ A tightly woven cotton fabric of fast color which was once quite a popular fabric.

²⁰ Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, 280-81.

²¹ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982), 58.

²² LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/-p52, “From Muhammad Ali Ayineh-saz To the Honourable Deputies of the Sacred Majles”, 19 March 1923.

unsuccessful. By the turn of the 20th century Iran had only a negligible number of large-scale factories with ten or more workers. Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, an employee of ILO, gives a list of 29 factories which were established in Iran but he believes that these factories whether owned by foreigners or Iranians have not provided the expected outcome “out of inexperience, lack of persistence and especially due to the competition of the two evil neighbours”, to wit, Russia and Britain.²³ Out of these factories nine were occupied with textiles and related industries such as silk reeling, and cotton ginning. According to Floor, on the other hand, between 1900 and 1914 about 30 modern large-scale factories were established.²⁴ Many of these enterprises were either gradually abandoned as failed projects or went into bankruptcy for a variety of reasons. Despite the failed attempts at factorization, however, many small-scale manufactures found a place in the market. By 1928 thousands of workshops were established in Tehran alone.²⁵

Table 4.1: Large Scale Factories in Iran and Their Labour Force 1890-1914

<i>Type of factory</i>	<i>Number of workers</i>
1890-1900	150
Silk reeling factory/Amin al-Zarb	
Silk reeling factory/Birikadeh	20
Match factory/Tehran	50
Paper mill/Tehran	60
Sugar mill/Kahrizak	300
Glass and porcelain/Tehran	20
Brick-making/Tehran	20
Oil-refineries/Gilan (5 plants with 272 men)	54
1900-1914	
Yarn factory/Tabriz	100
Brick factory/Orumiyeh	30
Olive-oil mill/Rudbar	20
Cotton ginning (26 factories with 416 workers)	16 (average)
Timber mill/Rasht	15
Timber mill/Talesh	15
Tobacco factory/Mashhad	20
Brick factory/Tehran	20
Soap factory/Nezafat	20
Brewery/Orumiyeh	15
Brewery/Tehran	10
Arsenal/Isfahan	15

Source: Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 119-120.

²³ Hojjat Fallah Tootcar, “Social and Political Activities of Guilds and Artisans from the Iranian Constitutional Revolution to the Rise of Reza Shah, 1906-1925.” PhD diss., (in Persian), Tarbiyat Modarres University, 2003, 26.

²⁴ Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 119. In one occasion he lists thirty-seven of such factories (Floor, Ibid., 119-120), while in another one he enumerates forty-five of them (Willem Floor, “Traditional Handicrafts and Modern Industry in Iran: 1800-1914”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 141, 343.

²⁵ According to Bharier 5,000 industrial workshops had been established in Tehran by 1928 with which provided employment to 15,000 workers and produced a wide range of goods.” Bharier, *Economic Development*, 171. Floor is suspicious about this number for it includes the kind of enterprises that do not qualify as workshop such as services. Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 121, footnote 28.

Against the inflow of imports the production of such export-oriented items as carpets, shawls, woollen and cotton fabric, silk-stuff and leather recorded a major increase in the same period and accounted for nearly one quarter of the value of Iran's total visible exports.²⁶ Yet Iran continued to suffer a chronic trade deficit. The promotion and development of native industries and the curtailment of imports were emphasized in literary works, religious writings and petitions sent from the public to the Majles. *Ahmad's Book or the Talibian Vessel* which was written in 1900 by 'Abd al-Rahim Talebov, an Iranian intellectual and social reformer, is an example of such literary texts.²⁷ In the fictional conversations between the author and his fictional son, Ahmad, Talebov draws attention to the significance of promoting home industries in the following words:

“If we do not open schools our children will remain illiterate. If we do not establish companies, develop and promote our industries and wear home-made clothes we will need foreigners for everything from match to paper. We will then send orders to their factories every day and we will promote foreign goods none of which is among the necessities of our lives.”²⁸

Also, during the late 19th century and the early years of the twentieth, several companies were established with the explicit objective of stimulating native industry. *Lebas al-Taqla* (Cloth of Abstinence) was written in 1900 by Seyed Jamal al-Din Va'ez Esfahani, a popular pro-constitutional preacher and writer, in support of such enterprises. Esfahani starts by urging Iranian not to use foreign textiles and to prefer home-made manufactures instead.²⁹ He argues that to support such enterprises is identical with helping Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. The following two verses from the Quran play particularly important roles in Esfahani's argumentation:

*O ye who believe! shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah with your property and your persons: that will be best for you, if ye but knew! (61/10-11).*³⁰

By using the metaphor of trade he suggests that two distinct capitals should be mobilized for this purpose. The first one, which is also the basis of all merits according to Esfahani, is faith

²⁶ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 170.

²⁷ Abd al-Rahim Talibov, *Ketab-e Ahmad ya Safineh-e Talebi* (Tehran: Sazman-e Ketabha-ye Jibi, 1967), 98.

²⁸ Ibid., 98.

²⁹ Seyyed Jamal al-Din Vaez Esfahani, *Libas al-taqwa*, ed. Homa Rezwani (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1985), 10-11.

³⁰ A.Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood: Amana, 1983), 1541-1542.

in God and the Prophet. According to him the second capital, jihad, entails fighting against the enemies of Islam. Nevertheless, he warns his audience that jihad should not be taken in the narrow sense of the word as to mean armed struggle and literal fight. Quite to the contrary according to him the real jihad is to work for uplifting the message of Islam and increasing its authority and to remove dependence on the enemy.³¹ On this common objective Esfahani bases a de-stratifying argument which suggests that all Muslims are servants of Islam and there are no such classifications as poor vs. rich or master vs. servant. Overall, Esfahani's work presents an impressive argumentation where religious, nationalist and patriotic discourses are effectively blended together in order to reach as many audiences as possible.

To the Sublime Majles: State-Society Relations and the Economy in Iran

The ineffective economic policies of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and World War I resulted in the further escalation of the Iranian economy for which imports were again held responsible. Although Iran remained neutral in WWI it suffered extensively from its consequences both as a battlefield of the Great Powers as well as due to the political instability created by the war. The increased unemployment in wartime conditions had a deteriorating effect on the lives of the lower classes as well as the businesses of the well-to-do. Thus the prohibitive and developmental approaches to economic development were voiced once again. Protectionists took a firm stand against the majority of imports, particularly consumption items, and argued that the economic collapse and the perennial trade deficit could only be reversed by an effective ban on imports. Developmentalists, on the other hand, argued that such a ban was not only against the basic principles of free market economy but also practically unworkable since home manufactures did not have enough productive capacity to substitute imports. Hence they urged for comprehensive economic planning and development. In the following paragraphs petitions which were sent in the early 1920's by diverse groups of the Iranian society to the Majles will be investigated in order to illustrate the grassroots dimensions of the debates regarding the trade deficit in Iran.

In October 1921 the Merchants Union of Tehran sent a petition to the Majles in which they attracted the attention of the deputies to the distressing economic conditions in the country where they cautioned about the inescapability of an irreversible devastation in case the

³¹ Va'ez Esfahani, *Libas*, 23-24.

economic situation continued as it was.³² Based on an analysis of the customs statistics, it was recognized, argued the petition, that the reason for the widespread poverty and economic disaster was the excessive imports compared to the scarcity or even the absence of exports. As a remedy they proposed a list which contained luxuries and decorative items to be banned from importation (Appendix 2). It consisted of eighty one articles which included, but was not restricted to, candles, cacao, sugar, tea, carpets, felt, eggs, biscuits, cheese, salt, fish, meat, vegetables, wax, oil, and gramophone and glass and crystal products. As for the textile articles the list was rather detailed and included all sorts of fabrics made of any material such as woollens, cotton products, silk-stuff, and linens. Indeed there was a chronic trade deficit in Iran's visible trade throughout the 1920's, as before, which by the end of the decade added up to at least \$30 million which was mainly financed by the outflow of precious metals i.e. gold and silver.³³ Upon not receiving any reaction to the first petition, the Union sent a second one in November 1921 to the same effect.³⁴ Two days after the second petition the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Welfare (MACPW) informed the President of the Majles that during the government of Moshir al-Dowleh between July 1920 and October 1920 the matter was investigated and a commission was set up at this ministry in order to consider the prohibition of the importation of luxuries and a report along with a list of such items had been sent to the Prime Minister.³⁵ It appears from the letter of MACPW that no effective measure was taken on the issue. This was apparently chiefly due to the treaties signed with Britain and Russia as the two major sources of imports.

After the Tehran merchants others too followed suit. The Merchants Union of Hamadan sent a petition in late November 1921 in which they argued that notwithstanding the good intention of the state the law regarding the prohibition of the outflow of gold and silver from the country did not produce the expected outcome due to the smuggling activities of those people who "[did] not care about the interests of the country".³⁶ By the law they were referring to the law passed by the Majles on 8 May 1915 concerning the prohibition of the outflow of gold and silver from the country. According to the merchants, a ban on the importation of

³² LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p14, "Merchants Union of Tehran to the Majles", 31 October, 1921.

³³ Massoud Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 70. According to Moghadam this \$30 million was the deficit on the visible account including the oil sector. The invisible account was also in deficit during this period. See G. R. Moghadam, "Iran's Foreign Trade Policy and Economic Development in the inter-War Period." PhD diss., Stanford University, 1956, 60. Quoted in Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization*, 70 footnote 11.

³⁴ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p14, "Merchants Union of Tehran to the Majles", 15 November 1921.

³⁵ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p14, "the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Welfare to the President of the Majles", 18 November 1921.

³⁶ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p14, "From The Merchants Union of Hamadan to the Majles", 20 November 1921.

luxurious and ‘unnecessary’ items would be the most effective measure to obtain the balance of trade. The debate was further continued by Tehran merchants in a third petition which they sent in mid-December 1921 where they openly criticized the inattentiveness of the deputies to the issue.³⁷ They argued that, from a purely economic point of view, the proposal for a ban on imports was in fact against the interests of merchants. They further argued that only out of a feeling of patriotism (*vatandusti*), and a sense of altruism they gave priority to the common good. Therefore, the deputies were also called to pay due attention to the matter. In the rest of the petition the merchants drew attention to the possible risks of widespread poverty and deprivation by warning the deputies that the persistence of the trade deficit carried the terrifying risk of producing a widespread poverty. Moreover they added that no powerful force could stand against the devastating consequences of widespread poverty and depravity. In an atmosphere of grave political instability and regional insurgencies this was an intimidating warning.

A series of correspondences between the Majles and various state departments followed this last petition. In February 1922 the Ministry of Finance sent a report to the Majles which was prepared by the commission which was set up at the Administration-General of Customs (AGC).³⁸ The report started by referring to the above-mentioned law concerning the banning of the export of silver and gold as well as of coins made from these metals. According to the report although the law aimed at protecting Iranian currency against unfavourable wartime conditions, any country which was incapable of reciprocating in kind to imports was obliged to pay in cash. It then stated that, as Josephn Naus, the former administrator of customs, had forecasted, as long as Iran`s imports remained more than its exports and it failed to develop its industries and proliferate its exports according to the principles of economics it was inevitable that it would spend its gold and silver stocks, which would result in poverty and bankruptcy. In another report AGC summarized its views on a proposed ban on imports under three articles.³⁹ Firstly, it was proposed that the government should examine the nation`s commercial treaties in order to ensure whether a ban on imports is legally feasible. Secondly, the Iranian government had a right to adopt countervailing measures in order to decrease imports and to obtain a positive trade balance, through which it would protect and promote its national industries. According to the report, in recent years many European states put extraordinary taxes on imports for various reasons, but primarily to protect the value of their

³⁷ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p14, “Merchants Union of Tehran the Majles”, 1 December 1921.

³⁸ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p14, “From the Ministry of Finance to the Majles”, 14 February 1922.

³⁹ LMDCIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, “From the Administration-General of Customs to the Ministry of Finance”, n.d.

money. In this way they aimed at increasing their customs revenues as well as promoting their industries. Thirdly, as the Administrator General has suggested in earlier years, the government could put extortionate taxes on some luxuries, and apply prohibition to others.

From early 1922 onwards, merchants, guildsmen and workers in the provinces were more actively involved in the debates. In January 1922 Hajj Taqi Vakil al-Ro'aya of Hamadan, one of the prominent constitutionalist merchants and the sponsor of the sanctuary at Abd al-'Azim in 1906, sent a private petition to the Majles where he brought a new dimension to the issue.⁴⁰ After highlighting the importance of maintaining the balance between imports and exports he called the attention of the deputies to the significance of free trade and the possible risks of violating it. Based on this, he proposed that a law should be passed according to which those who wanted to import foreign manufactures into Iran should first export Iranian goods of the same value as their imports. Vakil al-Ro'aya was also the head of the Merchants' Union of Hamadan and his arguments should have influenced other merchants too. In the second petition sent to the Majles on 7 February 1922 the Union argued that prohibiting the import of luxuries would not save more than four million tomans.⁴¹ Furthermore due to the principle of free trade as an important principle of international trade, such a measure would not produce the expected outcome. The Union then argued that balancing the trade through encouraging and increasing exports was the only viable solution. However, the merchants were aware of the fact that achieving such an economic leap forward in the near future was nearly impossible, since it would require the development and dissemination of trade, agriculture and industry, building streets and roads, exploitation of mines such as those in Kerman province, building dams, opening an agricultural bank and companies, establishing and supporting factories and materializing several other infrastructural projects. In order to achieve these developments, added the merchants, Iran would need much time which made this option impractical for the day. As an interim solution the one put forward by Vakil al-Ro'aya was repeated.

Nonetheless it appears that both Vakil al-Ro'aya and the Union abandoned this rather complicated solution and turned back to the simple one proposed by the merchants of Tehran. This shift becomes clear in a petition sent on to the Parliament on 12 January 1923.⁴² After reproducing their account as to the economically harmful impacts of the trade deficit and the

⁴⁰ LMD CIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Hajj Taqi Vakil al-Ro'aya of Hamadan to the Majles", 2 January 1922.

⁴¹ LMD CIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From The Merchants Union of Hamadan to the Majles", 7 February 1922.

⁴² LMD CIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From The Merchants Union of Hamadan to the Majles", 11 January 1922. In order to draw attention to the issue in February 1927 the Union also published it as a proclamation (Appendix 3).

significance of the positive trade balance the merchants described the socially devastating consequences of the excessive imports which, they argued, hurt every sensible person. According to them the inflow of foreign goods into the country had gradually destroyed thousands of Iranian families who lived on handicrafts. These people who relentlessly worked for long years to meet the domestic demands resisted these unfavourable conditions to the greatest extent. However because of a lack of protective measures in support of their trades, they disappeared. The marks of this decadence and misfortune, they argued, could be seen in such craft centres as Kerman, Esfahan, Kashan, and Yazd, as well others. The merchants then warned the Majles that should they keep on tolerating this situation, the country would, due to the predominance of imports over exports, turn into a great beggar house and an irreversible decline would set in. Based on this, they reaffirmed their proposal for the prohibition of the importing of decorative, luxury, and unnecessary items into Iran. According to them, after inspecting national manufactures and textiles, which could become productive with little support, a law prohibiting the importing of goods equivalent to goods produced in the country should be passed.

As the Majles did not take any concrete measures, petitions were sent from the provinces, such as the one sent from the Merchants Union of Malayer in November 1922.⁴³ After criticizing the deputies for not paying attention to their previous petitions and for not discussing them openly in the Majles, they stated that the trade balance was a matter of life and death. Thus, they argued, instead of discussing issues of minor significance, the deputies were supposed to consider the trade of the country and the ways to obtain a positive balance of trade. Further, in December 1922 a certain Mahmud M. Ramez, a textile entrepreneur from Tehran, sent a petition in which he argued that the only way out of the widespread poverty and depravity was to use national textiles and manufactures. To this end, he added, a law for the encouragement of industrialists should be passed by the Majles.⁴⁴ According to Ramez this law would consist of three articles. According to the first article, the state would, through MACPW, allocate ten thousand tumans in order to develop the textile industry. The second article would state that the ministry would make sure that no penny was wasted. According to the last article, fifteen months after a factory started its operations completely, the entrepreneurs would annually pay back five hundred tumans to the ministry with a certain percentage of interest that the government would determine.

⁴³ LMD CIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants Union of Malayer to the Majles", 23 November 1922.

⁴⁴ LMD CIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "Mahmud M. Ramez to the Majles", 2 December 1922.

A close analysis of these protectionist and developmentalist opinions reveals that there was an observable accord of views as to the vitality of curtailing imports. Yet opinions do not appear to be clear enough about how domestic demand could be met once imports were effectively curtailed. On the one hand, one has the impression from the protectionist approach that the capacity of the then-existing home manufactures was self-evidently sufficient. Put differently, it was suggested that foreign manufactures did not fill in any gap in the market but only blocked the way of home-made goods. Therefore the sole prohibition of the importation of such articles was sufficient. Yet, the developmentalists approach acknowledged the insufficiency of domestic manufactures, but they disagreed on how to overcome it. According to some, the solution lay in the encouragement of crafts industries while others urged for large-scale industrialization accompanied with infrastructural projects. Generally speaking, however, the issue of a ban on imports and the promotion of home-made production was as much an emotionally charged discursive debate as it was an informed negotiation on the productive capacity of the country. As different classes other than the merchants became involved in the discussions, this dimension became more visible.

In December 1922 the Guilds' Union of Tehran sent a petition to the Majles in which they reproduced the account of the negative consequences of the disastrous economic situation and argued that guild members were the most immediate victims.⁴⁵ Then, they expressed their support for the then-discussed bill which would make it obligatory for those who lived on the treasury of Muslims, to wit state employees, to wear domestically-produced clothes. This law, which will be discussed below, was passed on 19 February 1923. According to the Union, an article introducing a penalty for violators should also be added to the law. Finally, they stated that through this law some needs of the country would be met and new employment opportunities would be created for the jobless. In the meantime, religious groups brought a new dimension to the issue. On 6 December 1922 the Society of Religion (*jame'eh-e diyanat*), and the Society of Free Muslims (*jam'iyat-e ahrar-e eslami*) petitioned the Majles. On the top of the petition sent by the former a Prophetic saying was quoted which goes as "Islam is always higher and nothing goes above it" (*al-eslamo ya'lo vala yo'la aleyh*). By ascribing the deteriorating economic situation of the country to the excessive imports and the scarcity of exports the petition affirmed its support for the above-mentioned bill which would save the people and the helpless workers from misery. It was also stressed that use of national textiles and other goods was an effective means to combat imports. The Society of Free

⁴⁵ LMDCIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From the Guilds' Union of Tehran to the Majles", 2 December 1922.

Muslims also supported the proposal of the merchants regarding the prohibition of the importation of luxuries.

In the meantime, the Merchants' Union of Tehran continued to pressure the Majles for the adoption of their proposal. They argued in a petition sent in January 1923 that although their proposal as to the prohibition of the importation of unnecessary articles was met positively by the deputies, no measures had been taken in last the two years to reverse the economic problems.⁴⁶ Therefore they asked their proposal to be loudly read in the Majles and to be put into practice if considered useful. In case the deputies did not find it useful, added the merchants, they should come up with a better solution about which they should inform the merchants. The responsibility of the Majles to improve the country's economy and to develop native industries was further highlighted by the petitions sent from the merchants' unions of Golpayegan (6 February 1923),⁴⁷ Kermanshah (11 February 1923),⁴⁸ Ardabil (22 February 1923),⁴⁹ Astara (27 February 1923)⁵⁰ and Khorasan (5 March 1923).⁵¹ All of them shared the same determination as to the significance of the protectionist trade measures. According to the Kermanshah merchants, the textiles produced in Isfahan and Khorasan, as two of the leading craft centres, could save the country from foreign products if effectively encouraged by state policies. The petitions sent from Astara and Ardabil, two of Iran's northern cities close to the Russian border, blamed Russian merchants for the grave economic situation. Speaking on behalf of "the people and the merchants of the town", the petition of the Merchants Union of Ardabil drew attention to the assaults on and the monopolization of Iran's economy by Russian merchants. The merchants of Astara took a rather aggressive stand against foreign merchants. After referring to the widespread poverty in Iran the petitioners stated that Iran's unjust and inhumane civilized neighbours were "by various tricks and unbearable devices from every corner busy destroying Iran's future and fortune, monopolizing its trade, and turning Iranians into servants and captives". Thus, the supplicants expressed their support for a ban on imports. In this way, Iran should immediately make it clear to foreigners that Iranians were no longer willing to submit to their pressure and monopolization of their trade and would no longer be subject to their unjust and greedy ends. In any case, added the petition, the merchants, the notables as well as the toilers and the farmers of Astara would

⁴⁶ LMDICP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants' Union of Tehran to the Majles", 16 February 1923.

⁴⁷ LMDICP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants' Unions of Golpayegan to the Majles", 16 February 1923.

⁴⁸ LMDICP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants' Unions of Kermanshah to the Majles", 11 February 1923.

⁴⁹ LMDICP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants' Unions of Ardabil to the Majles", 22 February 1923.

⁵⁰ LMDICP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants' Unions of Astara to the Majles", 27 February 1923.

⁵¹ LMDICP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Merchants' Unions of Khorasan to the Majles", 5 March 1923.

practically put the proposal into effect and refrain from using foreign goods as much as possible.

‘The law for the use of national clothes’ (*qanun-e este‘mal-e albaseh-e vatani*) passed in February 1923 should be considered against this backdrop. The law made it compulsory for all state employees, including the military, to wear clothes produced of native fabrics and of Iranian make. In a collective petition dated December 1922 the supplicants expressed their gratitude to the parliamentarians for their sensitivity to native textiles and discussing the bill at the parliament.⁵² According to them this law was the only guarantee of the honour and the future of religion and the country (*din va dowlat*). Another petition dated 4 January 1923 argued that the encouragement of national textiles, which would result in the balance of trade, would also save the Muslim nation from being in need to foreigners.⁵³ On the other hand, however, as far as those people who lived on other sectors were concerned the law caused frustration and resentment. For instance, on 4 March 1923 shoemakers expressed their reservations about the law in a petition which they asked to be read at the parliament as a sign of the deputies’ attention to the situation of a handful of toilers. The petition reads as follows:

Before we begin our petition we entreat the retainers of the President of the Majles, may God make his power endure, and the honourable deputies to read this petition loudly in the Majles and to pay due attention to the situation of these craftsmen. Admittedly the purpose for the establishment of this national regime and the basis of the constitutional system is to attain the means of security and welfare for all as well as to obtain advantages and dispose of disadvantages to Iranians. This can only be obtained by making laws for the good of the country and for providing peace and revenues to people from which the general populace will benefit without discriminating between various crafts therein. You should not forget the principle of egalitarianism (*mesdaq-e vaqe‘-e mosavat*). As shoe makers we have always made sacrifices and become forerunners for the establishment of the sacred constitution while at the same time we have, in the last years, significantly developed our craft and made our handiwork far more beautiful and attractive. However, in return for our efforts, some of the deputies totally disregarded this craft in their debates concerning the use of native fabrics and home manufactures and they were oblivious to our craft and showed a humiliating attitude towards us. Their pretext was that home-made shoes hurt and injured their feet and produced [?]. Of course our words are about a number of deputies who wear foreign shoes and not those who from the beginning of their lives wore home-made shoes. In the meantime we urge those deputies who did not help us to study history in order to see what the Japanese Emperor did and said. You should have already heard that the Emperor, Mikado, declared that until shoes were produced in his country he would go around barefooted

⁵² LMDIP. d4-k25-j12-p14 “To the Honourable Majles”, 6 January 1923.

⁵³ LMDIP. d4-k25-j12-p14 “To the Honourable Majles”, 4 January 1923.

which he really did for a while until shoes were produced in his country. This is what great men and persons who are interested in promoting and developing a nation do. We would like to gain the attention of you gentlemen and request that you pay attention to native shoes like you did to native textiles. This way we request that you add an article about native shoes to the supplement of the law, and promote this craft too.⁵⁴

The petition is an interesting example of how workers engaged with the ruling establishment. On the one hand the workers used every discursive tool at their disposal to criticize the deputies, but on the other hand were careful not display a negative attitude towards all of the deputies, and they distinguished the deputies who wore foreign shoes and those who used domestic ones. However, there were also those who were critical of the actual value of the law which allegedly aimed at appeasing popular excitement due to the insufficient production capacity of the industry.

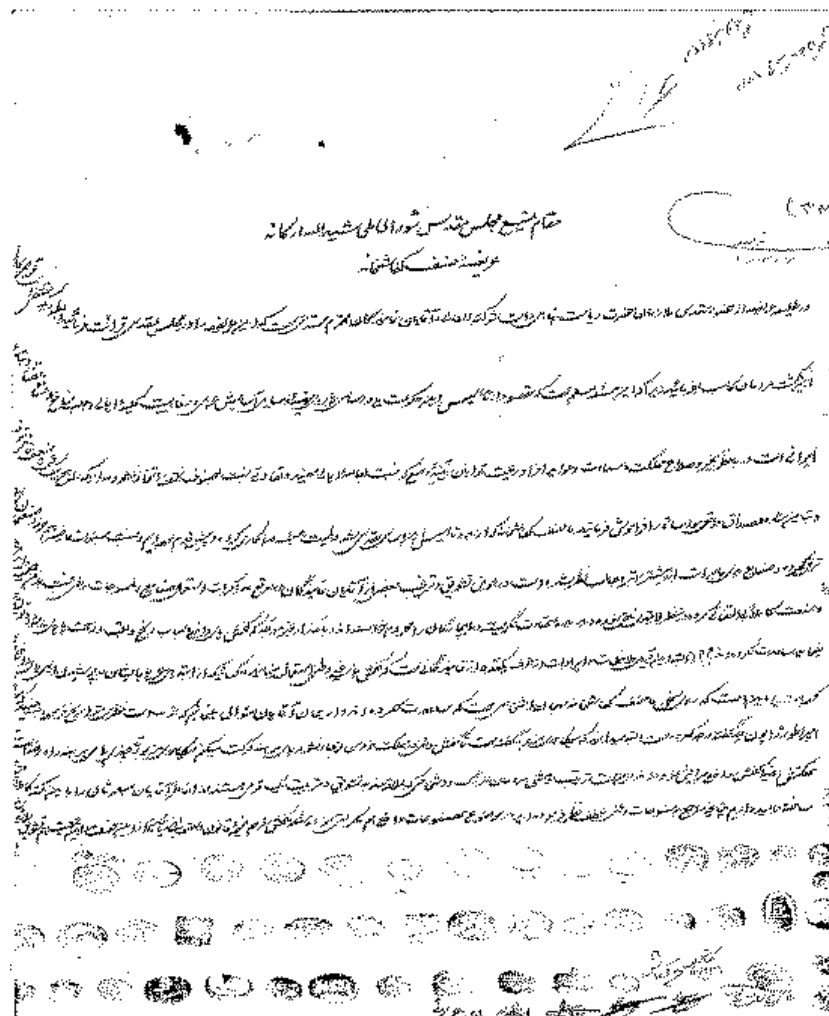
In a petition dated 4 March 1923 Taqi Daneshvar stressed the unintended consequences of this law.⁵⁵ He argued that although there was much excitement among the population as to promoting handicrafts in general and handmade textiles in particular, it was not possible to meet the demand of the market with handmade textiles, and by manually washing cotton and wool. Moreover, he argued, the native wool fabrics communicated anthrax to hundreds of people.

Furthermore, if handmade textiles become widely used, the industry would not be able to meet the demand and prices would rise considerably. This in turn would promote the cheap foreign clothes. Following these considerations Daneshvar emphasized that mechanization of the textile industry was the only feasible solution. Taking into account the devaluation of the German mark he proposed the purchase of factories from Germany at low prices, to be installed in Iran. The issues raised by Daneshvar were not the only problems that the law exposed. Although the law was a notable means to promote the weaving industry, it also betrayed the state's inability to introduce any effective prohibition on imports. Lack of a nationwide market and the virtual absence of transportation facilities were compounded by the hostile economic policies of Russia and Britain.

⁵⁴ LMDCIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From the Shoe-Makers", 4 March 1923.

⁵⁵ LMDCIP. d4-k25-j12-p14, "From Taqi Daneshvar to the Majles", 4 March 1923.

Figure 3: Shoemakers' Petition Dated 1923



Iran had to wait until the late 1920's to attain full tariff autonomy. New factories were established while at the same time crafts industries continued to dominate the manufacturing sector. From the late 1920's onwards, industrialization policies largely aimed at import-substitution grew at an unprecedented pace. This new policy aimed at large-scale industrialization. Before moving to what is often called the industrial leap forward in Iran in the late 1920's and during the 1930's, an analysis of textile craft industries will be provided. It will be demonstrated that following a set-back from the mid-19th century, crafts industries recovered from the shock and competed for the domestic market. It will also show how craftsmen survived and accommodated themselves to the new conditions.

Industrialization

Iranian Industries before Large-Scale Industrialization: The Textile Industry in Iran

The history of Iranian industry has often been studied within an urban context by emphasizing a transition, or lack thereof, from traditional crafts which were practiced mainly within guild structures, to large-scale industrial establishments. Although mention was made of other forms of production, such as village production or cottage industries, they were usually referred to in passing. What Donald Quataert calls “the factory orthodoxy” has for a long time haunted Iranian history writing, too.⁵⁶ Factories were regarded as the most tangible manifestations of modernity in countries as Iran as, for example, in the Ottoman Empire or Egypt. Thus, greater attention has been paid in Iran to large-scale industrialization attempts in a country where small-scale production was the dominant type of manufacturing. Further, industrialization was judged, in Rudolf Braun’s words, “from the point of view of uprooting, disruption and stereotyping”.⁵⁷ The negative impacts of industrialization on craft industries were overemphasized. In the rest of the chapter, I will first discuss the textile industry until the late 1920’s after which will be followed by an examination of large-scale industrialization in Iran.

Encompassing all spinning and weaving activities with their ancillary crafts, such as cotton carding, combing, dyeing and so on, the textile industry was the largest industry in Iran in terms of value production and size of workforce prior to the discovery of oil in the country in 1908, and was still ranked second afterwards. Small-scale manufacturing or cottage-industry, which typically but not necessarily employed less than ten workers and with rather light machinery, was the principal textile production type in Iran. This could either be practiced along guild-lines in urban settings or by part-time cultivator-workers in rural areas. Generally speaking, textile manufacture required little expertise and very light machinery which facilitated its widespread practice, especially for own use. Although urban based manufacturing is relatively well-documented, it is hard to find data that illuminates rural production.

Early-twentieth century Iran could be described as one “big weaving mill supported by many ancillary crafts”.⁵⁸ Tabriz, Isfahan, Yazd, Kashan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Kerman and Rasht were

⁵⁶ Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14.

⁵⁷ Rudolf Braun, *Industrialization and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

⁵⁸ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 23.

the major centres of the many textile-producing centres.⁵⁹ Although a variety of raw materials were spun and woven in Iran cotton and wool were the most favourite and widespread among them.⁶⁰ Silk was particularly processed in Yazd, Gilan, Mazandaran, Khorasan, and Azerbaijan.⁶¹ A simple hand loom was required in weaving and it was quite common to have at least one loom in the house. Testimonies of travellers attest to the widespread practice of weaving in Iran. Although Iranian textile production was hard-hit by ready-made imports, producers soon partly recovered from the shock by mobilizing cheaper labour, and reducing the quality of products through the use of imported yarns and dyestuffs. Consequently despite the initial setback a significant part of the textile industry remained intact. In many parts of Iran weaving continued to be the most important manufacturing activity. Available data can provide an overview of this point.⁶² By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries there were 1,000 shawl looms in Kerman with an annual export of 300,000 tomans. There were 200 woollen looms in Na'in and 300 in Kerman. The number of silk looms in Kashan was 200 producing a monthly output of 400 pieces while Yazd had 400 workshops with 2,000 looms and Mashhad 100 shops with 200 looms, and Nishapur 16 shops

⁵⁹ Generally speaking the history of Iranian industries during the period under study has remained relatively understudied. This holds true for the textile industry too which was one of the most significant manufacturing activities in the country. Apart from the works dealing with local histories, the following are the most useful works on the subject: H. E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia* (Cambridge: The M. I. T Press, 1966). Here Wulff investigates in detail the technologies used, and the technological innovations as well as shifts experienced in textile industry with its various branches, along with other industries; Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500-1925* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999). This work is the most comprehensive study written in English about Iranian textile industries. After giving detailed information about the raw materials used for and different branches of textile industry and its production centres Floor embarks upon providing a historical account of the industry; Willem Floor, *Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran, 1800-1925* (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003). In this work Floor covers industries other than the textile such as ceramics, glass making and metal working; Willem Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran* (Washington: Mega Publishers, 2009). In this work after sketching out the history of traditional crafts in Iran, Floor investigates the history of Iranian industries particularly of factory production; Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971). In this collection of primary sources, and other studies Issawi makes available in English an important set of material written not only in English but also in Russian and Persian; Mohandes Ali Zahedi, *Sanaayi-e Iran bad az Jang*, (Rangin, Esfand 1323). Zahedi provides information about the state and the history of Iranian factories after the World War II. However, since almost all of these factories were established during Reza Shah's time this is basically a work on the factories of the industrial leap-forward of 1930s and of 1920s to a lesser extent; Hosayn Mahbubi Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Mo'assasat-e Jadid dar Iran* Vol.3, ed. Karim Esfahanian and Jahanghir Qajariyeh (Tehran: Tehran University Publications, 1368/1988). In the third and the last volume of his encyclopaedic work Ardakani investigates new institutions in Iran from telegraph to telephone and from transportation to large-scale industrial establishment. As far as textile industry is concerned he gives rather detailed information on the establishment, the capital, looms as well as spindles of the factories erected during the period under study and later. Zahra Sadeghi, *Siyasathaye San'ati-ye Duran-e Reza Shah, 1304-1320* (Tehran: Khojasteh Press, 2009). This is a work on the laws and the decrees related to industries and industrialization during Reza Shah's reign covering a wide range of areas from railway construction to mines, and factories.

⁶⁰ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 13-15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶² The following quantitative information is taken, if not stated otherwise, from Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 268.

with 3 to 4 looms. As for cotton weaving, in Yazd there were 800 workshops with 2,000 looms. In these looms, imported British and Indian yarns were used.⁶³ Also, cotton pileless carpets, locally known as “zalu,” which were made of native yarn, were woven in Maibud around Yazd. In the town a small quantity of thinner, generally in red and blue stripes, was woven using artificial dyes. Also canvas of coarser or finer texture was woven by villagers of Yazd using local cotton and old-fashioned spinning wheels.⁶⁴ Kashan had 100 workshops which wove cotton. At Isfahan there were some 2,000 cotton looms and about 500-600 manufactories in all.⁶⁵ Thus it is “seen that although the crafts had been hurt by foreign competition, their output was still considerable”.⁶⁶ Shawls are a good example of this. Originally made of Persian goat wool and extensively woven in Kerman, shawls were a favourite dress material in Iran and not used only for decorative purposes.⁶⁷ Shawls were also woven from other materials such as camel wool, sheep wool, cotton, and silk. Although Kerman was the main production centre, in Mashhad, Tabriz, Yazd, and Isfahan too, shawls were woven.⁶⁸ By the early twentieth century, shawl production declined considerably. It was carpet-making which employed increasing numbers of weavers, and which became the most important export-oriented craft in the country. Interest in Persian carpets had increased in Europe after the World Trade Fair in 1851 and the demand was furthered by the World Trade Fair in Vienna in 1873.⁶⁹ It attracted a substantial amount of domestic and foreign capital and by 1914 was exporting goods worth £1,000,000.⁷⁰ In order to assure high quality production and more profits, foreign companies, such as the British-Swiss Ziegler&Co., the German Persische Teppiche AG, and the Dutch Hotz&Zoon directly invested in carpet weaving. Soltanabad, southwest Tehran and northwest of Isfahan and about 180 miles from both, was one of the main centres of such investment. There were approximately 2,000 looms in Soltanabad while in the villages in its vicinity 6,000 looms were functioning with an annual

⁶³ FO 248/1070, “Report on Trade of Yazd-Vice Consular District for Year Ending 31 March 1913”.

⁶⁴ FO 248/1070, “Report on Trade of Yazd-Vice Consular District for Year Ending 31 March 1913”.

⁶⁵ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 121.

⁶⁶ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 268. Compare the above figures with the ones from a report penned by E. K. Abbot Kashanin mid-19th E. K.: Kashan 800 silk looms; ‘a great deal’ of cotton twist spun; Isfahan had 200 silk looms, ‘the manufacture of cotton goods is carried to a great extent, and affords occupation to many of the inhabitants of the town and surrounding villages’; Yazd 2,200 shawl manufacturing looms, 220 woollen looms, producing £40,000-45,000 worth of goods ‘exclusive of that about 325 looms belonging to 9 villages around, valued at Tomans 15,000 (£7,000) more’. Issawi, *Ibid.*, 167-168. Also, writing about 1889 Curzon provides the following figures: in Mashad 650 silk looms and 320 shawl looms: in 1870 Kerman had 80 cotton factories and 6 “really good carpet factories” and in the mid-nineteenth century had had “as many as 1’800 silk factories employing 9,000 hands ...”. Issawi, *Ibid.*, 268.

⁶⁷ Floor, *Persian Textile Industry*, 305.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁶⁹ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 7.

⁷⁰ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 259.

production of 15 million qrans (£ 274,527) worth of carpet in 1913.⁷¹ In carpet production, the putting-out system and village production played an important role. H. W. Maclean's observation sheds important lights on this point. Sponsored by the Commercial Intelligence Committee of the Board of Trade in London Maclean made an extensive tour in Iran in order to investigate the conditions and prospects of trade in Iran and produced a report in 1904.⁷² The information he provides sheds light on the working of the putting-out system in the carpet weaving industry. In his *Report on the Conditions and Prospect of British Trade in Persia*, he makes the following observations:

The bulk of the carpet industry is carried on in the weavers' homes, the women and children doing the weaving. The so-called manufacturer supplies to the weaver the design and the quantities of wool in different colours required for one carpet. He also advances sums to account of the price arranged, the balance being paid on delivery of the finished article. The practice has the usual disadvantages of home employment, slovenly and dilatory work, with little progress towards skill and finish, as the looms, scattered over a wide area, cannot be constantly inspected. The vast majority of weavers, however, living in small isolated villages, and having also household duties, can work only in this way.⁷³

As late as 1924 carpet was mostly manufactured at home around Tabriz as elsewhere.⁷⁴ Carpet weaving was also practiced by Armenians of the Julfa quarter of Isfahan at schools.⁷⁵ It was a source of income for many people. According to the British political resident in the Gulf, five or six carpet-weaving establishments were set up in 1914 and they employed considerable numbers of children and women which, he added, diminished the number of beggars in the town.⁷⁶ Overall, the number of people employed in the carpet industry rose drastically from 1,000 in 1860 to 65,000 by 1910.⁷⁷ In terms of foreign trade too the importance of carpets was on the rise from the late 19th century onwards as can be seen in Table-4.2. From almost zero in the mid-nineteenth century, the share of carpet weaving in Iran's export revenues rose to about 12 percent in the 1911-13 period and grew to constitute

⁷¹ FO 248/1070, "Report on Trade of Sultanabad for Year Ending 20th March 1913".

⁷² Rose Greaves, "Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India, 1798-1921", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, *From Nader Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 415.

⁷³ MacLean 1904, quoted in Floor, Willem Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 8.

⁷⁴ FO 371/10127, (1914), "British Trade with Persia".

⁷⁵ FO 248/1029, "Isfahan Trade Report 1910-11".

* mainly rice

⁷⁶ FO 371/2425 (1915), "Situation at Isfahan, 1915".

⁷⁷ Martin Rudner, "The Modernization of Iran and the Development of the Persian Carpet Industry: The Neo-Classical Era in the Persian Carpet Industry, 1925-1945," *Iranian Studies* 44, no. 1, (2011): 51.

Iran's second largest export item, after oil, by late 1920's.⁷⁸ A number of points determined the general course of the Iranian textile industry during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First of all notwithstanding the survival of a considerable textile industry producing a variety of textures there has been a noticeable shift to cotton at the expense of other materials.⁷⁹ As stated above, a variety of raw materials such as silk, wool, and cotton have been historically used in the Iranian textile industry. Of these cotton was easiest to process: it was available in large quantity, for it was grown practically all over Iran. In addition, the silk disease of 1860 had seriously hurt silk production.⁸⁰

Table 4.2: Main Exports of Iran⁸¹ (Percentage of Total)

<i>Product</i>	<i>1850s</i>	<i>1880</i>	<i>1911-13</i>
Silk and products	38	18	5
Cotton and woollen cloth	23	1	1
Cereals	10	16*	12*
Fruit	4	6	13
Tobacco	4	5	1
Raw cotton	1	7	19
Opium		26	7
Carpets	...	4	12

Cotton cultivation showed a remarkable rise, and on the eve of World War I cotton cultivation expanded to over 100,000 hectares of land, amounting to 33,000 tons.⁸² Yet much of the crop, 25,000 tons, worth about £1,500,000, was exported to Russia.⁸³ Against the export of raw cotton, cotton yarns were increasingly imported in order to further reduce production costs. Secondly, imported yarns and dyestuffs were increasingly used by Iranian weavers.⁸⁴ The

⁷⁸ Rudner, "The Modernization," 51. Other industries too such as leather, opium, henna, and silk was stimulated due to their connection with export. Of leather industry Sobotsinskii writes: "leather production which until now was in the hands of a large number of enterprises standing halfway between cottage and handicraft industry and employing 5-10 workers, is changing into manufactories. Thus already in 1909 in Mashhad, and Hamadan, there were 8 workshops, with up to 40-50 workers each. The small handicraft shops were unable to withstand the competition and the large enterprises, and rapidly declined... In Hamadan in 1912, there were 300 small leather shops, compared with 400 in 1909, and in Mashhad 50 compared with 200". Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 259, footnote 6.

⁷⁹ This was a typical shift in countries under the influence of imported yarns and fabrics. The same phenomenon was experienced in the Ottoman Empire too. See Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23.

⁸⁰ Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 14. Silk was so hardly hit that although in the first half of the nineteenth century silk production rose to 1,000 tons, only 99 tons were recorded following the spread of the disease in 1877. The amount again slightly rose to 104 in 1910. Floor, *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁸¹ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 136.

⁸² Charles Issawi, "European Economic Penetration: 1872-1921", in *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 7*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 600.

⁸³ Charles Issawi, "European Economic Penetration", 600.

⁸⁴ The importation of yarns and dyestuffs was a common phenomenon in such countries as Iran, Turkey, and Egypt. As Issawi asserts in this way weavers in these countries were able to greatly cut their costs and partly

import of yarn and thread showed almost a steady increase as can be seen in Table-4.3. Apart from cotton yarns dyestuffs were also imported in large quantities. The use of aniline dyes has been an issue in Iran for it harmed the quality of Iranian textiles, particularly carpets. This cost Iranian textile products their lasting colour, for which they were famous. The increasing use of aniline dyes diminished the demand for and the growth of home-grown colouring plants such as indigo, madder-roots, and saffron.⁸⁵ In 1892 the import of aniline dyes and the thread dyed with them were prohibited, but due to smuggling activities the proscription remained largely on paper.⁸⁶ For some time, the export of carpets coloured with aniline dyes was prohibited, but in the early 1910's it was permitted and taxed at 12% ad valorem.⁸⁷ Thirdly, although domestic production gradually managed to regain, partly if not fully, its prominence in the domestic market, Iranian textiles, with the exception of labour intensive carpet industry, had already lost its international significance.

Table 4.3: Comparative Table Showing the Value and the Source of Cotton Yarns and Thread Imported into Iran During the years 1906-07 to 1913-14 (In pound sterling)

<i>Country</i>	<i>1906-07</i>	<i>1907-08</i>	<i>1908-09</i>	<i>1911-12</i>	<i>1912-13</i>	<i>1913-14</i>
British Empire (excl. India)	56,890	83,343	70,394	54,640	21,612	21,833
British India	86,039	90,904	49,104	88,038	129,476	132,244
Russia	4,760	8,131	8,099	30,231	72,134	85,677
Turkey	37	589	3,279	1,999	2,580	1,226
Belgium	-	-	1,314	715	1,593	1,428
Austral-Hungary	1,092	723	939	363	520	840
Italy	3,814	4,665	454	805	350	2,531
Germany	48	891	380	1,215	4,266	2,580
Switzerland	446	338	56	764	1,683	883
France	11	298	42	-	-	-
Oman	-	275	-	-	-	-
Other countries	43	117	24	200	381	243
Total	153,091	190,368	134,086	179,020	234,595	249,485
Total imports	8,620,795	8,168,685	7,449,681	-	10,319,557	11,766,663

Source: DCR 4487, Report on the Trade of Persia (London: HMSO, 1910), Annex F, p. 9 [rate exchange was £1=53.82 grans]; DCR 5515, Report for the Year 1913-14 on the Trade of Persia (London: HMSO, 1915), Annex F, p. 13.

Compiled and quoted in Willem Floor, *Textile Imports into Qajar Iran, Russia versus Great Britain: the Battle for Market Domination*, California, Mazda Publishers, 2009, 72.

recover some of their losses. Charles Issawi, "De-Industrialization and Re-Industrialization in the Middle East Since 1800," *IJMES* 12 (1980), 470.

⁸⁵ Mustafa Khan Fateh, *The Economic Position of Persia* (London: P. S. Kind&Son, Ltd., 1926), 20.

⁸⁶ Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, 303.

⁸⁷ Fateh, *The Economic Position of Persia*, 46. However, in late 19th century Lord Curzon makes the following remark: "aniline dyes are constantly used, but the carpets made with them are for the most part disposed of in the eastern markets, Russia and Egypt". Quoted in Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, 303.

There is no satisfactory statistical information on the workforce which was engaged in craft industries throughout the period under study. But the first complete census which was undertaken in 1956 attests to their persistence.⁸⁸ Even by then in many of the craft centres, craft industries were only the second greatest economic activity after agriculture. At any rate, it is obvious that crafts continued to be a major economic activity even when factory-based industrialization was well underway. Apparently, weaving was undertaken as a part-time job as it also was a major source of income. Yet, even in urban settings, guilds apparently lost their hold on textile production and the business became a free-for-all. Despite the political role they played in the Constitutional Revolution, the importance of guilds as economic units was rapidly declining. Production was either spreading to rural settings through the putting-out system, or it was gradually being concentrated in large-scale industrial establishments. The coming of a bureaucracy and the increasing authority of the central government, particularly from the early 1920's onwards, deprived guilds of many of their former administrative powers. However, when in the mid-1920's the Majles abolished guild taxes, the main source of power for guild elders, in the annex of the law 239 organizations were listed as currently paying the guild tax.⁸⁹

With further centralization and with improved transportation and communication facilities, Iran was becoming an integrated market with relatively free movements of goods. As will be discussed shortly, the ineffective state involvement in economic affairs rapidly changed from the 1920's onward but often to the disadvantage of small-scale industries. Tax exemptions were introduced, protective economic measures were adopted, and monopolies were established in order to secure neat operation and a viable market for state-sponsored or privately-owned large-scale industrial establishments. Although crafts, and cottage-industries did not disappear overnight, their economic significance continued to vanish. The population of villagers and craftsmen provided the newly established factories, as well as the developing oil industry in the south, with the necessary workforce. The following section deals with factory-based industrialization of the textile industry in Iran which, though it started much earlier, accelerated and became the standard economic policy during the Pahlavi era, particularly during the 1930's. Not only the development of industrialization shall be

⁸⁸ For the details of this survey see Chapter-3.

⁸⁹ Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 121, n.28. Elsewhere Floor provides the number as 230. Floor, "The Guilds in Iran: An Overview from the Earliest Beginnings Till 1972," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 125 (1975), 109. According to Issawi the number was 267 (Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, 285) which, argues Floor, is wrong since of these 267 only 237 paid guild taxes.

discussed but also mention will be made of how small-scale producers engaged with and tried to influence the newly emerging conditions.

Fabricating Iranian Modernization: Large-Scale Industrialization in Iran, 1925-1941

The economic and industrial policies of Reza Shah's reign have been both criticized and praised extensively. Involving a wide range of areas, from railway construction to mining, and from introducing new tariff policies to launching a state-sponsored or subsidized factorization, his reign witnessed a genuinely state-controlled economic development. For these policies, he was praised a saviour, and as 'the father of the nascent Iranian nation'. Or alternatively, he was criticized for his allegedly 'ill-planned' economic projects which, in the words of a contemporary observer, aimed at "progress for progress' sake".⁹⁰ To find a definitive answer to this debate is beyond the scope of this study. Yet, the stress on the achievements and the failures of the Pahlavi elites in the economic sphere, as in others, is another way of giving primacy to the actions of the state in shaping economic development, and it distracts our attention from the more complex decision-making processes. In these processes not only high politics was involved but also the demands of merchants, craftsmen, and workers played an active role.

Thus, the agency and the perceptions of the wider population regarding the economic policies which have been adopted from the mid-1920's onwards, particularly during the 1930's, warrant investigation. The reactions of those people who lived on crafts industries or small-scale manufactures should also be emphasized. As far as the textile industry is concerned, well into the twentieth century the output of the newly emerging factories continued to be largely insignificant in quantitative terms when compared with craft and cottage industries. For generations of reformists, saving the country from foreign dependence had been an elusive dream, which was greatly desired but not attained.⁹¹ They suggested that if factory-based industrialization was a major component of European modernization, Iran should follow the same trajectory. The flourishing oil industry in the south also set an example of European technology and industry. Unlike the Qajars, however, economic development was

⁹⁰ FO 371/20052. "Annual Report, 1935".

⁹¹ This point was clearly put as follows: "Persia is progressing, like many other Eastern countries, along the path of industrialisation and her progress would undoubtedly be much faster if so much of her time and money were not devoted to the construction of the north-south railway. The urge to increasing self-sufficiency is intensified by growing nationalism and by the desire to be less dependent on the Soviet Union for manufactured good among which textiles and sugar predominate." FO 371/17909 Annual Report on Persia for 1933.

to be achieved not through concessions but through the mobilization of indigenous resources. Import-substitution was the underlying objective of the industrialization program during the 1930's. To this end tens of factories which produced a variety of articles such as sugar, matches, soap, oil, and leather were erected. However, textiles received the lion's share of the massive industrialization projects for four main reasons. First of all textile products constituted the greater part of the imports which could be counterbalanced by an effective investment in this industry. Secondly, the raw materials required for textile production such as cotton, wool, and silk, were extensively produced in Iran. Thirdly, textile production required little expertise which facilitated the supply of the necessary workforce. Fourthly, the wartime crisis and its ramifications in the interwar period provided ample opportunities to renegotiate the existing tariff system and to purchase and install machinery from Europe.

During roughly the first two decades of the twentieth century, apart from the Majles and the cabinet, the Ministry of Commerce and Public Utilities was mainly responsible for industrial planning and monitoring. Also it appears that municipalities were also involved in industrial policies. For instance, in 1918 a wool spinning factory was erected by the Charities Directorate of Tehran municipality which provided employment to female workers, particularly widows.⁹² Following the coup d'état in 1921 new branches were established to implement and monitor industrial policies and relevant infrastructural projects. Ministry of Public Utilities 1922-9; Ministry of Economy 1929-31; Directorate General of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry 1931-7; Ministry of Industry and Mines 1937-9; and Ministry of Arts and Crafts 1939-41 have been established at various periods for this purpose.⁹³ Industrialization required legislative effort as well. Between 1925 and 1941 as many as 1,145 laws and decrees were passed or issued on industrial and related matters.⁹⁴ As can be seen in Table-4.4 most of these laws and decrees dated between 1933 and 1938. In 1927 the ambitious Trans-Iranian Railway project, which linked the Caspian Sea through Tehran to the Persian Gulf, was launched. In 1925 a law was passed which exempted industrial and agricultural machines and instruments and their component parts from import duties for ten years.⁹⁵ Until 1930 several monopolies were formed starting with sugar and tea, and extended

⁹² LMDCIP, dore4-k25-j12-p2, "To the Majles", December 1921.

⁹³ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 174, footnote 19.

⁹⁴ Sadeghi, *Siyasatha*, 60. Of these 211 were laws while the number of decrees was 934. Sadeghi, *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁵ There already were similar proposals for the development of industry in the country. For example in June 1922, Hajj Muhammad Mo'in al-Tojjar Bushahri, a prominent merchant and constitutionalist and a deputy to the First and the Third Parliaments, sent a petition to the Majles to this effect. After emphasizing the significance of getting rid of foreign needs he proposed a similar law for the exemption of machines from import fees. dore4-k25-j12-p31 "Mo'in al-Tojjar", 30 June 1922. Taqizadeh, too, made a similar proposal. Asked about the ways to

to other goods until foreign trade was fully monopolized in 1931. Also in 1925 the National Bank was established and soon took over from the British-owned Imperial Bank the monopoly right to issue banknotes. In the meantime, Arthur Millspaugh, the American Administrator General of Finances since 1923, was dismissed in 1927. Equally importantly in 1928 full tariff autonomy was attained. Thus, unlike the British-led oil industry in the south of Iran, the flourishing nationwide industrialization was financed and controlled by Iranians.

Table 4.4: The Distribution of Laws and Decrees on Industrial Issues According to Years, 1925-1941.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1925	8	0.69
1926	10	0.88
1927	33	2.88
1928	22	1.93
1929	25	2.18
1930	35	3.05
1931	54	4.72
1932	158	13.80
1933	108	9.43
1934	123	10.75
1935	42	3.67
1936	148	12.93
1937	91	7.95
1938	41	3.58
1939	130	11.35
1940	75	6.55
1941	42	3.66
Total	1145	100

Source: Sadeghi, *Siyasatha*, 61.

The renewed efforts at large-scale industrialization had been underway since the end of the First World War. The Vatan Wool Spinning and Weaving Factory at Isfahan, which was established in 1923 by the prominent merchant and industrialist Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Kazeruni, was a notable example of early factories (Figure 3). The machinery was imported from Germany and the factory was supported by the state. For instance orders were given for the military by the then the Commander in Chief Reza Khan.⁹⁶ Also Akhgar newspaper reports in June 1929 that one of the deputies, Seyyed Yaqub, proposed for the promotion of

develop industry in the country he proposed, inter alia, the abolition of import dues on machinery. FO 307/10158. The law ultimately passed in 1925 did not apply to many small-scale capital goods such as sewing and knitting machines, printing and engraving machines etc. (Bharier, *Economic Development*, 176) which, as Floor rightly observes, shows the state's bias in favour of large-scale industries. Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, 124.

⁹⁶ Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Mo'assasat-e Jadid*, 95.

native manufactures especially for the textiles produced at Vatan Factory.⁹⁷ Industrialization was also among the concerns of political parties. For example, the Revival Party which was formed in the early 1920's by Abd al-Hosayn Teymurtash, Seyyed Mohammad Tadayon, and Ali Akbar Davar called, inter alia, for an end to economic capitulations, industrialization and replacement of foreign capital by native capital.⁹⁸ In 1924 Taqizadeh, for example, was asked about the path the government should follow in order to restore the greatness of Iran and proposed the following remedies: construction of suitable motor-roads and importation of motor-cars; construction of railways through concessions; establishment of small factories for supplying the different districts of Iran; abolition of import duties on machinery; the granting of concessions to foreigners to secure investment in Iran for its development; introduction of waterway systems, telephones; encouragement of immigration from Europe to attract experts in agriculture and other fields.⁹⁹

Figure 4: Interior of the Vatan Factory, Late 1920's.



Source: Parisa Damandan, *Portrait Photographs from Isfahan: Faces in Transition, 1920-1950* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 219.

⁹⁷ Akhgar, 9 June 1929. Quoted in Abdol Mahdi Rajai, *Esfahan az Negah-e Akhgar* (Isfahan through the Lens of Akhgar) (Isfahan: Isfahan Municipality, 2014), 49.

⁹⁸ Abrahamian, *Iran Between two Revolutions*, 123. The following were also in the party's program: transformation of nomads into farmers; a progressive income tax; expansion of educational facilities for all including women; careers open to talent; and replacement of minority languages throughout Iran by Persian.

⁹⁹ FO 307/10158.

The Age of Iron: Factorization of Iranian Textile Industry, 1931-1941

Between 1925 and 1931 the foundation was laid for the nascent industries. Not only were important economic steps taken during this period, but also, major achievements, from the eyes of the central establishment, were registered in a variety of fields from the sedentarization of tribes, the creation of a strong army and security forces, and the consolidation of a strong government. The last two especially contributed to the elimination of the chronic countrywide insecurity in roads which very much hindered the safe movement of goods. The Great Depression in the early 1930's, and the implementation of the first five-year plan in the USSR, which prevented the access of Iranian merchants to Russian markets, further pushed Iran towards self-sufficient economic development in many of its manufacturing industries. From the early 1930's onwards the state took a rather direct roles in industrial development. The textile industry, especially cotton processing, flourished. Germany and Britain were the favoured suppliers of the necessary machinery for the new factories. Extensive investment was made in spinning in order to curtail the importation of foreign yarns since many of the existing factories and workshops used imported yarns. This point was also a major concern especially in the early 1920's. For example, in April 1923 a petition was sent from the Merchants Union of Tehran with twelve signatures, including that of the famous merchant and the head of the union Amin al-Darb.¹⁰⁰ By highlighting the significance of supplying thread to the cloth making, and carpet weaving industries they asked for a concession to establish spinning mills around Qazvin, Qom and Isfahan. However, despite their call as to the urgency of the issue, no tangible steps seem to have been taken. For example Hajj Mirza Ali Kaisariyeh, one of the petitioners, had to wait until 1938 to open a spinning mill at Qom in partnership with Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Yazdi.¹⁰¹ In 1932 the cotton spinning mill in 'Aliabad which was established in 1931 was extended.¹⁰² The following year orders were given again to British firms for necessary machinery for spinning mills at Shiraz with 5,200 spindles; Isfahan and Yazd, 4,200, spindles each; while the Shahi Mill in Mazandaran was expanded with 11,000 spindles.¹⁰³ Investment in spinning increasingly continued and in 1935 orders were made to British firms for textile mills at Kashan with a total of 6,400 spindles; Ahvaz, 8,800 spindles; Isfahan 6,688 spindles and 2,400 spindles (cotton thread); Mashhad 10,120 spindles; while the Shahi Mill was extended

¹⁰⁰ LMDCIP. dore4-k25-j12, "From the Merchants of Tehran", 25 April 1923.

¹⁰¹ Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moassasat-e Jadid*, 128.

¹⁰² FO 371/16967 "Annual Report", 1932.

¹⁰³ FO 371/17909 "Annual Report", 1933.

again with 9,856 spindles.¹⁰⁴ Germans also received their share from rapid industrialization. In 1935 orders were made to German firms for 6,000 spindles at Shiraz and 5,000 at Qom.¹⁰⁵ In the meantime, several other spinning and weaving mills, both private and state-owned, were erected in various parts of the country, particularly in the central and Northern provinces, while some of the existing ones substantially increased their products as well as their workforce. In the four years between 1934 and 1938 manufacturing industry experienced a major expansion, as can be seen in Table-4.5.¹⁰⁶ To provide raw material to these factories and to utilize the domestically produced cotton, there were 100 cotton ginning plants in 1936 half of which were privately owned.¹⁰⁷

Table 4.5: Statistics of Large Manufacturing Industry, 1926-41 (Establishments with ten or more workers)

<i>Year</i>	<i>New establishments</i>	<i>No. of factories</i>	<i>Workers employed</i>	<i>No. of factories</i>	<i>H. P installed (H.P.)</i>	<i>No. of factories</i>	<i>Paid-up capital (mil. Rls)</i>
1926	2	2	462	1	1,005	1	0
1927	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1928	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1929	5	5	463	3	2,105	3	8
1930	1	1	2,397	1	3,500	1	187
1931	2	2	859	2	1,666	2	60
1932	8	6	2,182	6	1,599	5	67
1933	6	4	586	5	871	5	60
1934	13	13	5,675	10	4,824	11	182
1935	12	11	3,092	9	8,838	11	223
1936	14	11	5,142	13	8,654	11	443
1937	9	9	6,418	7	7,493	9	625
1938	10	9	7,417	8	9,127	8	373
1939	4	3	1,184	4	2,202	3	60
1940	3	3	67	3	550	3	11
1941	3	2	149	3	178	2	23
1942	1	1	146	1	3,300	1	14
1943	1	1	12	1	233	1	0
1944	4	4	1,949	0	0	3	6
1945	1	1	17	0	0	1	0
1946	9	7	1,409	4	223	5	15
1947	2	2	795	1	13	0	-
Date not	68	39	3,143	20	5,986	28	361

¹⁰⁴ FO 371/20052, "Annual Report", 1935'.

¹⁰⁵ FO 371/20052, "Annual Report", 1935'.

¹⁰⁶ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 172. The extent of the expansion can also be observed from the trend in the importation of machinery. See Bharier, *Economic Development*, 175 Table-2.

¹⁰⁷ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 178.

given							
Total	178	136	40,421	102	62,367	114	2,718

Reliability: Fair for number of factories and employment; poor for H.P and paid-up capital. Source: Ministry of Labour, Statistical Survey of Major Industrial Plants of Iran, 1947, Tehran, undated (1948?).

Source: Compiled and quoted in Bharier, *Economic Development*, 173.

In industrialization, the state not only acted as an investor, but also as a protector of the private factories. This was done either through tax exemptions or by making orders, when there was no business, to sustain the operations of the existing factories. For example, in 1936 the Khosravi Tannery in Tabriz was saved from its financial problems by orders for the army.¹⁰⁸ Further, the modernization policies that were pursued supported the nascent factories as well. For instance, due to the Uniform Dress Law passed by the Majles in 1928, a need emerged for the provision of the necessary clothes to be worn by state employees. Thus when in 1935 a special uniform was made obligatory for the employees and the students attached to the Ministry of Education, orders were given to Vatan Factory for the clothes.¹⁰⁹

By the end of the 1930's the state was allocating 20 percent of its budget to industry.¹¹⁰ Compared with the turn-of-the-twentieth-century situation when the industry received almost nothing from the budget, this was a major improvement. Yet already from 1938 onwards the pace of industrialization started slowing down due either to the fear of overproduction or governmental attempts to limit profits.¹¹¹ Bharier aptly summarizes the general outline of industrialization policy during this period as follows:

¹⁰⁸ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 132.

¹⁰⁹ NLAI. 297/6434, "From the Ministry of Education, Religious Endowments and Fine Arts to Directory of Inspection", 12 Mehr 1314 (5 October 1935). For the implementation of the law the government again explicitly favoured large-scale establishments in general and Vatan Factory in particular which generated frustration and the protests of craftsmen as well as of other factories. As to the dissatisfaction of factories other than Vatan Factory the management of Dorakhshan Factory in Yazd complained that despite the fine and cheap clothes they produced the circular order regarding the wearing of uniform at schools advised students and teachers to purchase their clothes from Vatan Factory, or its branches in the provinces, as a result of which they were scared to buy them from anywhere else. NLAI. 297/6434, "From Derakhshan Factory to the Ministry of Education", 29 Azar 1314 (21 December 1935). Prior to this, Vatan Factory was criticized in 1931 by the 9th District of the Directory of the Statistics and Records. After stressing delight of the employees of the directory in the 9th district from the law regarding the uniform dress and their satisfaction from using native clothes the reports criticizes Vatan Factory which was the only supplier of the necessary clothes in the region and hence sold them at high prices. Within a month, adds the report, the price of the cloth rose from three to five tumans. NLAI. 291/954, "From the 9th District of the Directory of the Statistics and Records to the Governor of Isfahan", 25 Esfand 1309 (16 March 1931)

¹¹⁰ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 176. Sadeghi's figures are a lot higher than this. According to her, in 1941 51.09 percent (2,208,889,140 rials) of total government expenditure amounting to 4,323,911,676 rials was spent at industrial projects. Sadeghi, *Siyasatha*, 153. However, unlike Bharier, she includes in this such items as railway construction, post and telegraph, electricity plants etc.

¹¹¹ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 174.

On the industrial scene, government policy in the 1930's combined the establishment of state factories with various protective devices for privately owned plants. Insofar as there was a strategy for industrialization, it was based on the view that more factories are better than less factories, that state factories are better than private factories, that big plants are better than small plants, and that capital-intensive production is preferable to labour-intensive production. Choice of manufacturing industries was generally well-conceived on the grounds of raw material supplies and existing domestic markets, yet administrative and accounting inefficiencies in state plants meant that practically all the sixty-four state plants set up by the end of the 1930's were a drain on the annual budget.¹¹²

But not all factories were state-owned. By the end of the 1930's there were, in Iran, at least 265 plants with not less than 63,000 horsepower providing employment to 48,000 workers as can be seen in Table-4.6.¹¹³ Table-4.6 also demonstrates a sectoral distribution of factories established between 1930 and 1940. Of these 70 or 72 were spinning and weaving mills. Appendix 4 contains a detailed list of the textile factories. It shows that the factories centred in a number of locations. Along with Tehran, Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Fars, and Isfahan were the main centres of large-scale textile factories establishments. This was due to the availability of raw materials and the necessary workforce in these locations. Owing to this extensive industrialization, and the state's control over foreign trade, by the late 1930's not only did textile imports drop considerably, but also the value and the percentage of imported yarn experienced a major decline. The industrialization projects were financed by domestic sources, and only technical assistance came from outside. More than 40 percent of government expenditure was invested mainly in transportation and industry during this period.¹¹⁴ Mass consumption goods were heavily taxed at the cost of deteriorating living conditions for the lower classes, who suffered all the disadvantages of rapid industrialization. Compared with the early twentieth century, Iran of the late 1930's had experienced a major leap-forward towards industrialization. However, small-scale production was still the dominant mode of production and it employed the greater part of the labour force. This especially held for the carpet industry. The modernizing policies such as the introduction of certain dress codes, and the Pahlavi hat, outmoded many of the existing craft industries. In order to do away with traditional dress large quantities of European clothes, hats and shoes were

¹¹² Bharier, *Economic Development*, 87.

¹¹³ Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization*, 67.

¹¹⁴ Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization*, 75.

imported and sold at cheap prices which were impossible for local producers to compete with.¹¹⁵ In May 1929 the weavers of Mashhad sent the following petition to the Majles:

To the sacred Majles, may God empower its pillars,

Every helpless and unfortunate soul who suffers hardship and poverty seeks refuge in the high offices. Because these days people shun national clothes as the weavers' guild of Mashhad some eight to nine thousand miserable people who live and provide for their families on this craft are on the edge of destruction. Therefore, we found it necessary to present our situation to the sacred Majles may God empower its pillars. We ask the deputies to save us from our hardships hoping that they have not forsaken us and will give an answer to these weavers of Mashhad.¹¹⁶

Table 4.6: The Manufacturing Plants Established Between 1930&1940*

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number of plants**</i>	<i>Value of capital</i>	<i>Installed horsepower</i>	<i>Number of Workers s</i>
Textiles	72	1168	43026	29601
Sugar	8	582	9909	4501
Drinks	40	75	1360	565
Chemicals	11	637	2901	4458
Soap	16	15	85	231
Glass	6	22	574	1043
Leather	11	65	635	608
Matches	26	50	354	4033
Flour & rice milling	37	89	3072	1376
Cotton ginning	29	53	1382	590
Tea	9	42	348	399
Total	265	2798	63646	47405

Source: Extracted from Ministry of Labour, *Statistical Survey of Iranian Industries* 1947 (in Persian). Quoted in Massoud Karshenas, *Oil, State and Industrialization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 77.

* Excludes government cement factories.

** Historical cost at current prices[1990] in millions of rials.

Guilds were among the first groups to suffer from extensive political and economic centralization. Traditionally, alongside their economic functions guilds enjoyed important social and political powers in cities. The economic challenges coming from European economic penetration notwithstanding, they largely maintained their economic role, but during the Constitutional Revolution their influence was mostly political. In the first year of Pahlavi modernization severe blows were dealt to the guilds. Apart from the abolition of guild taxes, as the severest blow to their basic structure and *raison d'être*, guilds' activities, even their meetings, were put under strict police control.¹¹⁷ Radical secularization policies, on the

¹¹⁵ Reza Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 38.

¹¹⁶ LMDICP. d7/k90/j12.3, "From the Weavers of Mashhad", 21 May 1929.

¹¹⁷ Floor, "The Guilds in Iran," 110.

other hand, significantly weakened the position of the clergy and this in turn deprived guilds of a major supporter. Still yet, it is much of a state-centred approach to suggest that guilds “were deprived of all power”.¹¹⁸ As will be discussed in Chapter 4 the ineffective political system of the late Qajars against the European penetration had brought guilds closer to the mercantile groups which, with the exception of a few, had enormously suffered from foreign imports. During the late 1920’s and throughout 1930’s, on the other hand, guild members came to be more closely allied with the nascent working class due to the negative effects that industrial policies had on them. The two formed joint unions to protest against their deteriorating living and working conditions.

Concluding Remarks:

The Constitutional Revolution brought major changes in Iran’s political outlook. Not only the opening of the Majles, but also the provincial contribution to the political processes through societies (*anjoman*) formed in almost every town brought a new political culture to the country. Yet, for both internal and external reasons political stability could not be attained. Consequently the revolution fell short of realizing economic expectations. The geographical challenges to forming a nationwide market were compounded by political instability and the hostile attitude of Russia, as well as Britain’s self-interested policies which gave priority to its commercial ends above anything else. Still yet between 1906 and 1921 several attempts, successful or abortive, were made to achieve economic development and industrialization. During this period, the guilds as the main structure of urban-based manufacturing became politically significant while their economic role was decreasing. This was not only because of external factors, but also because manufacturers preferred more unmonitored methods of

¹¹⁸ Massoud, *Oil, State and Industrialization*, 67. In fact the limited literature on Iranian guilds does not provide sufficient information about their trajectory after 1926. Floor’s “The Guilds in Iran: An Overview from the Earliest Beginnings Till 1972, and Ahmad Ashraf’s “Nezam-e Siyasi va Jame’eh-e Madani,” *Iran Nameh* XIV, n. 1 1996’, 5-40 are the most detailed studies on the subject. They both seem to be too impressed by the abolition of the guild taxes in 1926, and Ashraf suggests that with this law guilds were practically dissolved, Ashraf, “Nezam-e Siyasi”, 23. The idea that “guilds are and were organizations of masters which protected the interests of the employers, not of the employees” and thus trade unions did not grow out of guilds (Floor, “The Guilds in”, 116) should have contributed to the meagre attention paid to guilds during late 1920’s and 1930’s. Needless to say, the law which abolished guild taxes deprived them of their main privilege but the data suggests that they remained active afterwards too. Also, it is not as easy as it seems to separate employers and the employees, at least from the Constitutional Revolution onwards, in their fight for survival. As will be discussed in Chapter 4 not only should guild employers be regarded along with workers but also the developments from mid-19th century onwards, if not before, blurred the distinction between the two out of which emerged the foundations, if not the actual structure, of trade unions.

production and the putting-out system in order to lower costs. Available data suggest that from the early 1920's onwards these initiatives gained unprecedented momentum. The increasing realization of political stability, often at the expense of political and cultural pluralism, and nationwide security, paved the way for the major economic leap forward of the 1930's. Attaining a large web of factory-based production was the main goal of the Pahlavi modernization policies. This would not only give Iran a modern outlook like its neighbour, Turkey, but would also stop the loss of the country's wealth to foreign nations for imported goods. The Pahlavi economic policies were almost exclusively aimed at the domestic market, and apart from the oil industry, Iran's role in the international economy hardly changed. Also, Iran's currency, qran until March 1930 and rial henceforth, almost steadily lost value in the face of the pound sterling. By the turn of the 20th century the rate of pound sterling in qran was around 51.1 in Tehran while by the start of the WWI it was about 55.5.¹¹⁹ Until the early 1920's it remained more or less the same and in 1923 it slightly rose to 56.56 but in 1929 it dropped to 54.76.¹²⁰ By the late 1930's the rate of pound sterling in qran rose to as high as 80.¹²¹ At any rate, when the Allied forces occupied Iran, and Reza Shah was forced to abdicate from the throne in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, in 1941, Iran had made significant progress towards industrialization. As the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company increasingly expanded its operations in the south, a nationwide industrialization had substantially transformed country's manufacturing scene. More than two hundred factories were erected by the late 1930's, producing a variety of goods from soup to matches, and from military boots to bricks, chemicals etc. Although art schools were established to promote craft industries, the main policies targeted factories. Carpet weaving remained largely under the control of small-scale establishments. In this industrial fervor, labour issues were given only a peripheral role. with the exception of a few specific legislative attempts at improving labour conditions, such as the one concerning carpet weavers in the mid-1920's, labour did not attract much official attention. Whether factory-based or otherwise, Iranian workers have reacted to, and accommodated the developments which took place from the early twentieth century onwards. Their living and working conditions as well as their engagement with higher authorities constitute the main concerns of the next chapter.

¹¹⁹ Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, 344-45.

¹²⁰ R. H. Hadow, *Report on the Trade and Industry of Persia 1923* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1923), 4; E. R. Lingeman, *Economic Conditions in Persia March 1930* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), 18.

¹²¹ F. A. G. Gray, *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions in Iran 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), v.

Chapter Five: Society and Labour: The Iranian Textile Workers, 1906-1941

Introduction

Whether in craft industries or large-scale industrial establishments, workers' worksite experiences, perceptions and actions are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the period under study. Twentieth century was a century of revolution which brought about far-reaching consequences in many aspects of life in diverse parts of the world. At the turn of the century a various constitutional revolutions took place in many countries. For instance, in Iran and the Ottoman Empire the constitutional revolutions which occurred in 1906 and 1908 respectively provided, if temporarily, a suitable environment for labour activism and for a freer expression of the labour-related demands and grievances. Both in the Ottoman and Iran workers seized the relatively free political atmosphere of the post-revolutionary period as an opportunity and launched various strikes.¹ Later on, the First World War which posed unprecedented military challenges to the belligerent countries and brought about major problems for non-belligerent countries played an important role in terms of labour relations. None of the states could predict that the war would last so long with so much heavy burdens and catastrophic consequences. To maximize the war effort governments had to mobilize not only troops to fight the war but also workers to work at factories. In many cases, in order to replace the male workforce growing numbers of women and children worked at factories usually under utterly difficult conditions. That "the demands made by the Government on the British people over the course of the First World War were on a scale hitherto unknown" can be said to hold true for any country which was influenced by the War in way or the other.² The wartime problems were aggravated by high inflation. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia added to the already existing labour activism in many countries including Iran. The war was followed by waves of strikes and demonstrations in various parts of the world especially in Europe and the United States. Demands were put forward for union recognition, shorter working hours, and wage raises exceeding the inflation rate. Consequently, the wartime hardships and the post-war challenges called for an effective state intervention to

¹ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "The Emergence of the Ottoman Industrial Working Class, 1839-1923", in *Workers and the Working Classes in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, Quataert Donald & Zürcher Ecik Jan Zürcher (eds.) (London: Tauris, 1995), 22.

² Douglas Brodie, *A History British Labour Law, 1847-1949* (Oxford & Portland: Hart Publishing, 2003), 149.

restore order and improve working and living conditions. The Great Depression which broke out in 1929 and continued throughout 1930s further escalated the economy and workers' conditions. Iran was not an exception to these worldwide developments.

In early twentieth century, foreign economic and political domination and internal despotism have created class-crossing alliances in Iran which at times obscured, if only temporarily, class boundaries. Nonetheless, the subsequent developments and the dissemination of communist ideas contributed to radicalization among the working people especially in urban settings. Formal labour organizations and the Communist Party of Iran radicalized workers and organized several labour actions throughout the period under investigation. Yet in a country where craft industries and small manufactures were the principle types of production, the impact of the leftist agitation was, for the most part, confined to urban centres and to factories which employed only a small part of the workforce throughout the period under investigation, as well as for a long time afterwards. Although much emphasis has been put, in the existing literature, on formal labour organizations and the collective labour activities which have been organized by them, a number of significant issues remain unclear. For instance, it would be interesting to learn more about informal labour organizations and non-organized labour which comprised the majority of the Iranian workers. Also, generally speaking "working class" is erroneously and unclearly taken as a distinct category and insufficient attention is paid to the discursive formation of the Iranian working class.³

This chapter examines labour issues in Iran from the inception of the First Majles in 1906 to the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941. It first discusses the discursive process of working-class formation in Iran in order to show how workers gradually developed a peculiar linguistic category for themselves as distinct from the language used by subaltern groups at large.

³ For two studies, the first on Iran and the second on Egypt, stressing the importance of the discursive making of the working class in the Middle East see: Touraj Atabaki, "From Amaleh (Labour) to Kargar (Worker): recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 84, Fall 2013, pp. 159–175; and Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class Formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," *Poetics Today* 15, not. 2 (1994): 157-190. Atabaki aptly summarizes this 'material' formation narrative of what he calls 'the teleological Marxists' (Atabaki, "From Amaleh", 21) as follows: 'the typical argument goes as follows: following the rise and expansion of the capitalist relations in Western Europe, embodied in colossal development of heavy industries and mass production commodities, the rising European powers were poised to expand the realm of their power – not only to add new market, but also to acquire raw materials desperately needed for their industries. The result of these processes set the standard for a new division of labour, worldwide. From the mid-nineteenth century Iran joined this global capitalist relationship, and by the end of the century, with the introduction of capitalist development in Iran and its integration into world markets, the labour force was created as a new working class. However, the consolidation of working class consciousness was only materialized by unionist and political movements, which the Iranian workers organized in early twentieth-century. By that time, the making of the Iranian working class had already been accomplished for all intents and purposes. Atabaki, "From Amaleh", 21.

Secondly, it then provides an overview of the workforce in Iran. Thirdly, the chapter investigates legislative attempts at regulating labour. Although no distinct labour law existed in Iran throughout this period there have been several, often sector-based attempts to improve working conditions. Fourthly, such major labour issues as working hours, wages and sanitary conditions are addressed. Fifthly, collective labour activism and formal labour organization will be discussed. The sixth and last section will investigate petitioning as a form of labour activism. Although this chapter predominantly analyses the textile workers, other industries and sectors will also be referred to throughout.

Being of the Working-Class: From *Kolah-namadi* (Felt-capped) to *Kargar* (Worker)⁴

Many studies on Iranian labour history seem to take for granted the existence of the working-class as a category, or else they seek its formation exclusively in certain material practices. Indeed the role of these material practices or structures has been great in Iran particularly from the mid-19th century onwards. Foreign economic domination, domestic political and economic developments, and the subsequent dislocations of villagers and townspeople, significantly contributed to the formation of the Iranian working class. However, beyond these structural developments the formation of the Iranian class should first be sought at its discursive formation. Through this discursive formation one not only can see how Iranian workers came to see themselves as such, but also follow how their relationships with the political establishment and other classes were shaped and shifted depending on their self-perceptions. There is no evidence to suggest that at the turn of the 20th century the Iranian

⁴ In this study “worker” is employed in the widest sense of the word to encompass not only those workers who were employed at large-scale industrial establishments, i.e. the industrial proletariat, but also those who worked in craft industries. Although a theoretical discussion of labour falls outside the interest of this study it should be noted that in much of the scholarship on Middle Eastern labour history a tendency prevailed for a long time to restrict workers exclusively with factory workers. The often progressive role attributed to proletariat was the main dynamic behind the generous and exclusivist attention paid to factory workers. However, as Keyder emphasizes for the Turkish case such an orthodox approach ignores or downplays the various forms of employment. Caglar Keyder, “Afterword: the Current Condition of the Popular Classes”, in *Workers and the Working Classes in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, ed. Donald Quataert and Ecik Jan Zurcher (London: Tauris, 1995), 147. Those people working in “non-centralized sites”, in Quataert’s phraseology, not only constituted the most common type of employment in Iran during the period under study but also a study of Iranian textile labour would be deficient without at least attempting to refer to them. My understanding of ‘worker’ is based on Marcel van der Linden’s comprehensive and all-inclusive definition: “every carrier of labour power whose labour power is sold (or hired out) to another person under economic (or non-economic) compulsion belongs to the class of subaltern workers regardless of whether the carrier of labour power is him- or herself selling or hiring it out and, regardless of whether the carrier him- or herself owns means of production”. Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Towards a Global Labour History* (Brill: Leiden, 2008), 33. Apparently this definition covers both free and un-free labour. Somewhere else he defines free labour as “the hiring out by a person (the worker) the right to use his or her labour power for a limited time to another agency”. Jan Lucassen, “Writing Global Labour History c. 1800-1940: A Historiography of Concepts, Periods and Geographical Scope”, in *Global Labour History*, ed., Jan Lucassen (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 45.

working-class existed, at the discursive level, as a distinct and exclusive social entity, for being a worker did not constitute a distinct identity even for those who by every criterion could be considered workers. Workers' discursive formation, therefore, gradually emerged from a general subaltern discourse and in time gained a language of its own.

In addressing higher authorities, Iranian subalterns described themselves—apart from such words as *ahali* and *mardom* (both meaning people) which separated only the ruled from the rulers—in various ways: *kaminegan* (inferior subjects)⁵; *bicharegan* (the helpless) and *badbakht* (the wretched)⁶; and *bandegan* (servants)⁷. Or else they combined a few of them such as *bichareh*, *'avamm*, and *kolah-namadi* (helpless, common folk and *'amaleh*—literally, “felt-capped”) There is thus a move from *ahali* (the people) to *kolah-namadi* (*'amaleh*).⁸ This latter term was particularly used to refer to a class of unskilled labourers who migrated to larger towns and cities, as a result of the increasing rural-urban migration which took place from the late 19th century onwards.⁹ A set of petitions sent by the tanners of Kashan in the early 1920's sheds light on how they perceived themselves against the ruling classes. In February 1922 the tanners wrote a petition to the Iranian Majles in which they complained of the excessive taxes and the subsequent deterioration of their trade:

To the deputies of the sacred Majles, may God empower its pillars. Our opinion as the *helpless* members of the guild of tanners and of the *'amaleh* and the common folk of Iran who are involved in trade and agriculture is that the honourable deputies and the ministers should not only deal with foreign affairs but they should also pay attention to domestic issues. The initiatives at the political level make sense to the clergy and the wise men who they enjoy dealing with such matters but as the common folk we lack that capacity.¹⁰

In their subsequent petitions they called themselves *ranjbar* (toiler), and *fa'aleh* (labourer). The term *kargar*, the equivalent of 'worker', came into common usage towards the end of the Qajar period in the 1890s when the first wave of modern manufacturing began in Iran.¹¹ Urban wage-earners – the casual, seasonal and unskilled construction labourers – were at that time commonly referred to as *'amalajat* (labourers) not *kargar* (worker). Following the

⁵ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2, “pashm risi”, 25 November 1921.

⁶ LMDCIPt. d7/k90/j12.3/p101-150, 20 May 1929.

⁷ LMDCIP. d6/k70/j35/p1-61, Shahroud, 4 March 1927.

⁸ LMDCIP. d4-k49-j24.2/p62, “From Tanners of Kashan to the Honourable Majles”, 4 February 1922.

⁹ Willem Floor, *Guilds, Merchants and Ulema in the Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Washington: Mega Publishers 2009), 11.

¹⁰ LMDCIP. d4/k49/j24.2/p62, “From Tanners of Kashan to the Honourable Majles”, 4 February 1922.

¹¹ Asef Bayat, “Does Class ever Opt out of the Nation? Nationalist Modernization and Labour in Iran”, in *Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Willem van Schendel and Eric J. Zürcher (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 199.

Constitutional Revolution in 1906, in the parliamentary proceedings *kargar* was used. For instance, according to the list which enumerated the responsibilities of the Majles, the twenty sixth article suggested that it was supposed to “make sure that workers (*kargar*) and labourers (*fa’aleh-ye ‘amaleh*) receive their wages in time and in full”.¹² However *kargar* did not emerge for some time as the standard and a distinct category from *fa’aleh* or *‘amaleh*.¹³ Apparently, as Atabaki argues, prior to the First World War there is no evidence that the working people in Iran called themselves *kargar*.¹⁴ From the early 1920’s onwards *kargar* increasingly came to be used to refer to the working people.

However one should be careful not to make far-reaching conclusions from this slow development in Iranian workers’ self-identification. ‘Workerness’ and some sort of ‘classness’ existed among Iranian workers even when *kargar* was not yet established as the standard term.¹⁵ The dislocations resulted from foreign economic domination, unpopular economic policies inside and the mass migration to Russia in search of jobs created some sort of a collective identity among Iranian workers. The transformation of this collective identity into a distinct working class identity gradually started from the early 20th century onwards. The relatively freer political atmosphere created by the Constitutional Revolution and wide politicization accelerated this transformation. To this the industrialization attempts in the post-WWI Iran, particularly during the 1930’s, were added. From the early 1920’s onwards *kargar* came to denote any wage-earners whether employed at large-scale establishments, at small-scale workshops or at public baths and at bakeries. From the early 1920’s onwards not only did the number of industrial workers steadily increase, but also the diversified nature of the Iranian working class became more pronounced. In addition to men, woman and children gained an increasingly visible place in working life.

¹² Mozakarat-e Majles, session 152, 13 September 1907.

¹³ Bayat, “Does Class ever Opt out of the Nation”, 199.

¹⁴ Atabaki, “From Amaleh”, 24

¹⁵ I took “classness” from Bayat who seems to disagree at this point and argues that only by late 1940’s “certain indications of a development of modern classness among Iranian workers became evident”. Bayat, “Does Class ever Opt out of the Nation”, 199. Although notably different from 1940’s there have developed among Iran workers a certain sense of solidarity already during late 1920s. The radical modernizing policies of 1930’s further accelerated this process. I borrowed “workerness” from Lockman, Lockman, “Imagining the Working Class”, 161.

The Workforce in Iran

Between 1900 and 1940 the population of Iran increased from 9.29 to 14.55.¹⁶ There is no conclusive evidence as to the size of the workforce in Iran for the period under study. According to Abdullayev between the late 19th century and the First World War there were 126,000 workers in Iran of whom 17,000 were employed in modern industrial establishments while the rest worked at craft industries and traditional economic activities.¹⁷ Abdullayev's figures were based on a narrow definition of worker. Table-5.1 shows the economically active male population and its proportion to the total population for three years at twenty-year intervals. According to the figures provided by Bharier in Table-5.2, however, in 1906 the estimated total number of economically active men over ten years of age was 3.812 million of which 3.431 million were engaged in agriculture. This means that the number of the industrial workers was at that time 381,000. In either case the real numbers should have been higher than this. As Floor argues underage children and quite a significant number of women who were engaged in all kinds of economic activities especially in carpet weaving should also be counted as part of the workforce.¹⁸ Moreover, peasants too usually spun or wove for additional income and they gradually incorporated into the urban workforce.

Table 5.1: The Percentage and the Number of the Economically Active Male Population

<i>Year</i>	<i>Men over ten in total population (%)</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Potentially active males</i>	<i>Estimated active men</i>
1906	39.0	10.29m.	4.013m.	3.812m.
1926	39.0	11.86m.	4.625m.	4.394m.
1946	35.6	15.93m.	5.671m.	5.104m.

Source: Bharier, *Economic Development*, 34.

As shown in Table-5.2 according to Bharier between 1906 and 1946 the proportion of the agricultural workers to the total labour force declined about 15 percent despite the rise in the actual number of agricultural workers caused by the increased population.¹⁹ This should have resulted from increasing rural-urban migration as well as growing employment opportunities in cities and towns.

¹⁶ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 26.

¹⁷ Jalil Mahmudi and Naser Sa'idi, *Shuq-e Yak Khiz-e Boland*, 44 (Tehran: Qatreh, 2002), 44.

¹⁸ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 115-16.

¹⁹ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 34.

Table 5.2: The Proportion of the Agricultural Workforce to the Total Population.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Agricultural Workers</i>
1906	90	3.431m.
1926	85	3.735m.
1946	75	3.828m.

Source: Bharier, *Economic Development*, 34.

Yet, as Table-5.3 shows the proportion of the workers at large industrial establishments in the total population was insignificant, although it experienced a steady rise from the mid-1920's onwards. If we consider the three tables together we have to conclude that there were 1,276,000 industrial workers in Iran in 1946 of whom 94,000 were employed in large-scale industrial establishments with ten or more workers. The rest were then employed by smaller manufacturers. If we add to this the child and female workers and those who were employed in the service sector, the figures should be higher.

Table 5.3: The Proportion of the Industrial Workers to the Total Population

<i>Year</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Industrial workers Employed at large Industrial Establishments Including the Oil Industry</i>
1906	-	-
1926	1	0.030m.
1946	2	0.094m..

Source: Bharier, *Economic Development*, 35.

Abdullayev suggests that the industrial workforce was derived mainly from three sources. The first source was the peasantry.²⁰ From the late 19th century the Iranian peasantry, especially those who lived in the northern regions sought employment in the expanding industries in Tsarist Russia. For example, of a total 192,767 workers who crossed the Russian border legally in 1911 as many as 160,211 were Iranians.²¹ Many of these migrant workers came from rural backgrounds. Following the October Revolution of 1917, thousands of these Iranian migrant workers in the Caucasus returned to their homeland to join the mounting army of unemployed labourers.²² Also, following the establishment of the oil industry in the south from 1908 onwards peasants were employed in this growing industry as in the other industries

²⁰ Z. Z. Abdullayev, "Promyshlennost i zarozhdenie rabocheho klassa Irana v kontse XIX-nachale XX vv." in Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, 48.

²¹ Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire", in *The State and the subaltern: Society and Politics in Turkey and Iran*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: Tauris, 2007), 40.

²² Touraj Atabaki, "Missing Labour in the Metanarratives of Practicing Modernity in Iran: Labour Agency in Refashioning the Discourse of Social Development", in *Interventions: The Impact of Labour Movements on Social and Cultural Development*, David Mayer and Jürgen Mittag eds. (Wien: International Conference of Labour and social History – ITH, Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 171-195. Here 180.

elsewhere in the country. Particularly by the end of the First World War the deteriorating living conditions forced many Iranians, especially the peasantry, to abandon their homes in search of a living. The second source of the nascent Iranian proletariat, according to Abdullayev, was the artisans.²³ Reports abound as to the decline in craft industries as a result of which many craftsmen sought employment in the growing industries. This was particularly true for the textile industry. It is impossible to draw a definitive picture of the workforce employed in craft industries in Iran. However craft industries continued to employ the greater part of the workforce. The first census undertaken in 1956 sheds important light on this point. It appears that as late as the mid-20th century in many parts of the country craft industries ranked as the second most important economic activity after agriculture. As far as people ten years of age and over and involved in gainful economic activity are concerned, the percentages for some of the major craft centres were as follows: in Tabriz district out of the 181 thousand thirty-eight percent of the men were farmers whereas 33 percent were craftsmen. Of the women sixty-one percent were engaged in crafts while 25 percent were in service sector²⁴; in Isfahan and its environs, of the 195 thousand persons 47 percent of the men were farmers and 26 percent were craftsmen whereas sixty percent of the women were engaged in crafts while 23 percent were employed in services²⁵; of the 165 thousand persons in Mashhad district 48 percent of men were farmers whereas 23 percent worked in craft and related industries. The percentage for the women was forty-five percent for crafts and 36 percent for the service sector²⁶; in Tehran of the 581 thousand persons those who were engaged in crafts amounted to thirty-four percent among men and 12 percent among women. For the men, sales and related occupations ranked second with 15 percent while as much as sixty-two percent of the women were engaged in the service sector.²⁷

Kashan was no different. Out of 73 thousand, 57 percent of the men were farmers and 27 percent were craftsmen while of the women, ninety-six percent were engaged in crafts while a mere 2 percent were employed in services²⁸; in Yazd, of the 106 thousand persons sixty-one

²³ Abdullayev, "Promyshlennost i zarozhdenie", in Issawi, *Economic History*, 49.

²⁴ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. III Tabriz Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, September 1958, ix.

²⁵ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. IV Isfahan Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, October 1958, ix.

²⁶ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. V Mashhad Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, February 1959, ix.

²⁷ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. II Tehran Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, July 1958, ix.

²⁸ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. XXII Kashan Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, May 1960, ix.

percent of the men were farmers and 23 percent were craftsmen. Of the women, as much as eighty percent were engaged in crafts while farming came second with 12 percent²⁹; in Shiraz census district among 110 thousand persons those employed in crafts amounted to 21 percent for men and as much as seventy-five percent for women. Also while farming was the largest economic sphere for men with forty-six per 28 percent of the women were reported to be employed in service occupations.³⁰ It was also reported on various occasions that those engaged in craft industries tended to be younger than those in other occupations.³¹ When we also consider the fact that boys and girls under 10 years of age were also employed in craft industries, it appears that the actual figures should be even higher. At any rate, although a substantial number of former craftsmen sought employment at the growing large-scale industrial establishments, craft industries continued to be the most important manufacturing activity throughout the period under investigation. The mass of urban poor constituted, according to Abdullayev, the third source of the Iranian working class.³² Recurring famines, droughts, and arbitrary rule in the provinces had pushed many peasants throughout the 19th century to larger towns and cities.

The Nature of Textile Labour

Although craft industries remained the principal type of textile manufacturing in towns and cities, peasants also spun and wove for own-use or for additional income. Although guilds have historically functioned as the principle centres of craft-based production in urban settings for the period under study they have steadily lost much of their controlling capacity. However as far as the late 19th and early 20th centuries are concerned, apart from references to the negative impact of ready-made imports on them, little is known even about the Iranian guilds and their workings, let alone about their workforce. Floor rightly argues that compared to Egyptian and Ottoman guilds, Iranian guilds remain largely understudied.³³ Guild membership was a male privilege and female membership was possible only in exceptional cases. In rural places, on the other hand, it was common to have a spindle or a loom, or

²⁹ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. XVI Yazd Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, April 1960, ix.

³⁰ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. VII Shiraz Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, January 1960, ix.

³¹ Census District Statistics of the First National Census of Iran, November 1956, Vol. V Mashhad Census District, Tehran: Ministry of Interior Public Statistics, February 1959, ix.

³² Abdullayev, "Promyshlennost i zarozhdenie", in Issawi, *Economic History*, 50.

³³ Willem Floor, *Guilds, Merchants and Ulama in Nineteenth Century Iran*, Washington: Mage Publishers, 2009. P. 120.

alternatively both, at which women along with men worked as a part-time activity. For instance, a German traveller makes the following remarks in early twentieth century:

However little the Persian, in general, likes to work, insofar as the common people are concerned it is rare to see the women just gossiping without their working at the same time on the spindle or the loom – not unlike our own womenfolk with their knitting. But even the men if they do not sleep during the day or sit in a tea-house, also start their spinning-wheel during the idle moments, but often to be occupied rather than of an urge to be productive.³⁴

Problematic though they are in their essentialist judgemental remarks about Iranian people, which abound in the travelogues of Westerners visiting Iran or other Middle Eastern countries, such observations are still useful for seeing how widespread weaving activities were. The rapid commodification of agriculture during the nineteenth century furthered the integration of the part-time weavers into the growing textile industry, particularly carpet making, through the putting-out system. With the disintegration of the guild system due to several factors, such as the ready-made imports, centralization policies and the establishment of a nation-wide market which rendered the closed-up guild structure dysfunctional, the labour force involved in urban-based manufacturing changed too. In small manufactures where sometimes tens of workers worked under overly unfavourable working conditions, women and children were employed extensively. Guilds seem to have substantially lost their regulating capacity, especially over the workforce, from the late nineteenth century onwards, which paved the way in urban centres for the dissemination of extra-guild manufacturing. Typical guild-based manufactures and the newly emerging workshops from late nineteenth century onwards are often indiscriminately referred to as ‘traditional industrial establishments’.³⁵ However, these workshops apparently displayed the guilds’ weakened control capacity at the production and workforce levels.

In the post-World War I period the number of female industrial workers steadily rose, especially but not exclusively in the textile industry. For example, due to the atrocities of the First World War, the Charities Directorate of Tehran Municipality established the *Dar al-Sanaye* ‘or the House of Industries with the aim of providing such jobs as weaving and spinning to needy women. At the Wool Spinning Factory in Mazandaran which was erected in 1918 at least as many as three hundred women were employed.’³⁶ On the other hand, in the

³⁴ Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500-1925*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1999. 16.

³⁵ See for example Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 117.

³⁶ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2. “Pashm risi”.

expanding textile industries during the 1930's, child labour was increasingly employed too. A survey of twelve cotton spinning and weaving plants in 1936 showed that although the number of male workers in the industry was declining as in other countries, instead of being replaced by female workers, their places were being taken by child-labour as seen in Table-5.4.³⁷ A list of the workers of the E'temadiyeh Weaving and Spinning Factory in Bushehr in 1937 shows that the average age of the workers was 21.6 and fifty-five workers were under fourteen (Appendix 5).³⁸ Also from among 707 workers at Vatan Factory in Isfahan in 1934, 184 were reported to be women.³⁹ As is also shown in Table-5.4 from the mid-1930's onwards there was a substantial increase in the number of the female and child workers.

Table 5.4: Workers in the Cotton Industry, by Gender and Age

Mills	March 1935			March 1936			March 1937		
	male	female	child	male	female	child	male	female	child
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	443	58	212
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	127	-	79
3	270	60	120	350	150	180	355	142	190
4	200	50	150	500	100	200	600	200	300
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	695	342	262
6	70	-	50	120	-	80	280	20	150
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	378	42	140
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	-	500
9	-	-	-	160	-	180	170	15	315
10	-	-	-	70	-	50	130	-	120
11	440	52	-	544	15	-	625	122	-
12	180	20	100	180	20	100	210	20	110
Total	1160	182	400	1924	285	790	4313	961	2378

Source: Touraj Atabaki, Willem Floor and Nazanin Sadeghi, "Change and Development in Labour Relations In Iran 1650-2000". *Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations 1500-2000*, https://collab.iisg.nl/group/labourrelations/documents?p_p_id=20&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&tabs1=recent-documents (last access. 27.11.2014).

Forced labour was another type of recruitment at the newly established factories. Forced labour was especially employed from the late 1920's onwards to supply the necessary workforce for the growing textile industry in northern Iran, where several large-scale industrial establishments were established during the 1930's. For example, in 10 April 1939 a "confidential and urgent" letter was sent from the Isfahan Municipality to the Governorship of Isfahan in which the need was expressed for workers to be employed at the newly established

³⁷ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 178.

³⁸ NLAI. 290/7115. 1316 (1937). The list excludes one worker whose birth and employment date are given as the same year.

³⁹ NLAI. 291/38, "List of the Workers Who Underwent Medical Inspection at Vatan Factory and their Dependents", 1313 (1935).

factories in Behshahr in the Mazandaran province in northern Iran.⁴⁰ It was also added that workers would be sent with their families, to prevent any attempt to escape in order to return to their families. Apparently the order was sent to various towns and in 12 April 1939 a similar one was sent to Shehreza in the province of Isfahan.⁴¹ In response, it was stated in 22 April 1939 that there was only one male worker suitable for the job and that many peasant women were engaged in such activities.⁴² We do not know how many workers were sent from Isfahan or elsewhere to Mazandaran. There are other reports regarding the employment of forced labour. For instance only two weeks before Allied forces entered Iran in 1941 a lengthy commentary on a report by Albert C. C. Embrechts, a Belgian employee of the American International Telephone and Telegraph Company in Tehran, was prepared by Harold G. Minor, the secretary of the American legation. Among other things he pointed out, in the following words, the plight of forced labourers in Reza Shah's reign: "forced labour, amounting almost to slavery, exists on some of the Shah's properties with wages as low as three and a half rials a day, from which the local police take a cut. Exploitation of the people, truly, has become scandalous and malodorous".⁴³

Regulating Labour: Attempts at Labour Legislation

It is not always easy to determine what is meant by labour legislation. The problem for the Iranian case stems from two main causes. On the one hand, during the period under study no distinct labour law existed in Iran. Instead, sector-based regulations were introduced often on a local scale. On the other hand, one's definition of labour very much delineates the scope of labour regulation. In the early twentieth century, "worker" was almost invariably taken to mean those who worked at factories, which Iran did not yet have many at that time. In what follows labour regulation is used to refer to every regulation which was introduced at the central and local levels and which targeted workers involved in every kind of trade and industrial activity. From the early 20th century onwards several political parties such as the Democrats and later Socialists and Communists addressed some preliminary labour issues

⁴⁰ NLAI. 291/1261, "From the Isfahan Municipality to the Governorship of Isfahan", 22 Farvardin 1318 (12 April 1939).

⁴¹ NLAI. 291/1261, "From the Governorship of Isfahan to the District Administer of Shahreza", 20 Farvardin 1318 (10 April 1939).

⁴² NLAI. 291/1261, "From the District Administer of Shahreza to the Governorship of Isfahan", 1 Ordibehesht 1318 (22 April 1939).

⁴³ Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Great Britain Reza Shah: The Plunder of Iran, 1921–1941* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 375. Embrechts' report dated July 12, 1941 and was titled 'Embrechts Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions in Iran' (891.00/1755).

such as working hours and child labour. For instance the Democrat Party's program declared that children under the age of fourteen must not be employed; the workday must not exceed ten hours; workers must get a weekly rest day; the factories must have necessary facilities for work and should provide the required sanitary conditions.⁴⁴ In 1919 The Socialist Party also included an eight-hour workday and the prohibition of the employment of children before they completed mandatory education among the party's objectives.⁴⁵ Notwithstanding their progressiveness such regulations took a long time to materialize.

In the beginning, provincial administrations played a prominent role in monitoring labour-related issues. Provincial administration was consolidated by the Constitutional Revolution. *Anjomans*, societies which were established in various cities in order to monitor elections to the First Majles in 1906, but continued to exist afterwards, were the main bodies which enjoyed much local influence. According to "the Law for the Provincial and District Council" which was passed by the Majles in 1906, the twenty-sixth article of the responsibilities of the Districts Council was to ensure the payment of workers' wages.⁴⁶ Other than this nothing specifically related to labour was mentioned. Apparently until the coup d'état in 1921 labour regulation consisted of local attempts such as the one in Kerman in 1913. The Deputy Governor of Kerman introduced a set of regulations to be maintained at carpet factories which incited carpet weavers to take sanctuary at the British consulate.⁴⁷ These disagreements brought carpet weaving to a standstill. Since much of the carpet weaving was done for European firms, they were also involved in the negotiations.⁴⁸ The regulations, according to the British Consul:

For the most part were in themselves desirable, an opinion in which the agents of the European carpet firms concurred. Some of them were however scarcely practicable, and to a large extent they could only be made effective after the lapse of a reasonable period of time, while in fact they were declared operative at once. On the other hand the conditions of the trade are notoriously scandalous and highly injurious to the health and wellbeing of the workers who are largely small children.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ittihadīyeh, *Maramnamaha*, 8.

⁴⁵ FO 248/1259.

⁴⁶ Mozakarat-e Majles, 13 September 1907. Provinces (*iyalat*) consisted of cities (*shahr*) which consisted of districts (*buluk*).

⁴⁷ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 85.

⁴⁸ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 85.

⁴⁹ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 85.

Subsequently the regulations were suspended but the question of the working conditions at the carpet industry would soon resurface. The most powerful pressure for labour regulation regarding this industry came from abroad when the newly founded the ILO (ILO), to which Iran was an early member, sent a memorandum to the Iranian authorities in 1921 in which it drew attention to the unfavourable working conditions in the carpet industry. The issue was discussed in the Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the ILO in October 1920 and consequently the case was presented to the Persian Government.⁵⁰ To this effect, on 31 October 1921 Albert Thomas, a former French politician and Minister and the first Director of the ILO, sent a letter to Prince Arfa' al-Dowleh, Iran's delegate to the Second Assembly of the League of Nations, in which he underlined the plight of the child and female workers in the carpet industry in Kerman.⁵¹ He first referred in the letter to the deliberations of the international conference held in Washington between 29 October and 29 November 1919 according to which the employment of children of under the age of 14 was forbidden. Following this he stated that children, some of whom were only five years old, had to work in the carpet industry in Kerman under unfavourable working conditions from sunrise to sunset with only a very short rest at midday. This, argued Thomas, hurt their physical and mental well-being. He then reminded the Iranian representative that since Iran was a party to the League of Nations and the ILO, their decisions were binding for it. Therefore he requested the Iranian authorities to take the necessary actions in this matter.

The same issue was reemphasized in another letter which was sent to the Iranian representative at the League of Nations.⁵² After reproducing the same account regarding the unfavourable working conditions of child and female labour in the carpet industry, it was stated the recent reports showed that the working conditions not only in Kerman but also in such cities as Kashan and Isfahan, were even more appalling than they previously been aware of.⁵³ It was discovered, continued the letter, that women had been paralyzed due to difficult working conditions and long working hours which amounted to about fourteen hours a day. In the subsequent negotiations and by the initiative of the British Consul in Kerman the owners

⁵⁰ Kosroe Chaqueri, *The Condition of the Working Class in Iran* (Florence: Mazdak, 1978), 202.

⁵¹ LMDCIP, d4-k55-j26.2 p158, 31 October 1921. The folder contains a Persian translation of Albert Thomas's letter to Prince Arfa' al-Dowleh. Thomas also mentions of the photos displaying the plight or underaged weavers in Kerman but unfortunately I have been unable to locate the photos in ILO archives during my research there.

⁵² LMDCIP, d4-k55-j26.2 p158. The translation of this letter was undated and it is not clear who the sender was but he apparently was Albert Thomas himself.

⁵³ It is also stated in the letter that a set of photographs attesting to the plight of women and children had also arrived to ILO but unfortunately during my research at ILO archive in Geneva I could not locate any of these photos.

of carpet factories which mostly belonged to Americans and Europeans agreed on a number of regulations regarding working conditions. Accordingly boys under 8 years of age and girls under ten must not be employed; carpet looms must be eleven inches from the ground to enable workers to comfortably lay down their legs; the workday must not exceed eight hours with a short rest at midday during which workers must go out of the workshops; a commission, whose members were not to consist of factory owners, must be formed to monitor compliance with the regulations.⁵⁴

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Mo‘azzaz al-Dowleh, also informed the British Legation, which backed ILO in this matter and whose several companies were involved in carpet industry in Kerman, that necessary instructions were sent to the local authorities in Kerman regarding the improvement of the working conditions.⁵⁵ Subsequently, the Governor of Kerman, Ja‘far Qoli Bakhtiyari, informed the Prime Minister, Ziya al-Din Tabataba’i, that a meeting was held with employers of the carpet industry on 11 December 1921 during which they agreed to the following: employment of journeymen should be strictly free and the contract should be based on mutual agreement; once approved by a religious judge (*hakem-e shar‘i*) the contract should be presented by the master to the *Kargozari* and the Directorate of Public Utilities for registration; the previous contracts should also be rearranged in accordance with the first two terms and should likewise be presented to these two authorities; the workday for journeymen as well as other employees should be eight hours in all seasons, and overtime shall depend on their consent for additional pay; boys under eight years of age and girls under ten should not be employed; masters should arrange the workshops with proper sanitary conditions; wages of journeymen should be increased five percent; on Fridays and public holidays should be free days; and men and women should work in separate workshops.⁵⁶ Shortly after the arrival of this report from Kerman the Majles sent a letter to the Prime Minister in which attention was drawn to the absence in the agreement reached by factory owners of a commission, as proposed by the British legation, which would monitor compliance.⁵⁷ Ultimately, on 17 December 1923 the Governors of Kerman and Baluchistan were ordered to issue the following regulations:⁵⁸

⁵⁴ LMD CIP. d4-k55-j26.2 p158.

⁵⁵ Chaqueri, *The Condition*, 208.

⁵⁶ LMD CIP. d4-k55-j26.2 p158, 8 January 1922.

⁵⁷ LMD CIP. d4-k55-j26.2 p158, 9 January 1922.

⁵⁸ Chaqueri, *The Condition*, 106.

- 1- The working day for all workers in carpet factories shall be 8 hours. The manufacturers (employers) shall not be entitled to require their workers to work longer than the specified hours.
- 2- On Fridays and on public holidays work shall be suspended in all carpet factories, and the workers shall be entitled to receive their wages for these days as working days.
- 3- Boys under 8 years of age and girls under ten years of age shall not be employed in these factories.
- 4- The boys' workshop shall be separate from the girls' workshop. Mixed workshops shall be absolutely prohibited.
- 5- Foremen (persons who dictate the patterns to the workers) shall not be admitted into the girls' workshop. Forewomen shall be employed to dictate the girls' patterns.
- 6- A manufacturer shall not in any case engage or retain a worker suffering from an infectious disease.
- 7- Carpet weaving workshops shall not be situated underground or in dump rooms. Workshops shall have windows towards the south, so that the sun can enter them.
- 8- The carpet weaving loom shall be one meter above the floor of the workshop and the seat shall be high enough for children to be able to perform their work as comfortably as possible.

In addition to these, several articles were also added regarding the enforcement and inspection for the implementation of these measures, and fines were proposed for non-compliance. The result was satisfactory for both ILO and the British Government. The British Minister in charge of the ILO affairs admitted his satisfaction in the House of Lords.⁵⁹ The Kerman negotiations were even regarded as “a very interesting example of the influence that may be exercised by international inquiry and persuasion”.⁶⁰ Yet, a few years later an article titled “the Kerman carpets, or the cutting off of the offspring of Kerman” appeared in *Shafaq-e Sorkh* (The Red Dawn) in 1928 which was quoted at length in the ILO's official publication.⁶¹ After emphasizing the importance of the carpet industry for Kerman, the unfavourable working and living conditions of the workers were once again underlined. It was stated that “it is not possible to meet in the city of Kerman itself one carpet weaver, boy or girl, woman or man, who has the appearance of a human being, the majority of the men and youth are

⁵⁹ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 90.

⁶⁰ ILO, *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. 1 January-March 1922

⁶¹ *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. XXVI (April-June 1928), 92-93.

sallow, abject, hunchbacked with deformed legs and arms, unfit for work”.⁶² Apparently the regulations of 1923 had not been properly implemented. As stated in the article, during the governorship of Abd al-Hosain Teymurtash, the former Governor of Kerman and the Minister of Court in 1928, a commission was appointed which consisted of chiefs of the District and City Police, the Director of Education and certain of the master carpet weavers. Subsequently a Government decree was issued which contained a set of sanitary and physical instructions for carpet workshops in line with the 1923 decree but in a more detailed fashion.⁶³ Apparently these instructions also remained limited in scope and effect, and the unfavourable conditions in the Kerman carpet industry made it one of the centres of labour activity.

Lack of a proper labour law was a matter of concern for workers too, as in the example of public bath attendants who, in the petition they sent to the Majles in August 1926 complained about the absence of a labour law:

To the Honourable Deputies of the Sacred Majles May God Empower its Pillars. With utmost respect,

In this period of Constitutional rule everyone, and every guild and trade is provided with laws and regulations with the exception of the public bath attendants. For bakers it was decided that they should work eight hours a day in two shifts. Yet, public bath attendants start work one hour and a half before the sunrise and work until three hours after the sunset and we work in immense heat. When we want to have some rest the master of the bath assigns us with drudgeries so that in an eighteen or nineteen-hour workday we have no time for rest but they do not pay us accordingly. We request that the municipal directorate in charge of these matters should inspect public bath workers and pay them in accordance with their work. Also [...] they give us two free days without pay although others have one day off with or without pay. What if we humble workers remain sick for four days? What should we eat then and how should we provide for our families? In addition to these, we suffer hardships during the summertime, and in wintertime a Mazandarani comes and presents a gift to the master and takes over our jobs.⁶⁴

In the rest of the petition bath attendants requested the adoption of measures to regulate their working conditions and safeguard their rights. Nonetheless, despite these calls, labour regulation remained a peripheral issue throughout the period under study. Most of the legislation attempts during the 1920's and 1930's concerned state employees. Due to the fever for industrialization during this period, labour issues remained of secondary importance. Iran had to be modernized, and workers' concerns were not on the list of immediate priorities. This

⁶² Industrial and Labour Information, Vol. XXVI (April-June 1928), 92.

⁶³ For the details of the decree see Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 92-93.

⁶⁴ LMDICP. d6/k8/j7, 12 August 1926.

point is made overtly in correspondence between Mirza Seyed Baqer Khan Kazemi, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, an employee of the ILO.⁶⁵ In a letter dated October 1933 and sent to Kazemi, Jamalzadeh raised a number of labour-related issues.⁶⁶ He mainly urged the establishment of a state department which would deal exclusively with agricultural and industrial affairs by focusing on labour issues. Furthermore, he stressed that since industrialization was increasingly underway in Iran at the time the creation of a labour office to ensure the neat working of this process was a necessity and that many Eastern countries have adopted essential measures on this issue. For instance, added Jamalzadeh, such countries as Egypt and Turkey have either established a labour office or a similar body to deal with industrial and agricultural affairs and to take part in the preparation of the necessary laws and regulations. He then proposed the establishment of an office with the following tasks: the inspection of working conditions and the situations of workers who were employed in the agricultural sector, craft industries or large-scale industrial establishments; the preparation of bills for laws and regulations about such labour issues as wages, working hours, sanitary conditions, worker-manager relations, setting the minimum limit age for workers, and the treatment of pregnant workers and the training of workers.⁶⁷ In May 1934 Baqer Khan Kazemi replied by stating that the introduction of laws and regulations about labour was not an urgency in Iran since the erection of factories was a new and an ongoing phenomenon in the country.⁶⁸ Once again, labour was equated with factory labour.

The Factory Act:

In the mid-1930's unfavourable working conditions, mainly in small-scale textile factories in Isfahan, came to the fore. In the ensuing investigations it was discovered that the conditions in textile factories were extremely unfavourable, they were full of garbage, and workers had to work under dust and in putrid air. The worksites were constructed in such a way that they had

⁶⁵ RL 48/1/1. "Creation of a Labour Office-Persia". ILO.

⁶⁶ RL 48/1/1. 18. October 1933. "To the Iranian Foreign Ministry". ILO.

⁶⁷ RL 48/1/1. "Creation of a Labour Office-Persia". ILO.

⁶⁸ RL 48/1/1. "To Mr. Jamalzadeh, Member of ILO". 21 May 1934. ILO. Baqer Khan Kazemi was not alone in this observation. Based on the agrarian nature of the Iranian society and the slow development of the large-scale industrialization some contemporaries as well as historians argued that until late 1920s no workers existed in Iran. This is most clearly reflected in the following and often quoted remarks of Agha Seyyed Ya'qub, deputy of the Majles, in 1922: The full remark is as follows: "As to the issue of employer and employed to which the Honourable Solayman Mirza pointed out I say that we do not yet have workers (*kargar*) in Iran and everybody is an employer (*karfarma*). If, with God's will, one day our trade and agriculture improve and factories are established then we will have to deal with the issue of employer and employed. For now we do not have workers, employers, railways." Mozakarat-e Majles, 10 January 1922.

neither air nor light.⁶⁹ The Factory Act which was adopted by the Majles in 1936 and introduced a number of essential sanitary measures for working conditions.⁷⁰ These regulations were in themselves revolutionary but not only did the Act remain largely on paper as far as workers' rights were concerned but also, it only concerned factories with ten or more workers. Besides, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) as the biggest employer in the country, after the Iranian state, did not implement the Act. The company found impossible the implementation of the Act and the modification of their existing practices accordingly. Ultimately, "the Act no doubt became a dead letter in many parts of the country – but nowhere more than in the oil districts of Khuzestan".⁷¹ It can even be argued that in some respects the Act made things worse for workers.⁷² The following measures, to name a few, were introduced that were to the disadvantage of workers: any misconduct from the part of employees on "sanitary, technical and disciplinary instructions of the competent authorities" was subject to imprisonment or fines; neglect of duty was to be compensated by the employee by a deduction from his/her wages and the sum was to be decided by the factory owner as the employee could also be prosecuted if negligence was held to be an offence. In case of non-compliance the employee was not only to make good the damage caused to the factory but would also be liable for five to seven days of imprisonment or to a fine of a certain amount.⁷³

These points can best be illustrated by a comparison of this Act with the Labour Law in Turkey which was passed by the Turkish Parliament in 1936 and put into force in 1937.⁷⁴ To start with, both the Iranian Factory Act and the Turkish Labour Law concerned establishments with ten or more workers. This point was criticized by some leftist publications in Turkey. For instance, according to the newspaper *İşçi Dünyası* (Worker's World) the definition of 'worker' in the Law was quite narrow and should be expanded since, argued the newspaper,

⁶⁹ NLAI. 291/3284, 29 Tir 1315 (20 July 1936).

⁷⁰ For a full translation of the Act see L. P. Elwell-Sutton, *Modern Iran*, London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1944, 213-224. For a discussion on the act see: Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 95-96.

⁷¹ Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: 1958), 97. Quoted in Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 95.

⁷² Willem Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 95.

⁷³ Elwell-Sutton, *Modern Iran*, 219.

⁷⁴ For a detailed analysis of the the Turkish Labour Law of 1936 see: Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri, 1920-1946* (Ankara: İmge, 1999), 353-410. The following information about the Law is based on this source unless stated otherwise. For a Discussion on the Law see: Ahmet Makal, *Ameleden İşçiye: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Emek Tarihi Çalışmaları* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), 104-107; and Diren Çakmak, "Toplumsal Uzlaşma Belgesi: 1936 Tarihli İş Kanunu" (Social Consensus Document: Labour Law Dated 1936), *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2007/1, 127-169..

“all of us, except the children and the elderly are workers”.⁷⁵ Although industrial development had recorded comparatively more impressive success in Turkey in mid-1930’s both countries were dominated by small-scale manufactures but in practice the laws concerned only large-scale industrial establishments. However, both of the laws contained details regulations regarding work contracts, working hours, female and child labour as well as sanitary conditions of the worksites. The underlying aim of these two laws was to discourage collective labour activities as well as to thwart communist and socialist agitation. The states acted in both of the laws as the sole and only legitimate intermediary between the employers and the employee. Karpat argues that “since the Labour Law numbered 3008 was prepared in line with the pre-WWII Italian law it regulated workers’ issues in a totalitarian manner.”⁷⁶ Makal describes this feature of the Turkish Labour Law by stating that the law was “protective” in individual labour issues and authoritarian in “collective” labour issues.⁷⁷ This latter feature was clearly reflected in the Iranian Factory Act which forbade the employees “to form or take part in any union or association prejudicial to the interests of the factory.”⁷⁸ Both in Turkey and Iran workers’ right to form organizations or to become members of the existing organizations came later on. For instance the Iranian Labour Law of 1946 recognized workers’ right to form a union.⁷⁹

In short, the liabilities of the employer, according to the Act, were less than those of the employee. These points were made strikingly by the workers of the Pashmbaf Factory in Isfahan.⁸⁰ After complaining about the arbitrary practices of the factory management in the past years “workers’ representatives”, more than a hundred individuals, as far as the signatures show, express their pleasure with the Factory Act which arguably was a result of their insistent efforts. Yet, they criticize the authority granted to the employer, or the factory manager, for the implementation of the adopted measures by arguing that workers were dismissed on unsound pretexts. Therefore the petitioning workers requested rehiring of the fired workers as well as the mediation of the judicial authorities in case of conflict between the workers and the factory.

⁷⁵ “Başlarken”, *İşçi Dünyası*, I (1 February 1953). Quoted in Yiğit Akın. “The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey: Language, Identity, and Experience”, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 54, Issue S17. 174.

⁷⁶ Kemal Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi: Sosyal, Ekonomik, Kültürel Temeller* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 1996), 106. Quoted in Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, 382.

⁷⁷ Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, 387.

⁷⁸ Elwell-Sutton, *Modern Iran*, 219.

⁷⁹ Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, Syracuse (N.Y : Syracuse University Press, 1985), 62.

⁸⁰ NLAI. 291/565 “To the Governorship of Isfahan, 1321 (1942).

Working Hours and Wages

For a long time no fixed rules seemed to exist in Iran about working hours. Usually Iranian workers had to work long hours, and a workday between ten and twelve hours was apparently normal.⁸¹ It could sometimes be as long as sixteen hours.⁸² Occasionally working hours were defined by sunrise and sunset as in the example of the aforementioned public bath attendants who complained in their petition that they had to start work “one hour and a half before the sunrise and work in the heat until three hours after the sunset.”⁸³ In some cases working hours were explicitly arranged at least on paper. For example it was decided in 1921 that the carpet weavers in Kerman would work eight hours in all seasons and Fridays and public holidays would be free days.⁸⁴ The long working day was one of the main concerns of early labour activism in Iran. For example in 1918 the printers in Tehran struck and obtained an eight-hour workday.⁸⁵ Also in 1919 the Socialist Party included an eight-hour workday among its objectives.⁸⁶ Through the 1930's several measures were taken to restrict working hours especially at the newly founded factories. Nonetheless arbitrary decisions continued to exist. For example the workers of the Pashmbaf Factory in Isfahan complained in May 1943 that the factory management extended their work hours from 8 to 10 hours.⁸⁷

Our information about the wages for the entire period under study is rather inconclusive. Wages varied considerably from one sector to the next while regional differences were also significant. At any rate as a rule wages were below the poverty line especially for unskilled workers. According to Abdullayev before the First World War in a silk reeling factory in Rasht male workers' wages for a day varied between 1,5 and 3 qrans while female workers earned between 0,5 to 0,75 qrans.⁸⁸ Child workers could earn 7 shahis a day.⁸⁹ Among weavers wages were more egalitarian but still quite low. An adult male weaver could earn 1,5 qrans a day while women and children received for a day's labour about 1 qran and 0,5 qran respectively.⁹⁰ In the early 1920's a weaver in Tehran could ear at most 3-4 karans a day.⁹¹ In

⁸¹ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 97.

⁸² Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 97.

⁸³ LMDCIP. d6/k8/j7, 12 August 1926.

⁸⁴ Chaqueri, *The Condition*, 106.

⁸⁵ Ardashir Avanesiyan, *Safahati Chand az Jonbash-e Kargari ve Komunisti-ye Iran dar Dowran Avval-e Saltanat-e Reza Shah: 1922-1933*, Leipzig: Tudeh Publication, 1979, 7.

⁸⁶ FO 248/1259.

⁸⁷ NLAI. 291/567, “The Complaint of the Workers of the Pashmbaf Factory about Unpaid Wages and Increase in Work Hours”. 26 Ordibehesht 1322 (7 May 1943).

⁸⁸ Issawi, *Economic History*, 41.

⁸⁹ Issawi, *Economic History*, 41.

⁹⁰ Issawi, *Economic History*, 41.

⁹¹ Shokrollah Mani, *Tarikhcheh-e Nahzat-e Kargari dar Iran*, (Tehran: Taban, 1979), 7.

the mid-1930's at large mills average wages were about sixpence (two rials) for a ten hour day compared to 63 pence in Britain, 23 pence in India and 14 pence in Japan.⁹² In 1928 a British commercial attaché remarked that a labourer's wage amounted to three to four grans per day. For these wages he could only buy "bread and cheese and an occasional piece of cotton cloth for his women-folk". Artisans received an additional five to ten grans.⁹³

Sanitary Conditions

In a radio broadcast dated 19 October 1942 A. K. S. Lambton, the press attaché of the British legation at the time of the broadcast and a famous British historian of Iran, emphasized the appalling working conditions of workers, including children, which she personally observed.⁹⁴ Generally speaking epidemic diseases have constituted a major problem in Iran.⁹⁵ There were not enough medical staff or infrastructure to fight the diseases. Reportedly in 1924 there were only 905 physicians in the country.⁹⁶ For example, in February 1933, petitioners from Zarand, in the province of Kerman, complained about the inattentiveness of the deputies to their repeated requests for a doctor to take care of sixty thousand people.⁹⁷ Although the ratio of doctors to the population almost tripled from the mid-1920's to the mid-1930's it still was a mere 1:4.000 in 1935 compared with more distressing 1:11.000 in 1924.⁹⁸ Apparently, the sanitary conditions at industrial establishments became a matter of concern in the mid-1930's. Workers often had to work in dark and poorly ventilated and insufficiently lighted rooms which exposed them to dust, steam and dirt. This was especially true for smaller workshops. For example it was discovered in the ensuing investigations at small workshops in Isfahan that workers had to operate in extremely dirty and dark environments where there was no proper ventilation.⁹⁹ The Bazaar of Hajj Mohammad Hosayn which was managed by a German national named Jackman and produced blankets for Vatan Factory was the centre of

⁹² Bharier, *Economic Development*, 178.

⁹³ F. R. Lingeman, "Report on the Finance and Commerce of Persia 1925-1927". London: HMSO, 1928. 30. Quoted in Floor, *Industry and Labour*, 100.

⁹⁴ ILO. CL-49.01.48. 11. 1942. "Conditions of Labour, Hours of Work-Iran- Industrial Conditions in Iran".

⁹⁵ About public health in Iran in general see Willem Floor, *Public Health in Qajar Iran* (Washington DC: Mage, 2006); A. R. Neligan, "Public Health in Persia: 1914-1924", *The Lancet*, Volume 207, Issue 5352, Pages 690 - 694, 27 March 1926.

⁹⁶ Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961, 73. Quoted in Rager M. Savory, "Social Development in Iran during the Pahlavi Era", in *Iran under the Pahlavis*, George Lenczowski ed., California: Hoover Institution, 1978, 92.

⁹⁷ LMDCIP. d8/k4/j19/p188-kerman, "Request for Remaining in the Office of Dr. Navabi", 4 February 1933.

⁹⁸ Savory, "Social Development in Iran", 93.

⁹⁹ NLAI. 291/3284, 29 Tir 1315 (20 July 1936).

such workshops.¹⁰⁰ Consequently a proposal was put forward by the Isfahan Municipality to design special places where such workshops would operate under sanitary conditions.¹⁰¹

Investigations were soon extended to large-scale establishments such as Rahimzadeh and Vatan factories in Isfahan. It was reported that Vatan Factory had only one drinking vessel for four hundred workers and that workers used a water melon for this purpose during the summer.¹⁰² Appendix-6 contains the detailed results of the medical inspections undertaken in 1934 and 1936 by Dr. Mahdi Filsuf, a prominent doctor in Isfahan, on workers employed at Vatan Factory as well as on their families. Out of 557 workers of Vatan Factory, only 17 were found to be in bad health.¹⁰³ Yet, an array of medical problems from malaria (41 workers), to syphilis (75 workers), rheumatism (42 workers), various injuries (72 workers), etc. were discovered.¹⁰⁴ Since the inspections included workers' families it is not easy to make far reaching conclusions from them about conditions of sanitation. Taken as a whole, this list does not provide much information about the respiratory manifestations of worker-related illnesses in Iranian textile mills. Yet lung diseases such as asthma, influenza, lung congestion and tuberculosis were observed. Also it was discovered in 1936 that sanitary conditions at Rahimzadeh factory which employed 340 workers in 1940 were far from satisfactory.¹⁰⁵ There is no mention in the inspections about the working conditions in small-scale manufactures.

The degree of the reliability of the inspections is not clear. Yet apparently it exercised an impact on the introduction of the above mentioned Factory Act which introduced a number of regulations on hygiene and sanitation, ventilation, lighting, heating and cooling of the work site, etc. Detailed rules were determined about the warmth of the work site, prevention of mosquitos and dust from entering the factory, provision of special clothes to workers as far as was possible, and the establishment of dispensaries in the factories. The following were among the issues regulated in the Act: buildings should be at least three meters high, unless required otherwise for technical reasons; the doors and the windows were to be adequate for ventilation and arranged so as to make workers comfortable during work; the work premises were to be cleaned while workers were not in; artificial light, if needed, was to be arranged in accordance with the work done and should not disturb workers' eyes; the worksites were to be

¹⁰⁰ NLAI. 191/3284, "To the Governorship of Isfahan", 16 Tir 1315 (7 July 1936).

¹⁰¹ NLAI. 191/3284, "From Isfahan Municipality to the Governorship of Isfahan", 20 Tir 1315 (11 July 1936).

¹⁰² Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 98.

¹⁰³ NLAI. 291/3284, "Report of the Medical Inspection on Workers", May 1936. See Appendix 6.

¹⁰⁴ NLAI. 291/3284, 29 Tir 1315 (20 July 1936).

¹⁰⁵ NLAI. 291/3284, "To the Governorship of Isfahan", 11 Tir 1316 (2 July 1937).

heated in winter time in to specified temperatures; fresh and cool water was to be provided with workers with an exclusive cup for each worker; measures were to be taken to prevent excessive noise; pregnant women were to be released on full pay during confinement; workmen were to be provided with special clothes for work; adequate medical facilities were to be provided inside factories.¹⁰⁶

The more distressing fact was that factories employed only an insignificant portion of the Iranian workforce, the majority of which worked in cottage and craft industries. Immediately after the Factory Act inspections were made again in Isfahan of the sanitary conditions of workers. As shown in Appendix 6 several reports were prepared again for the Vatan Factory.¹⁰⁷ The subsequent reports speak of the appalling working conditions at such factories as Barq and Rahimzadeh in Isfahan, as they also clearly show the difficulty of controlling the smaller workshops scattered throughout the city.¹⁰⁸

Socialism and Labour Activism in Iran

The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 took place as the result of a complex and class-crossing alliance of various groups which regarded the absolute monarchy as the main hindrance to economic, as well as political and social, progress. However, lower classes and radicalized groups soon discovered that such privileged classes as the tribal chiefs, the large landowners and the senior religious leaders came to be the real beneficiaries of the revolution.¹⁰⁹ The immediate aftermath of the Revolution witnessed the shattering of this alliance. The class-based nature of the First Majles from 1906 to 1908 furthered this process. With the gradual disintegration of the absolute monarchy, a new and more heterogeneous type of political community emerged in Iran, into which workers slowly integrated. Due to the dismay created by the post-Revolutionary developments, many Iranian migrants in Russia, who had been indoctrinated by the Russian Social Democrats, believed that a Communist revolution was the means to solve Iran's problems.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, many Iranians inside Iran regarded the establishment of a powerful government as the only viable solution. Such a government would eliminate foreign hegemony in the country and unfold development

¹⁰⁶ Elwell-Sutton, *Modern Iran*, 214-217.

¹⁰⁷ NLAI. 291/3284, "Report of the Medical Inspection on Workers", May 1936.

¹⁰⁸ NLAI. 291/3284, "From the Governorship of Isfahan", 16 Shahrivar 1315 (7 September 1936); and NLAI. 291/3284, "To the Governorship of Isfahan", 11 Tir 1316 (2 July 1937).

¹⁰⁹ Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 6.

¹¹⁰ Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy*, 6.

projects especially in the economic realm. To them the ideal government would ensure economic development, security and order in every corner of the country without using any coercive power to penetrate into people's everyday lives especially when penetration was not to their advantage. The process was more complex for workers. Until the development of large-scale industrial establishments many workers were employed in craft industries. For the period from the failure of the constitutional experiment in 1911 to the establishment of the authoritarian Pahlavi regime in the mid-1920's, workers often complained of the absence of state authority to safeguard their interests. However from about 1925 until 1941 they increasingly conceived of and perceived state power as hostile to their interests. Thus from a labour perspective the period between 1906 and 1941 was characterized by workers' drifting perceptions about and attitudes towards the state authority.

The dichotomy of organized and non-organized labour has for a long time haunted the scholarship on Middle Eastern labour. So has the distinction between the workers employed in craft industries and those who worked in factories. A putative clear-cut distinction was implied between these two allegedly discrete categories. While those workers who worked at factories were depicted as having class-consciousness and acting accordingly, the rest of the workers, if they were even regarded as such, were characterized as bereft of class-consciousness. If we consider the fact that until the end of the 1930's, and for some time afterwards, the textile industry, like many other industries in Iran, was largely dominated by craft or cottage types of production, the workforce involved in them deserves closer scrutiny. It is true that their actions are less adequately documented than those of the factory workers. Besides, unlike the factory setting, in the relationship between the journeymen or the apprentices and their master exploitation was less visible and the acquisition of an independent shop for a journeyman depended on the goodwill and the support of his master, who typically worked side by side with him. These conditions, however, should not prevent us from scrutinizing their experiences nor should they be misleadingly assumed to be passive. What is equally wrong, however, is to suggest tacitly if not explicitly, that those who were engaged in craft industries mattered only when involved in "recognizably modern forms of labour struggle".¹¹¹ For the period under study, at least until the early 1930's, several confrontational labour actions took place throughout Iran, but apparently, the majority of

¹¹¹ Sherry Vatter, "Militant Textile Weavers in Damascus: Waged Artisans and the Ottoman Labour Movement, 1850-1914", in Donald Quataert and Eric J. Zürcher ed. *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, 35-58, here 36.

workers often opted for more non-confrontational means to obtain better working and living conditions. At the same time, however, a non-obvious working class discourse and ideology was simultaneously growing in Iran especially from the mid-1910's onwards. For this development, structural changes and workers' reactions to these changes were as much responsible as the increasing radicalization among the Iranian working class through the formation of leftist organizations and publications.

From the early twentieth century onwards, Iran had come under the influence of socialist ideas. The immigrant Iranian workers in the Tsarist Russia played a crucial role in this process. Mass migration to the Caucasus to for jobs was commonplace among Iranians, particularly among those who lived in the northern regions near Russia.¹¹² Starting in the early 19th century, this trend increased later in the century due to the famines and economic instability in Iran, which contrasted with the flourishing economy in Russia, especially in the oilfields in and around Baku.¹¹³ Within ten years between 1897 and 1907 the number of Iranians living in Central Asia rose from 23,191 to 55,000.¹¹⁴ Moreover, between 1876 and 1890 an average of 13,000 Iranians acquired work permits and visas each year from Russian consulates in such northern cities as Tabriz, Mashhad, Rasht and Astarabad, to enter Russia legally. In Tabriz alone, the figure increased 110 percent from 15,615 in 1891 to 32,866 in 1900.¹¹⁵ In Khorasan the number of those seeking "work in the Transcaspian region in 1909 increased so fast that the number of villages with offices granting external passports rose from ten to twenty".¹¹⁶ Overall, in 1911 Iranians constituted as many as 160,211 of a total of 192,767 workers entering Russia legally.¹¹⁷ These figures should be considered together with those who crossed the borders by illegal means. Many of the migrant workers came back to Iran, and they did so often with some political experience. They were influenced by Marxist ideas and started to develop a socialist political language.

In the midst of the constitutional discussions in 1905, the Tabriz Social-Democratic Group was formed by Armeno-Iranians in Tabriz.¹¹⁸ The main question preoccupying the Group concerned collaboration with non-socialist groups, primarily for the Constitutional

¹¹² For an analysis of this migration trend see in Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire", in *The State and the subaltern: Society and Politics in Turkey and Iran*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: Tauris, 2007), 31-52.

¹¹³ Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests", 37-38.

¹¹⁴ Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests", 38.

¹¹⁵ Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests", 40.

¹¹⁶ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*, p 52. quoted in Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests", 40.

¹¹⁷ Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests", 40.

¹¹⁸ Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 13.

Revolution.¹¹⁹ According to Tchilinkirian, a member of the Group, two tendencies prevailed. The first tendency, the ‘Democratic’, favoured such collaboration and disfavoured a purely Social-Democratic education at that time.¹²⁰ However, although the second tendency agreed on the necessity of participation in the revolutionary movement it opted for an active educational program along socialist lines, among workers and other possible recruits.¹²¹ In the meantime a number of political organizations were formed among the Iranians in the Transcaspian regions. The Iranians living in the Caucasus had, in 1905, one year prior to the Russian Revolution, formed the Hemmat organization which in turned established the *Ferqah-e Ejtema’iyyun-e ‘Ammiyun* (The Social Democratic Party) known as *mojaheds* for which Nariman Narimanov was responsible.¹²² The following were declared among the party’s aims:¹²³

- 1- Limiting the power of the monarch.
- 2- Granting workers the right to vote, irrespective of their income or wealth.
- 3- Holding parliamentary elections based on universal suffrage.
- 4- Redistributing the large landed estates among peasants and introducing legal protections for peasant ownership of land.
- 5- Granting democratic rights for workers, such as freedom of association, speech and assembly, and the right to strike.

Social Democrats participated in the Second Majles between 1909 and 1911 as a separate group. Led by Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh the central committee of the party consisted of Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh, Solayman Mirza Eskandari, Mirza Baqer Agha Qafqazi, Mirza Abd al-Hosayn Khan Vahid al-Molk, Seyyed Mohammad Reza Mosavat, Mirza Ahmad Qazvini and Mirza Mahmud Khan.¹²⁴ According to the Democrats, the twentieth century had the same significance for the East as the seventeenth century had for the West in the sense that the “outmoded feudal system” was to be replaced by the overwhelming power of capitalism.¹²⁵ Iran would also join this inevitable course of history. The party also expressed its determination to preserve the constitutional system and the rule of the parliament. Also, according to the program every national was equal before the state

¹¹⁹ Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 14

¹²⁰ Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 14.

¹²¹ Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 14.

¹²² Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 17.

¹²³ Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 18.

¹²⁴ Ferioudun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e Demokrasi-ye Ejtema’i dar Nahzat-e Mashrutiyat-e Iran* (West Germany: Noupad, 1985), 136.

¹²⁵ Mansureh Ettahadiyeh Nezamfafi, *Maramnamaha va Nezamnama-ha-ye Ahzab-e Siyasi-yi Iran dar Dovvomin Dowreh-e Majles-e Shura-yi Melli*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1982), 4.

irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. Freedom of the press, organization and movement were also stressed in the program.¹²⁶ About economic issues the program was rather detailed. Besides a number of economic and political issues, the program also touched upon the following labour issues: no child under the age of fourteen could be employed; the working day should not exceed ten hours; workers should have a weekly day off; factories should have the necessary facilities for work as well as to fulfil the sanitary conditions.¹²⁷

The Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 directly influenced the communist movement in Iran. Soon after the Revolution the Communist Party of Iran was founded in 1920 as an offshoot of the Justice Party. In the first congress of the Adalat Party on Iranian soil, in Anzali, in June 1920 the Communist Party was founded. Through the effort of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Iran, the Central Council of Federated Trade Unions (CCFTU) was established in 1921 and in the following three years reached a large size. Trade unions were active in the oil industry, as well as amongst carpet weavers in Kerman and textile workers of Isfahan, along with other industries. Communist and socialist publications remained a common feature of Iran's intellectual scene during the 1920's and several labour actions of varying extent took place in this period. With the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in 1924 and Moscow's decision to 'Bolshevize' the international communist movement, which was re-affirmed at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, communist groups received orders for more radical actions in their respective countries.¹²⁸ The strikes at the Abadan oil refinery in 1929, and the Vatan Factory Strike in Isfahan in 1931, were among the notable labour actions of the period.¹²⁹ As a result of these and similar developments, the state's attitude towards communist and socialist activities stiffened. First of all, a series of articles, which were quite possibly probably based on the revelations of Grigory Sergeyevich Arutyunov, also known as Georges Agabekov, were published in the Parisian periodical *Le Matin* between 26 and 30 October 1930, causing much speculation about the communist activities in Iran as in other Near Eastern countries.¹³⁰ Agabekov had for a long time functioned as a spy for the OGPU (predecessor of the KGB) in Central Asia, the Caucasus,

¹²⁶ Ittihadieh, *Maramnamaha*, 6.

¹²⁷ Ittihadieh, *Maramnamaha*, 8.

¹²⁸ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of the Communist Revolution* (London: Methuen and Co., 1960), pp 104–10.

¹²⁹ For a discussion of the Abadan strike see: Kaveh Bayat, "With or Without Workers in Reza Shah's Iran: Abadan May 1929", in *The State and the subaltern: Society and Politics in Turkey and Iran*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London, 2007), 111-122; and Stephanie Cronin, "Popular Politics, the New State and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class: The 1929 Abadan Oil Refinery Strike", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46: 5, 699 – 732.

¹³⁰ Boris Volodarsky, "Unknown Agabekov", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 28, No. 6, (2013): 890–909. Here 891-2 footnote 4.

and the Middle East.¹³¹ The information he disclosed regarding the communists in Iran resulted in the persecution and execution of many Iranian communists. Also, earlier in 1931 the Iranian communists started to organize in Europe and a conference of Persian Communist Students was held in Cologne in February 1931.¹³² The delegates resolved “to uphold the standard of liberty and revolution [and] ... to do everything in our power to overthrow the regime of robbers ... [as] Persia must belong to the labouring masses”.¹³³ Ultimately in June 1931 the Majles adopted the anti-communist bill which, inter alia, banned the formation of trade unions.¹³⁴

However, until 1931 several strikes took place in various parts of Iran. In the Supplementary Fundamental Laws of 1907, freedom of expression (article 20), and freedom of association (article 21) were established.¹³⁵ The printers of the Kuchaki printing shop in Tehran became the pioneers of trade unionism in Iran when they formed a trade union in 1907.¹³⁶ Likewise the first strike took place in November 1906 when the fishermen of Anzali protested against Liazonov, the Russian fisheries concessionaire.¹³⁷ The strike took place in a form of sanctuary, at the telegraph office of Anzali, from where they complained to the Majles of the low price paid by Liazonov for each fish. It was largely due to the relatively free atmosphere ensured by the Constitutional Revolution that workers could strike. In 1907 telegraph operators of Tabriz went on a strike for the payment of their arrears.¹³⁸ In the same year the printers of Tehran went on a strike out of solidarity with their colleague who had been beaten up by the chief of the government printing office, E‘temad al-Saltaneh.¹³⁹ The strike ended upon the dismissal of the chief. Also the telegraph operators of Tehran went on strike for higher wages and better treatment. Likewise the workers of the power plant of Amin al-Zarb in Tehran organized a strike in 1907.¹⁴⁰ The strike lasted for three days during which no electricity was supplied to the city. The striking workers demanded paid free days, clothes

¹³¹ Touraj Atabaki, “Napadid shodegan: chera hezb-e tudeh-e Iran duchar-e faramushi-ye gozinashi dar khosus-e hazf-e enqelabiyun-e komunist dar Iran ba dast-e “baradar-e bozorg” shodand?”, *Andisheh Pouya* 11, (Mehr&Aban 1392/Sept.&Oct. 2013): 69.

¹³² Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 93.

¹³³ K. Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 93.

¹³⁴ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 78.

¹³⁵ E. G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution, 1905-1909* (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966), 375. Between pages 362 and 384 Browne provides an English translation of the full text of the 1906 Constitution and the Supplementary Laws of 1907.

¹³⁶ Or 1906, see Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 31.

¹³⁷ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 32.

¹³⁸ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 33.

¹³⁹ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 33.

¹⁴⁰ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 33.

paid by the employer (since because of their work, their clothes would become torn), as well as the establishment of a health and safety fund.¹⁴¹ The strikes continued to take place in Iran throughout the 1910's and 1920's. Many of the early labour actions which took place from the inception of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 to the dawn of Pahlavi modernization in the early 1920's did not occur in the manufacturing sector. Instead, telegraphers, tramway workers and print shop employees were among the protagonists of labour activism.¹⁴² The First World War brought about a general destitution in Iran and the measures adopted by the government proved to be insufficient.

Considering the total workforce engaged in the textile industry, the number of workers involved in trade unions and strikes was quantitatively insignificant. Textile manufacturing continued for a long time to be guild-based in urban settings, while in rural areas, households were the sites of textile production. The textile industry largely remained, throughout the period under study, in the hands of smallholders. This especially held true until the 1930's when governmental support of and participation in industrial planning saw a remarkable rise. Nevertheless, even then the share of the privately-owned enterprises, mainly on a small scale, for the textile industry, was incomparably higher. This, more than anything else, contributed to the relatively smaller number of labour activities which took place among the workers employed in such enterprises—not simply because they were bereft of class-consciousness. It is true that formal labour organizations were, in early twentieth-century Iran, a latter-day phenomena, and that the development of organized labour went hand-in-hand with working class radicalization. Yet, we need to be cautious about what conclusions to draw from this. For instance, safeguarding the interests of the employees was apparently not the predefined *raison d'être* of guilds; it is controversial, particularly for the period under investigation, to argue that “guilds are and were organizations of masters which protected the interests of the employers, not of the employees” or to claim that the family-business nature of craft industries “precluded the possibility of labour disputes”.¹⁴³ Certainly, one of the functions of the guilds was to ensure the smooth functioning of the manufacturing process and to prevent or resolve disputes between the master and the employee. Therefore, we can expect that such a dispute would be settled within guild ranks before it turned into an open confrontation. Also, a journeyman, for instance, had a good reason to remain on good terms with his master

¹⁴¹ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 33.

¹⁴² For an analysis of labour activism during this period see: Willem Floor, *Labour and Industry in Iran*, Washington: Mega Publishers, 2009, 31-39; and Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy*, 1-8.

¹⁴³ Willem Floor, “The Guilds in Iran: An Overview from the Earliest Beginnings Till 1972,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 125 (1975), 116.

not least because he need his master's support for acquiring an independent shop and becoming a master himself. In addition, the struggle against foreign imports or later on against increasing factorization seems to have brought the master and his employees closer as real or perceived victims of these processes. Besides, guilds increasingly became debilitated and lost much of their controlling and enforcing capacity which promised low, if any, possibility of obtaining compromises through an open protest.

During the 1910's and 1920's the voice of the textile workers is occasionally heard in the debates regarding the prohibition of the importation of foreign commodities and the promotion of domestic industries. Shokrollah Mani provides valuable information about the establishment of the Textile Workers' Union in Tehran. After describing the unfavourable working and living conditions of the workers in the textile industry, as in others, in Tehran he describes how Ahmed Lame' from the Printers' Union, encouraged him to establish a union for the protection of textile workers' rights.¹⁴⁴ Seeing Mani's enthusiasm, Lame' arranged a meeting with Seyyed Mohammad Dehgan, a communist who in his previous career as a journalist translated *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* into Persian.¹⁴⁵ Dehgan helped Mani form a trade union for textile workers which was represented in CCFTU. Mani states that because of the low wages the Weavers' Union was more active in organizing strikes compared to other trade unions.¹⁴⁶ For example upon the intention of textile factory owners to reduce workers' wages the Union organized a successful strike in 1922 as a result of which no reductions were made.¹⁴⁷

The rapid industrialization of the late 1920's and 1930's paid little attention to the plight of workers whose working conditions were usually heart-breaking. Wages, mostly on a piecework basis, were low, and job security was absent whereas vilification, and bastinado and similar punishments were commonplace. Apart from the oil industry, which was the most developed and mechanized industry in the country, the textile industry employed the greater part of the nascent proletariat. Villagers who migrated to larger towns and cities, former craftsmen who had lost their jobs for various reasons but mainly due to cheap imports, and destitute city-dwellers constituted the main source of labour in the nascent industries. Although both female and child labour were employed in factories, it was in the small-scale

¹⁴⁴ Mani, *Tarikhcheh*, 8.

¹⁴⁵ Mani, *Tarikhcheh*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Mani, *Tarikhcheh* 12. The printers' union was the other active labour organization in Tehran.

¹⁴⁷ Haqiqat, 1 May 1922. Quoted in Hojjat Fallah Tootcar, "Social and Political Activities of Guilds and Artisans from the Iranian Constitutional Revolution to the Rise of Reza Shah, 1906-1925." PhD diss., (in Persian), Tarbiyat Modarres University, 2003, 374.

establishments, particularly in carpet weaving, where they were extensively employed often in bad working conditions and for rather low wages.¹⁴⁸ A survey undertaken of twelve cotton spinning and weaving plants in 1936 revealed that the number of male workers in the textile industry was declining, as in other countries. Yet unlike in other countries, male labour in Iran was being replaced by child labour instead of female workers.¹⁴⁹ A list which was prepared for the E'temadiyeh Weaving and Spinning Factory in Bushehr contains information about the workers and provides some ideas on the composition of the industrial workforce (Appendix 5).¹⁵⁰ Of the 193 workers listed in the roster, 188 were women while the men numbered only five. The number of children under 14 years was 57 with an average of 9.8 years. From the information provided in the roster, it appears that employing more than one worker from the same family was commonplace. But the list is not conclusive since, according to a list of factories prepared by the Ministry of Arts and Crafts, the factory had at least around five hundred workers with 3,500 spindles and 120 looms.¹⁵¹ Piecework was a widespread practice in the textile industry. In 1900, the basic daily wage for unskilled labour was 1 qran [about 4.5 pence] and a skilled worker received 1.5 qrans daily.¹⁵² In the mid-1930's, an average wage in the cotton textile-industry was about six pence for a ten-hour day.¹⁵³ Wages usually fell far behind the costs of living. Thus throughout the 1920's major labour actions took place in various sectors including the textile industry. Yet, the most notable strike of the textile workers took place in Isfahan in 1931 among the workers of Vatan Factory.

The working and living conditions of the workers who worked at factories were in most cases unfavourable. For some time, a secret committee affiliated with the CPI had been preparing for a strike at Vatan Factory.¹⁵⁴ The decision to strike on the coming May Day in 1931

¹⁴⁸ Female and child labour remain an unexplored dimension of Iranian labour history, particularly in the textile industry. Apparently women were an integral part of industrial labour in Iran from quite early on. For example a total of 300 female workers were employed in a wool spinning factory in Mazandaran apparently established by Tehran municipality, for destitute women. LMDICP. d4-k25-j12, 3 September 1921. Again in early 1920s the issues of employment of female and child labour in unfavourable conditions at carpet industry in Kerman was raised by the recently created ILO (ILO), of which Iran was an early member, and its first Director, Albert Thomas. LMDICP. d4/k55/j26.2/p158, 15 October 1921.

¹⁴⁹ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 178.

¹⁵⁰ NLAI. 290/7115, 1316 (1938).

¹⁵¹ NLAI. 380/387, 16 Bahman 1318 (6 February 1940).

¹⁵² Bharier, *Economic Development*, 5. 1 qran was equivalent to about 4.5 pence in British currency in 1900.

¹⁵³ Bharier, *Economic Development*, 178. The average wages in some countries were as follows: 63 pence in Britain; 23 pence in India; and 14 pence in Japan. Ibid., 178.

¹⁵⁴ For an account of the strike see: Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 75-78; Farhang Qasemi, *Sandikalism dar Iran* (Paris: Bonyad-e Musaddeq, 1985), 171-176; Mahmudi & Sa'idi, *Shuq-e Yak Khiz-e Boland*, 215-221; For the details of this strike see: Serhan Afacan, "Revisiting Labour Activism in Iran: Some Notes on the Vatan Factory Strike in 1931." *International Labour and Working Class History*. (Forthcoming).

coincided with an imprudent move on the part of factory management. A contract was drafted by the director Mirza Ja‘far Kazeruni, son of Mohammad Hosayn Kazeruni, the famous merchant and owner of Vatan Factory, which according to the petitioning workers “was entirely in their own interests and against those of the workers”.¹⁵⁵ On May Day, some 60-70 workers arrived in a garden near the city. On the wall a red banner was fixed on which was written “Proletarians of the World Unite”.¹⁵⁶ However, the actual strike took place on May 7 with wide participation from the workers. A few workers who wanted to continue work were attacked by striking workers and were induced to strike. The striking workers came with a list of 13 demands including but not limited to: freedom to organize a union; changing from piece-work to a monthly salary; an 8-hour workday, instead of 12 hours, for not less than 5 qrans; abolition of vilifications, punishment with the stick, etc.¹⁵⁷ Some of the strike leaders were arrested and one, a CPI member, was taken to Tehran but succeeded in escaping.¹⁵⁸

Upon negotiation, not only was the contract withdrawn but workers also obtained the following concessions: the workday was reduced from twelve to nine hours; the examination system at the factory gate was abolished and vilification and money fines were reduced; a tea drinking facility was established and vessels with ice water were put in all departments; lunch time was extended from half an hour to one hour.¹⁵⁹ Communist newspapers celebrated these achievements and opined that the strike set an instructive example for the future activities of CPI.¹⁶⁰ The strike has usually been mentioned in the literature as an exceptional and exemplary action. Nonetheless, an analysis of the discursive tools which the striking Vatan Factory workers used attest to a more common and established form of labour activism through which workers engaged and negotiated with the central as well as local authorities in order to gain their support. This was much criticized by the communist publications of the time who blamed workers for having insufficient consciousness of the political context.

The workers wrote a petition on 11 June 1931 which addressed Reza Shah and complained that the imprisoned workers were not released although the strike was over:

¹⁵⁵ NLAI. 310/344, 20 Khordad 1310 (11 June 1931).

¹⁵⁶ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 75.

¹⁵⁷ Paykar, 1 October 1931. Quoted in Chaqueri, Kosroe, *Asnad-e Tarikhi: Jonbash-e Kargari, Susyalesti, Demokrasi va Komunisti-ye Iran*, 22. (Historical Documents: The Workers’ Social-Democratic and Communist Movement in Iran 1905-1975, vol. 22) (Florence: Mazdak, 1993), 272-273.

¹⁵⁸ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 78.

¹⁵⁹ Paykar, 1 October 1931. Quoted in Chaqueri, Kosroe, *Asnad-e Tarikhi* 2, 272-273.

¹⁶⁰ Paykar, 1 October 1931. Quoted in Chaqueri, Kosroe, *Asnad-e Tarikhi* 2, 272-273.

To the sacred threshold of the protector of Islam His Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi may our souls be sacrificed for his sake,

We are the praying servants of His Majesty and the workers of the Haft Dast [Vatan] Factory. The director has drafted a contract which was entirely in the interests of the employer and against those of the workers. Some of the workers who were forced to sign it, but refrained from doing so, were dismissed from their jobs and then other workers also stopped working. As a result, by the order of the director (Mirza Ja'far Kazeruni, son of Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Kazeruni), the chief of police arrested and jailed six of them and denied access to them as if they were bloodthirsty criminals. For one and a half months they are now in prison. We made complaints to the high authorities and to the state attorney, but no one paid attention to our grievances. Since Mirza Ja'far is the richest person in Isfahan he bribes whoever necessary (*tarashsuhat-e servat-e u beh kasani keh bayad serayat bekonad mikonad*). For his own benefit and for not paying wages to workers, he deprived fifty workers of their jobs and livelihood. A group of painstaking labourers who try to live on a few pennies with their families are tortured and jailed and all this can happen under the eternal rule of His Majesty the Shah, may our souls be sacrificed for His sake. What should we do? O, just King and the protector of Islam, O, protector of his subjects, O defender of the helpless and the weak! For the sake of Your Highness, for the Sake of the Leader of the Age [the twelfth imam of the Shiites] pay attention to the cry of these humble and helpless workers. We do not know why the chief of police always obeys Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Kazeruni's son and does whatever he says. We are left helpless, please help us! We are expecting His Majesty's answer and mercy.¹⁶¹

The Ministry of the Interior informed the Government on 5 September 1931 about the release of the imprisoned workers following the necessary investigation.¹⁶² The deferential attitude of Iranian workers towards the Shah, as visibly reflected in the petition, was regarded by some communist newspapers as a mistake and the result of a lack of clear apprehension of the situation in the country. For example *Nahzat*, published in Berlin, argued a few months after the strike that "the Vatan Factory strike showed that workers did not understand the link between the present government in Iran and the capitalists".¹⁶³ Moreover, it was also argued that workers were mistaken by going to the state attorney in order to ask for the release of their fellow colleagues and by surmising that the attorney would defend their rights. After all, argued the newspaper, not only the state attorney but also the Shah, the Majles, the government and the judiciary were entirely on the side of the capitalists and were inimical to workers.¹⁶⁴ Many of the striking workers, however, were well aware of the balance of power

¹⁶¹ NLAI. 310/344, 20 Khordad 1310 (11 June 1931).

¹⁶² NLAI. 310/344, "From the Ministry of the Interior to the Cabinet", 13 Sahrivar 1310 (5 September 1931).

¹⁶³ *Nahzat*, 12 March 1932. Quoted in Kosroe Chaqueri, *Asnad-e Tarikhi: Jonbash-e Kargari, Susyalesti, Demokrasi va Komunisti-ye Iran*, 6. (Historical Documents: The Workers' Social-Democratic and Communist Movement in Iran 1903-1963, vol. 6) (Florence: Mazdak, 1966), 155-161.

¹⁶⁴ *Nahzat*, 12 March 1932. Quoted in Chaqueri, *Asnad-e Tarikhi*, 155-161.

and carefully made a clear distinction between Reza Shah, whom they called “the helper of the oppressed and the weak”, and the local authorities whom they regarded as corrupt. Strike leaders and workers, too, knew that Reza Shah was in favour of keeping order and apprehensive about any independent labour movement and in fact, societal movements of any sort. The striking oil workers had followed in 1929 with a similar strategy by distinguishing between the “Crowned Father” and the hostile Anglo-Persian Oil Company, but to no avail.¹⁶⁵ The communists thought therefore that the Vatan Factory workers had made a similar mistake. In almost every labour movement during the 1920’s and 1930’s this ‘everybody-but-the Shah’ attitude was prevalent. That “all the responsibility must fall upon persons and positions of lower standing (corrupt officials), while the relationship of trust and of filial obedience with the prince is to be preserved and confirmed” was a universal strategy adopted by subalterns in various corners of the world throughout history.¹⁶⁶ For workers, their immediate concerns and working the system “to their minimum disadvantage”, to use Hobsbawm’s phraseology, ranked first.¹⁶⁷ This did not mean that workers lacked any comprehension of the political context. It meant instead that workers were cautious about taking the risks of confronting the Shah. Thus, by assuring the Shah of their obedience and of the fact that their action did not tarnish his legitimacy, workers emphasized their certain and concrete grievances. Following the Vatan Factory strike the anti-communist law was passed by the Majles which forbade all trade union activities.

Workers as Petitioners: Discursive Practices

Iranian workers slowly developed, from the early 20th century onwards, a language of their own through their discursive engagements and negotiations with the state, just as other classes did. Their discourse was far from revolutionary and was usually rather deferential. This discourse was not unchanging either. From the inception of the constitutional system in 1906 until the coming to power of Reza Shah, workers stressed the effort they spent and the sacrifices they made for the Constitutional Revolution. Afterwards, they employed a predominantly nationalistic language often in line with Reza Shah’s policies. Although the anti-communist law of 1931 effectively prevented the organization of strikes and trade unions,

¹⁶⁵ Bayat, “With or Without Workers”, 119.

¹⁶⁶ Marcia Schmidt Blaine, “The Power of Petitions: Women and the New Hampshire Provincial Government, 1695-1700”, *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in Social History (2001), ed. Lex Heerma Van Voss, 57-78. Here 37.

¹⁶⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “Peasants and Politics,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1 (1973): 13.

the state continued to promote petitioning by workers for various reasons. The first reason stemmed from the fact that petitioning consolidated the relationship between the ruling establishment and the workers, and the legitimacy of the former, for historically the addressee of petitions was regarded in Iran, as anywhere else in the world, as the legitimate source of authority. Secondly, the Pahlavi regime discouraged and forbade any collective actions from any social group including, but not limited to, workers since feminists, intellectuals, tribal elements or religious groups were also seen as a threat to state power. Nonetheless, petitioning allowed for the ruling classes, and for Reza Shah, to remain aware of the perceptions of the people, local politics, and local rulers, on a scale difficult to attain by other means. In fact “even the most autocratic of governments used petitions as a source of information about popular feeling”.¹⁶⁸ Thirdly, by addressing their petitions directly to the central establishments, often after their local initiatives had proved a failure, petitioners in a sense consolidated the centralization process in Iran. Finally, Reza Shah regarded himself as the father of the nation and cautiously maintained his image as a just ruler while liability for injustices and improper policies rested with those around him. Thus, by stimulating people to write petitions Reza Shah effectively established and consolidated his image as the protector of the nation as well as the “reference point of justice and of fairness”.¹⁶⁹ The petitioning workers were well aware of these discursive tools. Through petitions one can possibly verify certain forms and modes of communication between society and the institutions and to “reconstruct the procedures of mediation, repression, acceptance, and agreement” adopted by the authorities in response to social demands.¹⁷⁰ Certainly in almost any petition there is a tension, and therefore protest, negotiation and so on, for people hardly wrote petitions when things went satisfactorily. In no other realm can one so efficiently follow the trail of this process, and of state-society interaction for that matter, in terms of labour relations in Iran. In this sense as Cecilia Nubola argues in her study on petitions in northern and central Italian states in the early modern age, “‘petitioning’ refers to different concepts of authority and sovereignty as well as to specific power relations between rulers and those ruled”.¹⁷¹ It was within the frame of these different concepts that Iranian workers expressed and negotiated their demands and grievances with the state.

¹⁶⁸ The definition is taken from: Lex Heerma Van Voss, “Introduction”, *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in Social History (2001): 1-10, here 4.

¹⁶⁹ Cecilia Nubola, “Supplications between Politics and Justice: The Northern and Central Italian States in the Early Modern Age,” *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in *Social History* (2001): 35-56. Here 36.

¹⁷⁰ Nubola, “Supplications between Politics and Justice”, 35.

¹⁷¹ Nubola, “Supplications between Politics and Justice”, 35.

From the mid-1920's onwards industrialization gained speed in Iran and turned into an ambitious state policy by the early 1930's. During this period the number of petitions seems to visibly increase, as other forms of resistance were explicitly forbidden. In their petitions workers voiced a variety issues such as lost limbs, irregular and unpaid wages, excessive working hours, unfavourable working conditions, lost jobs, mistreatment by managers, and work site injuries. In what follows I will analyse these petitions in terms of the labour issues they pertained to and the discursive tools which were used by workers. Although I will focus on textile workers, those from other sectors will also be mentioned when, and as much as, necessary.

A Weeping Traveller: Mohammad Ali of Yazd and Lost Jobs

In the early twentieth century foreign imports were perceived by workers as the main reason for the loss of their jobs. Already by the late 19th century the negative effects of foreign imports on native textile manufacturing were pointed out. It was believed that ready-made imports not only devastated the native industries but also pushed the have-nots further into poverty. The contraction in craft business in the provinces led many former craftsmen to seek employment in larger cities such as Tehran, Tabriz and towns in Khorasan which apparently still provided employment opportunities.¹⁷² Besides, going abroad, especially to Russia, was still a viable option until the First World War. In addition to these options, the situation of the craft industries was not necessarily as dismal as it was often said to be, since while some traditional crafts were hard hit by imports, a number of new ones came into existence. For example, making of Russian shoes (*orusiduz*) increasingly provided employment from the late 19th century onwards.¹⁷³ Another success story was recorded by the cloak weaving (*'ababafi*) industry.¹⁷⁴ *'Aba* weaving was an especially rich source of employment in the countryside where mostly women spun and wove, but was not limited to rural areas. By 1910 there were 120 master *'aba* weavers in the city of Isfahan.¹⁷⁵ This meant alternative employment opportunities for those craftsmen who lost their jobs in the face of foreign imports. Furthermore, if foreign trade hurt the crafts which competed with imports, at the same time it

¹⁷² Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 6.

¹⁷³ Tahvilda, 98. Qouted in Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Tahvilda, 106. Qouted in Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 7.

stimulated export-oriented production such as leather, opium, henna, and silk. For example, regarding the leather industry Sobotsinskii writes:

Leather production which until now was in the hands of a large number of enterprises standing halfway between cottage and handicraft industry and employing 5-10 workers, is changing into manufactories. Thus already in 1909 in Mashhad, and Hamadan, there were 8 workshops, with up to 40-50 workers each. The small handicraft shops were unable to withstand the competition and the large enterprises, and rapidly declined... In Hamadan in 1912, there were 300 small leather shops, compared with 400 in 1909, and in Mashhad 50 compared with 200.¹⁷⁶

The most striking growth, however, was experienced in the carpet weaving industry. So, craftsmen could leave one certain trade for another in the same town or else could migrate in search of a living in another town or city. However, first World War I, and then the modernization policies which were adopted from mid-1920's and steadily accelerated until 1941, posed new challenges to craftsmen. In the meantime, there was a slowly-growing industrial proletariat. In their petitions both types of workers complained about losing their jobs. Those workers who were involved at craft industries lost their jobs due mainly to the factorization and mechanization of the textile industry or the impact of cheaper imports. This point was frequently criticized by craftsmen from all over the country.

Craftsmen apparently condemned foreign investment in Iran as well as the factorization of Iranian industries, a point which is vividly made in the following lines from a petition sent by the Union of Merchants of Hamadan dated January 1926. After highlighting the unfavourable economic conditions in the country the petition remarked:

All over Iran one can see the dispirited and cheerless craftsmen whose numbers are already few. If you can spare some time, you can even visit their crypts (*dakhmeh*) which are the twentieth-century Iranian factories. Their look will answer all your questions. The most important of such factories are carpet-weaving factories which are under foreign control. Go and see how small boys and girls work there for an entire day for a few pennies. If foreigners buy Iranians carpets it is because of the low wages. If we compare them with workers of the industrialized nations of the world they earn a lot more money in a six to eight-hour workday. So we work but cannot earn and whatever we earn we spend it on foreign textiles and other goods.¹⁷⁷

The complaints about foreign imports and their negative effects on home manufactures were universal phenomena in Iran. In September 1927 silk-stuff makers of Yazd complained of losing their livelihood due to the cheaper imports.¹⁷⁸ Following this they requested the adoption of measures for promoting native textiles. They also requested in the petition the

¹⁷⁶ Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 259, footnote 6.

¹⁷⁷ Raziye Yoozofi Neya, *Asnad-i Tejar-i Advare Avval ta Panjom-e Shura-ye Melli* (Tehran: Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, 2009), 503.

¹⁷⁸ LMDICP. d6/k59/j27/p69, "To the Presidency of the Parliament", 21 September 1927.

appointment of an instructor to teach them the use of aniline dyes. In the response from the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Utilities it was stated that the law regarding the use of national cloth for state officials served as an effective means to promote domestic industries.¹⁷⁹ It was also added that the manufacturer should try, to the extent possible, to increase the quality of their goods and lower their prices. As far as the issue of aniline dyes was concerned it was stated that the limited budget of the Ministry did not allow the appointment of an instructor, but factory owners and producers could themselves come to Tehran to receive training in their use. The modernization policies of the 1920's and 1930's increasingly deprived many craftsmen of their livelihoods. With the Uniform Dress Law of 1928, for instance, traditional dresses were abandoned in state offices in favour of Western-style clothes which were supplied by the newly founded factories. This meant for hand weavers such as cloak makers the loss of their jobs. Thus in 1929 the cloak makers of Isfahan complained in a petition about the deterioration in their craft due to this law. In response Mehdi Qoli Hedayat, the prime minister, suggested that they weave fabrics suitable for "normal clothing" (*lebas-e ma'mul*) and added that the use of cloaks in winter was not forbidden.¹⁸⁰ According to the local *Akhgar* newspaper published in Isfahan, in February 1929 weavers of Tehran protested against the Vatan Factory and that weavers of Yazd lost their livelihood due to the mechanization of the textile industry.¹⁸¹

Hardly anyone criticized the modernization policies of the 1920's as harshly as Mohammad Ali of Yazd, himself a silk weaver who in an exceptionally long and utterly critical petition dated January 1929 condemned the deputies in very strong and elaborate language for not paying attention to the plight of the perishing craftsmen. The petition is worth quoting at length:

To the Honourable Head of the National Assembly,

When the Creator of humankind, the Instructor and the Trainer (*mo'alleem va morabbi*) of human beings, the Leader of the revolutionaries and the Rebutter of the claims of naturalists May peace be upon Him fought against His enemies who were also the enemies of humankind, He was defeated by them. When He was victimized and fell to the ground from His horse and when His enemies attacked His tent for plunder, he addressed their honour and said: "if you do not have religion do be free in your world" (*in lam yakun lakum dinu kunu ahraran fi dunyakum*). In order to weep popular preachers (*rowzehkhan*) translated this as "kill me and do whatever you want". However

¹⁷⁹ LMDICP. d6/k59/j27/p69, "From the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Utilities to the Presidency of the Parliament", 26 June 1927.

¹⁸⁰ NLAI. 290/8508, "To the Guild of Cloak Makers of Isfahan", 1 Tir 1308 (22 June 1929).

¹⁸¹ 7 February 1929. Quoted in Rajai, *Esfahan*, 125.

those who have a deeper understanding (*ahl-e ma'ani*) know what it actually means so they do not restrict its meaning to that ignoble crown and to that particular day, for the real meaning addresses humankind in general and Muslims in particular, and is valid until the end time. The word means “o the worshippers of their world and desires (*donya va shahvat parastan*) if you do not have religion then work for hard for your world”. (A characteristic which Iranians lack). I am not trying to pretend to be a preacher here. My objective is to remind and be a witness to Iranians in general and particularly to the deputies who are in this time a source of emulation for the people, and I tell you that it would very good if you were sincere about your declarations and listen to this advice. [...]. You present yourselves as the proponents of toilers (*tarafdaran-e ranjbar*) and I wish you could sometimes turn this from simple words to reality. Have you ever wondered about the situation of this miserable folk of Yazd? [...]. Have you ever thought about the consequences of the Uniform Dress Law for the silk-stuff makers of Yazd? Their goods are no longer purchased by people. I remember well that their goods were exported to Russia twenty years ago and were used there. Today due to lack of consideration their products are neither sold nor used. Your lack of consideration and attention to this community is responsible for this. Why is this? This is because Iranians and the entire world turned into imitators and as you know it is the ones at the top who are imitated. When you use European socks, pants, shirts and even staffs the lower classes try to become like you, as a result of which Iranian industries and handicrafts disappear just like those people who produce those goods. The populist gentlemen (*aqayan-e surat mardom*) preferred foreign fabrics to Iranian ones and they do not need the silk-makers of Yazd and Kashan. Iranian weavers wear themselves out to make the Iranian gentlemen purchase their goods and you are their leaders. Actually this sickness had spread a few years ago but did not receive widespread recognition.¹⁸² Also, if at least the notables (*'ayan va ashraf*) wore in wintertime the *'aba* produced in Na'in to protect themselves from the cold! But of course how funny would the Pahlavi hat appear with an *'aba*! An overcoat must be worn with it, or a jacket or a dressing gown! [...]. If it was only to protect yourselves from the cold and to stay warm it is possible to make both from the *'aba* produced in Na'in. But why bother? Instead it is easier to use the sacred cloth (*parcheh-e mobarak*) of whatever name which is produced by Monsieur Foreigner!¹⁸³

Following this harsh introduction Mohammad Ali then embarks upon explaining the plight of the silk-stuff makers of Yazd and the miseries of their families. However he was very careful to make sure his obedience to Reza Shah “the father of this bunch of helpless people, the Sultan who from the beginning ceaselessly worked for improving and developing the homeland and for removing the oppression coming from foreigners and their slaves inside the country (*zolm-e ajnab va ajnab parastan*)”. He then continued:

182 He sarcastically refers to the Law for the use of national clothes passed in 1923. The law made it compulsory for all state employees, including the military, to wear clothes produced of native fabrics and of Iranian make.

183 LMDICP. d7/k155/j35.1/13, “To the Honourable Head of the National Assembly”, 17 January 1929.

So I spent my valuable time to write these lines and I am reminding you that “if you do not have religion do be free in your world”. [...]. Would it not be good if you behaved like pious people do, and work to make Iranians, from the lower and upper classes, from ordinary people to the notables, wear Iranian clothes produced in this country?

He then claims that from the previous New Year to the day when the petition was written twelve or fifteen thousand people migrated from Yazd. In the meantime he not only condemns the Uniform Dress Law but also the monopolization of the opium trade and several other measures. He finally requested the adoption of necessary measures to ensure the use of native clothes and to develop domestic industries. He signed the petition as “a friend of the Pahlavi”.

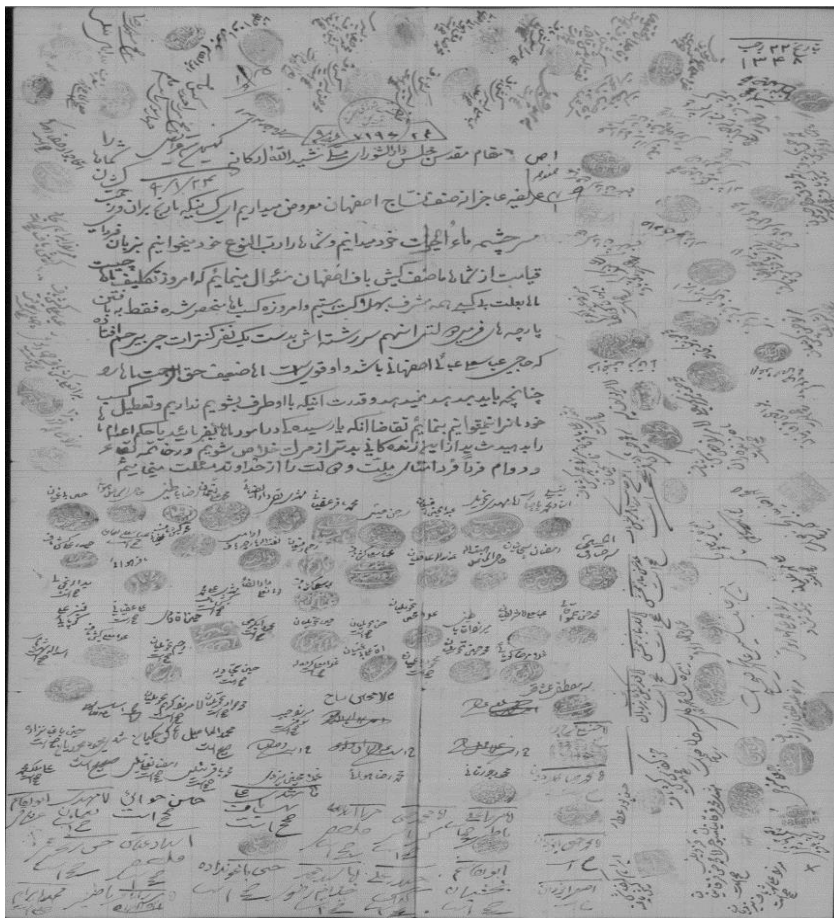
However, the case of Mohammad Ali of Yazd was rather exceptional. Usually the petitioners used deferential language to make their point, as the muslin weavers of Isfahan did. In a collective petition 24 December 1929 with hundreds of signatures on it, they complained of losing their livelihood and falling into misery because of the decline of their craft.¹⁸⁴ By employing a deliberately dramatic language they stated that their only source of income depended on weaving uniforms for state employees. However, they added that this business had lately been given out by a contract to a certain “merciless” contractor (*kontratchi*) named Haj ‘Abbas ‘Ali Esfahani who did not pay the craftsmen their wages and deprived them of their livelihoods. The workers argued that they neither had the power to confront Esfahani nor the intention of giving up their craft. The craftsmen then requested the following: “We call you to redress our grievance. If you want, you can order our execution and save us from this misery since in this situation death is better than living. Finally we pray to God to give you the trustees of the nation eternal fortune and support”.

Apparently, the official authorities worked with contractors for their orders for the sake of convenience, if for no other reason, and the latter mediated between the producers and the purchaser—in this case the local political establishment. This brought the craftsmen face to face with the ever-increasing penetration of state power into their lives and the threat posed by the nascent large scale industrial establishment. It is not known what workers meant by not receiving their wages. We may assume, however, that they either fulfilled their part of the contract but were denied their wages, or the contractor, Haj ‘Abbas ‘Ali Esfahani, subcontracted the order to some other individuals or to a company.

¹⁸⁴ LMD CIP. d7/k102/j14.2/p94, “To the Glorious Parliament”, 24 December 1929.

The reaction of the Majles reinforces the second possibility. In 22 April 1930 the President of the Majles responded to the petition by arguing that this case had been considered, but since trade was free in Iran no action could be taken about it.¹⁸⁵ It appears that upon this reaction from the Majles the workers tried their chance with the Ministry of National Economy but to no avail.

Figure 5: The petition of the muslin weavers of Isfahan who complain of deteriorating trade



Source: LMDICP. d7/k102/j14.2/94, 24 December 1929.

The ministry replied in in 25 May 1939 that the ministry did not compel the local authorities in Isfahan to continue their contract with Haj ‘Abbas ‘Ali Esfahani or not to make contracts with other individuals.¹⁸⁶ The petitioners then were advised to apply to the judicial authorities in Isfahan if they believed they incurred any losses because of the contractor.

¹⁸⁵ LMDICP. d7/k102/j14.2/ p94, “To Hajj Esma‘il Hava‘i and the other Weavers of Isfahan”, 22 April 1930.

¹⁸⁶ LMDICP. d7/k102/j14.2/ p94, “To the Honourable Weavers’ Guild of Isfahan”, 25 May 1939.

Occasionally, the tension between the workers employed in craft industries and the nascent large scale industrial establishments become obvious, as in the case of the *barak* weavers of Isfahan.¹⁸⁷ In a petition dated 29 March 1930 they complained in the following words of their and their misery and depravation, which they argued was caused by the Vatan Factory:

To the Noble Presence of the Deputies of the Glorious Majles, May God Empower its Pillars,

As the representatives of the *barak* weavers of Sadahi [?] we the minor servants, Qadam Ali ‘Ala’i Sadahi and Mir Ali Mokhtari Sadahi, present the following. In this period the state and the deputies are struggling for the advancement of national production and of the guilds. The nation and the homeland chose the path of progress only in order to promote the national products and to develop the guilds (*asnaf*) and the industries of the country. Therefore the Government, the authorities and especially the deputies of the Majles should give equal consideration to the guildsmen, and the industrialists and should only care about the benefit of the country and the development of the guilds. They should not discriminate against any person at the expense of another since everyone enjoys the same rights in society. The labourer (*ranjbar*) and the millionaire are the same. We the *barak* weavers of Sadahi are over ten thousand people, and have taken the contract for the manufacturing of the overcoats for the armed forces in Southern Iran and produced them with our labour and elbow grease (*dast-ras va ranj*). Each piece of our finished products cost the state three tumans and can be used for three years.¹⁸⁸ Last year Vatan Factory obtained the contract for the same business and produced each piece for three tumans and a bit and could only be used for two years. When our products, as your servants, which are good for three years are compared with those of Vatan Factory which can be used only for two years the qualified people will confirm the tenacity of the former. Moreover since the main objective of the authorities is to promote national goods it should be considered that we are ten thousand citizens of the homeland (*ahl-e vatan*) while the owner of Vatan Factory is one individual. Also, once this

¹⁸⁷ Barak is a garment made of camel’s hair.

¹⁸⁸ Craftsmen were not alone in their unease form the preferential treatment given by the state to Vatan Factory despite the expensiveness of its products. For example the management of the Derakhshan Factory in Yazd complained in a petition dated 21 December 1935 that despite the fine and cheaper clothes they produced the circular order regarding the wearing of uniforms at schools advised students and teachers to purchase their clothes from Vatan Factory, or its branches in the provinces, as a result of which people were scared to buy them from anywhere else. NLAI. 297/6434, “From Derakhshan Factory to the Ministry of Education”, 29 Azar 1314 (21 December 1935). Indeed in September 1929 the Ministry of Commerce issued a decree by which state officials working at all ministries were told to buy their clothes from Vatan Factory. *Habl al-Matin* (Calcutta) 24 September 1929. Quoted in Raja’i, 125. Also the uniforms of the street cleaners in Isfahan were made by Vatan Factory, Akhgar 14 September 1933. Quoted in Raja’i, 372. Prior to such critiques Vatan Factory was criticized for its expensive goods in 1931 by the 9th District of the Directory of Statistics and Records. After stressing delight of the employees of the Directory in the 9th district from the law regarding the uniform dress and their satisfaction with using native clothes, the reports criticized Vatan Factory as the only supplier of the necessary clothes in the region for selling them at excessive prices which the general populace could not afford. NLAI. 291/954, “From the 9th District of the Directory of Statistics and Records to the Governor of Isfahan”, 25 Esfand 1309 (16 March 1931). The report argued the quality of the goods produced by the factory was not so good and was lower than average imported European clothes despite their high prices. The report also added that within one month, the price of the clothes produced by this factory rose from three to five tumans.

state contract is taken from us we will disappear for we have no other craft or trade, but the owner of Vatan Factory does not need this contract at all as he can produce different clothes of various colours. If we take the state budget into account, our products reach the army for three tumans each, to be used for three years. Our business is patriotism, our business is progress-loving, and our business is proper since it not only serves the interests of the state but also saves the ten thousand citizens of the country (*nofus-e mellat*) from deprivation. Vatan Factory can produce different goods of various colours for the army. After all the peaceful decision rests with your noble presence may God prolong your fortune.¹⁸⁹

Upon not receiving any response to their case, the weavers sent after about three months another petition in which they reproduced the same account.¹⁹⁰ In this second petition written on behalf of “the ten thousand minor workers of the guild of *barak* weavers, both male and female” (*in chakeran-e karegaran-e senf-e barakbaf-e balegh bar dah hezar nofus az zan va mard*) the stress on labour was more deliberate. The petitioning workers particularly focused on the notion of the homeland (*vatan*) to counteract the Vatan Factory named to address the same patriotic feelings. Besides, as a discursive tool the workers explicitly presented the owner of the Vatan Factory as the sole beneficiary of the contract by dismissing altogether the hundreds of workers employed at the factory.

Throughout the 1930’s the state support for large scale industrial establishments in general and for the Vatan Factory in particular, along with foreign imports even as late as the mid-1930’s, continued to be held liable by the craft workers for the decline of their craft and their lost jobs as in the case of the cloak makers of Isfahan. In February 1934 they sent a petition in which they complained about the hardships they faced for the decline of their craft.¹⁹¹ They stated in the petition that after cloak making was no longer possible they started to produce different fabrics which also failed because of the cheaper imported fabrics. Thus they demanded the establishment of an institution where they would be educated to find themselves a sustainable job. Or else the cloak makers asked the government to order the police and other security forces to purchase from them part of the necessary clothes which they have been buying from Vatan Factory. The cloak makers also argued that the state could establish a company for the craftsmen and imports machine by which they could produce clothes.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ LMDICP. d7/k102/j14.2/p89, “To the Glorious Parliament”, 29 March 1930

¹⁹⁰ LMDICP. d7/k102/j14.2/p89, “To the Glorious Parliament, 22 June 1930”.

¹⁹¹ NLAI. 291/2480, “To the Honourable Governor of Isfahan”, 6 Esfand 1312 (25 February 1934).

¹⁹² The unrest was not limited to textile workers. Those workers employed at other industries also protested the establishment of factories which they argued replaced their crafts. A similar case was made by cigarette sellers in

Occasionally, workers lost their jobs due to the unintended consequences of the modernization policies of which the Uniform Dress Law is an example. In 12 July 1936 the drapers of Najafabad, a town in the Isfahan province, complained from their deteriorating business due to the Jewish peddlers from whom the veiled women who could not go out to the bazaars shopped.¹⁹³ They complained that such peddlers had no shops and were subject to no taxes. They in turn requested that those peddlers be ordered to hire shops and get involved in other businesses. According to the drapers since Najafabad was an agricultural town, men were busy working on the land while most of the transactions in the bazaars were undertaken by women who since the implementation of the unveiling law could not go out at all. In another petition dated 26 January 1937 the drapers operating at the bazaars in Isfahan complained of losing their livelihood again due to the Jewish peddlers.¹⁹⁴ They stated that due to the Uniform Dress Law the women who no longer could go out to the bazaars chose to shop from peddlers. Consequently, Isfahan women increasingly preferred this type of shopping. As a result the business of the drapers went from bad to worse. The drapers finally requested the prohibition of peddlers who were not subjects to any taxes or did not have shops of their own.

Factory workers too frequently complained about losing their jobs. Factory workers lost their jobs for a variety of reasons. Economic issues played a role but conflict with factory management was another reason for losing jobs. During the 1930's workers were somehow aware of the interventionist state role in industrialization and called the official authorities to their help in times of economic problems. The case of the three hundred and fifty former workers of the Khosravi Tannery in Tabriz attests to this point. The workers stated in a collective petition in June 1936, that they lost their jobs because of the financial difficulties and increased taxes which led the factory management to close its shoe-making department.¹⁹⁵ They stated that the department had been producing military boots and had to shut down due to the increased customs duties on the necessary chemicals. Therefore, they asked for the

a petition dated March 1932. According to what they read in newspapers, wrote the cigarette sellers, some merchants and other investors involved in cigarette selling imported a number of cigarette-cleaning machines, with a daily product equal to that of nearly a hundred workers. Although these machines did not yet work with full capacity the workers with their families, they argued, were in a state of decline. The cigarette-sellers then asked the Majles to show mercy to the workers and their families and saving them from this misery. LMDCIP. d8/k168/j6, "From the Cigarette Sellers", 3 March 1932.

¹⁹³ NLAI. 291/2581, "To the Governor of Isfahan", 21 Tir 1315 (12 July 1936).

¹⁹⁴ NLAI. 291/2581, "To the Glorious Governor of Isfahan", 6 Bahman 1315 (26 January 1937).

¹⁹⁵ LMDCIP. d/k107/j16, 26 June 1936.

removal of factory's financial difficulties in order to be able to get back to their work.¹⁹⁶ Consequently the factory was saved from its financial problems by army orders.¹⁹⁷

In an undated petition which probably belonged to the mid-1930's, the workers of Pashmbaf Factory in Isfahan complained of mistreatment and arbitrary practices by their manager. The workers criticized the powers granted to the factory management for the implementation of the adopted measures in the following words:

Currently the Pashmbaf Factory management fires a worker from the factory, who wasted years of his life for it, every day, through various pretexts and imaginary excuses. For this they receive no permission from official authorities. Three days ago a worker named Mohammad Ali Mohammadi employed at the spinning department was dismissed for no reason... Workers are worried from the possibility that such arbitrary decisions may in time turn into established practices among factory managers.¹⁹⁸

Sometimes the conflicts between the workers and the factory management were rather evident as in the case of the Zayandeh-Rud Factory in Isfahan. In an undated petition, probably from the late 1930's, the workers complained about the obstinate behaviour of the manager who allegedly introduced unfavourable working practices.¹⁹⁹ They argued that the manager increased the working day from eight to twelve hours; refused to pay the wages when workers had to wait for the repair of a broken machine although the common practice in other factories was payment of wages. Although in many instances we can follow the reaction of the authorities, in this case no such reply was attached to the file.

Unpaid Wages

Unpaid wages constituted another problem for which workers sent petitions. Such complaints mostly came from factory workers. The first case is from the Wool Spinning Factory in Mazandaran, northern Iran, which was established by the House of Industries (HI) to provide employment to needy women. In August 1921 three hundred female workers sent a petition to the Majles and to the Cabinet in which they asked for their unpaid wages for the last nine

¹⁹⁶ Consequently, the factory was saved by army orders. Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 132.

¹⁹⁷ Floor, *Labour and Industry*, 132.

¹⁹⁸ NLAI. 291/565 "To the Governorship of Isfahan, 1321 (1942).

¹⁹⁹ NLAI. 291/352, "The Attitude of the Manager of the Zayandehrud Factory towards the Workers", n.d.

months that they worked, before the factory was finally closed.²⁰⁰ They stated that they worked at the factory which was managed by an Armenian named Monsieur Mowl under utterly unfavourable conditions and that each of them had several orphans to take care of. In addition, they added that their previous appeals to various state authorities for a redress of their grievance did not yield any results. Finally after stating that they needed protection they wrote that the deputies should not accept that “the Iranian honour (*namusha-ye irani*) seeks protection from foreigners”. The petition was apparently forwarded by the Petitions Commission to the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Utilities which informed the Head of the Majles that HI was established in 1918 and was placed in 1920 under the authority of this ministry.²⁰¹ However according to the Ministry HI was subsequently relegated to the Tehran Municipality. Therefore, the Ministry suggested that the female workers had to appeal to the municipality. Three months later on 19 November 1921 the workers sent a second petition which addressed all of the deputies and in which woman workers reproduced the same account regarding the difficulties they had to face.²⁰² By using the same honour discourse they added “does your clemency allow you to leave a bunch of your women and honours (*avrat va navamis-e shoma*) without food and clothing?” Finally they stated that if their grievance was not redressed they would take sanctuary at Baharestan Square where the Majles was located.

Here the female workers appealed to the patrimonial feelings of the deputies and their role as the protectors of the nation. However, since the issue concerned previous years, Tehran Municipality denied any responsibility in the matter and stated that it concerned HI.²⁰³ Therefore, it was suggested that the workers should apply to Monsieur Mowl who was the previous manager of HI until it was abolished. Shortly afterwards the workers sent a third petition.²⁰⁴ The petition dated 12 December 1921 which addressed the President of the Majles, the Cabinet and the Petitions Commission provided further details as to their living conditions. The workers wrote that during the famine years between 1917 and 1919 Americans used to support them but as the famine ended they stopped their help as well. They

²⁰⁰ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2. “To the Glorious National Assembly and to the Honourable Members of the Cabinet”, August, 1921.

²⁰¹ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2. “From the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Utilities to the Head of the Majles”, 3 September 1921.

²⁰² LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2 “To the Honourable Deputies of the Sacred Majles May God Endure their Power”, 19 November 1921.

²⁰³ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2, “From Prime Ministry to the Head of the Majles May God Endure its Fortune”, 30 November 1921.

²⁰⁴ LMDCIP. d4/k25/j12/p2, “To the Head of the Majles, the Cabinet and the Petitions Commission May God Endure their Fortune”, 12 December 1921.

then complained that their wages for the three months were 12 tumans for each. They also requested the sending of an inspector to inspect their miserable situation and verify their righteousness. This petition was followed by a response written by Monsieur Mowl who addressed the petitioning woman workers.²⁰⁵ He denied responsibility and argued that his “only desire was to help the helpless class (*tabaqah-e bicharegan*)”. According to him the responsibility rested with the Ministry of Commerce rather than with himself. However, for the women, seeking support from Monsieur Mowl was not an option for “there is a big difference between a woman who received twelve tumans a month and a manager whose monthly income is one hundred and fifty tumans”.²⁰⁶ The result of the case is not clear from the documents, as in the case of a former worker of the Hamadan branch of the British owned East Carpet Factory who complained in September 1926 that after twelve years of service at the factory part of his wage had remained unpaid.²⁰⁷ For this he applied to the factory but to no avail. He then applied to the Governorship of Hamadan but they rejected help since the factory was owned by the British. The worker then applied to the British Consulate in the city and was advised to apply to the judicial authority of Hamadan.

Concluding Remarks

From the inception of the constitutional system in 1906 until 1931 when the anti-communist law came into effect, Iranian workers took part in several strikes that characterized this period. Those workers employed in the services sector, such as telegraph employees and tramway workers, were among the first to launch collective actions which gradually received acceptance among those working in other industries. Nonetheless it is safe to argue that at any rate the greater part of the workforce in Iran remained non-organized until the end of the period under study. The insignificant number of large-scale industries, lack collective action amongst craft workers and the primarily political-oriented agendas of the leftist organizations determined the course of labour activism in this period. The unstable political atmosphere, foreign intervention, and the eruption of First World War politics, narrowly defined, and security issues further distracted attention from the growing labour issues. Once the war was over labour actions experienced a major increase. With the state’s ever-increasing grip over

²⁰⁵ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p2, “To the Woman Workers of the House of Industries”, n.d.

²⁰⁶ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p2, “To the Head of the Majles, the Cabinet and the Petitions Commission May God Endure their Fortune”, 12 December 1921.

²⁰⁷ LMDICP. d4/k25/j12/p2, “To the Honourable Parliament”, 20 September 1926.

the political, social and economic fields especially from the establishment of the Pahlavi regime in 1925 onwards, the frequency and the number of labour actions suffered an obvious setback. As the government forbade trade unions, especially CCFTU, 150 labour organizers were arrested between 1927 and 1932.²⁰⁸ Also upon the forced retirement of Solayman Eskandari the Socialist party had dissolved with its clubs having been burnt down by organized mobs.²⁰⁹ The recently adopted position of the Communist Party of Iran towards Reza Shah and the existing political establishment was one of the main reasons for the government's uncompromisingly hostile attitude towards leftist movements. First in the party's Second Congress in Urmieh in 1927 and then in the Third International in Moscow ten months later the 1921 coup was described as a British plot and the Shah was denounced as an imperialist stooge.²¹⁰ Moreover, the Congress also called for a revolution of "peasants, workers, and national capitalists".²¹¹

The anti-socialist and anti-communist feelings apparently found echoes in the provinces, or else they were used as discursive tools to outmanoeuvre political rivals. The following petition sent from the workers and guilds union in Kerman in August 1927 provides an interesting example of this:²¹²

To the Sacred Majles May God Empower its Pillars,

As the people of Kerman we have been waiting for the appointment of proper, pious and respectful members (*'aza-ye saleh va anaser-e ba diyanat va abrumand*) to the ranks of the judiciary as the shelter of our honour and property (*navamis va amval*). This way we would benefit from righteous judges with a sense of duty. This would not only enable the consolidation of a judicial power in the country and people would enjoy security and justice but we could also swell with pride for having qualified judicial authorities with a sense of duty in a time when our state stood up against several states and abolished capitulations. Unfortunately the situation is far from this. We hear that the new members of the judiciary are people who lack piety and honour as well as religion and proper behaviour (*nah alaqamandi beh diyanat va haysiyat darand va nah mazhab va sehhat-e 'amal*). In addition, they are all from the Qajars and socialists with hostility and enmity to the people of Kerman. [...] The people of Kerman express their hatred towards the nomination to

²⁰⁸ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 139.

²⁰⁹ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 139.

²¹⁰ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 139. The Congress was actually held in Ivanova near Moscow in the autumn 1927. Y. Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e duran-e separe shodeh: Khaterat va asnad-e Yusof Eftekhari, 1299 ta 1329*. Kaveh Bayat & M. Tafrashi (eds.) (Tehran, 1370/1991), 28-29. Quoted in Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 89.

²¹¹ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 139

²¹² LMDICP. d6/k49/j23.2/p131, "To the Sacred Majles May God Empower its Pillars", 7 August 1927.

judicial posts of such people as Mahmu[d] Dargahi, Dehgan, and Mo'in al-Shari'eh, and Soleyman Mirza Qajar Kermani, and Monshizadeh, and Golestani.²¹³

In the rest of the petition the supplicants asked for the dismissal of these people. Nonetheless, the end of leftist organizations and of collective labour activism did not mean the end of labour activism as such. True, during the factory-based industrial leap-forward of the 1930's labour issues remained a peripheral concern.²¹⁴ No more than sporadic and unsystematic attempts were made to regulate workers' working and living conditions. However, during the same period workers gradually developed a language of their own which was not confrontational but served to make their demands and complaints adequately clear. It appears that the number of the petitions, both individual and collective, was a lot higher during the 1930's than before. Petitioning served during this period as "a privileged communicative space" in which not transparency but dissimulation served as the main discursive tool for workers.²¹⁵ Workers' discourse "intended to be ambiguous, to have a double meaning, to be garbled so that they cannot be treated as a direct, open challenge and, hence, invite an equally direct, open retaliation".²¹⁶ In most cases, a relatively harsh criticism from the part of the workers was almost immediately softened in the following line and a clear line was cleverly drawn between the Shah and the lower authorities. Loyalty was so overly stressed in petitions that no room was left for a suspicion of rebellion or open confrontation. These petitions provide insights into the living and working conditions of the Iranian textile workers, as others, as they also help us reconstruct the relationships between workers and the political establishment.

²¹³ Dehgan should be the famous labour activist, the president of CCFTU who presented Iran in the Third International. Sulayman Mirza was apparently Sulayman Mizra Iskandari.

²¹⁴ The pace of industrialization decelerated from 1938 onwards due either to the fear of overproduction or governmental attempt to limit profits. Bharier, *Economic Development*, 174.

²¹⁵ 'A privileged communicative space' is taken from D. Zaret, "Petitions and the 'Invention' of Public Opinion in the English Revolution", *American Journal of Sociology*, 101 (1996), pp. 1497-1555. Here 1512. Quoted in Ken Lunn & Ann Day, "Deference and Defiance: The Changing Nature of Petitioning in British Naval Dockyards", in Lex Heerma Van Voss, ed., *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in Social History (2001): 131-150. Here 132.

²¹⁶ James Scott, "Everyday Form of Resistance", *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, V. 4 (1989): 55.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study ends with the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941, whose departure from the country to spend the last few years of his life in exile closed a crucial epoch in Iranian history. He had left behind a relatively stable political structure, a series of secular reforms and the consequences of a rapid industrialization process lasting more than a decade. Following the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 during nearly the first four decades of the twentieth century, Iran hovered between foreign domination and internal repression. On the one hand, foreign powers mainly exerted economic influence on Iran, as on the neighbouring Ottoman Empire. Particularly from the mid-19th century onwards Iran was viewed by industrialized powers, especially Britain and Russia, as an open market for their ready-made products. Consequently from the 19th century onwards 'the foreigner' had been established in popular opinion as an 'enemy' against the interests of Iranians. On the other, popular opposition against internal repression became more pronounced with increased economic deterioration, and gradually became consolidated into political opposition which culminated in the Constitutional Revolution in 1905. The constitutional experiment which lasted until 1911 was especially effective in the creation of a political community in the country, but in economic terms its achievements were negligible. For the first time in Iran's history had the political arena become so multifaceted and multivocal, with local politics becoming far more important than before. However neither the insufficient infrastructure in the country nor the binding economic treaties which had been signed throughout the 19th century with European powers, mainly Britain and Russia, allowed for notable economic development. The international developments proved to be no less unfavourable.

Although labour organizations and collective labour actions were observed from the early 1900's onwards, generally speaking, workers' voices were lost in political debates. At the turn of the 20th century politics and economics were sufficiently intertwined to bring diverse, and at times conflicting, parties together. Thus, the great part of the early labour movement had agendas which were not necessarily directly labour-related. The experiences of such movements and organizations tell us a lot about the history of the period and they deserve close scrutiny. Nonetheless, many of the labouring people who chose to stay out of the early labour organizations or fell outside the predefined scope of such organizations were busy earning their bread and livelihood. For the most part these people remained peripheral to the

scholarship on early twentieth century Iranian history. Their experiences constituted one of the major concerns of this study.

From the late 19th century onwards the low customs-duties put by economic treaties on goods imported into Iran by European merchants and companies and the damages which these imports brought over the craft industries in the country have disillusioned many Iranian craftsmen, traders as well as other people from the political establishment. The chronic trade deficit and the declining craft industries have, thus, been a matter of debate from the nineteenth century onwards. Throughout the 1920's major steps were taken to establish security in the country and to minimize foreign economic domination. This way, the groundwork had been laid down for the economic leap-forward of the 1930's. Political and economic developments were discussed in chapters two and three, respectively, and I will not reproduce those accounts here. It should be noted, however, that the resolution of many previous problems gradually served to crystallize the differences of previously allied social groups, such as the clergy, merchants, tradesmen, and workers, etc., and contributed to a class-based representation of Iranian society. For instance, although some of the big merchants, craftsmen and workers had jointly struggled against foreign imports less than a decade earlier, the workers and craftsmen found themselves in a disadvantaged position in the context of the industrialization policies during the 1930's. Secondly, from the early 1920's onwards, workers had to negotiate with a strong central power with its increasing penetration into the provinces.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had also added to labour radicalism and to the formation of nationwide labour activism which was also facilitated by improved transportation and communications. While the main concern of many of the Communist Party of Iran and the leftist organizations was to struggle against the ever-increasing power of the state and its macroeconomic policies, the mass of workers tried to accommodate and cope with the new conditions.

With increased factory-based industrialization, the manufacturing scene in Iran, especially at the textile industry and hence of the workforce involved in it, changed as well. It appears that throughout the nearly four decades investigated in this study a great variety and number of manufacturing activities existed in Iran, both in urban settings and the countryside, and they fell outside the purview of guilds. In other words, for the period under investigation guilds ceased to be the major manufacturing units for the textile industry, and probably for many

others too. Nonetheless as Quataert observed for nineteenth and twentieth century Ottoman guilds, in Iran too it is not clear at all what these surviving guilds had become.¹ This point requires further investigation. Having been stripped throughout the 1910's and 1920's of their economic and political significance many of them retained their existence due to their social functions. We know that many of the former craftsmen have gradually and increasingly been integrated into the proletariat. The relationship between these guilds, factories and the rise of unregulated, extra-guild production in terms of the workforce involved in them can significantly contribute to our knowledge of the diversified nature of Iranian labour. Also, the relationship between the guilds and the newly emerging small-scale manufacturing needs to be studied. It appears that lack of any proper documentation of their activities renders a comprehensive study of the labour involved in artisanal industries nearly impossible. Nonetheless, any work devoted to the study of Iranian labour during this period must at least attempt to accommodate the experiences and struggles of labour involved in such diverse manufacturing activities.

By focusing on petitions this study dealt with industrialization and labour issues in Iran from 1906 to 1941. It offered a new dimension in reconceptualizing Iranian labour history. In the main, the study tried to trace the discursive formation of the Iranian working class and explained how workers came to identify themselves as such. For this it discussed how a genuine class identity emerged from a general subaltern discourse. The study also called into question the traditional distinction made between organized and non-organized labour and problematized the teleological role attributed to factory workers. The relationship between the working people and the ruling classes constituted another concern of this study. Nonetheless, I encountered two main problems while conducting my research. First of all, due to the disproportionate number of petitions from the first to the twelfth parliaments investigated in this study, it was not possible to reach an equally comprehensive discussion of each period. Thus, although we have comparatively fewer petitions from 1906 to 1925 the number of petitions for the years between 1925 and 1941, particularly during the 1930's, is substantially higher. This difference may have two main causes. First, we can assume that with the increased bureaucratization from the mid-1920's onwards, petitions were more effectively administered and preserved. Second, workers used petitioning especially "in the situation where workers' organizations were not yet formed or recognized" or "where other forms of

¹ Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 8.

resistance were explicitly forbidden”.² Until the late 1920’s workers enjoyed such direct means of expressing and demonstrating their grievances as trade unions and collective action. Yet, with such organized activity having been explicitly forbidden, workers used petitions for this purpose. This does not mean that petitioning was absent in freer political settings. Quite the contrary, what Swarnalatha observed for colonial Andhra applies to the Iranian workers, too. That is to say, workers “resorted to other methods only in the event of the failure of petitioning to yield results”.³ However, during the 1930’s, petitioning served as the only viable means of expressing their demands and grievances, which significantly added to the number of petitions from this period.

The second problem in this study is the absence of a predefined geographical focus. This might have resulted in understating regional differences which were significant in Iran especially for the period under study. For example, while in some regions craft industries related to textiles suffered an almost steady decline from the nineteenth century onwards, in some others where European goods could not reach, or reached in comparatively insignificant amounts, craft industries remained intact for a longer period of time. Similar observations can be made for industrialization too. It would be wrong to assume that industrialization developed at the same speed and scale all over Iran. Regional studies can better illustrate such differences. For the lack of a geographical focus, too, I have two basic explanations. First, for the main concerns of this study I chose to focus more generally on petitioning practices of workers by referring to the textile labour which was among the largest sectors in the country and remained so throughout the period thus analysed. While doing so, I wanted to refer to crafts industries as well as to factories. An interregional approach served my purposes better, for while craft industries continued in some regions to be the dominant type of manufacturing, in some others large-scale industrial establishments became the principle production centres. Thus by referring to various regions throughout the work I discussed the experiences of textile workers who were employed at different manufacturing sites. Second, as the number of petitions for each period was disproportionate so was their geographical scope. For instance, while I was able during my archival research in Tehran to find many petitions from Isfahan, this was not the case for every city.

² Lex Heerma Van Voss, “Introduction”, *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9 Petitions in Social History (2001): 1-10. Here P. 5.

³ Potukuchi Swarnalatha, “Revolt, Testimony, Petition: Artisanal Protests in Colonial Andhra”, *International Review of Social History* 46, 107-130. Here 113.

Throughout the period investigated in this study Iranian workers had to deal with distressing living and working conditions. From the start, I agreed with Barrington Moor's following remarks:

"For all students of human society sympathy with the victims of historical processes and skepticism about the victors' claims provide essential safeguards against being taken in by the dominant mythology. A scholar who tries to be objective needs these feelings as part of his working equipment."⁴

My purpose here is not to portray Iranian workers as victims which, I believe, would be just as unfounded as seeing them as a revolutionary force. Nonetheless, theirs was a life full of challenges as they were caught between a rock and a hard place. There was, on the one hand, the challenge posed by foreign imports which deprived many craftsmen of their livelihood. True, Iranian craft industries did not decline overnight in the face of increasing imports and developed various survival strategies which enabled them to gradually reclaim some of their lost territory. Yet, working conditions and workers' wages were among the first to be compromised. The more manufacturing moved to the less monitored areas, such as cottage and putting-out industries, the lesser workers were able to obtain favourable working conditions. The foreign import was not only dominant but also attractive and was preferred by many, who could afford it, to home manufactures. On the other, there was the increasing factorization, particularly during the 1930's, which paid little, if any, attention to labour issues. The Iranian working class was made amidst these conditions. Their petitions are proofs of a sophisticated engagement with the ruling classes as well as their superiors.

There is no doubt that there is a growing literature on Iranian labour history. The working people who constitute the majority of Iranian society, like any other society, have already been historical subjects. What we need to do is to challenge our previous opinions about the working people and to focus on diverse aspect of Iranian labour history. to this ends, and for others, petitions which provided the main source material of this study deserve further attention. Petition-writing was a familiar and effective practice for most Iranians who had diverse objectives. It was not unaffordable for most but it was not without risks either. People used petitioning when they needed it. By using petitions we can gain insight not only into the experiences and perceptions of Iranian workers but also of the public at large. Also, I think we need more monographs on workers who were employed in various industries from tanning to carpet-making, and from match-making to the services sector. Although there were some

⁴ Barrington Moor, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Middlesex: Penguin University Books, 1974), 523.

common characteristics shared by industries in general, there were at the same time sector-based developments which can only be revealed by focusing on various industries. Our apprehension of the past will remain incomplete without due attention paid in our historical inquiry to the experiences and perception of the working people. As far as labour history is concerned this apprehension needs, first and foremost, to overcome the erroneous tendencies which either equate labour history with that of the formal communist and socialist organizations or else label any class-based labour claims as foreign imports and harmful. This can only be achieved via a concerted effort and only through such an effort can we gain further insight into the understudied aspects of Iranian labour history.

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Appendices

1. Representatives of the Guilds in the First Majles¹

	Name	Electoral District	Representative
1	Hajj Agha Tirforush	Tehran	Wood sellers, carpenters, chair makers, turners, mat weavers ²
2	Hajj Mohammad Ebrahim Vares	Tehran	Mercers, silk sellers, peddlers
3	Hajj Mohammad Taqi Bonakdar	Tehran	Mercers
4	Hajj Mirza Ebrahim Khayyatbashi	Tehran	Tailors, fine-drawers, cloakmakers, dressmakers, embroiderers
5	Seyyed Ahmad Zargarbashi	Tehran	Goldsmiths, braziers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths
6	Hajj Sheikh Esma'il Bolurfurush	Tehran	Crystal sellers, glass makers
7	Mir 'Abd al-Mottaleb Kordestani Amin al-Tojjar	Tehran	Butchers, tanners, chicken sellers, lamb sellers

¹ The list is largely based on the following: Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, "Dowreh-e Jadid-e Mashrutiyat dar Iran-4," *Kaveh*. 15 July 1918. However, Taqizadeh does not provide detailed information on the guilds represented by these deputies. Thus, other secondary sources mainly the following are also used: Fallah-Tootcar, "Social and Political," 146 and Afary, *Iranian*, 73. Guilds of Tehran were allocated thirty two representatives but in the end twenty nine were elected due to the number of guilds members. A number of problems about this list should be addressed. First of all, the Electoral Law of 1906 introduced an electorate consisting of six societal strata but they did not have to elect one from among themselves. In other words, guilds' representatives were not necessarily guilds members. For that matter, that Fallah-Tootcar includes Hajj Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Wail al-Ra'aya in the list of guilds representatives should be met with caution. He was a leading merchant of Hamadan and his election should be regarded as an alliance of different groups rather than being an act of guilds alone. The same hold true for Taqizadeh too. The reason behind this is well explained by Sa'd al-Dowleh on 30 December 1906 in the twenty third session of the newly founded parliament. When specific issues regarding elections came about he made the following observation: "in big cities where there are many guilds with lots of members the issue of elections is not complicated. However, in small towns and villages where guilds have members from all groups of society yet not with many members they too have the full right to elections but in the following manner: each class and guilds should write the names of their candidates to be put on streets and bazaars and drew lots and whoever received the majority of votes will be elected as deputy' *Luh-e Mashruh*, 30 December 1906. Another problem originates from the power of anjomans. Apparently, where they were powerful enough anjomans played determining roles in the election. Mansureh Ettehadiyeh-Nezamafi argues, for example, that in Tabriz the law was not implemented and the Anjum of Tabriz elected the deputies. Ettehadiyeh-Nezamafi, *Majls va Intikhabat*. P. 8.

² For the glossary of the guilds the following work is used: H. E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia* (Cambridge: The M. I. T Press, 1966), 331-385. Also, especially about the crafts related to textiles the following work is used: Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500-1925* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 129-206.

8	Mashhadi Baqir Baqqal	Tehran	Grocers, wholesalers, nuts sellers, fruit sellers, fodder sellers, rice sellers
9	Hajj Sheikh Hasan ‘Ali ‘Alaqeband	Tehran	Braid makers, ³ gold embroiderers, galloon sewers, galloon weavers, gold wire-drawers
10	Hasan Me‘marbashi Panjeh ‘Ali	Tehran	Well-sinkers, builders, brick-kiln makers, tile-makers, jar sellers
11	Hajj Mollah Hasan Vares	Tehran	Broadcloth sellers
12	Seyyed Hosayn Borujerdi	Tehran	Blacksmiths, farriers, horseshoe makers, nail makers, balustrade makers
13	Sheikh Hasan Tehrani Saqatforush	Tehran	Perfume-sellers, drug-sellers, tea-sellers, sugar seller
14	Hajj Sheikh Hosayn ‘Ali Dallal	Tehran	Shoemakers, sole-makers
15	Hajj ‘Abbas Qoli Nanva	Tehran	Bakers, fodder sellers
16	Hajj ‘Abl al-Vahhab Kolahduz	Tehran	Hat makers, <i>chelow</i> cooks, cooks, kebab cooks, kellehpaz, ⁴ <i>yakhni</i> ⁵ sellers
17	Hajj Seyyed Mohammad Sa‘atforush	Tehran	Cobblers, watchmakers
18	Seyyed Mohammad Taqi Herati	Tehran	Copper makers, pistol makers, carriage makers,
19	Mirza Mahmud Ketabforush Khvansari	Tehran	Bookbinders, gilders, paper sellers, books sellers
20	Seyyed Mostafa Semsar	Tehran	Brokers, cotton ginners, quilt makers, old cloth sellers
21	Seyyed Mahdi Saqatforush	Tehran	Coffee-house keepers
22	Seyyed Valiullah Khan Nasr	Tehran	Barbers, bath attendants, ice sellers, water bailiffs
23	Hajj Mohammad Taqi Tajer Dahbende	Tehran	Cloth shoe (giveh) makers, <i>takhtfurush</i> ⁶ , sock weavers
24	Mirza Hosayn ‘Ali Mahruzadeh	Tehran	Mat weavers, <i>tirfurush</i> ⁷
25	Hajj Hosayn ‘Ali Va‘iz	Tehran	He was elected but did not join the Assembly and Hajj Sheikh Hosayn Ali Dallal)14 th on the list) was elected instead. ⁸
26	Agha Mirza Hasan	Tehran	Following his resignation Mirza Hosayn Ali Arsidouz was elected. ⁹

³ ‘*Alaqehband* is someone who twists braids (*qeytan*), using silk and cotton yarn: Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry*, 131.

⁴ One who dresses and sells the head, feet and tripe of cattle: F Staingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005), 1045.

⁵ A rich stew of meat: Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 1529.

⁶ Cloth shoe sole: Wulff, *Traditional Crafts*, 379.

⁷ The one who sells axels of spinning wheels: Wulff, *Traditional Crafts*, 381.

⁸ Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political,” 146.

27	Mirza Hosayn ‘Ali Sigari	Tehran	Cigarette sellers
28	Sheikh Hosayn ‘Ali Urusiduz	Tehran	Cloth sellers
29	Mirza Mohammad Khan Sadeq Hazrat	Tehran	
30	Hajj ‘Ali Akbar	Tehran	Cooks
31	Ostad Gholam Reza Yakhdansaz	Tehran	Saddlers, trunk makers
32	Hajj Mohammad Baqer	Tehran	Soap makers
33	Hajj Mirza Agha Farshforush	Tabriz	Carpet sellers
34	Mirza Hadi Jawaheri Esfahani	Isfahan	Jewellery makers
35	Hajj Mirza Ebrahim Agha	Azarbaijan	

⁹ Fallah-Tootcar, “Social and Political,” 146.

2.The List of the Items Proposed by the Merchants Union of Tehran to be Banned from Importation

Name					
1	Candle,	28	Gum, plaster, rubber and ... products	55	Writing material
2	Cacao	29	Sewn clothes	56	Makeup items
3	Coffee	30	Music instruments	57	Travel itemsf
4	Sugar	31	Various items	58	Goatskin products
5	All sorts of items made of lead, tin, spelter/zinc, copper and nickel	32	Jewelleries	59	Replica jewellery
6	Plants and all sorts of plant products	33	Various stones of all kinds	60	Wand and ...
7	Cotton fabrics with the exception of muslin and ...	34	Cleaned and un-cleaned cottons	61	Gambling instruments made of paper or other stuff
8	Fabrics made of wool and all sorts yarn	35	Cotton and silk fabrics	62	Toys
9	Fabrics made of pure wool	36	Yarn and pure or mixed silk velvet	63	...
10	Liquid glues	37	Lace	64	Gramophone ...
11	Phaeton, carriage, cart and automobile with the exception of trolley and bus	38	Felt	65	All kinds of cobbler items
12	Wood stuff	39	Carpet	66	Buzzer
13	Drinks	40	Kashmiri and Sherwani shawls	67	Furniture and mirror
14	Coal and charcoal	41	Woollen fabrics mixed with silk	68	Gold watch
15	Wax	42	Woollen fabrics mixed with cotton and linen	69	Artistic and collection fabrics
16	Fruits	43	Raw linen and hemp	70	Opium
17	Milk	44	Linen fabrics mixed with silk	71	Rosy papers for writing
18	Vegetables	45	Woven and unwoven silk mixed with linen and yarn or pure silk	72	Wallpapers
19	Honey	46	Tapestry and stripe	73	All sorts of perfumery
20	Eggs	47	Lacework	74	Un-tanned skins
21	Starch	48	Various kinds from number 20 which are not named in the table	75	...
22	Macaroni	49	Rag for <i>giveh</i>	76	Porcelain and ...
23	Biscuit	50	Wooden box	77	Gold pitch
24	Cheese	51	Wax and oil	78	Sugar essence
25	Salt	52	Silver products	79	All sorts of soap
26	Fish	53	Tobacco products	80	All sorts of tobacco
27	Meat	54	Button	81	All sorts of glass and crystal products.

3. The Declaration of the Merchants Union of Hamadan Issued on 23 February 1927 Regarding the Gravity of Adopting Protectionist Trade Measures¹

۲۰ شعبان ۱۳۴۵ ۳ اسفند ۱۳۰۵
شماره ۶۳۹

پیشنهاد اتحادیه تجار همدان راجع به منع قطعی ورود اشیاء تجملی و غیر ضروری
به مملکت ایران که تقدیم مقامات عالییه شده

آرزوی علاقه مندان به مملکت ایران این است که دولت بموجب قانون ورود اشیاء غیر ضروری را به مملکت بدون شرط اعلام فرماید تا بدین وسیله بقایای صنعتگران داخله که از این کرداب هولناک جانی بدر برده در آتیه بتوانند دست بکاری زده در سایه حمایت و تشویق دولت و ملت اقمه ثانی بشراکت تحصیل نمایند ما از نظر خیر خواهی با مذاکراتی که در اطراف ایجاد گمرک صد در صد میشود مخالف هستیم زیرا منظور واقعی از این اقدام باید تهیه کار برای بیگاران و دربار ثروت در داخله ایران باشد بر قرار نمودن گمرک صد در صد کاری برای بیگاران و ثروتی در مملکت ایجاد نمی نماید بلکه همین تحمیل گمرک جدید دایره فقر و فلاکت و فساد اخلاق را توسعه خواهد داد نکته اساسی این است که این ملت فقیر و بریشان را از استعمال و هوس اشیاء غیر ضروری که در خور وضعیت امروزه آن نیست منع ننماییم ما اطمینان میدهیم که از راه گران کردن قیمت اشیاء غیر ضروری بوسیله گمرک صد در صد این نتیجه حاصل نشده و اهالی این عادت مشر را ترک نخواهند نمود بهترین شاهد ما این است که دیلا اشاره مینماییم مقصود اصلی از قانون تحدید تریاک مصوبه سال ۱۳۲۹ این بود که پس از ۸ سال استعمال این سم مهلك در داخله ایران ممنوع شود اینك هشت سال از آخرین مدت قانونی آن میگذرد مصرف كننده كان تریاك چهار برابر قیمت اصلی آن را به بهای باندول میدهند یعنی مالیات صد در چهار صد میپردازد جانش را هم در این راه فدا میکنند - دولت متبوع ما هم این مالیات را می گیرد - قسمی از نسل آینده مملکت هم قربانی این اشتباه شده باز هم این درخت بد بختی و فلاکت را آب باری می کنیم با این تجربه تلخ آیا مالیات صد در صد جلوگیری از استعمال اشیاء غیر ضروری خواهد نمود ؟؟ ما سعی میکنیم همیشه حقایق را دنبال نموده با همین تکیه گاه از تمام مقامات عالییه مملکتی استرجاح مینماییم که اشیاء تجملی و غیر ضروری را در حدود تمام چیز هایی که مواد اولیه آن ها در ایران موجود است بدون شرط از ورود بداخله ایران قطعاً جلو گیری فرمایند

در جلسه شب چهارشنبه ۲۰ شعبان ۳ اسفند ماه ۱۳۰۵ تصویب شد
از طرف اتحادیه تجار همدان
(تقی ایرانی)

¹ LMD CIP. dore6-k46-j22, 'From the Merchants' Union of Hamadan to the Majles', 14 April 1927. Emphases are in the original.

English Translation:

The proposal of the Merchants Union of Hamadan as to the definitive prevention of the importation of luxuries and decorative items into Iran:

The wish of those who are concerned about the happiness of the country and the nation is the *unconditional prohibition* of the importation of unnecessary items into the country by the government.² In this way, the remaining craftsmen who suffered enormously from this terrifying storm can in the future earn bread with their honour by the encouragement of the government and the nation. Based on the debates we conducted on the issue, we are against 100% customs duties. Because, if the purpose of such a decision is *to provide employment to the jobless* and to keep wealth within the country, neither of these can be obtained by 100% customs dues, rather, it will only further poverty, misery, and moral turpitude (*fesad-e akhlaq*). The main purpose should be to prevent this poor and miserable nation from the use of and inclination to inappropriate unnecessary goods.

We think that to put 100% duties on these goods will not bring any results, and people will not give up their bad consumption habits. The following example will suffice to prove our point. The preliminary goal behind the law for the restriction of opium passed in 1911 was the prohibition of the use of this mortal poison after eight years in Iran. Eight years later people paid four times the real price to buy it, so they paid 400% taxes and even sacrificed themselves to be able to use it, and the government received those taxes. We are still watering this unfortunate and lethal tree.

Based on this bitter experience, will 100% dues prevent the use of unnecessary articles? Being always in search of the truth we call all the high authorities of the country to *unconditionally prohibit the importation* of luxuries and decorative items and of anything whose raw material is available in Iran.

² Emphases are in the original as bold emphases

4. The List of Textile Factories in Iran in 1940¹

a. Cotton Weaving and Spinning Factories

Annual Production											
No	Name	Location	SD	No. of spindles	No. of looms	Cotton yarn (kg.)	Fabric (m.)	Capital	No. of workers	Note	Daily Production
1	Shahi Spinning&Weaving Fact.	Shahi	1930	36,400	280		4000,000				
2	Bushahr Printed Cotton Fact.	Bushahr	1938	32,000	1,200		12,000,000				
3	Risbaf Weaving and Spinning Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1934	8448	---	681,000		26569078	1270	Has wool weaving and spinning too.	2,270 kg. Cotton yarn
4	Wool Industry Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1938	4000	---	99,500		14438000	553	Has wool weaving and spinning too.	660 kg. Cotton yarn and 7530 meters of cloth
5	Wool Weaving Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1938	2578	---	48418		13238594	70	Has wool weaving and spinning too.	80 kilo yarn
6	Zayandeh Rud Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Esfahan	1936	8096	163	523,120	2,894,746	12201241	1340		1743 kg. yarn 9649 meters of cloth
7	Shahreza Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1937	4824	130	239116	700,000	9,495,638	785		797 kg. yarns and 233 meter clothes
8	Rahimzadeh and Partners Spinning Fact.	Esfahan	1936	4,996		375,000		6099798	340		1025 kg. yarns
9	Barq-e Dahsh Spinning	Isfahan	1936	4,608		271526		3881139	262		905 kg. yarns

¹ The lists are extracted from the following source unless explicitly stated otherwise: NLAI. 380/387, 16 Bahman 1318 (6 February 1940).

	Fact.										
10	E'temadiyeh Weaving and Spinning Fact. in Bushehr	Bushahr	1938	3800	120	202500	132976	4195845	495		975 kg. yarns and 443 m. cloths.
11	Khorasan Khosrovi Yarn Spinning and Textile Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Mashhad	1938	10,120	150	337,500	600,000	114,338,22	448		1125 kg. yarns and 2000 m. cloths
12	Ettehadieh spinning and weaving Fact. in Shahreza	Shahreza	1938	6,046	---	163,580	---	5779077	350		5,491 kg. yarns.
13	Tehran spinning and weaving Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Tehran	1935	3,200	60	202,500	120,000	3,000,000	250		400 m. fabrics and 216 kg. knits
14	Azerbaijan Facric Weaving Fact.	Kazvin	1937		100		100,000	4,890,000	200		333 m. fabrics
15	Qazvini Spinning Fact.	Kazvin	1910	5,000	---	173,000	---	4,000,000	200		500 kg. yarns
16	Khoi Kalkatachi Spinning and Weaving Fact.	Tabriz	1926	7,820	---	44,190	---	8,868,745	534	Has wool spinning and weaving too.	130 kg. yarns and 220 m. fabrics
17	Eqbal Yarn Spinning Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Yazd	1934	7,000	---	288,430	---	50,70,000	272		961 kg. yarns
18	Hosaynali Harati Fact.	Yazd	1935	3240	---	192432	---	3,000,000	212		941 kg. yarns
19	Samnan Thread Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Samnan	1932	9,480	---	830,000	---	9446122	450		2766 kg. yarns
20	Kashan Spinning Fact.	Kashan	1936	6,760	---	487768	---	6923773	256		1,986 kg. yarns
21	Fars Textile Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Shiraz	1934	5,376	---	277,645	---	4,575,150	253		925 kg. yarns
22	Fars Ltd. Co. Fact.	Shiraz	1936	6,000	---	158,044	---	6567608	255		526 kg. yarns
23	Khuzestan Spinning Fact.	Ahvaz	1936	8,800	---	475,318		6,384,233	360		1,840 kg. yarns
24	Khorshid Joint Stock Co. Spinning Fact.	Kerman	1937	4,992	---	255,753	---	3690314	171		1,000 kg. yarns
25	Yusef Lotfali Khanchi Fact.	Bandar-Abbas	1935	5,000		298,215	---	1718030	370		1,000 kg. yarns
26	Qom yarn Spinning Fact.	Qom	1938	4,608	---	270,000	---	5520229	230		900 kg. yarns
27	Isfahan Spinning Fact.	Isfahan	1938	2,488		3398952 pieces of reel	---	4055850	315		14496 pieces of reel

28	Omid Sa'adat ²	Rasht	1938								
			Total	205,580	2,203	6,827,155	20,547,722	185042295	10241		
Explanation: With the exception of a small amount, the rest of the yarn is used in the factory in fabric making.											

b. Wool Spinning and Weaving Factories

Annual Production											
No	Name of the factory	Location	SD	Spindles	Looms	Wool yarn (kg.)	Fabric (m.)	Capital	Number workers	Note	Daily Production
1	Vatan	Isfahan	1925	5,220	118	600,000	849,723	20,0532,94	1153		20,000 kg. wool yarns and 2,810 meters fabrics
2	Risbaf Spinning and weaving Joint Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1934	5,400	80	276,800	322770	26,5690,78	1270		923 kg. wool yarns and 1090 meters fabrics
3	Isfahan Wool Industry Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1938	3240	60	---	225,900	144,38000	553	*	115,582 kg. wool yarns and 2109700 m. fabrics
4	Wool Spinning Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1938	4,480	10	---	708,130	13238594	70		
5	Haj Rahim Agha Qazvini Spinning and weaving Fact.	Qazvin	1929	3,200	156	59,454	66,800	6,512,820	200		500 m. fabrics
6	Koroghlu Fabric weaving Fact.	Kazvin	1936	680	100	200,000	290,000	3,246,294	340		550 m. fabrics and 200 pieces of blankets
7	Derakhshan Fact.	Yazd	1933	1328	15	50,978	85,758	4,500,000	123		169 kg [wool yarn?] and 280 meters fabrics
8	Khoi Kalkatachi Spinning and Weaving Fact.	Tabriz	1936	1500	32	33,000	101,92	8,868,754	534		130 kg [wool yarn?] and 230 m. fabrics
9	Hartunian Factor. ³	Mashhad	1933	500		140-300 avg. 220			30		
			Total	255,48	571	1,220,452	2,559,273	97,426,834	4,273		
Explanation: The factories numbered 3,3,4, and 8 whose combined capital is 26,114,425 rls. With a total of 2427 workers are considered together with their data on the list of the cotton spinning and weaving factories.											

² Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moessasat*, 124.

³ Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moessasat*, 119-120.

c. Knit and Sock Weaving

No	Name	Location	Erection Date	Annual Production	Number of Workers	Note	Daily Production
1	Qods Chorabchi Co. Fact.	Tehran	1905	180 thousands various kinds of cotton and fluffy knits; and 280,000 pairs of socks	138		600 cotton and fluffy shirts and jackets; 900 pairs of socks
2	Ltd Co. Sock Fact.	Tehran	1931	7,154 dozens of sock	107		272 pairs of socks
3	Saba Co. Fact.	Tehran	1929	20,000 shirts and 400,000 pairs of socks	70		66 shirts and 133 pairs of sock
4	Jurabchi Brothers Fact.	Tehran	1921	54050 meters of shirt fabrics; and 1000,22 socks	85		166 knit fabric; 72 pieces of shirts; and 933 pairs of socks
5	Kazi Jurabchi Fact.	Tehran	1901	20,000 pieces of socks and 240000 pieces of knits	65		66 pieces of athletes; 100 pieces of jumpers and ascots; and 333 pairs of socks
6	Mansurian Fact.	Tehran	1913	24,000 kg knits	110		33 pieces of jackets and 400 pairs of socks
7	Arjomand Weaving Fact.	Tehran	1935	5000 m. knits	7		17 m. of knit fabrics; one dozen of cotton shawls; and 33 dozens of socks; and 833 rls. of various goods
8	Iran Knit Fact.	Tehran	1935	36,000 m. of knits	15		120 m. of knits
9	Haqiqat Knit Weaving Fact.	Tehran	1932	1,000 dozens of knits	14		3 dozens of knits
10	Shahpur Weaving Co. Fact.	Tehran	1937	90,000 pairs of socks; and 90,000 pieces of jacket	25		42 m. of knits; 360 pairs of socks; 3 pieces of jackets; and knit shirt
11	Shayan Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Tabriz	1932	85,000 meters woollen and cotton knits	70		267 pieces of various athletes, jackets and jumpers
12	Abu al-Qasem Gorji Fact.	Yazd	1911	140,000 rls. woollen and cotton	20		108 athletes; 23 jackets; 13 shirts with fluffy background; 144 shirts and jackets; and 47 pairs of socks
13	San'at Knit Fact.	Tehran	1933	40,000 rls woollen and cotton goods	20		8 woollen shorts
14	Khosrovi Khomeini Knit Fact.	Tehran	1927	150,000 rls. woollen and cotton goods	16		500 rls. Knit fabrics
15	Zarifi Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1933	5,000 dozens of woollen and cotton goods	65		12 dozens of shirts and 234 pairs of socks
16	Ostovar/Ostovaran Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1936	200,000 rls. of woollen and cotton goods	20		1323 rls. of woollen and cotton goods

17	Fernan Jackman Fact.	Isfahan	1929	25,000 meters towels and fabrics	35		83 meters of towels and fabrics
18	Javid Weaving Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Isfahan	1927	About 20,000 kg of knits	45		21 dozens of shirts
19	Hajj Agha Mohajer	Mashhad	1925	About 300,000 rls.	17	Manual	500 rls
20	Mohammad Javad Jorabchi Fact.	Mashhad	1921	About 46,800 pairs of socks and 10,500 shirts and ascots	45	Manual	150 pairs of socks and 35 shirts
21	Hajj Mohammad Jakatchi Fact.	Kermanshah	1913	About 40,000 rls	30		133 rls
22	Soraya Joint Stock Co. Fact.	Tabriz	1937	About 4,320 kg knits and socks	22		14 kg knits
23	Shams Weaving	Tabriz				Manual	66 shirts and 500 pairs of sock. It is manual
24	Ettefaq Weaving	Rasht				Manual	600 pairs of socks. It is manual.
25	Farhangiyan Broth. Sock Weaving	Rasht				Manual	60 shirts 60 dozens of sock. It is manual.
26	Zomrodi Brothers Sock weaving	Rasht				Manual	187 pairs of sock. It is manual.
27	Jurabchi Brothers Sock Weaving	Rasht				Manual	400 pairs of sock. It is manual.
28	Sharq Weaving	Mashhad				Manual	600 rials. It is manual.
29	Vahdat Jurabchi	Mashhad				Manual	80 rials
30	Payandeh Weaving	Esfahan				Manual	120 cotton shirts 300 woollen shirts. It is manual.

d. Silk Weaving Factory

No	Name of the Factory	Location	SD	Spindles	Looms	Capital	Annual Production in tons	Daily Production (m.)	Note
1	Chalus Silk Weaving Fact.	Chalus	1937		220 ⁴		1,000,000 m. of fabrics; 27,000 kg of silk thread; 3,000 pairs of socks ⁵	3,333	

⁴ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 40. The figures provided by Zahedi are from around 1943-44.

⁵ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 42.

e. Bag and Sack Weaving

No	Name of the Factory	Location	SD	Spindles	Looms	Capital	Daily production (m.)	Note
1	Shahi Sack Weaving Fact.	Shahi			62 ⁶	11,500,000 ⁷	16670 meters	
2	Rasht bag weaving factory	Rasht		2100 ⁸	80 ⁹	14,890,000 ¹⁰	11944 meter 646 kg. Sugar yarn	

⁶ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 40.

⁷ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 40.

⁸ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 40.

⁹ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 40.

¹⁰ Zahedi, *Sanaye-e Iran*, 40.

5. The List of the Workers of the ‘Etemadiyeh Weaving and Spinning Factory in Bushehr in 1935.

No.	Name	Father's name	Surname	Badge no.	Birth date	Employment date	Age
1	Yusef	Hosayn	Dehgai	1	1309	1316	7
2	Nasrollah	Asad	Karbor	12	1300	1316	16
3	Hosayn	Khezr	Purbagi (?)	71	1306	1316	10
4	Jaddollah	‘Ali	Puladtan	13	1298	1316	18
5	Ahmad	Karam	Ahmadpur	30	1302	1316	14
6	Karam	‘Abd al-Reza	Razai	43	1304	1316	12
7	Ahmad	Hosayn	Sheikhzad	4	1303	1316	13
8	Ahmad	Gholamhosayn	Honarbakshsh	212	1274	1316	40
9	Khalil	Mohammad Hashem	Niksarasht	312	1285	1316	31
10	‘Abdollah	Hosayn	Deyanat	11	1297	1316	19
11	Bahzad	Ja‘far	Ganjeh	25	1284	1316	32
12	Sharaf	Safar	Firouzzad	15	1279	1316	37
13	‘Abdollah	Ahmad	[???	118	1301	1316	15
14	Najaf	Hosayn	Qaidi	10	1293	1316	23
15	Esma‘il	‘Abd al-Reza	Khoshkhiram	126	1282	1316	34
16	Ahmad	Aghajan	Mohammadi	127	1309	1316	7
17	‘Abdollah	Ahmad	Birteh	129	1307	1316	9
18	Khalil	Ja‘far	Farzandai	236	1300	1316	16
19	Hosayn	Gholamhosayn	‘Alizadeh	595	1300	1316	16
20	Gholamreza	‘Abbas	Mirshakari	593	1289	1316	27
21	Khodadad	Ghul‘amali	Bakhtiyari	241	1295	1316	21
22	Haji	Reza	Sheikhabuli	249	1291	1316	25
22	Ghorghali	‘Ali	Kakizadeh	93	1306	1316	10
23	Gholamhoseyn	‘Ali	Tangruzi	37	1275	1316	41
24	‘Ali	Mohammad	Barghoman	79	1305	1316	11
25	Reza	‘Abd al-Hoseyn	Sertelian (?)	237	1284	1316	32
26	‘Ali	Yusef	Kananitariq	150	1295	1316	21
27	Khezr	Khodagharm	Mollai	31	1308	1316	8
29	‘Ali	‘Abdullah	Maleksarqoli	261	1309	1316	7
30	‘Abd al-Hoseyn	‘Ali	Mahin	255	1298	1316	18
31	Mohammad	Hosayn	Deyanat	254	1294	1316	22
32	‘Abd al-Karim	Hosayn	[...]	48	1305	1316	11
33	Reza	Ahmad	Bakhtiyari	263	1290	1316	26
34	‘Abbas	Gholamhosayn	[...]	259	1297	1316	19
35	Gholam‘ali	Mohammad	[...]	33	1302	1316	14
36	‘Ali	Hosayn	Shams al-Din	24	1284	1316	32
37	Rahman	Abu Qasem	Moradzadeh	152	1303	1316	13
38	Haydar	Hosayn	[...]	153	1307	1316	9
39	‘Abbas	‘Ali	Zendehbudi (?)	154	1303	1316	13
40	Ja‘far	Mohammad	Sheikhabuli	644	1276	1316	40
41	Jahanghir	Reza	[...]	258	1297	1316	19
42	Hosayn	Mohammad Hosayn	Mohammadi	262	1278	1316	38
42	Haidar	Mohammad	[...]	44	1303	1316	13
43	Ahmad	Ebrahim	Ebrahimi	48	1292	1316	24
44	Seyyed Ibrahim	Seyyed Hosayn	Hosayni	35	1300	1316	16
45	Safar	Gholam	[...]	337	1290 (?)	1316	26
46	Esma‘il	Karam	[...]	84	1306	1316	10
47	Salman	‘Abbas	[...]	300	1311	1316	5

48	Khezr	Khodadad	Mansurinajad	57	1307	1316	9
49	Reza	Khodadad	Abadi	76	1279	1316	37
50	Gholamhosayn	[...]	[...]	277	1302	1316	14
51	Mohammadhosayn	Najaf	Abadi	746	1289	1316	27
52	Hosayn	‘Ali	[...]	276	1301	1316	15
53	Hosayn	Hashem	[...]	324	1277	1316	39
54	Hosayn	Haji	Hajipur	335	1264	1316	52
55	Husayn	Gholamreza	Charghusheh	336	1276	1316	40
56	Haidar	Khezr	Jangju	713	1280	1316	36
57	‘Araz	Hasan	[...]	544	1303	1316	13
58	‘Abd al-Rasol	‘Ali	Simurgh	387	1277	1316	39
59	‘Abbas	‘Ali	[...]	500	1299	1316	17
60	Shah ‘Abbas	Haji	Dorakhshandeh	501	1285	1316	31
61	Esma‘il	Qanbar	Muqim (?)	514	1307	1316	9
61	Abd al-Hoseyn	‘Abbas	[...]	506	1295	1316	21
62	Mohammad	‘Abbas	[...]	511	1305	1316	11
63	Namdar	Baqer	[...]	536	1297	1316	19
64	‘Ali	Khezr	Gharghuri	499	1303	1316	13
65	‘Alibaz	Mohammad	...bahmani	498	1293	1316	23
66	Haji	Asadullah	...bahsi	579	1300	1316	16
67	Rasul	Rahim	[...]	544	1300	1316	16
68	[...]	Bahram	Zendeh...	549	1308	1316	8
69	Setareh	Haidar	[...]	578	1304	1316	12
70	[...]	Abu al-Qasem	[...]	548	1303	1316	13
71	‘Abbas	Gholamhosayn	[...]	449	1299	1316	17
72	Agashah	Shah...	[...]	631	1285	1316	31
73	Mohammad	Mustafa	...	636	1273	1316	43
74	Javad	Haji	Zayn al-‘Abidin	634	1300	1316	16
75	Mahmud	Rasul	[...]	637	1278	1316	38
76	‘Ali	[...]	Azari	650	1263	1316	53
77	Ebrahim	Mohammad ‘Ali	Mustafapur	630	1284	1316	32
78	Seyyed Abdullahi	Seyyed Ali	...	655	1305	1316	11
79	Habib	Ahmad	...zadeh	644	1295	1316	21
80	[...]	Shahibrahimi	[...]	652	1291	1316	25
81	Mohammad	‘Ali	[...]	641	1284	1316	32
82	Seyyed Abdullah	Seyyed ‘Askar	...najad	654	1282	1316	34
83	‘Ali	[...]	[...]	651	1290	1316	26
84	Shah...	Shah ‘Ataullah	Safavi	681	1305	1316	11
85	Mohammad	Gholamreza	Moradi	226	1298	1316	18
86	Habib	Haydar	Qana‘atpisheh	545	1290	1316	26
87	Jabir	Mohammad	[...]	674	1291	1316	25
88	Mohammad Ali	‘Abbas	[...]	676	1292	1316	24
89	Ne‘matullah	Abd al-Ghani	...	677	1300	1316	16
90	Naser	Reza	Ansari	667	1297	1316	19
91	Khezr	Rotsam	Ebrahimi	682	1307	1316	9
92	[...]	Ibrahim	Rasulzadeh	72	1300	1316	16
93	[...]	[...]	Haydarpour	94	1300	1316	16
94	[...]	Hosayn	Mohammadi	701	1297	1316	19
95	Reza	Gholamhoseyn	Darvai	700	1304	1316	12
96	Abdullah	Asadullah	[...]	702	1303	1316	13
97	‘Abbas	‘Ali...	[...]	707	1302	1316	14
98	[...]	[...]	[...]	669	1298	1316	18
99	[...]	[...]	Safavi	689	1301	1316	15
100	[...]	‘Ali	Havadzadeh	687	1305	1316	11
101	[...]	[...]	Khosh	...	1286	1316	32
102	Mohammad	Gholam‘ali	[...]	1131	1277	1316	39
103	[...]	[...]	Bayatzadeh	691	1276	1316	40
104	Seyyed Anzali	Seyyed Haydar	Nukari	693	1295	1316	21

105	[...]	Gholam	Shabaneh	591	1295	1316	21
106	‘Abdullah	Haydar	Honarpisheh	592	1288	1316	28
107	[...]	[...]	Ansari	597	1288	1316	28
108	Gholamreza	Hoseyn	Qanbari	243	1298	1316	28
109	[...]	Mohammad	Bakhtiyari	146	1295	1316	21
110	[...]	Haji	Zayn al-Abidin	594	1293	1316	23
111	[...]	Gholamhosayn	[...]	603	1289	1316	27
112	[...]	Mohammad	[...]	608	1286	1316	30
113	Hosayn	‘Ali	Sangari	618	1284	1316	32
114	Ali AAskar	[...]	[...]	617	1275	1316	41
115	[...]	[...]	[...]	620	1297	1316	19
116	[...]	[...]	[...]	718	1316	1316	0
117	[...]	[...]	[...]	71-	1285	1316	31
118	[...]	[...]	[...]	570	1286	1316	30
119	Mohammad	...	Khvajaghan(?)	670	1272	1316	44
120	Hosayn	Hosayn	Baqi (?)	753	1280	1316	36
121	[...]	[...]	[...]	7--	1284	1316	32
122	[...]	Taymur	[...]	606	1269	1316	47
123	Anzali (?)	Gholamreza	Rouzgar	800	1296	1316	20
124	‘Ali	Ebrahim	[...]	801	1278	1316	38
125	Hosayn	Haji	[...]	711	1302	1316	14
126	Haydar	Gholam	[...]	805	1294	1316	22
127	Jaber	Hasan	[...]	733	1277	1316	39
128	Gholam‘ali	‘Abd al-Hosayn	[...]	745	1303	1316	13
129	Haydar	Qasem	[...]	715	1274	1316	42
130	Khodakaram	Haji	[...]	744	1273	1316	43
131	Hosayn	‘Abbas	Zende...	232	1284	1316	32
132	Amanallah	Khayrallah	Shojakermani	731	1279	1316	37
133	Bakhsh	‘Ali	[...]	739	1274	1316	42
134	‘Abdullah	Solayman	[...]	782	1278	1316	38
135	[...]	Hashem	Dahqan	798	1284	1316	32
136	Abdullah	Mohammad	Ansari	520	1301	1316	15
137	Bakhsh	Gholamhoseyn	[...]	721	1284	1316	32
138	Seyyed Hashem	Seyyed Ali	Ali begh Shah	619	1284	1316	32
139	Kazem	Ahmad	Bakhtiyari	822	1304	1316	12
140	Gholamreza	[...]	[...]	825	1307	1316	9
141	Shah Mohammad	Shah Karim	Mosawi	846	1300	1316	16
142	[...]	Ramazan	[...]	838	1307	1316	9
143	[...]	[...]	[...]	852	1312	1316	4
144	‘Ali	Hosayn	[...]	856	1306	1316	10
145	[...]	Hosayn	Hajipour	860	1307	1316	9
146	Zahra	[...]	Boshahri	862	1308	1316	8
147	Kazem	Mohammad	[...]	884	1302	1316	14
148	Mohsen	‘Abb al-Hoseyn	Ebrahimi	885	1307	1316	9
149	‘Abbas	Mohammad	Khalifeh	886	1299	1316	17
150	‘Abbas	Ahmad	Khalifeh	890	1307	1316	9
151	Ahmad	Mohammad ‘Ali	Asba‘i	892	1307	1316	
152	[...]	‘Ali	[...]	894	1308	1316	
153	Abdullah	Abbas	[...]	900	1306	1316	
154	Mokhtar (?)	Gholamali	[...]	905	1300	1316	
155	[...]	Mohammad	Abadi	909	1301	1316	
156	[...]	Gholamhosayn	[...]	910	1302	1316	
157	Mohammad	İbrahim	[...]	917	1304	1316	
158	‘Abd al-Rahim	Gholamhosayn	Na‘mati	933	1302	1316	
159	‘Abdullah	‘Ali	Zare‘i	957	1300	1316	
160	Jani	‘Ali	Pishani	958	1310	1316	
161	Ebrahim	Gholamreza	[...]	960	1294	1316	
162	Bakhtiyar	Mohammad	Khalili	965	1304	1316	

163	‘Abdullah	Hosayn	[...]	966	1306	1316	
164	Khezr	Baqer	[...]	973	1284	1316	
165	‘Abd al-Rasul	Gholamhosayn	Qadimi	976	1299	1316	
166	Rajab	‘Ali	[...]	977	1300	1316	
167	Gholamreza	Ahmad	Shanidi	984	1302	1316	
168	‘Abd al-Reza	Baqir	Sarkhosh	985	1289	1316	
169	Qasem	Safar	Bahai	986	1284	1316	
170	Hosayn	‘Abd al-Hoseyn	[...]	989	1296	1316	
171	Hasan	[...]	Hasan Ahmadi	990	1310	1316	
172	[...]	Gholamhosayn	[...]	1030	1302	1316	
173	Hashem	Khodadad	Bozorg	1036	1285	1316	
174	Hosayn	[...]	[...]	1046	1299	1316	
175	Darwish	Hosayn	[...]	1047	1284	1316	
176	Gholamreza	[...]	Pursaleh	1049	1305	1316	
177	[...]	[...]	[...]	1055	1305	1316	
178	Gholamhoseyn	Karam	‘Ali...	1057	1307	1316	
179	Shapur	[...]	Safawi	1058	1274	1316	
180	[...]	Khodabakhsh	Alizadeh	1064	1301	1316	
181	Khadijeh	‘Ali	Jawharzadeh	1071	1307	1316	
182	Zahra	Seyyed Hosayn	[...]	1070	1308	1316	
183	Latifeh	Abu al-Qasem	Soleyman	1080	1304	1316	
184	...khan	Hosayni	Deyanat	1082	1308	1316	
185	Khayri	Reza	Banghari	1086	1307	1316	
186	[...]	Hosayn	Deyanat	1088	1302	1316	
187	Manijeh (?)	Mahmud	[...]	1092	1302	1316	
188	Zahra	Karam	[...]	1095	1276	1316	
189	‘Abdullah	Karim	Dahqani	1116	1309	1316	
190	---	---	---	---	---	---	
191	Ahmad	‘Ali akbar	Risi	553	1286	1316	
192	‘Abu al-Qasem	Qanbar	Tayyari	557	1274	1316	
193	...jafar	Abd al-Hoseyn	[...]	660	1296	1316	

6. The Results of the Medical Inspection on the Vatan Factory Workers

NO	ILLNESS	NUMBER OF THE INSPECTIONS				TOTAL	
		1934				1936	
		MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST		
1	Various wounds			39	139	72	250
2	Abnormal heart rhythms					3	3
3	Syphilis	29	121	59	70	75	354
4	<u>Indigestion</u>	8	13	29	25	4	79
5	Urinary retention		23	46		61	130
6	[?]	6	7			4	17
7	Pinkeye					13	13
8	Malaria		100	132	145	41	418
9	Liver abscess					4	5
10	Eczema	2	22	17	16	5	63
11	Swollen nose					3	3
12	Pulmonary oedema					4	4
13	Partial paralysis					3	3
14	Atrophy					18	18
15	Cutaneous leishmaniasis	6	8	5	6	2	25
16	Ringworm	15	42	41	16	22	136
17	Taenia		3		8	4	15
18	Hysteria	8	13	16	2	2	41
19	Hematomunia					5	5
20	<u>Rheumatism</u>	36	113			42	191
21	Ear swelling	7	16	16	10	2	51
22	Asthma	8		6	5	4	23
23	Heart diseases	20	111	9	20	5	165
24	Haemorrhoid	4	8	23	13	2	50
25	<u>Tuberculosis</u>	4	12	14	24	2	56
26	Sour stomach	29			96	4	129
27	Mental disorder	6	12	37	17	2	74
28	Influenza					4	4
29	Typhoid fever				4	3	7
30	Catarrh					5	5
31	Thunderclap headache					4	4
32	Gonorrhoea	13	52	41	58	33	197
33	Scab	3	18	3	4	4	32
34	Lung congestion					5	5

35	Bone tuberculosis	6		14	30	3	53
36	<u>Diarrhoea</u>		7		12	12	31
37	Enlarged uterus					4	4
38	Gingivitis	5	12	4		3	24
39	Corneal oedema	4	15	13	4	5	41
40	Breast abscess					6	6
41	Swollen eyelid	4				3	7
42	Dysentery		16		10	5	31
43	[?]			21		4	25
44	Gland tumour			11	20	3	34
45	Nephritis				2	5	7
46	Malta fever					2	2
47	Cystitis					2	2
48	Lymphedema [?]		6			4	10
49	Trachoma					8	8
50	Osteoarthritis	12				3	15
51	Croup					2	2
52	Hernia	5		2	4	3	14
53	Enteritis					4	4
54	[?]		11		15	8	34
55	Adenitis					5	5
56	Gout					3	3
57	Diabetes					4	4
58	[?]					3	3
59	Dermatitis					5	5
60	Syphilitic arthritis		13	45	65	4	127
61	[?]	13		54	41	7	115
63	Sciatic nerve		14			4	18
64	Schizophrenia		13			3	16
65	Jaundice	2		3		7	12
66	Chancre					6	6
67	[?]					7	7
68	Burns	10	4	19	7	4	34
69	White plague	7				4	11
70	Pruritus	10		15	14	5	44
71	Chronic Constipation					3	3
72	Head fractures					4	4
73	Paratyphoid fevers	4		9	8		21
74	Foot ulcer	8	12				20

75	Paronychia	4	9	22	22		57
76	Smallpox	4		2	12		18
77	Back pain	12	13	18			43
78	Strangulation of the Uterus	4					4
79	Finger ulcers	2					2
80	Gastric distention	14		4	5		23
81	Swallowed dental crowns	1					1
82	[?]	23					23
83	Hepatomegaly	6	12	5	22		45
84	Anaemia	5		20	25		50
85	Heart valve disease	2	5	2	8		17
86	Crassulacean	12	8	23			43
87	Infective endocarditis	13	16				29
88	[?]	12					12
89	Myocarditis	5	11	4	6		26
90	<u>Bronchitis</u>	13	52	28	27		120
91	Aggressiveness	13			11		24
92	Common cold	8		3	6		17
93	Syncope	19	14		41		74
94	Hypochromic anaemia	10		9	5		24
95	Bone pain	6	11	9	4		30
96	[?]	4		4	10		18
97	Bleeding	9		10	18		37
98	Papilledema	2		2			4
99	Mouth swelling	6		4	5		15
100	Pertussis	7	8	6	4		25
101	Neuritis	4	4	17	16		41
102	Pneumonia	6	4		4		14
103	Headache caused by syphilis	23					23
104	Foot pain		6				6
105	[?]	13					13
106	Gastritis		4				4
107	Cerebral haemorrhage		12				12
108	Lumbar fractures		5				5
109	Osteitis		9	3			12
110	Haematuria		5				5
111	Periodontitis		7				7
112	Bone Lesions		11				11
113	Body swelling		13				13

114	Toothache		3				3
115	Sore throat		11				11
116	Vitiligo		3				3
117	[?]		14				14
118	[?]		12				12
119	Chalazion		3				3
120	[?]		3				3
121	[?] syphilis		4				4
122	Breast tuberculosis			15	17		32
123	Love			11			11
124	Neurasthenia			13			13
125	[?]			5			5
126	Conjunctivitis			24	62		86
127	Swelling of female ovules				18		18
128	Cancer				6		6
129	[?]				20		20
130	Mental retardation				14		14
131	Cataract				9		9
132	[?]				4		4
133	[?]				6		6
Total		556	1109	1006	1317	633	4611

Summary

This study deals with the social history of industrialization and labour in Iran from the inception of the constitutional system in 1906 until the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941. In the main, I seek to discuss the Iranian industries before and after the large scale industrial leap-forward of 1930s in order to examine the conditions of the working people. The study consists of six chapters. In the introductory Chapter One I explain the main three concerns and the theoretical framework of the research. The first of these concerns is that I try to answer how Iranian workers came to see themselves primarily as workers since 'workerness' was one of the several identities and affiliations that people had. For doing this, workers' petitions are analysed in order to gain insight into their self-perception. This point is of utmost significance for an ample study of Iranian labour history since Iranian workers, as those in any part of the world for that matter, developed a peculiar working class identity through a gradual and complex process. By tracing the making of this process I call into question a purely objective and structural understanding of class formation in Iran. The second main concern which preoccupies me in this study is to go beyond the traditional concerns of labour history. For a long time, formal labour organizations and collective labour actions constituted the main areas of investigation in labour history writing. Although this started to change from 1960s due especially, if not exclusively, to E. P. Thompson's seminal work *The Making of the English Working Class* the Iranian labour history writing continued to be dominated by rather traditional themes. Thompson's work was particularly influential in convincingly drawing attention to examining not only factory workers by also artisans. In this study, I try to restore the agency of those workers too who were employed at craft industries. Besides, attention was also paid throughout the study to the diverse aspects of workers' lives other than their worksite experiences. My third concern is the establishment of a proper link between the workers' agenda and political processes. I needed to relate workers' experiences to the state, and vice versa, without necessarily suggesting a tug-of-war between the two. My engagement with Iranian workers' history showed me that the risk of a total decline of the state power was perceived by the majority of workers to be at least as precarious as the uncompromisingly repressive state authority. Throughout the period under investigation Iranian workers struggled, in one way or the other, to prevent any of these two possibilities from happening. Instead, they tried to draw the state to their side when they needed it and kept aloof from it otherwise. Yet, if the state was roughly from 1906 until early 1920s hardly able to pay much

attention to workers' plight, from early 1920s to the end of the period discussed in this study it proved ambitiously determined to extend its power in almost every imaginable way. This equation required workers to develop careful strategies and a balanced discourse to work the system 'to their minimum disadvantage', to use Eric Hobsbawm's phraseology.

In Chapter Two I present an historical background of the 19th century, insofar as it relates to the period investigated in this work. Here, mention is made of the reform movement which mainly started in the military sphere as a reaction of successive defeats at the hands of Russia, but then extended, in the following decades, to include the political, economic and social spheres as well. The economic and social aspects of the reforms are particularly emphasized here. It is argued in this chapter that the popular support for the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 was due to epidemic diseases, famines, unpopular economic policies of the Court as well as stifling foreign economic domination. A coalition of merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen, religious groups and intellectuals were responsible for the uncompromising movement against arbitrary Qajar rule. This was most clearly reflected in the Tobacco Protest of 1891. The significance of this protest for labouring people stemmed from the fact that the craft workers experienced or witnessed for the first time the possibility of affecting the Government's policies through resistance.

Chapter Three deals with an overview of the period which extends from the Constitutional Revolution in 1906 to the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941. Here attention is especially paid to the emergence of a new political community in Iran, particularly among labouring people, in its shifting forms. In the First National Assembly opened for the first time in country's history in 1906, six classes (*tabaqat*), including guild members, were represented in the Parliament. Their parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities are discussed in this chapter. The class-based election system was abolished before the elections for the Second Parliament in 1909. This however did not mean the end of the participation of the labouring people in the making of the political community in Iran. To this end, mention is also made of petitioning a peculiar channel of state-society interaction in Iran from the Constitutional Revolution onwards, although petitioning as such had been a centuries-old established tradition in the country. Also, the failure of the constitutional experiment in 1911 and the emergence of authoritarian modernization within about a decade are analysed from a grassroots perspective. In the main, it is argued in this chapter that, disillusioned by the constitutional experiment's failure to provide employment, establish security and form a national economy with minimum foreign influence, Iranian subaltern groups, along with other

classes, had become receptive to a strong, though not necessarily despotic, state. The steady rise to power of Reza Khan from 1921 until his coronation as the Shah in 1925 partly met some of these expectations. However his uncompromising centralization policies claimed the previously more or less autonomous realms from which Iranian subalterns made their living with little state intervention. Combined with the mechanized factory-based economic policies from the mid-1925s on, Iranian subalterns increasingly felt uneasy with the new regime and enjoyed almost no betterment in their living and working conditions.

Chapter Four examines Iranian industrialization between 1906 and 1941. In this chapter I first analyse popular perceptions of economic development and reactions to foreign ready-made imports. These reactions do not only show how popular classes perceived economic development in Iran but also curiously illustrate the working of the state society interaction. Following this, Iranian industries until the industrial leap-forward of 1903s are discussed by emphasizing small-scale and artisanal industries. The tension between promoting the craft industries and introducing factory-based industrialization is referred to in the chapter. It then discusses the factory-based industrialization which started in the late 1920's and gained unprecedented speed during the 1930's. Along the way, however, attention is paid to how workers, as well as other classes, were involved in this process and how they perceived industrialization policies. Throughout the chapter, emphasis is put on the textile industry, while other industries are also mentioned when relevant. Chapter-5 deals with labour issues. It first discusses the discursive formation of the Iranian working class and how Iranian workers perceived themselves primarily as workers and how they gradually developed a language of their own. Following this, the nature of the Iranian labour was discussed. Here such issues as the total number of workers in Iran, male and female workers as well as the distribution of workers to those who were employed factories and those who worked at craft industries. This is followed by an examination of legislative attempt to regulate labour issues in Iran. In the rest of the chapter working hours, sanitary conditions and workers' attempts at improving their conditions were discussed. These attempts did not only include collective actions but also petitioning which workers used as a way of conveying their grievances and demands. Attention is paid, in this context, to workers' impact on and reactions to the labour policies adopted by the state. Throughout the chapter not only central politics, but also provincial politics are considered. Chapter 6 contains some concluding assessments and suggestions for further research.

STAAT, MAATSCHAPPIJ EN ARBEID IN IRAN, 1906-1941: EEN SOCIALE HISTORIE VAN IRAANSE INDUSTRIALISATIE EN ARBEID MET BETREKKING TOT DE TEXTIEL INDUSTRIE

Samenvatting

Deze studie behandelt de sociale geschiedenis van industrialisatie en arbeid in Iran vanaf de invoering van het constitutionele systeem in 1906 tot het einde van de regering van Reza Shah in 1941. Ik bespreek de Iraanse industrieën vóór en na de grootschalige industriële ontwikkeling in de jaren '30 om de omstandigheden van de werkende klasse te onderzoeken. Deze studie bestaat uit zes hoofdstukken.

In het eerste hoofdstuk behandel ik ter inleiding de belangrijkste drie vragen en het theoretische kader van dit onderzoek. (1) De eerste vraag luidt hoe Iraanse arbeiders zichzelf als zodanig gingen zien, aangezien 'arbeider' slechts één van de identiteiten en banden was die mensen hadden. Om deze vraag te beantwoorden onderzoek ik petitie van arbeiders om inzicht te krijgen in de manier waarop zij zichzelf zagen. Voor een uitvoerige studie van de Iraanse arbeidsgeschiedenis is dit inzicht van groot belang. Iraanse arbeiders ontwikkelden – zoals overal ter wereld – hun identiteit als werkende klasse geleidelijk en op complexe wijze. Door deze ontwikkeling na te gaan trek ik een zuiver objectief en structureel begrip van klassenvorming in Iran in twijfel. (2) Ten tweede probeert deze studie de gebruikelijke thema's van de arbeidsgeschiedenis achter zich te laten. Arbeidsorganisaties en gezamenlijke acties van arbeiders waren lange tijd de voornaamste onderzoeksgebieden in de arbeidsgeschiedenis. Hoewel deze situatie in de jaren '60 begon te veranderen, in het bijzonder door het verschijnen van *The Making of the English Working Class* van E.P. Thompson, bleef de Iraanse arbeidsgeschiedenis overheerst worden door traditionele vraagstukken. Het werk van Thompson was vooral invloedrijk omdat het de aandacht niet alleen op fabrieksarbeiders, maar ook op ambachtslieden vestigde. In deze studie probeer ik ook de arbeiders die in de ambachtsindustrie werkzaam waren te betrekken. Daarnaast besteed ik niet alleen aandacht aan werkervaringen van arbeiders, maar ook aan andere aspecten van hun leven. (3) Ten derde wil ik het verband tussen de doelstellingen van arbeiders en politieke processen aantonen. Ik moest de ervaringen van arbeiders relateren aan de staat en omgekeerd, zonder noodzakelijkerwijs een strijd tussen beide te suggereren. Mijn onderzoek naar de Iraanse arbeidsgeschiedenis toont aan dat de meerderheid van de arbeiders een minstens zo groot gevaar zag in het wegvallen van de staatsmacht als in een onderdrukkende

staat waarmee niet te onderhandelen viel. In de periode die hier onderzocht wordt deden arbeiders op allerlei manieren moeite om beide mogelijkheden te voorkomen. Zij probeerden de staat aan hun kant te krijgen als dat nodig was, maar bewaarden in andere gevallen afstand. Maar hoewel de staat vanaf ongeveer 1906 tot de vroege jaren '20 nauwelijks aandacht besteedde aan de netelige positie van de arbeiders, bleek hij vanaf de jaren '20 tot het einde van de periode die in deze studie behandeld wordt opvallend vastberaden om zijn macht op elke denkbare manier te vergroten. Deze situatie noodzaakte arbeiders tot zorgvuldige strategieën en een evenwichtig vertoog om het systeem 'tot het minste nadeel voor henzelf' (Eric Hobsbawm) te beïnvloeden.

In hoofdstuk twee schets ik de historische achtergrond van de 19^e eeuw, voor zover deze van belang is voor de periode die ik onderzoek. Ik vermeld de hervormingsbeweging die, vooral in militaire kringen, als een reactie op meerdere nederlagen tegen Rusland begon. In de volgende decennia breidde deze beweging zich op politiek, economisch en sociaal gebied uit. Ik benadruk vooral de economische en sociale aspecten van de hervormingen. In dit hoofdstuk betoog ik dat de Constitutionele Revolutie van 1906 haar oorzaken vond in epidemieën, hongersnood, impopulair economisch beleid van het Hof en verstikkende economische overheersing door het buitenland. Een coalitie van handelaren, vaklieden, ambachtslieden, religieuze groepen en intellectuelen was verantwoordelijk voor de compromisloze beweging tegen de willekeurige heerschappij van de Qajaren. Het Tabakprotest in 1891 is hiervan het duidelijkste voorbeeld. De betekenis van dit protest lag in het feit dat arbeiders voor het eerst ervoeren dat zij het beleid van de regering middels verzet konden beïnvloeden.

Hoofdstuk drie geeft een overzicht van de periode tussen de Constitutionele Revolutie in 1906 en het einde van de regering van Reza Shah in 1941. Ik besteed vooral aandacht aan de opkomst, met name onder arbeiders, van een nieuwe politieke gemeenschap in Iran, die verschillende vormen aannam. De Eerste Nationale Vergadering werd in 1906 voor het eerst in de geschiedenis van het land geopend. Er waren zes klassen (*tabaqat*) in het Parlement vertegenwoordigd, waaronder gildeleden. In dit hoofdstuk worden hun parlementaire en buitenparlementaire activiteiten besproken. Het op klasse gebaseerde kiesstelsel werd nog vóór de verkiezingen voor het Tweede Parlement in 1909 afgeschaft. Dit betekende echter niet het einde van de deelname van arbeiders aan de vorming van een politieke gemeenschap in Iran. Ik vermeld ook petitie's als een karakteristiek medium voor de interactie tussen staat en

maatschappij vanaf de Constitutionele Revolutie, hoewel het aanbieden van petitieën in Iran een eeuwenoude traditie kende. Ook wordt het falen van het constitutionele experiment in 1911 en de opkomst van autoritaire modernisering binnen ongeveer tien jaar vanuit een *grassroots* perspectief geanalyseerd. In hoofdzaak betoog ik in dit hoofdstuk dat Iraanse ondergeschikte groepen samen met andere klassen gedesillusioneerd raakten door het falen van het constitutionele experiment om werk te verschaffen, veiligheid te garanderen en een nationale economie met een minimum aan buitenlandse invloed te ontwikkelen. Daarom waren zij ontvankelijk geworden voor een sterke, hoewel niet noodzakelijkerwijs despotische staat. De gestage groei van de macht van Reza Khan van 1921 tot zijn kroning tot sjah in 1925 voldeed ten dele aan deze verwachtingen. Zijn compromisloze beleid van centralisering eiste echter de min of meer autonome gebieden op waarbinnen Iraanse ondergeschikten zonder veel staatsbemoeienis in hun levensonderhoud voorzagen. In combinatie met het gemechaniseerde en op fabrieken gebaseerde economische beleid vanaf het midden van de jaren '20 voelden Iraanse ondergeschikten zich steeds ongemakkelijker bij het nieuwe regime en verbeterden hun levens- en werkomstandigheden nauwelijks.

Hoofdstuk vier onderzoekt de Iraanse industrialisatie tussen 1906 en 1941. In dit hoofdstuk analyseer ik eerst de manier waarop de bevolking de economische vooruitgang zag, evenals de reacties op de kant en klare importproducten uit het buitenland. Deze reacties laten niet alleen zien hoe de werkende klassen de economische vooruitgang in Iran zagen, maar illustreren ook de interactie tussen staat en maatschappij. Vervolgens bespreek ik de Iraanse industrieën tot de industriële sprong voorwaarts in de jaren '30, waarbij de nadruk ligt op kleinschalige en ambachtelijke industrieën. Ook verwijs ik naar de spanning tussen de bevordering van de ambachtelijke industrie en de invoering van op fabrieken gebaseerde industrialisatie. Hierna bespreek ik de op fabrieken gebaseerde industrialisatie, die begon aan het einde van de jaren '20 en in de jaren '30 een ongekeerde snelheid bereikte. Ik laat daarbij zien hoe arbeiders, evenals andere klassen, in dit proces betrokken waren en hoe zij het beleid van industrialisatie zagen. De nadruk ligt in dit hoofdstuk op de textielindustrie, hoewel andere relevante industrieën ook worden genoemd.

Hoofdstuk vijf behandelt arbeidskwesties. Ik bespreek eerst de discursieve formatie van de Iraanse werkende klasse, de manier waarop Iraanse arbeiders zichzelf eerst en vooral als arbeiders zagen en hoe zij geleidelijk een eigen taal ontwikkelden. Daarna onderzoek ik het karakter van de Iraanse arbeid. Ik bespreek het aantal arbeiders in Iran, de verhouding tussen

mannelijke en vrouwelijke arbeiders en de verdeling van arbeiders die in fabrieken en in de ambachtelijke industrie werkten. Daarop volgt een beschouwing van wettelijke pogingen om arbeidskwesties in Iran te reguleren. Verder bespreek ik in dit hoofdstuk werkuren, sanitaire voorzieningen en de pogingen van arbeiders om hun omstandigheden te verbeteren. Tot deze pogingen behoorden niet alleen gezamenlijke acties, maar ook petitie's, die de arbeiders gebruikten om hun grieven en eisen over te brengen. In deze context besteed ik ook aandacht aan de invloed en reacties van arbeiders op het arbeidsbeleid dat de staat voerde. In dit hoofdstuk betrek ik zowel de landelijke als de provinciale politiek. Hoofdstuk zes bevat enkele concluderende beoordelingen en suggesties voor verder onderzoek.

Curriculum Vitae

Serhan Afacan was born in Istanbul in 1982. He completed his BA at Istanbul Bilgi University, Department of History, in 2008. He also holds BA at International Relations. He then enrolled at Leiden University and completed his MA, in 2009, at the Department of Persian Language and Culture with his thesis “Occidentalism in the Age of Orientalism: Mohammad Iqbal and the West”. Since 2009 he has been a PhD candidate at Leiden University, the School of Middle Eastern Studies at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS). He was also a Research Fellow at the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam from 2009 until 2013. His latest publications include “Revisiting Labour Activism in Iran: Some Notes on the Vatan Factory Strike in 1931.” *International Labour and Working Class History* ILWCH. (Forthcoming); “Shenakhtan va Shenasantan-e Hamsayeh” (*Discovering the Next Door Neighbour: A Critical Review of the Books Published in Turkey about Iran in the 20th century*) (in Persian), *Goftogu*. V. 59/Spring 2012, pp. 55-68; “Devletle Yazismak: Turkiye ve Iran Sosyal Tarihciliginde Dilekceler” (*Corresponding with the State: Petitions in Turkish and Iranian Social History*), (in Turkish), *Turkiyat Mecmuasi*, Vol. 21/Spring, 2011, pp.1-29; “Iran’da Muhafazakar Olmak: Devrim Rehberligi ve İlgili Tartismalar” (*Being Conservative in Iran: Guardianship of Islamic Jurists and the Relevant Debates*) (in Turkish), *Dogudan*, 13 (2009). pp. 24-33. His academic interests include Modern Iranian history, Iranian labour history and state-society relations in Iran and the Middle East.