

Theory from the South:
Disciplinary Education and the Beginning of Religious Optionality in Iran (1889-1934)

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
under the Executive Committee
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2022

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Abstract

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This dissertation writes the intertwined histories of education and religion in Iran in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. “New education” (*ma‘ārif-i jadīd*)—from 1889, the founding of the first *dabistān* in Tabriz, to 1934, the founding of the first university in Tehran—implemented an aspiration towards mass, functional literacy and disciplinary learning. Disciplinary education obliged learners into the service of the nation and the state, overshadowing *ādāb al-muta‘allimīn* that had embarked the student on God-centered learning. As Iranians went through the twentieth century, new education transformed schooling, learning norms, and intellectual identities. Less evidently but perhaps more significantly, new education brought about an unintended consequence: religious optionality, or the possibility of literacy without religious belief and practice. In making these arguments among others, this dissertation draws on printed, manuscript, and documentary sources in Persian and Arabic. It engages debates on secularization, also revising them in reference to the histories of the Global South. The present dissertation destabilizes received, Eurocentric theory of secularization, opening up the issues of religious and epistemic modernity to a wider range of human histories.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iv
Transliterations, Translations, and Dates.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Theory, Historical Difference, and the Problem of Secularization.....	18
1.1 Theory and Difference	25
1.2 The Orientalism of Our Epistemology.....	31
1.3 The Theses of Secularization	42
1.4 Iranian Historical Difference and Secular Differentiation.....	51
1.5 Religion’s Privatization as an Empty Set.....	64
1.6 The Decline and Expansion of Religion	70
1.7 The Question of Optionality	79
Chapter 2: To Educate an Immiserated Nation.....	91
2.1 A Discourse is Born	94
2.2 The Paradox: <i>Shar’i</i> Education Reform and Religious Optionality	114
2.3 The Transformation of Disciplinary Education	123
Chapter 3: The Origins of Dabistān: Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah and the Quest for New Education	157
3.1 The Early Years	160

3.2 From Local Preacher to Cosmopolitan Educator	165
3.3 Iranian Educator in the Ottoman World.....	168
3.4 The First Yerevan Schools.....	180
3.5 The Tabriz Schools	186
3.6 In Tehran, From Patronage to Exile.....	193
Chapter 4: The Management of Knowledge and the Birth of the University.....	206
4.1 A University is Born	207
4.2 To Manage a Population	223
4.3 To Manage by Numbers.....	226
4.4 To Manage the Land	237
4.5 To Create Order	245
4.6 To Authorize Learners	253
Chapter 5: Disparaging “Those Who Know”: The Transformation of Anti-Ulema Imagination	262
5.1 Berating Ulema Character in the Classical Period.....	265
5.2 The Constitutional Turn and the Emergence of Modern Polemics.....	274
5.3 Ulema Authority in Question.....	277
5.4 Dispossessing Ulema of <i>‘ilm</i>	284
Conclusion	302
Figures.....	309

Bibliography 316

Acknowledgments

I begin with an unorthodox acknowledgement—gratitude to the creator and the sustainer of the worlds, to whom I owe every breathe, thought, and argument put into these pages. Further gratitude is due to my many teachers; they include the members of my dissertation committee: Hamid Dabashi, Sudipta Kaviraj, Wael Hallaq, Ervand Abrahamian, and Houchang Chehabi. Before meeting my adviser, Hamid Dabashi, his versatile and far-reaching intellectual vision had impassioned me. I was fortunate to have learned from him on many occasions. Ervand Abrahamian provided me with some of the most enduring instructions on the political history of modern Iran. It was a pleasure to take one of the last formal courses he offered. Hamid Dabashi and Ervand Abrahamian generously satisfied my intellectual curiosity, even when I would share their company in their leisure or through the commotion of New York streets. I am thankful for the mentorship of another pioneer in Iranian Studies, Houchang Chehabi. His scholarship was one of my first introductions to the field. Sudipta Kaviraj instilled in my thinking the most critical methodological insights. He genuinely and selflessly facilitated the intellectual interests behind this dissertation. Wael Hallaq’s unapologetic voice and passionate critique of modernity opened up new possibilities in the composition of this dissertation.

It was a unique pleasure to grow under the tutelage of the professors in my department; it is rare to find any one department with so many scholars who have genuine commitments to anti-colonial thought and the uplifting of the peoples of the Global South. In particular, the courageous anti-imperialist epistemology of Joseph Massad and Saeed Honarmand brought me joy over and over. Saeed Honarmand shared his knowledge of Persian literature and Iranian history with me on a regular basis; I never wanted the hours spent in his company to end.

Mahnaz Moazami of the Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies taught me about pre-Islamic Iran; her knowledge, humility, and compassion are an inspiration. Iraj Shahbazi of the University of Tehran taught me how to read Hafez years ago; since then, he has been generously available in shaping my intellectual questions.

In addition to these teachers, I thank my peers who provided their feedback on earlier drafts of this dissertation. Further thanks are due to the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium that allowed me trips to CUNY and Yale to study with Ervand Abrahamian and learn from Abbas Amanat. I thank the people and organizations that provided me with funding, language, and philological training during my research, including the financial support provided by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Columbia. I also thank all the professors and teachers who patiently taught me to read languages and manuscripts. Then, there were all the libraries, cafés, and buildings that opened their doors to me in a search for a space to think and write—I am grateful to them, as well as all those who opened their homes to me in my many journeys in search of sources, in particular my family. Without the help of archivists, this dissertation would be without its most original sources; in particular, I must thank Farshideh Kounani, Mohammad Baghaie, and Behdokht Roshdieh.

Further acknowledgments are due to many friends in Tehran, New York, and elsewhere, who provided their support during my graduate studies. I am also grateful to the communities that have kept me accompanied as I make meaning in this world. The anti-imperialist community—to which I am connected primarily through the virtual world—has made me feel supported in my anti-colonial epistemology, which informs the methodology of this dissertation. The Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities of New York made me feel at home—sometimes, as if I was in my hometown of Tehran. Many friends in the Iranian diaspora were

also there to indulge my interests. And of course, I thank the kind people of Iran; it is my heartfelt wish that this work can contribute in a small way to the knowledge of Iranian history and to our struggle for sovereignty. I dedicate this dissertation to the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I close this acknowledgement with a pleading for forgiveness. First, from those whose precious names and memories I overlooked to record on these pages—I am grateful to them. Second, I plead mercy for the imperfections that will follow, for which I alone am responsible. And, *Allahu a'lam*.

تقدیم به مردم عزیز سرزمینم

Transliterations, Translations, and Dates

I use the Library of Congress conventions to match transliterations available in U.S. library catalogs. I do not transliterate common names, such as Tehran, or non-Latin nouns found in major English dictionaries, such as ulema, unless they are part of a longer phrase or title. In the narrative, I use the Persian or Arabic singular combined with the English suffix -s to pluralize (for example, “colleges” is rendered “madrasas,” instead of *madāris*). For brevity’s sake, when writing proper names in Persian, I do not use the *izafa* “-i” (for example, I write Sohrab Sepehri, instead of Sohrab-i Sepehri). I write verses of poetry and longer phrases in their original Persian or Arabic, accompanied with a translation.

All translations are mine unless noted otherwise. I provide dates on the Islamic lunar calendar, or the Iranian solar calendar depending on the source, alongside their Gregorian conversions.

Introduction

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me:
O what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O it drives all joy away!
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

Ah then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour;
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn through with the dreary shower.
How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring!

-William Blake, The Schoolboy-

In a premodern *ādāb* text on education, we are told that if a learner intended to acquire knowledge, upon contemplation, he or she shall realize there will be no days off.¹ To illustrate this, the author narrated the following account from one of Avicenna's chief students:

A group of students and I attended Avicenna's course on Saturday. We fell short in understanding the instructions. Avicenna asked: "have you taken Friday [Sabbath for Muslims] off?" We replied: "yes, we were spending time with friends." Avicenna became despaired that we had chosen leisure over learning. This verse followed:
Precious time, you shall not waste in a comfort's howl
in this world, no one knows tomorrow's fate to come.²

Hard work and discipline in the acquisition of knowledge were very old. The disciplined learner had to follow the guidance of the ulema to cultivate desirable study practices, which even

¹ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id: dar aḥvāl-i madāris va masājid*, 269.

² Adapted with modifications for readability from *ibid.*, 269-70.

included the postponement of marriage.³ The inception of modern schooling in the context of the nation-state also generated discipline, but of a very different kind. Discipline was no longer primarily the learner’s initiative, mediated through ulema knowledge; the student now became the recipient of rules by abstract organizations of the school and the state. The following prescription from 1925 by Iranian intellectual and novelist, Muḥammad ‘Alī Jamālzādah, was quite telling of a new form of discipline, which although inspired from European practice (in his case, German), came to transform learning in a much wider geography, including West Asia and Iran:⁴

[In Berlin they have a grade that] I wish would become commonplace in Iranian schools...this grade is for the care and attentiveness of students, not in their learning tasks, but concerning order and discipline [German, *ordnung*] in all areas, for example, teachers are obligated to see if on a daily basis students comb their hair, cut their nails, and attend in a timely manner...in their schoolwork, clothing, movement, sitting and rising, they are to fully comply with the disciplines of time, space, and hygiene. [In Germany] when it is still completely dark children are forced, with utmost burden, to leave their soft and warm bed...so that they are not in trouble once they are at their school...if it were up to the Iranians, they would allow students to sleep in and would begin instructions in the afternoon...⁵

Jamālzādah wanted the Education Ministry to turn discipline—including all the rules on time, bodily movement, and appearance—into a distinct, graded subject, and believed this grade would be of “utmost importance,” and “perhaps more important than studying itself.”⁶ This came into fruition. To this day, primary and secondary schools grade students on discipline (*inḏibāt*) on a scale of 20, and this grade follows them into subsequent stages of life for which they are

³ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for several examples of this guidance. Another form of discipline (more precisely, punishment) the teacher applied in early stages of education was physical punishment. See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for details.

⁴ For use of disciplines in Egyptian schooling, specifically the appropriation of the Lancaster model, see Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 69.

⁵ Jamālzādah, *Īrānshahr*, 1925, no. 4, 205.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-6.

rewarded or punished, including prohibition on registration in certain schools for poor disciplinary performance.⁷ In this dissertation, I argue that this grade is an instance of a broader reality of disciplinary power, which distinguished modern education from premodern learning that came before it. Drawing primarily on French and English histories, Michel Foucault theorized disciplinary power as a type of power that was distinctly modern.⁸ It targeted individuals through a number of tactics to create in them a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assured the automatic functioning of power. Foucault used the architectural design of the panopticon to capture the essence of disciplinary power.⁹ Power designed in this way in the prison and other organizations of modern life observed and monitored persons uninterruptedly.¹⁰ The *muhtasib* (*Shar‘ī* enforcer) had to be physically present as did the mullah at the *maktab* (premodern primary school) to monitor the *ummah* or its learners. In contrast, disciplinary power generated new means, such as impersonal surveillance to monitor the nation, or the school transcript to monitor its students. The authority of the *muhtasib* or the mullah was made visible to the Muslim and to the learner; with disciplinary power, in contrast, it was the subject of power—the nation and its students—who became most visible to impersonal bureaucracies and educational authority.¹¹

In the present dissertation, I emphasize the unsaid about Iranian education reform, specifically its disciplinary nature, in a time period that began with 1889, the founding of the first *dabistān* (reformed, primary school) in Tabriz, and ended in 1934, the founding of the first

⁷ This information is based on the schooling experience of myself and my peers.

⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 215.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹¹ Foucault called the visibility of the bottom to the top, “descending individualization,” which was contrasted with the visibility of the king (top) to the subjects (bottom), See *ibid.*, 193.

dānishgāh (university) in Tehran. At the most fundamental level, I make sense of the following question: when, how, and why did premodern educational and intellectual authority change from their premodern to their national form? In answering this question, I shall identify the events and the agents at play that made such things as disciplinary power, compulsory education, state intervention into learning, the value of universal literacy, and the authority of the state-trained teachers and intellectuals possible, and gradually, compelling. These transformations displaced premodern education, in which the ulema-produced teachings and *ādāb* played the defining role, intended to cultivate in the learner a virtuous character and a God-centered consciousness via the acquisition of *‘ilm* (knowledge).¹² Moreover, I attend to transformations in religious identity, linking new education to what I will call religious optionality, or the change in literate culture where religion (Islam specifically) was no longer a near inevitability but an option. Put differently, I attempt to make sense of why it was that in twentieth-century Iran, it became possible to become literate without expressions of religious belief.

The Disciplinary History of Iranian Education Reform

Existing English scholarship on education reform has been framed through the conceptual gamut of modernization studies.¹³ Of particular prominence in interpreting

¹² For details of these transformations, see the chapters that follow, in particular chapter 2.

¹³ Three major works on education reform in modern Iran have been written. All three used modernization as the guiding concept for their studies. From the latest work to the earliest, see Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*; Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*; Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*. Ringer (2001) covered a history of reform starting with the reforms of Qajar prince, Abbas Mirza, in the early nineteenth-century and ending with the constitutional period (1906-1911). She focused on students sent abroad, the *Dār al-funūn* school, the new primary school movement, and intellectual writings at the turn of twentieth-century. The approach of reformers, she argued, was generally one of “translation” of European institutions for Iran. Menashri (1992) began in the same period but went further into the Pahlavi period, also covering the first university in a short chapter. His main thesis was to shift the political focus of modernization studies to an emphasis on education and its contribution to change. Arasteh (1962) began with the *Dār al-funūn* (circa, 1850) and ended in what was then contemporary times (1962). He defined education broadly to include apprenticeships and political activism, also covering reform in primary, secondary, and higher education. The main thrust of the work was that education needed further modernizing. For a summary of existing scholarship on education reform, see Koyagi, *Modern Education in Iran During the Qajar and Pahlavi Periods*. This brief article

educational change has been the idea of development with a Western telos, including the metaphor of “awakening.”¹⁴ Existing historiography has interpreted education reform as a “desire to emulate the West and its successes.”¹⁵ This interpretation overlooked considerable evidence that Iranian educational reform was also mediated through the world beyond the West, via Russia, Caucasia, and the Levant in particular.¹⁶ Although as we shall see in the following chapters, direct European impact was most prominent, particularly interest in European discipline in the Reza Shah period (1925-44). Therefore, the emphasis on the West, though exaggerated, is the lesser problematic. The bigger problem is that this historiography privileged

did not provide original research and read more as a literature review on the subject. The author’s main contention was a restatement of Ringer’s argument on the translation of European institutions for a local context, see *ibid.*, 108. For three early English theses written on the subject, see Kanu (1939), “The Reconstruction of Persian Education.” Ph.D. dissertation; Nakhosteen, Mehdi Khan 1933. “The Development of Persian Education and Learning,” Ph.D. dissertation; Sadiq (1931); *Modern Persia and Her Educational System*. Issa Sadiq’s thesis that was transformed into a short book in 1931 combined a presentation of Iranian education (pp. 44-82) at the time with a general introduction to Iranian history, told through a nationalist-reformist perspective.

¹⁴ See Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 3, 5. The micro study on Baha’i schools stated that premodern education “prevented [Iranians] from *developing* their country’s potentialities and innate capabilities.” My emphasis. See Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools: The Bahai’s and Modern Education in Iran, 1899-1934*, 27. Arasteh linked education reform to “awakening” in his study as manifest in its title, see Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*. The link between awakening and reform was also used in a much earlier work by an Iranian intellectual and participant in the constitutional movement, Nāzīm al-Islām Kirmānī (d. 1918) in *Tārīkh-i bīdārī-i Īrānīyān*. The metaphor of awakening was also used by Badr al-Mulūk Bāmdād in her work on the “emancipation” of the twentieth-century Iranian woman. She wrote: “the blinkers of ignorance were lifted from the eyes of uneducated people...they woke from the sleep of unconcern.” See Bāmdād, *From darkness into light: women’s emancipation in Iran*, trans., Bagley, 25.

¹⁵ Quoted from Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 5. For a similar framing, see Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 1. According to Arasteh, education reform began as a “reaction to Western measures imposed on Iran.” See Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 20. Shahvar’s study assigned the proximate cause of education reform to when “Iran’s rulers and subjects alike experienced the West’s power and might.” See Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools*, 1. The most thorough work in Persian on the history of education reform also began from the West and the premise educational change was a response to “Western achievements.” Qāsimīpūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-’i qājārīyah: bānīyān va pīshruvān*, 1.

¹⁶ See Chapter 3 to this dissertation for an empirical history of education reform connected to the world outside the West. For a similar argument in the context of Persianate travelogues, see Hamid Dabashi, *Reversing the Colonial Gaze: Persian Travelers Abroad*. Dabashi explicated the Eurocentric reading of Persian travelogues in English scholarship, rightly pointing out that the places visited outside the West were often ignored, despite the travelers spending substantial time in these destinations.

the idea of development without critical reflection on its coloniality.¹⁷ With development having a Western telos, these works wrote into history a premise of Western superiority on the one hand, and oriental despotism and Iranian backwardness on the other.¹⁸ This general colonialist framing was also reflected in specific observations made by the authors. David Menashri's study alleged that "the university became a center of conformism which [Reza] Shah expected it to be." This speculation was made in comparison to the "organic" and dynamic university in the West, which was supposedly liberated from the state.¹⁹ This contrast between free Western universities and "state-controlled" oriental ones is especially unconvincing in light of the historical and contemporary state control over universities as well as the culture of academic conformity, in particular to imperialist interests.²⁰ Similarly, Monica Ringer, in the most-to-date monograph on the subject, concluded the study in her *own* voice and not that of reformist sources by declaring

¹⁷ In Menashri, where the concept of development was most pronounced, his only critical discussion was a distinction between functionalist theory (advocating for development through education reform) and conflict theory (believing that lack of development resulted from education linked to international capitalism). See Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 11-12. Between the two camps, the idea that there must be development (on colonialist terms) was presumed, with the functionalists seeking its presence through modernization, and conflict theorists blaming its absence on the unfair arrangements of international capitalism. Menashri did not take a clear position between these, nor did he critique the Western developmentalist telos integral to them. He muddled his voice with the developmentalist language of reformist sources throughout the book. As an example, see *ibid.*, 143.

¹⁸ For an explanation of oriental despotism in the context of liberal representations of Islam, see Massad, *Islam in Liberalism*, 17.

¹⁹ Quotation is from Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 154. For his interpretation of Western universities growing "organically" and not from "above," see *ibid.*, 143. Menashri made this conclusion on oriental despotism, despite his own earlier analysis on some legal independence given to the university. See *ibid.*, 149. In contrast, Arastah, with primary reference to the second Pahlavi period, argued that powers were shared, in law and in lived practice, between the Ministry of Education and the Pahlavi dynast on the one hand, and the university administration on the other. He added that specific "colleges exercise[d] a certain degree of autonomy." See Arastah, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 26.

²⁰ For instance, today, the U.S. state exercises great control over the funding of language learning or in the logistics of research. The U.S. Department of Education only funds languages connected to imperialist interests, while Fulbright recipients are prohibited from travel to adversarial nations under repressive U.S. sanctions. Moreover, with the exception of a small minority of scholars, the majority conform to and reproduce U.S. imperialist ideology. For the historical linkage between area studies and state interest specifically, see Hughes, *Situating Islam: The Past and Future of an Academic Discipline*, 34-35.

that “reform entailed...simply put the end of irrational, informal, and arbitrary government.”²¹ Moving from Oriental despotism to Iranian “underdevelopment,” Menashri wrote, without empirical justification, that “scientific research in the western sense was unknown at the colleges brought together to form the [first Iranian] university.”²² This statement needs to be qualified in light of the research-based theses produced in the immediate years after the university’s founding.²³ Using these among other sources in my dissertation, I reject the tired tropes of Westernism juxtaposed against oriental despotism or against Iranian underdevelopment, instead looking at the politics of education through a convergence between the West and the (semi)-colonies.²⁴ I conceptualize the management of education through asynchronous but *shared* practices of governmentality.²⁵

Framing Iranian educational history through development has reproduced the narrative of Westernism. This has also corroborated the superior representation of modernity over premodern life.²⁶ The developmentalist studies have viewed premodern education as, in their own words, a “limited,” “underdeveloped,” and “irrelevant” system producing “illiterate and superstitious”

²¹ Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 251-52.

²² Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 153.

²³ Of the 12 theses I obtained, which were written by bachelor-level students in the first few years of the university’s opening (1934-1936), all of them followed the social scientific method. In some cases, they were more impressive, in terms of research, insight, and writing quality, than advanced undergraduate papers produced at today’s U.S. universities. Moreover, they generally followed modern rules on plagiarism by providing citations, even if they were not in APA or another equally arbitrary convention we use today. The subjects varied and included the history of education in Iran, pedagogical critique of college programs, borrowing of European pseudo-science on “the races (*nizhād*) of Iran,” Arab conquests of Iran, the economy of Yazd, and agricultural practices in France. I analyze one of these theses at length in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. See the bibliography for full titles of the theses, held at the University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

²⁴ I use the term Westernist/Westernism playfully, in imitation of Islamism, to indicate a belief in Western political and cultural superiority.

²⁵ See Chapter 4 to this dissertation.

²⁶ For a critical primer on modernity, engaging its narratives of liberation but also its reality of discipline, see Wagner, *Modernity: Liberty and Discipline*.

people who were “easily manipulated by their leaders.”²⁷ One study added, without evidence or argumentation, that “the school system such as it existed [in the 1800’s] had badly deteriorated.”²⁸ As we shall see in this dissertation, the deterioration of premodern education was what reformists believed, and this belief did not necessarily correspond to historical reality. Similar to this existing scholarship, reformist intellectual, Ahmad Kasravi (d. 1946), celebrated education in one of the most enduring texts on constitutional reform, part historical and part polemical.²⁹ In his modernist argumentation, Kasravi reflected the reformist anxieties of his time when national identity and robust state organization, in part achieved through education reform, appeared as necessary safeguards against colonialism.³⁰ It is one thing for intellectuals in the (semi)-colonies to celebrate modernism in their early twentieth-century political context, and quite another for contemporary scholars to reproduce the same view. In contrast to Iranian intellectuals, existing works have not been so much inspired by material political dilemmas, but by subjecting premodern education to modernist values. The existing literature has not assessed premodern education independent of the reformist sources.³¹ I write a different work that takes

²⁷ Arasteh called the *maktab* “limited” in Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 6. In his short article on the subject of education reform, Matthee branded it as “underdeveloped” in Matthee, “Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period,” 314. And, Menashri wrote “students were not prepared for any useful occupation. The syllabus was totally irrelevant to the country’s needs” in Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 41-42. The last quote is (perhaps surprisingly) not from a reformist source but from Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools*, 1.

²⁸ Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 17.

²⁹ As an example of his celebratory approach, see Kasravi, *Tārīkh-i mashrūṭah-’i Īrān*, 26.

³⁰ On the connection between territorial integrity against colonialism and national identity, Ḥusayn Kāzīmzādah (better known as Īrānshahr), wrote that without a common national identity, Iranians from different ethnic backgrounds continued to feel “mutually alien,” which allowed “a foreign enemy to violate their rights and intrude upon their land.” See Īrānshahr, *Īrānshahr*, October 18, 1923, no. 2, 66, Columbia University Libraries.

³¹ Ringer did not engage with premodern educational organization before reform. Menashri minimally engaged it in his introduction, see Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 13, 16. Of the three major studies, Arasteh engaged premodernity more than others, but this engagement lacked in primary sources. For instance, his only source on madrasa education was a French travelogue, see Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 61-62.

premodernity into consideration by an examination of primary sources from the period. I reject celebratory histories of modern education, in favor of understanding the historical contingencies that made education reform and its corresponding values possible and compelling. These values included universal, instead of selective literacy, and surveillance disciplines, instead of bodily punishment. Without filtering the narrative through modernist expectations, I trace change from *ādāb al-muti'allimīn* rules to disciplinary power, from the *maktab* to the *dabistān*, from the madrasa to the *dānishgāh*, from court rule to state's governmentality, and from ulema-centered epistemology to the rise of state-trained intellectuals.

In addition to development, the idea of secular education has been central to existing historiography. This historiography has identified reformist intellectuals, reduction of ulema's teaching mandate, change in curriculum, and new pedagogy as secular, and has interpreted educational change away from the *maktab*/madrasa to the *dabistān*/*dānishgāh* as evidence of secularization.³² It has omitted a methodological inquiry into these concepts. The concept of the secular is indebted to European histories, while the theoretical canon on secularization has explored this process in primary reference to Western histories.³³ This does not necessarily mean that these ideas are provincial, particularly because of the global reach of colonial modernity. However, it also does not mean that Western and colonialist cognition shall transfer over to the Global South without revisions. It is a major argument of my dissertation that social theory must be used reflexively in cases of historical difference: if we are to apply the European, and a

³² For examples, see Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 8, 242, 248, 249, 251, 252, 272; Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads," 314, 324-25. Matthee dated secularization of education to the period before Reza Shah reforms, but without specifying the precise years, see *ibid.*, 324; Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 13, 150, 157, 161; Arasteh, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 32, 50, 86, 99, 133. Arasteh described education reformers as "dedicated secularists." See *ibid.*, 99. Shahvar used the concept of secular intellectuals and secular education, distinguishing them from Baha'i education reform. Although similar in modernization intent, the latter, he wrote, had a religious element. See Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools*, xxii, xxiii, 6, 12, 20.

³³ For a detailed discussion, see Chapter 1 to this dissertation.

fortiori, colonialist concepts, we must also inquire about their application to historical difference. I shall therefore examine the relevance of secularization theory in my dissertation at some length.

Indeed, an inquiry into the relationship between European-derived theory and historical difference is the defining methodology of my dissertation. My attempt is to show a principled commitment to this method. This means a critical engagement with European-derived ideas, whether it is the discarded idea of development (at least in certain pockets of the humanities), the destabilized concept of the secular, or the more seemingly neutral idea of disciplinary power.³⁴ Hence, I enter upon critical reflections on disciplinary power as well. Although the operation of this type of power is reflected in the primary sources on education, this does not necessarily mean that there are no mismatches between theory and Iranian history. Disciplinary power was never as planned and thorough in Iran (and one might add, West Asia more generally) as it was in the West. This was quite apparent in the organization of the economy. The impositions of capital on labor behaved in ways different than those in the West, with fewer disciplines being enforced on labor in most contexts, particularly in the family-centered bazaar.³⁵ Even in the more modernized, capitalistic segments of the economy, supermarkets and office labor, workers were not supervised and disciplined with the same panoptic precision.³⁶ This is not to say that labor

³⁴ The discarding of developmentalist language is most observable among scholars in the humanities. The language is still widely used among departments such as law, international affairs, and political science. As argued here, the former group has a persuasive basis for its dispensation: the concept guides the mind to a colonialist teleology, an end-destination of a superior Western political and economic planning that all Global South nations should “develop” towards. Secularization, in contrast, is not entirely discarded by critical scholars, but has been under increased scrutiny and cautious use in recent scholarship. For a critical approach to secularity in the context of educational change in mandate Palestine, see Schneider, *Mandatory Separation: Religion, Education, and Mass Politics in Palestine*. For an older, more general critique of the secular, see Asad, *Formations of the Secular*.

³⁵ For a study on guilds and merchants in the Qajar period, see Floor, *Guilds, Merchants, Ulama in Nineteenth-Century Iran*. On the bazaar since the second Pahlavi period (1953), see Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace*.

³⁶ One simple example is the fact the bodily movement of workers in Iranian supermarkets is not disciplined as it is in the United States. They can generally sit and relax during their work shift. I make this

was not exploited by owners of capital, but to highlight the limits of disciplinary power as an easily transferable tool of analysis from the West to the rest.

Another methodological problem with existing historiography is that it has lacked in the depth of primary sources. Ringer's work drew heavily on secondary, interpretive sources in Persian, but used the primary sources of the period minimally.³⁷ Journals and other primary sources, when used, were generally taken from quoted segments in secondary sources.³⁸ Moreover, the reading of the few primary sources used directly were suspect. Ringer's reading of the source material was, in several places, untraceable to the actual contents of the text. In particular, she pushed early nineteenth-century intellectual sources into her modernization narrative, without corroborative content from the text.³⁹ For example, Ringer read a belief in "European strength and the concomitant 'deficiency' in Iran" in Mīrzā Šālih Shīrāzī's *Safarnāmah*, to argue that "in Shirazi's view...modernization (read Westernization) was essential for progress."⁴⁰ The text of the travelogue did not allow for this interpretation and this interpretation was not cited to any specific parts of the text. Per my reading of Shīrāzī's *Safarnāmah* in chapter 2, we shall see that his travelogue was descriptive (not prescriptive) and

observation based on my experience, as a service worker and also an observer, in both countries. Thus far, no scholarly work has examined the relationship between disciplinary power and the Iranian economy methodically.

³⁷ The primary sources Ringer used were the writings of Qajar courtiers or late Qajar-era reformers in print form, such as Malcolm Khan (*Qānūn*), Dawlatābādī (*Hayat-i Yahyā*), Marāgheh'ī (*Siyāhatnāmah-i Ibrāhīm Bayk*), and Talebof (*Kitāb-i Aḥmad*). The bibliography listed a number of printed, primary sources that the author did not use in the book, such as Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's diaries, which was listed on Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 293. For a full bibliography, see *ibid.*, 273.

³⁸ As examples, see extensive recycling of primary source quotations from Mahbubi-Ardakani's works among others in *ibid.*, footnote 41 on 29, footnote 34 on 75, footnote 48 on 78, footnote 59 on 84, footnotes 20, 23 on 151, footnote 37 on 223, footnote 94 on 240. For a full list of Mahbubi-Ardakani's works employed in Ringer, see *ibid.*, 289.

³⁹ For examples, see *ibid.*, 55, 57.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 55. Another study on the subject cited to Ringer's misreading of Shīrāzī without corrections. See Soli, *Forgotten Schools*, endnote 42 on 12.

showed no interest in a modernization project for Iran, despite measured admiration for the infrastructure and social life he saw in Russia and England.⁴¹

The works before Ringer, namely Menashri and Arasteh, were more attentive in their reading of text.⁴² However, as in Ringer, they lacked in primary sources of the period under study (1889-1934). Arasteh, although benefiting from his lived experience in Iran after the World War II, left many parts of his study uncited to source material.⁴³ In contrast to Ringer, Arasteh had used some documentary sources, but they were almost all from 1936 and after.⁴⁴ Menarshi had visited the Iranian archives prior to the 1979 revolution; still, his study appears thin in archival material from before the abdication of Reza Shah.⁴⁵ For instance, in his chapter on the founding of the University of Tehran, minus a few valuable interviews he had conducted with a some of men involved with the university's founding (all deceased now), he had not

⁴¹ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁴² In contrast to Ringer, Menashri correctly recognized that “Shīrāzī does not advocate the adoption of western ways, as other Iranians would do later” adding that the text is “descriptive rather than admonitory. See Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 68.

⁴³ The book is sparsely cited to sources. Even more documented historical events such as Amir Kabir's reforms were uncited, see Arasteh, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 35. The work also did not have a bibliography and ended abruptly. See *ibid.* 145. For references to his own experience in vocational education in the second Pahlavi period, see *ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁴ Examples were his use of University of Tehran's news bulletin from 1940 and after, or newspapers from 1958, and Ministry of Education reports from 1936 (also used in Menashri) and 1939. The only older sources were parliament proceedings (*muzākīrāt-i majlis*) from 1906 and education legislation from 1910-11, 1928, 1934 produced in the appendix. See *ibid.*, 139. Arasteh occasionally made mention of the agricultural schools and teacher's colleges in the constitutional and Reza Shah periods, but his analysis lacked in primary sources. On his references to the teacher's colleges, see *ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁵ Menashri had a good number of primary sources from the second Pahlavi period (mostly from the 1960's and the 1970's). However, his documentary sources for the period under consideration were fewer. Of note were documents from parliamentary proceedings (*muzākīrāt-i majlis*), also used in Arasteh, in addition to Pahlavi-era statistics bureau (*markaz-i āmār*) documents and two annual reports (1932/1311-12 and 1936/1314-15) from the Ministry of Education. For their respective use, see Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 77, 186, 332.

obtained archival documents from the university.⁴⁶ I write a different work, in which I draw on a larger set of primary sources, including some of the earliest sources of the *dabistān* movement and the higher colleges that gradually merged into the first university.

A number of source-rich works in English are available on Iranian history at the turn of the twentieth century; however, as I argued here, the existing works on the more specific subject of education reform in this period leave the perceptive reader wanting.⁴⁷ My dissertation intends to fill in the gaps, in particular redressing the following areas: the thinness of primary source material, problems in the reading of text and philology, the absence of premodern histories, and the coloniality of methodology.

Trajectory, Arguments, and Sources

I write the present dissertation in five chapters. In the first chapter, I dwell on the uses and limits of social theory, setting out the methodological orientation of the dissertation as a whole. I follow the line of inquiry, initiated by the critical scholarship of Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sudipta Kaviraj, Hamid Dabashi, Joseph Massad, and Wael Hallaq among others, to inquire into the relationship between theory and historical difference. My starting premise is that any historiography of the Global South—former colonies and semi-colonies of the West—must account for the limits and inadequacies of Eurocentric and colonialist social theory presumed to be universal. In other words, we cannot simply universalize from the Western theoretical canon and speculate that the existing theories of capital, labor, discipline, class, race, sexuality, public,

⁴⁶ The only exceptions were statistical table on student enrollment and some uncited “files” on students’ names. By the author’s own admission, these were not too informative. See *ibid.*, 151-52.

⁴⁷ On intellectual and literary history of this period, see Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century*, chapters 1-3 in particular; Āryanpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā: tāriḫ-i 150 sāl-i adab-i Fārsī*; Brown, *Persian Literature in Modern Times (1500-1924)*, 298 and after in particular. Brown and Āryanpūr can be criticized for a number of issues, including their nationalist historiography. However, they are impressive in use of primary source material and in their philological abilities, in contrast to the existing historiography on education reform. For a survey of Iranian history in this period, see Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, chapters 4-8 in particular.

modernity, secularity—to name some—apply with the same characteristics elsewhere (in some cases, we may even have to dispense with a particular concept or set of social theory entirely). This question of theory and historical difference, I will argue, is an epistemological issue that Said's critique of Orientalism implies, although it is not directly raised by the text. Indeed, the debates following *Orientalism* primarily focused on the question of representation; the question of orientalist epistemology is a more contemporary interest and only investigated methodically (and also methodologically, meaning as a question of method) by a handful of scholars, many of whom teach at the department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. Following their inquiry, I focus on a particular set of social theory (secularization) and its application to a specific case of historical difference (Iranian history). As I argued in the present introduction, secularity is used in Iranian studies historiography, and as a mean to comprehend education reform, but without a careful accounting of its explanatory value (or lack thereof). I argue that secularization theory, as it stands in the social theory canon, confounds more than it clarifies when tested against Iranian historical transformations. However, I also do note that in modern Iran (1906-), religious belief and practice gradually changed from a near inevitability to an option, which raises the following dilemma: if existing secularization theory presents us with explanatory problems, how do we explain the emergence of options between religion and irreligion? This is the question that I take up in the later chapters of the dissertation, looking for an answer from Iranian history and Persian sources. In crafting an “indigenous” response, the following chapters examine a central institution of modern Iran—education reform—and draw a causal link between education reform and the optionality of religion.

The second chapter moves from method to history through primary sources. I inquire into the discursive and institutional context (institution as norm and organization both) that made

education reform possible.⁴⁸ My historiographical premise is to make sense of discourse production from indigenous language, in lieu of external social scientific theories, such as modernization or developmentalist theories. I trace the origins of reform to the Persian discourse of misery (*badbakhtī*), which began in the late nineteenth century but gripped collective Iranian consciousness all the way into the present.⁴⁹ Intellectual advocates of immiseration believed that national redemption (*nijāt*) from misery required education reform (for some of them, it was the *only* path to redemption). Discourse then made reality. New norms, including the implementation of disciplinary power in education, distinguished new education (*ma'ārif-i jadīd*) from premodern learning. This change, I will argue, also impacted religion and religious identity.

Probing the institutional change in education further, I turn from educational norms to the organization of education, examining the new primary and higher schools in chapters three and four. In chapter three, I provide a history of the transition from the premodern *maktab* to new elementary schooling of the *dabistān*, by following mass literacy advocate, Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah (1860 (?)-1944). Distancing myself from the celebratory historiography on reform, I attempt to contrast the *maktab* with the *dabistān*, without affirming reformist or modernist expectations of what “right” education had to be. In chapter four, I examine the transition from premodern madrasa learning to the modern university (1934). Remedying Menashri’s thinly-sourced history of the university’s founding, I proceed historically based on a large set of primary and secondary sources in Persian. I also proceed theoretically to examine the

⁴⁸ In the historical literature, institution is generally used to mean an organization with a physical presence such as the university. In the sociological literature, institution refers to an established norm, practice, or pattern of social behavior with great longevity, such as greeting practices including handshakes. I use institution in both senses because educational organizations and norms both changed. For a sociological approach to institution, see Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, 17. I thank Marina Rustow who brought my attention to this distinction.

⁴⁹ I thank Saeed Honarmand for his insightful instructions on this point.

relationship between higher colleges and eventually the first university on the one hand, and the modern state's governmentality on the other.⁵⁰

In the fifth and final chapter, I turn from change in institutions of education to its agents that created knowledge. Specifically, I examine literary and intellectual discourses on the ulema in three periods: premodern, constitutionalist, and modern. Proceeding historically, I argue that the literary and intellectual imagination vis-à-vis the ulema changed in quality as Iran entered the twentieth century. What was once a character criticism of *certain* ulema, such as their alleged hypocrisy, transformed into a castigation of the epistemic and social authority of the *entire* ulema collective in the Reza Shah period. The modernist intellectual representation coupled with institutional change in education allowed state-trained intellectuals to overshadow the ulema as custodians of legitimate knowledge.

The library and archival research for this dissertation took me to many places. Columbia University Library in New York City was an invaluable resource for several lesser-known printed sources in Persian, such as *Lu'lu' va Marjān: Dar Ādāb-i Ahl-i Minbar (Pearl and Coral: On the Habits of the Preachers)*, which I use extensively in chapter five. I visited several archives in London, Yerevan, and Beirut, and Tehran; it was the public and private archives of Iran that provided me with the most relevant sources. These archives were the National Library and Archives of Iran, the University of Tehran Manuscript and Documents Archives, the Majlis library, and the private archives of Behdokht Roshdieh. I use a combination of printed, manuscript, and documentary sources in this dissertation, which are in Arabic but much more extensively in Persian. These sources include Persianate travelogues (*safarnāmah*), *Ādāb al-*

⁵⁰ In chapters three and four, I contrast this new organization of education at elementary and higher levels with premodern learning that preceded it. As a result, I do not delve into the details of modern, secondary education because premodern learning did not have a category for secondary education. See Bāqistānī and Mu'īnī, *Ta'lim va tarbiyat dar tamaddun-i Islāmī*, 57.

muti'allimān texts and manuscripts, ulema biographies (*tazkarah*), Qajar and Pahlavi documentary sources, endowment (*waqf*) documents, ministerial archives in particular those belonging to the Ministry of Education, primary school documents, annual reports (*sālnāmah*) of higher colleges and the first university, intellectual memoirs and letter correspondences, Persian journals, and unpublished theses belonging to the University of Tehran's earliest period. The consequent chapters shall clarify when and how (and in what language) the aforementioned sources are used. But, first, I shall begin with the methodological discussion that orients my reading of the primary sources, and of history and theory. This is the task of the chapter that follows.

Chapter 1: Theory, Historical Difference, and the Problem of Secularization

“How can we write Iran’s history outside Orientalism?”¹ Tehran-based academic, Ibrāhīm Tawfīq, raised this question in his recent book on method. The question is not Iran-specific, however; it applies to the study of the (semi)-colonized world more generally. What is the relationship between theory and their historical difference? Is social theory universal? To what extent does theory received from the European canon, and its corresponding explanations of the world, apply to historical difference? And, where does it fail to carry over?

In his enduring work, *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty provides one of the earliest methodological (and also methodical) responses to these questions. Chakrabarty argues that the received theories of the public, and of labor and capitalism, cannot adequately explain the history of Bengal and must be revised through historical difference.² Joseph Massad also engages the question of theory and historical difference, in the context of sexuality in Arab West Asia. In *Desiring Arabs*, Massad traces the universalization of European sexual epistemology, arguing that it distorted how Arabs themselves had thought about sexual contact “before homosexuality.”³ The Arab intellectual elite, facilitating an “imperialism from within,” to borrow from Frantz Fanon, adapted European cognition, explaining (and explaining away) male-on-male

¹ Tawfīq, *Nāmīdan-i ta’līq: barnāmah’i pizhūhishī barā-yi jāmi’ah’shināsī-i tārikhī-i intiqādī dar Īrān*, 11. The book is produced by a group of scholars. It bears the name of Ibrāhīm Tawfīq “and colleagues” on the cover page. For the list of these colleagues, see the bibliography.

² Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. For an extended engagement with this text, see the subsection in this chapter entitled “The Orientalism of Our Epistemology.”

³ See El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, from which I borrow the quoted phrase. El-Rouayheb provides a well-argued account on the lack of homosexuality as a concept in the premodern Arab-Islamic world.

sex as unrepresentative or as foreign, Persian imports.⁴ In more recent times, the “gay international”—composed of Western NGOs, academics, and journalists—is exporting Western categories, including LGBT identities, to remake alternative expressions of love and pleasure in the Arab world after its own image, after which it attempts to “rescue” gay Arabs from “repressive” Arab culture.⁵ In *Restating Orientalism*, Wael Hallaq goes beyond the concepts of the public, of capitalism, and of sexuality, engaging with modern thought broadly. As with Sudpita Kaviraj, he hones on the epistemological dimension of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, not simply its representational force.⁶ Hallaq views orientalism as derivative of modern knowledge more generally, arguing that it was embedded in, defined by, corralled into, and driven by a larger structure that extends throughout the modern project and its Enlightenment.⁷ This is what made the “intellectual attitudes” of an “ordinary, typical, and mainstream” economist identical to that of his orientalist, historian, anthropologist, or a scientist counterpart, Hallaq adds.⁸ Modern knowledge as a whole, through a process Hallaq provocatively calls modernity’s “structural genocide,” made premodern epistemologies, including the *Sharī‘a*, dead.⁹ Presumably, the Azrael impact of modernity compels us to think about *Sharī‘a*, not on its own terms, but in an entanglement with the modern concepts of law/morality, sovereignty, politics, and separation of

⁴ See respectively, Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 76, 74.

⁵ See *ibid.*, 162. On the gay international phenomenon and its connection to “homonationalism” in the West, see Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 38.

⁶ See Kaviraj, “An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity” analyzed in the subsection below entitled “The Orientalism of Our Epistemology.” Although Kaviraj does not explicitly engage with *Orientalism* in this article.

⁷ Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge*, 8, 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

powers.¹⁰ Hamid Dabashi, in *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*, has suggested an “*alternative theory*” (his emphasis) to modernity.¹¹ Dabashi aims to introduce new concepts and narrative towards alternate universalities (in the plural) that would undermine Europe’s existing universality (in the singular). These interventions have not attempted to dismantle European-derived theory altogether; rather, they have attempted to destabilize theory assumed to be universal by showing the distortions it brings to cases of historical difference. Following these critiques, my objective here is to engage with the epistemological implications of Said’s *Orientalism*. My immediate goal is to understand the utility (or lack thereof) of a particular social theory (secularization) in relation to a particular history (Iranian history).

(European) social theory when speculatively universalized may produce imperialist and politically regressive outcomes. As mentioned, Massad shows this in the context of the “gay international” on sexuality.¹² Another example is race and racialization. In his essay, *Racism and Nationalism*, French theorist, Étienne Balibar, applies race and racism universally, writing that “it would...be difficult to find contemporary societies from which racism is absent [adding that] there is a plethora of racisms [in the colonized world] both institutional and popular, between nations, ethnic groups, and communities.”¹³ This speculation universalizes European cognition to the world at large. It is true that outside Europe and its extensions, there exist a wide array of

¹⁰ More materially-politically, the destructive impact of modernity is why governing according to the *Shari‘a* paradigm became “impossible,” or at least this is what Hallaq argues in *The Impossible State*.

¹¹ See Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*, 258.

¹² Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 161.

¹³ See Balibar, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 40, 44. Balibar admits that “not all societies are equally racist.” Nonetheless, he still views race, racialization, and racism as a universal process. It is also interesting to note Balibar’s attention to historical difference elsewhere (despite his flawed, universal reading of race). On difference of nationalisms, he writes: “We have no right whatsoever to equate the nationalism of the dominant with that of the dominated, the nationalisms of liberation with the nationalisms of conquest.” See *ibid.*, 45.

institutional discrimination and popular prejudices against those who do not fit in the national narrative of self. However, such discrimination and prejudice are not necessarily racialized, and more generally, the cognition of race and racism are not necessarily duplicated outside the West. It is true that the social elites, in their interaction with European “scientific” culture, appropriated the same racist ideas for national objectives.¹⁴ However, this did not necessarily produce an institutional practice or a popular cognition of race and racism. In Iran, despite the elite-led Aryan national narrative of the Pahlavi period, no institutional or popular cognition of race and racism developed. Popular prejudice of a Persian against a Kurd, an Arab, or a black Iranian is not expressed through the cognition of race, but through much older narratives around linguistic, religious, and geographical difference. The evidence-free universalization of race has become a well-funded fad in recent years, with entire Ph.D. theses being written and academic positions being offered on colonized histories through a primary emphasis on race/racialization, even in cases where this cognition carries little to no explanatory value.¹⁵ This universal speculation results in a world of morally ambiguous sameness, where everyone is responsible for racist thinking and is equally racist, minimizing moral and political distinctions between the colonialists who invented race and the colonized who received their racism. This has always been a beloved tactic of imperialism and settler colonialism, to project their own flaws unto the colonized.¹⁶

¹⁴ For the intersection between European racist thinking and Iranian nationalism, see Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and Politics of Dislocation*.

¹⁵ For an example, see the handsomely-paid “Race and the Middle East/North Africa” postdoctoral fellowship at CUNY. Available online at <https://memeac.gc.cuny.edu/gc-mellon-race-and-the-middle-east-north-africa-postdoctoral-application/>, accessed November 16, 2021. It is one thing to acknowledge the influence of racist thinking among West Asian and North African elites, and quite another to organize an entire disciplinary or thematic field around it.

¹⁶ For the projection argument, see Massad, *Islam in Liberalism*, 11-12.

This failure to think indigenously, and understand the colonized peoples on their own terms, may therefore stand in reciprocal relationship to Western imperialism. However, I do not mean to suggest that Western academics have conspired to orientalize the (semi)-colonized world *conceptually* for the benefit of Western imperialism. The problem is less sinister than a conspiracy, but also, much grimmer, deeper, and more structural than a simple conspiracy. The problem is produced by our most fundamental theoretical concepts, which we all share, from the most imperialist academic to the most decolonial one, including those outside Western universities— Ibrāhīm Tawfīq’s dilemma being a case in point.¹⁷ The deep structure of European-derived epistemology means we cannot simply escape orientalist epistemology in the same way we can escape orientalist representation. On representation, Said implied a strong but dubious determinism, stating in categorial terms: “every European, in that he could say about the Orient, was a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.”¹⁸ Contrary to this indictment, I think authorial agency in representation is quite possible. As demonstrated persuasively by Hamid Dabashi, Hungarian-born orientalist Ignaz Goldziher’s representation of Islam is a case in point, which Said mistook for an inferior representation.¹⁹ It was possible for orientalist agency to complicate the relationship between racist colonialism and knowledge production, as it is possible today, although rare, for Western writers to defend, against imperialist discursive domination, Syrian sovereignty or the organized resistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Bolivarian revolution. These anomalous critics take

¹⁷ In Hallaq’s restating of *Orientalism*, the question of a good versus a bad orientalist is also largely irrelevant. See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 10.

¹⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 204. Elsewhere in *Orientalism*, Said acknowledged that authorial consciousness may liberate itself, at least partially, from the cultural field and from political forces. See *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁹ See Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism*, 26. For Said on Goldziher, see *Orientalism*, 23. For some of Goldziher’s primary writings on Islam, see Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammadanische Studien)*.

up authorial agency against liberal, imperialist dictation, for which they are slandered as “regime apologists,” are censored from “big tech” platforms, and are punished (in a material, career sense).²⁰ It is thus possible to exercise “free will” against orientalist and imperialist representation. In contrast, orientalist epistemology is far more deterministic. We cannot simply escape the fundamental concepts of modern thought. For example, we are able to write that there is more political pluralism in the Islamic Republic state than there is in mainstream U.S. politics; such representation would be blasphemous to Western-educated readers, but it would still be comprehensible. In contrast, we cannot write coherently without our modern concepts, and if somehow, we could, this writing would be totally incomprehensible to the reading public.

From this discussion, it shall also follow that the inadequacy of social theory is not a problem of nomenclature nor of political correctness. The problem will not simply fade away if we change our terminology from, say, the Middle East to West Asia.²¹ It requires years of philologically-abled scholarly output that thinks about the (semi)-colonized world on its own historical terms. Moreover, the problem is not inherently about “the West versus the rest.” We would also distort, say, Chinese history if we were to speculatively and without revisions apply the theory of Persianate kingship to how Chinese emperors and kings ruled. Western social

²⁰ For one example, see the exchange between Ana Kasparian of the Young Turks and The Grayzone journalist, Aaron Mate, in which Kasparian began by saying, “fuck Aaron Mate,” after which she alleged Mate works for “disgusting dictators.” This was likely a reference to his investigative work on the Douma chemical attacks, which Western media and states alleged was committed by Syria. Mate called the allegation to be “one of the biggest pro-war deceptions since Iraq.” For the exchange, including links to Mate’s articles on the alleged chemical attacks, see <https://twitter.com/aaronjmate/status/1397797272440692740>, accessed November 16, 2021.

²¹ Although I do take up the nomenclature of West Asia in this dissertation, instead of the Middle East. The obvious reason is the U.S.-centric geography of the concept. “Middle East” was invented in 1902 by an American naval historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, who designated the area between Arabia and India as the Middle East. This was later taken up by the Times and the British government, after which it passed into general use, also overshadowing the Euro-centric designation of the “Near East.” A less apparent, but more important, reason is because “Middle East” brings to mind all these false clichés: intractable complexities, ancient enmities, and backwardness among them. West Asia, on the other hand, can be populated with new intentions, which would represent the region on its own terms, against imperial geography, colonial thinking, and Western media clichés. For the origins of the term Middle East, see Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, 9.

theory is signaled out here for two reasons. One, it is the basis of our thinking in the U.S. academy, and two, it is the only one that is universal: Western colonialism extends modern, European thought into the world at large.

In this chapter, I orient my dissertation methodologically. The method is set in several stages. First, I shift the discussions surrounding Said's *Orientalism* from one on representation to epistemology, reading a number of major methodological works on the question of theory and historical difference. This shall interest scholars outside the field of Iranian studies. Thereafter, I come closer to the interest of an Iran historian, narrowing down social theory to secularization and historical difference to Iranian history. I then elaborate on the major theses of secularization: functional and cognitive differentiation, privatization, and decline of religion. I then ask whether these theses have explanatory value for modern Iranian history (1906-). In making sense of this relationship, I draw on Iranian historiography, Islamic studies scholarship, and modern primary sources in Persian on the one hand, and premodern Persianate sources on the other. Through these sources, I probe whether secularization and Iranian historical change exhibit any relationship. My principal argument is that secularization theory generally confounds more than it clarifies. However, I also note what I shall call optionality—the condition of modernity in which individuals and society come to view religious belief and practice as one option among others—which, although theorized by Charles Taylor in reference to the West, carries over to Iranian history as a descriptive statement.²² In modern Iran too, religion changed from a near inevitability to an option. This leaves us with the following dilemma: absent secularization (in its Eurocentric sense), how did optionality become possible? This is the question that I take up in the more empirically-driven chapters of the dissertation, drawing a causal link between

²² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 423.

optionality and the institution of education reform. Before narrowing down the discussion, I shall begin with the more general and inter-regional discussion, the issue of theory and historical difference.

1.1 Theory and Difference

On this issue, we begin with Edward Said's *Orientalism*; but our task is to enlarge and extend the problem of orientalism from representation into cognition, epistemology, and social theory. Said provided a critique of orientalism, which he thought was best understood not as an objective, impartial science inquiring about the Orient, but as a knowledge system shaped by historical, political, and ideological forces (of colonialism in particular), also informing these forces through its intellectual and imaginative authority.²³ Orientalism, for Said, was fundamentally about a structural reciprocity between Western knowledge production and the power of colonialism.²⁴ It was comprised of three interdependent phenomena: an academic discipline, a broader style of thought that drew an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident, and the material domination of the colonized Orient.²⁵ Both the text of *Orientalism* and subsequent commentary primarily dealt with the way in which the reciprocity between Western knowledge production and colonialism came to *represent* the Orient.²⁶ After *Orientalism*, scholars of a postcolonial orientation in particular, critiqued orientalist representations and their accompanying superiority/inferiority tropes. A text such as

²³ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

²⁴ In his study, Said narrowed Western knowledge production to British and French intellectual, cultural, and political history, which then carried over to the United States after the end of the Second World War. This was because of the colonial power Britain, France, and the U.S. have exercised over the Middle East. See Said, *Orientalism*, 4-5.

²⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 2-3.

²⁶ For an example, see the compilation of essays in Macfie, *Orientalism: A Reader*, which are predominantly concerned with representation.

Raphael Patai's, *The Arab Mind*, was relegated to the dustbin of anthropological analysis. Anthropologists of Arab culture no longer felt at liberty to assign essential features to an "Arab mind" that stood in an inferior relation to "the West."²⁷ Scholars also shied away from the likes of Bernard Lewis for his historiographical premise that something "went wrong" with the "Islamic civilization" that brought about "Western superiority."²⁸ Bernard Lewis did not simply view the supposed decline of Islamic civilization as a description of the discourse of colonialists and of Islamic modernism, but as an objective historiographical premise upon which he built the narrative of Islamic and Middle Eastern histories.²⁹ The discarding of Patai's essentialism went hand-in-hand with the rejection of Lewis's decline thesis. Scholars followed their critical deconstruction with positive methodological alternatives. A number of scholars moved away from Lewis's divergence to a convergence methodology. The supposition that Islam and the West were two conflictual essences yielded to a search for convergences between Islamic and Western histories. In his interesting but overlooked work, Dietrich Jung, instead of departing from a vantage point of difference and confrontation (though not wholly dismissing it), departed from a point of similarity, arguing that orientalists and Muslim intellectuals converged on their production of an essentialist image of Islam.³⁰ Richard Bulliet went further to propose an entirely new conceptual frame of convergence, the "Islam-Christian civilization." Bulliet argued that the past and future of the West could not be fully comprehended without appreciation of the twined relationship it has had with Islam over fourteen centuries. The same is true of the Islamic world,

²⁷ For this approach, see Patai, *The Arab Mind*, 9-12, 18.

²⁸ See Lewis, *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3, 151.

³⁰ Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam*, 16.

he added.³¹ Above all, scholars turned to humane representation of Muslims and the Middle East as a positive alternative to orientalist representation. They took up a new obligation to emphasize the diversity and humanity of the objects of their study.³² On humane representation, Western scholars (and one might add, writers more generally) have been more generous on culture when compared to (contemporary) politics. Politics that go against imperialist domination or represent “pariah” politics, to borrow a favorite phrase of Western journalism, are still represented through orientalist tropes as, among other things, “threatening,” “repressive,” “despotic” and “corrupt,” when put next to Western liberal democracy and their marketed alternatives or allies such as the Rojava.³³ The political exception notwithstanding, a shift occurred after *Orientalism*: an attempt, although not always a successful one, to represent the Other, her culture in particular, in an intentional opposition to tropes of Western superiority.

In contrast to representation, the critique of Western knowledge paid far less attention to the epistemological problem of orientalism. I understand the epistemology of orientalism as the critique of the conceptual and explanatory language formulated in reference to European histories, which is then universalized, as “social theory,” to explain human histories at large.³⁴ The universal application of European cognition is a historical practice dating back to the advent of colonial power. It began with Western social scientists and orientalists using concepts from

³¹ Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, 45. Despite a method of convergence, Bulliet still appeared to believe in Western superiority, or at least, reproduced the claims of Westernists without critique. For example, he wrote that no one would foresee “European ideas and techniques could lead, by the end of the twentieth century, to societies, governments, and economies that would be as free, as prosperous, and as dominant as those of Europe and North America.” *Ibid.*, 49.

³² As an example, see Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary Age*.

³³ The work of Massad, *Islam in Liberalism*, provides a historical genealogy of such representations, and dwells on their use in the contemporary Western imagination. See Massad, *Islam in Liberalism*.

³⁴ I thank Sudipta Kaviraj for his 2016 seminar course on methods where I first learned of the wider implications of Said’s *Orientalism*.

and about their own area to explain the world their states had conquered. During the nineteenth century, European cognition began to influence the self-conception of “Eastern” intellectuals themselves. Iranian intellectual, Mīrzā Fath ‘Alī Ākhund’zādah (1812-78), began a book of social criticism with the following note about his new concepts he had taken from Europe (*farangistān*): “There are some words in the European language, which their close translation into the language of Islam is very difficult. Therefore, this book will transmit these words literally with Islamic letters [i.e., will transliterate them]. This compels me to write the explanation of these words from the outset so that the readers are informed of their essential meaning.”³⁵ Ākhund’zādah went on to list concepts almost entirely foreign to Iranian cognition at the time, such as “despot,” “civilization,” “literature,” “fanatic,” and “politic,” and explained each in turn before he applied them to his analysis of Iran’s supposed deficiencies. Ākhund’zādah’s introduction of and reliance on European knowledge in speaking to his own society was an instance of a broader dependency of epistemology that developed among colonized intellectuals.

Said did provide us with an epistemological critique in *Orientalism*, but for him this critique was not about the universalizing of European experience; it concerned the distinctive terminology reserved for the Orient. For Said, orientalism, after drawing an ontological distinction between the Orient and the Occident, developed a professional vocabulary for the latter. This vocabulary did not correspond to how the Orient understood itself, also representing the Orient as inferior and essentially alien.³⁶ For example, orientalism designated distinctive

³⁵ Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 284.

³⁶ See Said’s discussion of orientalist language in context of his analysis of Dante’s *Inferno* and d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque orientale*. Said, *Orientalism*, 71-72.

categories for political rule among the Orient, through such vocabulary as “oriental despotism.”³⁷ This concept conveyed to its readers that “oriental” political rule was distinct, inferior, cruel, and barbaric.³⁸ It seeped into Western discourse more generally. The adaptation of oriental, or alternatively, “Asiatic despotism” carried into the contemporary period and impacted a wide register of expression, whether it was in the Disney cartoon, Aladdin, or in the writings of Marxist theorist, Nicos Poulantzas.³⁹ Said correctly added that after World War II, orientalism’s distinctive language for the Orient broke down into many parts and became diffused in the social sciences.⁴⁰ In his analysis of orientalism and social science, Said primarily reflected on their *distinctive* “jargon” about Middle East, Arabs, and Islam, which, for him, fundamentally rested on a superiority/inferiority dichotomy and a certain cultural hostility.⁴¹ In contrast to Said, my primary concern is not with the distinctive vocabulary for the colonized; rather, it is with our *universal* conceptual language: the problematic of European cognition about Europe that is then universalized and applied to the colonized, but without a careful accounting of their historical difference.

As Said argued, and as we saw with such concepts like oriental despotism, the distinctive language for the Orient resulted in its inferior image. Ironically, scholars who conceptualize colonized histories through “universal” (read: European) theory may also generate the same result: an inferior, deficient image of historical difference. As Partha Chatterjee puts it: when the

³⁷ See Massad, *Islam in Liberalism*, 17.

³⁸ For a critique of oriental despotism in the context of Islamic legal history, see Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 65.

³⁹ In Poulantzas, *State, Power, and Socialism*, 73, 76.

⁴⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 284.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

“European experience [is] taken as the universal history...by comparison, the history of the rest of the world will appear as the history of *lack*.”⁴² Tehran-based scholar, Ibrāhīm Tawfīq, takes up the same argument. He departs from the question, of whether it is possible to write the history of Iran outside orientalist knowledge (*ghayr-i sharq’shināsānah*).⁴³ More specifically, Tawfīq critiques what he calls the “historiography of absence,” (*ghiyāb ’nigārī*) according to which there is something in Europe that is absent (or in Chatterjee’s terms, is “lacking”) elsewhere (in his case, Iran).⁴⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty studies the problem Chatterjee and Tawfīq raise based on a study of *adda*—or the Bengali practice of friends getting together for long, informal, and unrigorous conversations.⁴⁵ According to Chakrabarty, when we apply European social theory to *adda*, we learn that *adda* does not fit the theory of a modern European public, which would mean it is either deficient in some respect needing certain developments to become a modern public, or that it must be forced back into the “traditional” category, to which, as a product of twentieth-century Bengali history, it cannot belong. In Calcutta, *adda* was entangled with the rise of an urban middle-class society rooted neither in relations of rural patronage and dependence, nor in a European-like public sphere occupying more formal social spaces like coffee houses or literary societies. *Adda* involved the production of a social space and a form of sociability which was neither domestic nor public, and so cannot be assimilated into a narrative of European modernity. On European terms, *adda* can only be regarded as a product of the incomplete introduction of a bourgeois public sphere, and an example of Bengal’s remaining “traditional” and failing to make

⁴² Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 238. My emphasis.

⁴³ Tawfīq, *Nāmīdan-i ta’līq*, 11, 16.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 37, 47.

⁴⁵ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 181.

the transformation of modernity.⁴⁶ This same problem can arise in numerous other cases of historical difference too, whether it is our attempt to understand Indian bureaucracy, Arab sexuality, or Islamic politics.⁴⁷

The methodological question for those of us who study the histories of the colonized is the following: can we simply carry on with European-derived theory? What do we do in the cases of mismatch between theory and history? In what follows, I explain the problematic of universal social theory. I then draw on major critics who have responded to this problematic to set the general framework for our discussion. Thereafter, I attempt to connect this framework to specific objectives of this dissertation, namely the secularization problem.

1.2 The Orientalism of Our Epistemology

As with the theory of a modern public, other received theory comes to us through the European canon. Even Karl Marx and Max Weber, whose thought had lasting and capacious application to the modern world, carry a provincial specificity to their ideas. Marx thought about capital and the processes of capitalism (in primary reference to Europe and its extensions), and Weber conceived of new forms of political and administrative authorities that had emerged in his context (again, a European one).⁴⁸ Marx presented us with a modernity (although he did not use the concept himself), which was rooted in the capitalist economy. For Marx, capitalism began from “primitive accumulation” of capital by the revolutionary, European bourgeoisie. Through enslavement, conquest, robbery, murder, and force, the bourgeoisie turned the producer into a

⁴⁶ See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 181, 212.

⁴⁷ On Arab sexuality, see Massad, *Desiring Arabs*. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Massad provides a persuasive critique of problems that emerge when European epistemology on sexuality and on sexual identity is applied to Arab societies. Concerning Iranian revolutionary politics, theocratic democracy would appear as an anti-democratic oxymoron under the European experience, but under Shia legal categories and the Iranian social experience it may very well work as a harmonious unit (at least for certain demographics).

⁴⁸ See Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*.

wager-laborer and separated her from her means of production. Although emancipated from serfdom and fetter of the guilds (presumably, in the European context), the bourgeoisie robbed workers of their means of production and compelled them to sell their labor for wages and sustenance. For Marx, feudal exploitation became capitalist exploitation.⁴⁹ The shift from feudal to capitalist economy brought about a number social, political, and legal transformations, Marx argued. The town or the city emerged in distinction to the country. The town was the concentration of population, of instruments of production, of capital, of pleasure, of needs, while the country was now the center of isolation and separation. The worker who used to be a producer of her own product in the country was now compelled to move into the town to sell her labor in exchange for money.⁵⁰ Furthermore, political centralization resulted from the concentration of population, of means of production, and of property in towns. Independent but loosely connected provinces with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation transformed into a singular state with one government and a uniform set of laws.⁵¹ Thanks to its economic power, the bourgeoisie had exclusive political sway over the centralized state. According to Marx, the executive of the modern state was essentially a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie.⁵² While consolidating power over politics, the bourgeoisie projected its power globally through colonization. Wherever the European bourgeoisie went in search of markets in the colonies it created a bourgeois class after its own

⁴⁹ See Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*.

⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. one, 817. See also Marx and Engels, *Development of the Division of Labour*, in *Marx and Modernity: Key Readings and Commentary*, ed., Robert J. Antonio, 83.

⁵¹ Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 7.

⁵² Ibid., 5.

image.⁵³ This meant that the same distinction between owners of capital and wage-laborers emerged in colonial towns, and the sociopolitical and legal institutions of capitalism followed.

Marx's theory of capitalism may be interpreted in two ways: on one reading, Marx viewed modernity originating in the capitalist structure of Europe, which would then restructure the entire world.⁵⁴ On a second reading, Marx viewed capitalist modernity as a universal event and "a world system" from the outset.⁵⁵ Marx himself appeared to have implied a certain gradual expansion to capitalism when he wrote that Europe shall show colonized societies "the images of their own future"—a graphic speculation that sits rather well with Weber's "universal historical significance," meaning that European developments acquire over time universal extension.⁵⁶

Similar to Marx, Weber attempted to provide a universal explanatory model for modernity. In contrast to Marx, Weber did not reduce the driving momentum of modernity to a particular process. For Marx, an analysis of a particular constituent process (read: capitalistic economy) was the fundamental point of departure based on which other processes could be understood.⁵⁷ As we saw, the modern centralized state for Marx was a development roughly parallel to and caused by capitalistic economy, and it could not be understood *but for* an understanding of capitalism. Weber in contrast examined distinct social and economic

⁵³ Marx and Engels, *Development of the Division of Labour*, 87.

⁵⁴ Without explicit reference to Marx, Hallaq intervenes in this debate. He appears to grant his adversaries' argument on the mutual, global constitution of modernity in such areas as economic production (using the example of sugar plantations in the colonies). However, he adds that this interpretation of modernity erroneously "privileges economic-materialist interpretation to the exclusion of crucial others." See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 19. It would seem to follow from his argument that if we consider other areas of life such as epistemology, modernity was European first, and was made global over time. For the details of his argument, see *ibid.*, 179.

⁵⁵ For this interpretation, see Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, 24.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," 498.

⁵⁷ See also Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Democracy for Tocqueville played an analogous role to Marx's primacy of capitalism in his understanding of modernity.

institutions of modern, European life all of which together—under the principle of rationality—formed modernity. Their relation was of mutual dependence and facilitation, not of unidirectional causality. Of the most predominant social institutions of modernity for Weber was the bureaucratic administration of rational-legal authority. Broadly, rational-legal authority was one where obedience was owed to the legally established impersonal order, the same kind we find in contemporary bureaucracies of the West.⁵⁸ This kind of authority, Weber believed, was seen in large-scale private enterprises, in political parties and armies, and in state and church; in other words, in the differentiated spheres of politics, economy, and religion in modern life. It was contrasted with traditional authority where obedience was owed to the person of “the chief” who occupied the traditionally-sanctioned position of authority and who was bound by tradition, with obligation of obedience being a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations. It was further contrasted with charismatic authority where obedience was owed to the charismatically-qualified leader as such who was obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism, or his exemplary qualities.⁵⁹ For Weber, traditional and charismatic authority were not necessarily devoid of rationality. Moreover, either traditional or charismatic authority could find their way into modern life. However, rational-legal authority was the new feature that distinguished modern life from life forms that came before. Rational-legal bureaucratic administration was so central to modernity that Weber remarked: “The development of *modern* forms of organization in all fields [was] nothing less than identical with the development and continual spread of bureaucratic administration.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 324.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 328.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 33. My emphasis.

Weber, grounded in the social reality of the West, articulated his concept of rational-legal bureaucratic administration as fundamental to modernity. He did not pay particular attention to historical difference in his account. Wherever rational-legal authority was found, with the characteristics he had devised, that particular society would be modern.⁶¹ This would exclude the possibility that one would find a bureaucratic administration where “traditional” characteristics held, such as personal relationships, that was nonetheless modern. Weber did not consider the possibility that historical difference could give rise to a different form of organization that would still qualify as modern.

Two of our most canonical thinkers theorized modernity in large part from and through Europe. We saw that social theory when uncritically universalized from the European province may muddy our interpretation of the colonized world as undeveloped, deficient, and inferior. So, how shall we approach this problem, the orientalist epistemology of our most canonical thinkers? The problem of theory and historical difference, as a methodological question, has received minor attention in the modern academy—we covered some examples in our introduction. Of the most methodical of them is the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty. Chakrabarty’s answer to the question of theory and historical difference is to argue that European thought is both indispensable and inadequate. This argument is contextualized based on the Bengali experiences

⁶¹ Weber articulated seven characteristics that were as follows: 1) A continuous rule-bound conduct of official business, meaning a generalized body of rules was enacted that was supposed to cover all cases falling within the purview of the organization’s “jurisdiction”; 2) “Jurisdiction” was the specified area of competence. For instance, a state agency that was granted authority to work on justice acted within its specified area of competence, i.e, the prosecution of those alleged to have engaged in criminal or civil wrongdoing. It did not venture into other matters, say, budgetary management or national defense; 3) The organization of offices followed the principle of hierarchy; 4) Specialized training was necessary to become a member of the administrative staff; 5) Administrative staff were completely separated from the ownership of means of production and administration. As an example, the managing director of an administrative organ did not own the building in which the office sat. Nor did she in principle contributed her personal wealth to the running of the organ. She was provided with the capital to run the organization and had to render an accounting of their use; 6) Complete absence of appropriation of official position by incumbent except in rare cases, and 7) The primacy of writing through public announcement for the formulation and recording of rules and decisions. See *ibid.*, 330-32.

of political modernity in the nineteenth century.⁶² Chakrabarty observes, a phenomenon like political modernity as theorized by Marx and Weber—that is, the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprise—is impossible to think of without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual traditions of Europe. Concepts like citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, public/private, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history.⁶³ The conceptual world of social science that studies modern society cannot be unlinked from European thinking and histories, he adds. In Chakrabarty's words, "there is no easy way of dispensing with these universals in the condition of political modernity. Without them there would be no social science that addresses issues of modern social justice [and one must add most issues of the political in the modern world]."⁶⁴ Put simply, European cognitive language is indispensable. Inadequacy, on the other hand, means that European thought cannot simply transfer over to explain societies of the non-West. Its application requires serious attention to historical difference. In Chakrabarty's words, "the task is to explore how European thought—which is now everybody's heritage and which affects us all—may be *renewed from and for the margins*."⁶⁵ In his particular line of inquiry, Chakrabarty takes note of the mismatch between European concepts and Bengali history. His solution is *not* to dispense with these concepts and start anew from indigenous modes of thinking; rather, he starts with European-derived concepts set against historical

⁶² Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 (my emphasis).

difference. His objective is to demonstrate their inadequacy to move us towards “plural and conjoined genealogies” of analytic categories of the modern world.⁶⁶

To illustrate his thesis, Chakrabarty opens up narratives of capitalist modernity to issues of historical difference. Chakrabarty does not want to dispense with the concept of capitalist modernity. Instead, he analyzes the relationship between historical difference and the logic of capitalist modernity to filter out the Eurocentric baggage or what he calls “not yet historicism”—which in the previous section we covered as Chatterjee’s “lacks” historiography and Tawfīq’s historiography of “absence.”⁶⁷ The not yet historicism, Chakrabarty argues, “is what made [capitalist modernity] look not simply global but rather as something that became global over time, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it.”⁶⁸ In distancing his approach from not yet historicism, Chakrabarty distinguishes between two types of history that have emerged with the spread of capitalism and the emergence of the modern world. The first is “History 1,” that is a past posited by capital as part of its precondition. History 1 is contrasted with “History (or histories) 2.” These histories 2 are compatible with History 1, and in fact, live in intimate and plural relationships with History 1. However, they do not belong to the life process of capital and are not subsumed in the narrative of its progress, and allow us to make room for human diversity.⁶⁹ Histories 2 inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate the run of capital’s own logic.⁷⁰ In other words, histories 2 modify History 1. He gives the example of “nonsecular and phenomenological histories of labor,” of tool and machinery worship by

⁶⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 63, 66-67.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 64.

workers in jute mills near Calcutta. Another example is that of Muslim Indian weavers fusing *dhikr* and Islamic practices into their bodily labor in an inseparable manner.⁷¹ These instances of histories 2 reveal problems of translation of “specific life-worlds” into History 1 of capitalist modernity—secular and universal— it cannot make sense of them so it either “obliterates” them under its metanarrative or explains them away as obstacles to a “proper” introduction of capitalist modernity. Rejecting this approach, Chakrabarty asks us to make these histories visible as “irreducible pluralities” that exist in an intimate relationship with History 1 but are not reducible to it. Thus, History 1 of capitalist modernity is not dispensed with but is shown to be inadequate by histories 2 of work and worship. If we accept Chakrabarty’s argument, we cannot speculatively universalize from Marx’s History 1 (Europe) to histories 2 (other histories). We must interrogate the ways in which histories 2 interact with, interrupt and modify History 1.

In a similar line of inquiry, Sudipta Kaviraj attempts to account for the relationship between theory and historical difference. As in Chakrabarty, Kaviraj does not dispense with received theory; rather, he provides an outline that would revise social theory, on the question of modernity in particular.⁷² For the purposes of this specific argument, Kaviraj accepts the theorization of the character of modernity in Europe with particular reference to Marx and Weber. However, he rejects their universal hypothesis that European modernity has the power to replace earlier social forms in the rest of the world to install a universal social form in its own image. Kaviraj therefore rejects Marx’s assertion that modern European history showed to societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America “the images of their own future,”⁷³ and by

⁷¹ Ibid., 77, 80.

⁷² Kaviraj, “An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity.”

⁷³ Ibid., 498.

extension, he would likely find problematic Weber's notion of "universal historical significance," i.e., European modernity *is* modernity. On Weber specifically, Kaviraj notes that the Indian *modern* state's bureaucratic administration behaved in ways very different from Weber's rational-legal authority.⁷⁴ The problem with the universalization theory, Kaviraj holds, is that it is primarily speculative and extrapolates trends from European case to other contexts, without close inspection of what actually happens when modernity appears in colonized contexts.⁷⁵

In finding a better fit between facts of historical difference and the received theory of modernity, Kaviraj proposes an outline of a revisionist theory of modernity, according to which, constituent processes of modernity develop sequentially (as opposed to functionally-symmetrically) based on historical differences, and the sequence in which they develop produces a different modernity from that of European nations.⁷⁶ Taken to its logical conclusion, there is neither a universal modernity nor predetermined symmetrical or sequential developments that produce modernity; rather, modernity is determined according to sequencing organized by historical difference.

The distinction between sequence and function-symmetry needs unpacking. To start, social theorists view modernity not as not a single, homogenous process but one where constituent processes are analytically decomposable.⁷⁷ Heterogeneous processes therefore, say, secularization, capitalist industrialization, and centrality of the state in social order come together

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 500. Similarly, Iranian sociologist, Said Arjomand, finds it difficult to fit Reza Shah's (1921-44) emerging bureaucratic administration under Weber's theory, see Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, 64.

⁷⁵ Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," 522.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 512.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 508.

to form modernity. But the question is how? There are, Kaviraj holds, two ways to theorize the relationship between modernity's analytically decomposable processes. The conventional approach is one of function-symmetry. Separate processes are linked by a functional relation of interdependence. This means that either all of them would emerge, evolve, and survive interdependently, or none at all. Since the processes emerge simultaneously, their historical development is likely to be parallel and symmetrical. For example, if capitalistic industrialization and centrality of the state in social order are two processes of modernity, they are temporally and symmetrically linked, meaning they have parallel developments during the same historical epoch. As the economy is becoming capitalist in character so is the state becoming more central in the social order.⁷⁸ The other view has it that decomposable processes of modernity develop sequentially, i.e., in a sequence. For example, capitalistic industrialization comes first and then, say, another element like democracy. The precise sequence in which constituent processes of modernity appear in a particular society would determine the specific form of modernity. According to Kaviraj, if we accept the sequential view, we should not treat modernity as a general condition that has an emergently homogenous character everywhere, but as a historically contingent combination of its constituent elements that produce different histories of the modern.⁷⁹ In summation, Kaviraj holds that modernity outside Europe should be thought of as processes that unfold sequentially under the influence of local conditions. This suggestion would accommodate historical difference without forcing it into the undeveloped or deficient categories. Under a sequential model, we may think of the fusion of Islam and the state in certain Asian and African contexts, not as an obstruction to modernity, but as an experience of

⁷⁸ Although Kaviraj does note that under some interpretations Marx's theory of modernity has sequential tendencies, see *ibid.*, footnote 39 on p. 509.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 514.

modernity in which the constituent process of secularity did not run symmetrical to state formation (nor followed it), but other processes such as the bourgeois public or democracy did. Kaviraj's revisionist approach would therefore accommodate a modernity in which a constituent process of European modernity would come in a different sequence, would be substantially modified by an indigenous alternative, or would be entirely eliminated.

Accordingly, both Chakrabarty and Kaviraj respond to the Eurocentrism of our cognition by devising a middle path, one that does not dispense with European categories but revises them so they match with and better explain indigenous histories on their own terms. Note that neither proposes a revival of or production of a strict indigenous cognition. In fact, such methodology for any historiography of the *modern* appears daunting. We may be able to write strictly through indigenous cognition of the sources for a historical account of premodernity. Moreover, we can engage in certain efforts to “decenter” the West—for example, by arguing *with* thought outside the Western canon. At most, if not all, contemporary universities, it is only the European intellectual tradition that makes it into theory courses, and this tradition is the only one that is seriously engaged with in any academic book. Thinkers outside the Western canon are viewed, not as theoretical interlocutors, but as matters of historical research. However passionately we may argue with a Marx or a Weber, we will rarely, if ever, argue in the same way with a Gangesa, an Ibn Khaldun, a Mulla Sadra or an Ali Shariati.⁸⁰ Wael Hallaq writes that “when imperialism in all of its forms had completed its main mission, no Muslim historian could even attempt—much less be capable of producing—a Tabarian, Mas‘udian, or Kathirian history, these standing at one time as indubitable exemplars of Islamic historiographical narratives. Nor was it conceivable in the least that a Juwayni, a Razi, or a Nasafi could be replicated in the central

⁸⁰ For a similar point, see Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 5-6.

shar‘i domain—or any other for that matter. These paragons of paradigmatic Islamic learning effectively and fairly quickly became expressions of a dead past .”⁸¹ We could add Tabari to a method and theory course to diversify the canon, but whether we can revive a Tabarian historiographical method to explain and analyze the modern, disenchanted world appears less possible. I like to suggest—as a working hypothesis but without demonstration for now—that in writing any history of the modern strict indigenism may not be an option. I agree with Hallaq’s on the “destructive” force of modern knowledge and with Chakrabarty that modern histories will necessarily have to narrate a social world impacted by the experience of colonial modernity, and hence, of European categories and concepts.

1.3 The Theses of Secularization

Thus far, we have examined the problem of orientalist epistemology, or the limits of social theory in relation to historical difference. I like to hone on one specific set of social theory and one particular case of historical difference: the application of secularization theory to education reform in modern Iran (1906-). As the introduction to this dissertation showed, the existing literature links Iranian education reform in this period to the idea of secularization. I shall test below if the theory of secularization carries explanatory value for our historical case study.

In popular speech, but even in the academic literature, secularization may be invoked loosely and ahistorically at times, simply as anything that has to do with this world.⁸² Secularization has a more exact use in the theoretical literature, however, which divides it into three distinct but interrelated processes of modern history. The first is what theorists have come

⁸¹ Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 230.

⁸² For the distinction between secular and religious on the one hand, and this world and the other world on the other, see Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 14.

to designate as the differentiation thesis. I divide differentiation into two distinct parts: functional and cognitive. Functional differentiation denotes the objective, external, and social dimension of secularization. It means that modern institutions came to differentiate and separate themselves from religion. Religion specialized in its own emerging “religious” function and dropped or lost many other “nonreligious” functions it previously had within its purview. Religion thus became functionally distinct from the modern economy, state, science, and education.⁸³ In the society and organization of the modern West, the primary reference for secularization theory, Christian churches evacuated areas previously under their control or influence. The institutions of market economy operated “as if” God did not exist. The church separated from the state, which began to expropriate church lands.⁸⁴ After differentiation, education was no longer ecclesiastical-controlled education, but a practice under the control or influence of the modern state that did not generally provide religious education.⁸⁵

Differentiation of religion was not simply a functional process; it was also cognitive. With modernity, religion emerged as an analytically distinct concept against which secularity also gained meaning and was mutually defined.⁸⁶ Premodern cognition did not clearly differentiate religion from other areas of life; when it appeared to do so, the concepts it designated did not necessarily correspond to the modern concept of religion.⁸⁷ In premodernity, the term religion (from the Latin term, *religio*) existed but it only thinly overlapped with our

⁸³ See Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of A Sociological Theory of Religion*, 107; Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 19, 21.

⁸⁴ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 40. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 107.

⁸⁵ See Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 13.

⁸⁶ See Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25. See also Ahmad, *What is Islam?*, 177.

⁸⁷ See Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 28.

modern concept. Cicero's *On the Nature of Gods* (circa 45 B.C.E.), used *religio* (derived from *relegere*) to mean "to read again" or "to read over and over." Religio meant a painstaking sense of duty, concentrating fully on what one was supposed to do. It was most common for Latin writers to use the term in the plural, in the form *religiones*, meaning "ritual" duties. For these writers, there was not necessarily any theological or doctrinal content to this concept of religion, but it did contain a notion of duty and obligatory practices.⁸⁸ The rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire led to a distinctively Christian adaptation of the concept of religion. In Augustine's *Of True Religion (De vera religione)* from 390 C.E., religion meant acknowledging the creator with reverence, uniting a correct intellectual perspective with appropriate attitudes and actions, somewhat comparable to the Islamic notion of *dīn*. Augustine, "true religion" only existed in the singular, and unlike Cicero, religion had strong theological and doctrinal content, which were now located in the authority of the Christian Church.⁸⁹

Neither Cicero nor Augustine put forth a concept of multiple religions nor did they differentiate between the religious and the secular. The reformation and European colonialism together shifted Western thought from a singular (Christian) religion to multiple religions. We see a strong representation of the concept of multiple religions in Hugo Grotius's *On the Truth of the Christian Religion* published in 1627 in Latin.⁹⁰ Grotius described non-Christians as having religions too, although false ones. His book became a debating manual aimed at conversation of

⁸⁸ See Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, 38-39.

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁰ See the frontispiece to the 1632 English translation in which "the Jew," "the Turke" (Muslim), and "the Pagan" were all represented along "the Chrisitan." See Grotius, *True Religion Explained and Defended against ye Archenemies Thereof in These Times*. Talal Asad dates the universal definition of religion (which presumably meant there were multiple religions) to the seventeenth century. See Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 40.

non-Christians for European sailors on missions of economic and military conquest.⁹¹ The intervention of modern philosophical and scientific thought further shifted Western thinking. It was no longer occupied with arguments on the superiority of Christianity over other religions, but with scientific theories that attempted to make sense of religion in relation to the secular, or explain religions in the plural. In the nineteenth century, Western evolutionary thought designated religion as an earlier, “primitive” human condition from which modern law, politics, and science emerged and became detached.⁹² Twentieth-century social theory, within the structuralist school of thought in particular, distanced itself from the evolutionary model, which had viewed religion as primitive and archaic that we now encounter in a truer form (laws, politics, and science), instead, arguing that religion was a distinctive space of human belief and practice that could not be reduced to any other.⁹³ Where the two sets of theory—evolutionary and structuralist—converged was their emphasis on religion as a universal category separate from power.⁹⁴ Social theorists and anthropologists held that *all* human communities, from the “primitive” to the most “advanced” (“Western civilization” presumably), had religion. Moreover, they treated the essence of religion as separate from power.⁹⁵ As Talal Asad persuasively argues, post-reformation Western history shifted power from religion into the realm of modern science, modern production, and the modern state. This meant religious authority no longer employed the pervasive laws and institutions (imperial, ecclesiastical, monastical, family, school, and church

⁹¹ Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, 40.

⁹² Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ For an example of evolutionary theories on religion, see Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*. For examples of structuralist theories on religion, see Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*; Geertz, *Religion as a Cultural System* in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed., Michael Banton; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

⁹⁵ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 28.

among them) to propel one to the realization of truth.⁹⁶ Rather, it focused on dissemination of its teachings in differentiated, restricted spaces to maintain and attract followers. It was in this context that leading definitions of religion, such as that of Clifford Geertz, turned not on power and publicness but on seemingly private “moods and motivations [of] men.”⁹⁷ This type of definition was perhaps what made the idea of a theocracy ruling over a state a threatening phenomenon, because according to the prevailing definition, political and legal power were analytically and normatively separate from religion.

Since the 2000’s, a number of scholars have taken a critical approach to the received theory of religion through two points of departure. First, they have historicized the cognition of religion, examining the discursive context in which we began to think of religion against which our cognition of secularity became possible.⁹⁸ Secondly, they critically examined the definition of religion that presumes it to be separate from power in general and politics in particular.⁹⁹ These attempts have generated much self-reflexivity about the context and contingencies of our cognition. However, these critiques have not destabilized the analytic category of religion in any significant way, even if they have allowed for more diverse readings of its relationship to power and politics. The cognitive category of a differentiated religion remains intact and is used widely by adherents, critics, and theorists.

Secularization thus meant the differentiation of religion as both a functional and cognitive process. The second thesis of secularization is the privatization of religion. Privatization meant that under modernity or modernization programs, religion lost (or would lose) its presence in the

⁹⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁷ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 90.

⁹⁸ For one of the most influential works on this subject, see Asad, *The Formations of the Secular*.

⁹⁹ See Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*.

social, political, and economic spheres, being removed to the private sphere of individual choice and the family.¹⁰⁰ In the sphere of politics, for example, religion would disappear altogether or if it was still seemingly operative—for example religious discourse providing legitimacy for the state—it was nothing more than rhetorical ornamentations devoid of social reality.¹⁰¹ The privatization of religion in this manner contrasted with the pre-secular age where religion constructed a common, “public” world within which *all* of life received ultimate meaning binding on all the believers.¹⁰²

An interrelated event, and the third thesis of secularization, was the decline of religious belief and practice. According to the decline thesis, secularization affected the totality of cultural life and ideation, observable in the decline of religious contents in the arts, in philosophy, in literature, and most important of all, in the rise of science as an autonomous, thoroughly secular perspective on the world.¹⁰³ This resulted in pluralization of belief, to borrow from sociologist Peter Berger. Pluralization meant that there was no longer one religious “plausibility structure” but several plausibility structures, or belief systems that attempted to make the world plausible to their adherents.¹⁰⁴ Pluralization was comparable to Charles Taylor’s notion of “nova effect,” the steadily widening gamut of new positions—some believing, some unbelieving, some hard to classify—which in a secular age became available options.¹⁰⁵ Functional differentiation followed

¹⁰⁰ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 20. For the argument on religion as an individual choice, see Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 133.

¹⁰¹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 133.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 133-34.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 107. See also Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 20.

¹⁰⁴ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 152, 154.

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 423.

by pluralization demonopolized religion. This meant that religion lost its monopolistic hold over society and was no longer the ultimate legitimation. Religion, in other words, was no longer *the* knowledge that served to explain and justify the social order, answering questions on why certain arrangements of individual and collective life existed the way they did.¹⁰⁶ The demonopolized, differentiated religious sphere had to compete with secular spheres that produced their own plausibility structures.¹⁰⁷ Plausibility structures became as consumer products: they had to be marketed and compete for the attention of individuals who chose or rejected them. This left religions with two options. They could choose to enter the marketplace of ideas and compete for adherents. Alternatively, they could refuse to accommodate to pluralization and continue to profess the old monopoly. Based on recent history, it is clear that religions chose the first option and proved themselves adaptable to the demonopolized, competitive situation. Contrary to certain Enlightenment and Marxist predictions, religion did not become obsolete in the contemporary world (although for Marx, it *would* become irrelevant under a communist future)¹⁰⁸ but survived, competed for, and attracted members successfully.¹⁰⁹ Decline, therefore, did not mean total fall and destruction; it was a decline *relative* to the premodern rest.

The literature reviewed here traced the causes of secularism to specifically European developments. For Berger, secularization could not be reduced to any one particular cause.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 29.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁰⁸ For an example of Marx's thought on religion, see his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. For a persuasive interpretation of Marx's position on religion, see Raines, *Marx on Religion*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ See Berger's introduction to *Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Berger introduced this edited volume, arguing against his earlier predictions in *The Sacred Canopy*. His new position was that modernization did not necessarily lead to a total decline in religion.

¹¹⁰ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 110.

However, he considered two factors to be of special importance: industrial capitalism (although this was arguably a global process from inception) and Protestantism.¹¹¹ He devoted special attention to the latter and its disenchanting tendencies, claiming that Protestantism served as the historically decisive prelude to secularization.¹¹² Weber had theorized the relationship between capitalism and Protestantism, and Berger showing interest in both, focused specifically on the relationship between Protestantism and secularization. Berger understood disenchantment (*Entzauberung der Welt*) in the Weberian sense. According to Berger, Protestantism divested itself as much as possible from the three of the most ancient and powerful concomitants of the sacred: mystery, miracle, and magic. Drawing on Weber's sociology of religion, Berger traced this disenchantment to the Hebrew Bible.¹¹³ He argued that the Israelites and their holy book produced a demythologized religion where God became transcendent and their ethical monotheism increasingly rationalized through the development of Jewish law.¹¹⁴ The Jewish religion, Berger claimed, was then interrupted by Catholicism that reenchanting, or if one wishes, re-mythologized the world.¹¹⁵ Its sacramental system provided escape from the total rationalization of life demanded by Judaism and also provided multiple mediations between God and the individual, hence undermining God's transcendence. The Protestant reformation revived the transcendentization and rationalization of Judaism and went much further. It disenchanting

¹¹¹ Ibid., 109, 113. On industrial capitalism, see also Chadwick, *The Secularization of European Mind in the Nineteenth-Century*. He argued that Christian churches were unable to extend themselves and adapt to rapid industrial and city expansion, writing that "the Industrial Revolution divided men from God" and the "Larger the town [was], smaller the percentage of churchgoers." Ibid., 94, 96.

¹¹² Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 113.

¹¹³ Although Weber's concern was with Jewish economic ethic and its relationship (minimal, he thought) with the origins of modern capitalism, see footnote 18 in Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 201.

¹¹⁴ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 120.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 121.

the world by drawing a sharp boundary between the transcendent God and that of humanity. The only mediation between them was through the redemptive action of God's grace. When this narrow channel of mediation was removed in the modern West, Berger argued, secularization became a real force. Society then became amenable, through modern technology and science in particular, to systematic, rational penetration, both in thought and activity.¹¹⁶

Whether we find such causalities of secularization compelling is beyond the scope of our discussion. However, one thing they establish clearly: theorists of secularization traced its causality to European history. Differentiation, privatization, and relative decline are arguably true for much of the West. Although, it must be briefly mentioned that privatization appears less convincing in a number of Western countries, as evidenced in the publicness of religion in the rise of the solidarity movement in Poland or the public reemergence of Protestant fundamentalism in U.S. politics.¹¹⁷ In these cases, Christians refused to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of secularization had reserved for their religion. Their organizations abandoned their assigned place in the private sphere and entered the public sphere to challenge the legitimacy and autonomy of secular spheres and their claim to be organized according to principles of functional differentiation without regard to religio-moral considerations.¹¹⁸ The limitations of secularization theses in relation to the West at large is a matter of debate. This issue does not concern us, however. Our inquiry is on the explanatory value of secularization outside the West. As previously discussed, Marx and Weber had viewed capitalist modernity and modern bureaucratization as European processes that duplicated

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 112.

¹¹⁷ See Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 2.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

anywhere modernity went.¹¹⁹ Similarly, secularization theorists considered secularization a universal process: wherever modernization would go, they thought, secularization would too.¹²⁰ In what follows, we shall test this speculation against the Iranian transition into modernity, with specific reference to its predominant religion Islam.

1.4 Iranian Historical Difference and Secular Differentiation

In making sense of secularization (or lack thereof), we shall begin with the two meanings of the differentiation thesis, functional and cognitive differentiation. In regards to functional differentiation, secularization thesis has a rather limited application, and in large part, it confuses more than it clarifies. The functional differentiation inaugurated by secularization in Europe, between the function of religion and the state, already existed in some form in premodern Islam. Wael Hallaq, in the context of his discussion on the separation of legislative, judicial, and executive sources of authority in Islamic history, illustrates this persuasively. He argues that there was a sharp separation between the dynastic power of the “state” (*dawla*) and “religious” authority (Islamic legislators and judges). The former was concerned with “secular” domains like tax collection, division of booty after war, raising of army, and safety of roads, while “religious” authority dealt with the interpretation and application of divine law.¹²¹ Islamic legislator-mufits, as a rule, were private legal specialists who were legally and morally responsible to the society in which they lived, not the ruler and his interests. Their function was to create laws based on the *Sharī‘a*, which in principle constrained the state, providing it with a set of obligations under

¹¹⁹ See the section titled “The Orientalism of Our Epistemology” in this same chapter.

¹²⁰ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 170-71. Berger wrote that “it is safe to predict that the future of religion everywhere will be decisively shaped by the [force of] secularization.” *Ibid.*, 171.

¹²¹ Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 53, 67.

divine law.¹²² Compare ulema-legislators with modern legislators. Under the modern state, legislators are very much integral to the state executive. They often serve in legislative bodies of their nations before running for and being elected to the office of presidency or prime minister. The legislators see themselves as part of the same governing structure, and as a norm, they move between branches. This was not the case with ulema-legislators in Islam, however, nor with Muslim judges (*qādīs*). According to Hallaq, the *qādī* applied legislator-produced laws in courts with ultimate reference to the legislators themselves, not to the state.¹²³ Muslim judiciary was not in the service of applying a law determined by the dominant powers of a state or a peremptory ruler but rather of safeguarding a *Sharī‘a* law whose primary concern was the regulation, on “moral” grounds, of social and economic relations.¹²⁴ It is true that the state had the power to appoint judges but it could play no role whatsoever in the work of the judge between appointment to and dismissal from office, Hallaq adds. Unlike modern judges whose careers depend on their office, Muslim judges did not specialize in their field because they routinely performed other tasks (e.g., educational functions and the copying of manuscripts), meaning that income from *qādīship* was merely one of several sources of income and therefore the state could not use its appointing-dismissal power to coerce *qādīs* into a particular way of decisionmaking.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the paradigmatic moral force of *Sharī‘a*, as a rule, compelled judges and rulers alike to respect judicial independence.¹²⁶ According to Hallaq, any cooperation that took place between *qādī* (and also mufti) and the state was meant as *mediation* between the

¹²² Ibid., 64.

¹²³ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹²⁶ For the details of Hallaq’s argument on judicial independence, see *ibid.*, 61-62.

state and the masses, while the former kept its eyes fully open on the interests of the masses.¹²⁷ This was the *normative* separation of powers. Historical cases existed where the ulema interests aligned with or became entangled with that of the ruler, instead of the community.¹²⁸

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im makes a similar argument on premodern differentiation. The convergence between religious and political authority found its only precedent in the example of Prophet Muhammad, he claims.¹²⁹ After the prophet, differentiation became the normative model in Islamic history. Although Islamic societies were not secular in the modern sense of the term, the state was largely nonreligious and autonomous from the religious institutions despite religious motivations of state actors or their occasional claims to the contrary, he adds.¹³⁰ The ulema had neither the power nor the obligation to confront practical questions like the maintaining peace between local communities or defending the realm against external threats. These were the pragmatic functions of the state. Meanwhile, the rulers did not generally possess the qualifications to embroil themselves in religious matters. An-Na'im adds that rulers needed to concede the autonomy of scholars to gain Islamic legitimacy from those scholars' endorsement of the state, while religious leadership needed to be autonomous not to undermine its authority in the eye of the public.¹³¹

The differentiation, An-Na'im claims, is traced back to as early as the rule of first Caliph Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr pursued the apostasy wars against those Arab tribes who did not accept his

¹²⁷ Ibid., 56.

¹²⁸ In the Shia context, Said Arjomand traces some of these alignments or entanglements in his works. See *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Sh'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, 193, and *The Turban for the Crown*, 14.

¹²⁹ An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*, 53.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 46, 60.

¹³¹ Ibid., 52.

authority, and these wars were met with disagreements from many including two of the prophet's companions 'Alī and 'Umar. The disagreements would have been inconceivable if Abū Bakr had been exercising the religious authority of the prophet, because the companions would not have disputed any aspect of Abū Bakr's decisions if they accepted them as expressing the religiously binding precepts of Islam. The disagreements were conceivable because Abū Bakr was exercising political authority alone, he adds.¹³² When the Umayyad dynasty came to power, against the claims of 'Alī to political leadership, the dynasty was perceived as having no religious legitimacy let alone religious authority.¹³³ Later too, when Seljuk, Ayyubid, Mamluk, or the Ottomans ruled, the ulema retained authority over matters of religious practice, doctrine, and institutions.¹³⁴ It is true that there were periods where there was conflation between religious and political authority, An-Nai'm adds, for instance, the Fatimids declared an imamate in their territory that asserted the continuation of the spiritual and political authority of the prophet. Moreover, they also attempted to conflate state and religious institutions, for example by forcing Sunni judges to reconcile their positions with the Fatimid policies.¹³⁵ When such decisions among others angered the ulema, they generally deferred to state authority and did not call for rebellions in order to prevent civil strife (*fitna*). Echoing Hallaq, An-Nai'm writes that such instances did not so much demonstrate sameness between political and religious authority, but they show the negotiation and mediation that took place between the differentiated religious and political authority.¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid., 59.

¹³³ Ibid., 61.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 65.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 8.

Hallaq and An-Na'im primarily focus on Sunni history, presumably because there have been few Shia dynasties in Islamic history. However, the same differentiation existed in post-Safavid Iran. In fact, the independence of the Iranian ulema from the state was quite stark. Unlike the Sunni world, they enjoyed their own sources of income through landholdings and Shi'i *khums* known as the Imam's share (*sahm-i imām*), which came from landlords, merchants, and guild elders.¹³⁷ The first official American representative in Iran in 1887 claimed, in somewhat exaggerated terms, that a senior cleric in Tehran was so powerful that "with one word he could hurl down the Shah."¹³⁸

Accordingly, "religious" and "state" leadership were already differentiated in Islam and in Iran before modernity. However, there is a sense in which the differentiation thesis is applicable to the Pahlavi turn. Matters that came within the purview of the *Shari'a* were not merely vertical, i.e., the obligations of the believer to God. They were also horizontal and covered the obligations of persons to persons—what we today call social, economic, educational, and legal relations. When the Pahlavi state began its modernizing reforms, it transmitted many of these from the ulema to the new organizations of the state. In two main areas, education and law, modernization brought certain religious functions within the power of state administration. Building on earlier "bottom-up," intellectual efforts, the Reza Shah state instituted the first national order of primary education called the *dabistān*, thus encroaching upon ulema authority that educated the young through their *maktab* schools.¹³⁹ Towards the end of Reza Shah's rule in 1941, the state administered 2336 primary schools and 241 secondary schools. Higher education

¹³⁷ See Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, 77.

¹³⁸ Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians*, 441, quoted in Abrahamian, *A Modern History of Iran*.

¹³⁹ See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

grew as well to rival the madrasa: in 1925, fewer than 600 students were enrolled in the country's six colleges. By 1941, Tehran University alone had more than 3,330 students.¹⁴⁰ After Mohammad Reza Shah's "White Revolution," the same system of education expanded: elementary schools had an enrollment of 4,080,000, secondary schools of 741,000, and colleges of 145,210.¹⁴¹ In fact, in this period, the *maktab* was completely absorbed into the *dabistān*.¹⁴² The judiciary underwent differentiation too. The state replaced the *Shari'a* courts with a new state judicial structure that synthesized Islamic and European civil law.¹⁴³ The authority to register legal documents, including property transactions as well as marriage license, were transferred from the clergy to state-appointed notary publics. The jurists were also required to receive legal training in modern universities; *madrasa* training was not enough.¹⁴⁴ With Pahlavi reforms, the ulema had to drop and lose the "nonreligious" functions, which they previously had within their authority. The Reza Shah-era coinage of the term "spiritualists" (*ruḥānīyat*) to replace the old term "those who know" (*'ulimā*) was quite telling: it shifted the role of the ulema as "knowers" and educators to those who dealt with matters of the spirit (*rūh*) and with ritual.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ For these numbers, see Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 85. For an extended discussion of the new university, see chapter 4 in this dissertation.

¹⁴¹ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 134.

¹⁴² See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

¹⁴³ For a recent study on legal reform around modernist lines in the constitutional and Pahlavi periods, see Enayat, *Law, State, and Society in Modern Iran: Constitutionalism, Autocracy, and Legal Reform, 1906-1941*.

¹⁴⁴ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 87-88. The requirement of university training in the legal profession persisted after the Islamic revolution. It is rare for lawyers and judges to have simply received a madrasa training before they practice or adjudicate.

¹⁴⁵ Shortly before Reza Shah's rise to power, *ruḥānīyat* still referred to a character quality of being spiritual or holy (not to the collective of clerics). For an example, see the article from the constitutionalist paper, *Da'wat al-ḥaqq*, entitled "The Spirituality and Light of the Illuminated Islam" (*ruḥānīyat va nūrānīyat-i dīn-i mubīn-i Islām*). See *Da'wat al-ḥaqq*, Dhī al-Ḥijjah, 1321/1904, 1, The National Library and Archives of Iran, Periodicals (*Nashriyāt*).

So far, there appears to be a fit between differentiation and Iranian modernization reforms. One historical difference complicates the matter considerably, however: the transference of legal and educational functions from the ulema to the state differed in its intentionality, and on its approach to religion and power, when compared to differentiation in the West. In the United States, for instance, the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution prohibited the state from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion.”¹⁴⁶ The U.S. Supreme Court (“the court”), in what came to be known as the “Lemon test” interpreted this differentiation between the state and religion to mean that any legislation passed must have a secular legislative purpose, its primary effect must be one that “neither advances nor inhibits religion,” and it must not foster an “excessive government” entanglement with religion.¹⁴⁷ The court ruled unconstitutional a number of laws and practices in state schools. These included the daily invocation of a prayer containing Christian content, “non-denominational” prayers, and one minute for voluntary, silent prayer every morning.¹⁴⁸ The first was interpreted as “advancing” religion. The second as a “religious activity” by the state, and the third “was not motivated [the court held] by any clearly secular purpose.”¹⁴⁹ In contrast, the court held constitutional the invocation of the phrase “one nation under God” at state schools, because the pledge was not converted into “a religious exercise.” It had, the court held, a secular (read: nationalist)

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Constitution, Article VII, Amendment 1.

¹⁴⁷ See *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971). For a commentary on *Lemon*, see McConnell, Gravey, and Berg, *Religion and the Constitution*, 11, 230.

¹⁴⁸ In the order mentioned, see *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963). The prayer included ten verses from the Bible. On the “non-denominational” prayer case, see *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962). The prayer in *Engel* was as follows: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.” For the case on silent prayer, see *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985).

¹⁴⁹ See *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985).

purpose.¹⁵⁰ The court added to the Lemon test in *Lynch v. Donnelly*. In what became known as the “endorsement test,” the court ruled that the state may not endorse nor sponsor religion by any acts. This meant that a “neutral observer,” examining all the facts and circumstances, would not think that the state’s action was an endorsement, sponsorship, or special approval of a religion.¹⁵¹ In the same case, applying this test, the court held that state-subsidized nativity scene, surrounded by Christmas decorations, had a secular purpose and was a mere “acknowledgement” of religion.¹⁵² Five years later, in *Allegheny v. ACLU*, the court held unconstitutional the practice of placing a nativity scene, *without* Christmas decorations, in the main staircase of a courthouse, reasoning that under the endorsement test a neutral observer would find this scene as an endorsement of religion.¹⁵³ Accordingly, the court ruled that any attempt by the state to advance, endorse, or sponsor religion, in educational and other contexts, is impermissible under the U.S. Constitution that had functionally separated religion from the secular state.

It is true differentiation between religion and the state occurred in Iran, insofar as the state assumed legal and educational functions that formerly belonged to the ulema. However, in exercising these functions, the state never assumed a secular purpose. In certain contexts, it advanced, endorsed, or sponsored a particular interpretation of religion. For example, it established the College of Rational and Transmitted Sciences (*m‘aqūl va manqūl*) to advance study about but also *of* religion (the latter is prohibited in public schools under U.S. secular

¹⁵⁰ *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, 542 U.S. 1 (2004). The court held that the plaintiff who challenged the pledge lacked standing because he did not have legal custody of his daughter. Nonetheless, three of the justices upheld the pledge on its merits, and another justice wrote a separate, concurring opinion on the pledge’s constitutionality. For an analysis of this case, see McConnell, Gravey, Berg, *Religion and the Constitution*, 508.

¹⁵¹ *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668 (1984).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *County of Allegheny v. American Civil Liberties Union*, 492 U.S. 573 (1989).

law).¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the education ministry mandated scripture classes in state schools.¹⁵⁵ The state also inhibited religion through legislation such as “turban licenses” intended to create a clear boundary between layman and the ulema.¹⁵⁶ In all of these examples, the state endorsed, sponsored, advanced, or inhibited religion (or a particular interpretation of it). Modernization brought about some functional differentiation, but this differentiation, lacking a secular purpose, entangled the state and religion in contrast to their normative separation in premodernity. In this way, secular functional differentiation confounds more in explaining Iranian history than it clarifies.

We must now consider whether cognitive differentiation finds application in our particular historical inquiry. Premodern Persian texts (i.e., those written before the twentieth century) provided empirical descriptions of how people conceived of their relationship to the world, and many of these descriptions fell under the modern concept of religion. Texts of premodernity presented a number of cognitive categories such as *dīn*, *maz̄hab*, and *‘aqīdah* that corresponded, in their descriptive matter, with the modern concept of religion. However, none of these concepts precisely matched the modern concept nor were they mutually defined against a secular one. A seventeenth-century text called *Dabistān-i mazāhib (The School of Manners Followed)* is instructive in this regard. The author is identified by recent scholarship as Kaykhusraw Isfandiyār, the son and follower of Safavid-era Zoroastrian priest, Āzar’Kayvān; the

¹⁵⁴ For an extended discussion of this college, see the chapter 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁵ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 85.

¹⁵⁶ Chehabi, “Staging the Emperor’s New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah,” 222. For the relationship between the Reza Shah state and the ulema more generally, see Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period*.

author described in an apparently disinterested manner the living religions of Iran and India.¹⁵⁷ I use the category of religion, as do secondary analyses, to present the contents of the text.¹⁵⁸ However, the cognitive categories through which the text conceives of its subject matter do not neatly match the modern concept of religion. The title of the text uses the category of *mazāhib* (the plural of *mazhab*) to describe the “manners followed” by people of Iran and India. *Mazhab*, from the root of *z-h-b* (to go, to depart), means going, manner followed, or road entered upon.¹⁵⁹ In Islamic history (although not in the text under discussion), its specific use denoted the major schools of Islamic *fiqh*. *Mazhab* acquired a new meaning in more recent years, denoting religion as such. Among Persian speakers today, to say religion the word *mazhab* is used, and to say someone is religious or practices her religion closely, the term *mazhabī* is used (the *-ī* turns the abstract noun into an adjective), among other terms such as *mu'min* and *mutidayyin*. However, in the text, *mazhab* was not used in this way, although it significantly overlapped with religion in terms of its descriptive purview. This purview included cosmogony, cosmology, belief (‘*aqīdah*), and law (*shar‘*, an Islamic concept the author used for all of the *mazāhib* under discussion).¹⁶⁰ In describing beliefs about the divine and creation, the text frequently invoked the category of

¹⁵⁷ The text appeared descriptive, neither proselytizing nor polemicizing. However, the editor, Raḥīm Rizāzādah Malik, claims it made several “baseless” claims narrated from “drug addicts” and the “uncultured” to weaken religions, including the religion of Muslims and Shias, while promoting the “fake” Āzar’Kayvānīyān path. He adds that the other possibility for the inclusion of “baseless” claims is that the British added them to the manuscripts as part of their “divide and rule” strategy. See pages 2-3 of the editor’s preface (*yāddāsh*) to Kaykhusraw Isfandiyār, *Dabistān-i mazāhib*. The preface pages are unnumbered.

¹⁵⁸ As an example of secondary analysis, see the second unnumbered page of the preface to *Dabistān-i mazāhib*. The editor, Raḥīm Rizāzādah Malik, in reference to the contents (*maṭālib*) of the text, employs the category of “different religions” (*adyān va mazāhib-i mukhtaliḥ*).

¹⁵⁹ Hans Wehr, 361-62.

¹⁶⁰ The first two are my categories and not the text’s. For an example of a discussion on cosmogony, see Kaykhusraw Isfandiyār, *Dabistān-i mazāhib*, 64-65, 239.

'*aqīdah* (belief).¹⁶¹ Less repeatedly, the text used *ṭarīq* (path), *ā'īn* (a Persian word approximating both the Arabic *mazhab* and *ṭarīq*), and *qawā'id* (rules).¹⁶² The overlap between these categories and modern religion, despite lack of a precise equivalence, is perhaps less interesting for our purposes. What is more notable is that none of these concepts were mutually defined against secularity. The conflict between Godliness (*khudā'parastī*) and governance (*salṭanat*), a classical Islamic trope, was emphasized.¹⁶³ But there was no distinction that would approximate religion as a cognitive category differentiated from the secular. The *mazāhib* or manners followed were not thought in relation to a secular world.

With the advent of the constitutional movement, Persian literary writing and its conceptualization underwent a gradual change. The 1903-04 *Da'wat al-ḥaqq* journal fell somewhere between the old register and the new, but closer to the old. The cognitive differentiation of religion was still thin in this period, and the boundaries between the categories of religious on the one hand, and social, political, educational on the other still blurry. The journal introduced its contents as one that discussed “the truths of the Islamic religion (*dīn-i Islām*) and the interests concerning Muslims.”¹⁶⁴ In large part, these “truths of the Islamic religion” concerned, using modern categories, not “religious” issues but “social” and “educational” reform that the writers thought would improve collective welfare.¹⁶⁵ For example, the journal made a case for women’s education and for the wide use of printed announcement (*i'lān*) for public information and the distribution of printed reading material in coffeehouses to

¹⁶¹ As examples, see *ibid.*, 118, 121-22, 147, 175, 185, 188.

¹⁶² As examples, see *ibid.*, 67, 69.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁴ *Da'wat al-ḥaqq*, Rabī' al-avval, 1322/1904, 1.

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, no. 2, 8.

facilitate adult education.¹⁶⁶ The “social” and “educational” contents were also entangled with the discussion of “religious” questions, such as prophethood (*nabuwwat*), benefits of rituals and prayers (*‘ibādāt*), and the necessity of belief (*‘aqīdah*).¹⁶⁷ In later Iranian history, journals developed differentiated categories. For instance, a contemporary literary or social journal does not generally discuss anything having to do with *‘ibādāt*, and this must be sought elsewhere. In contrast, *Da‘wat al-ḥaqq* brought together questions of education reform, constitutionalist politics, and *‘ibādāt* into the same journal.

Following constitutional reform and particularly Pahlavi modernization, the cognition of religion became stronger. Religion was no longer a given and had to be asserted alongside new formations, such as the state (*dawlat*), the nation (*millat*), new education (*āmūzish*), and the economy (*iqtisād*), or defended from, accommodated or supervised under them. A text from the early revolution years by the Devotees of Islam (*fidā‘īyān-i Islām*)—one of the first Islamist groups to partake in modern politics and preceding the Muslim Brotherhood—is quite telling.¹⁶⁸ A quote from a 1954-55/1333 interview with the group’s leader, Navvāb Ṣafavī, conducted by an unnamed Pakistani journalist, articulated the group’s ideology. Navvāb Ṣafavī conceptualized an “Islamic movement” (*nihzat-i Islāmī*), writing that “today [i.e., 1954-55], the Islamic movement is in firm need of the bodies and blood of the devotees, and without them, no movement would form.”¹⁶⁹ This movement, in Navvāb Ṣafavī’s estimation, had to make Islamic the administrative

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, no. 2: p. 10.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Dhī al-ḥijjah, 1321/1904, 1-2.

¹⁶⁸ This text, retrieved from the University of Tehran’s archives, is undated. However, given the information it provides, it was most likely produced soon after the Iranian revolution of 1979. Much of the material is quoted to interviews with Navvāb Ṣafavī in 1954-55/1333. See *Zīrbānā-yi jam‘iyat-i fidā‘īyān-i Islām*, 2, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

(*idārī*), educational (*āmūzishi*), and economic (*iqtiṣādī*) order (his own categories).¹⁷⁰ According to Navvāb Ṣafavī, to facilitate respect for human labor and productivity, this movement had to further implement “Islamic ethics” (*akhlāq-i Islāmī*)—this was a new concept as *akhlāq* was formerly thought of without the adjective Islamic.¹⁷¹ We therefore see in the ideas of Navvāb Ṣafavī and the Devotees of Islam the cognition of an Islam that had to assert itself against or in conjunction with the state, with education and ethics, and with the economy. Navvāb Ṣafavī further viewed Islam as sufficient for ordering all aspects of life—a broader Islamist position in the twentieth century that may be interpreted as nostalgia for a premodern organization in which religion was present in all of life’s ebbs and flows.¹⁷² The prescription for an all-encompassing Islam was itself an indication, not only of a lessening of Islamic domination of life, but that religion was now being thought of as a distinct category that had to reassert itself within new formations.

In the Pahlavi period and after, a cognition of religion emerged as a concept that had to be asserted, accommodated, or supervised along new formations. However, none of this produced a cognition of secularity against which religion was mutually defined. In fact, Persian has not developed an organic term for secular, and the English term is simply transliterated.¹⁷³ The repurposing of the word *īnjahānī* (literally “of this world”) for secular has not entered

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷¹ See *ibid.* Prior to the 20th century, the combination of *akhlāq* and Islam as a unified phrase is not found in library catalogs of Arabic and Persian titles.

¹⁷² Ibid., 2-3, 8. Some fifty years earlier, *Da‘wat al-ḥaqq* journal had an entry on “Islamic *Shar‘īa* being sufficient for human affairs.” Contrary to Navvāb Ṣafavī, however, this sufficient *Shar‘īa* was not being asserted against new formations; rather, it was being asserted to validate the Abrahamic view of the world and the sending of prophetic law to guide the humanity, specifically Prophet Muhammad. See *Da‘wat al-ḥaqq*, Dhī al-ḥijjah, 1321/1904, 2.

¹⁷³ It is quite telling that a search in Persian for secular and secularism in transliteration, under any major library catalog, returns only a few results.

general or even scholarly discourse.¹⁷⁴ What is thought of since the Islamic revolution is critiques of religion (*dīn*) (or a particular interpretation thereof) as something that presents dilemmas when put at the center of politics (*sīyāsat*).¹⁷⁵ However, this has happened without a corresponding interest in the ideology of secularism. To summarize cognitive differentiation, Persian literary sources of premodernity point to concepts that approximate modern religion, but without being precise equivalents. Twentieth-century sources, on the other hand, indicate a cognition of religion in its modern and more differentiated sense. However, neither premodern nor modern sources point to a concept of religion that is mutually defined against secularity.

1.5 Religion's Privatization as an Empty Set

If differentiation is a thin and confounding match for Iranian historical difference, a survey of relevant evidences shows that the privatization thesis carries no explanatory value. Contrary to secularization theory, Pahlavi-era modernization produced the opposite of privatization; it made religion profoundly public. In contrast with the Qajar period, modernization in the Pahlavi period was rapid and extensive. The modernizing state of Reza Shah (1921-44) was built on two main pillars: the military and the bureaucracy which grew tenfold and seventeenfold respectively. Their expansion was made possible by revenues from oil royalties, extractions from tax delinquents, higher custom duties, and taxes on consumer goods. The modernized standing army came about thanks to Reza Shah's new conscription program. The new program extracted males from traditional, local environments and immersed them for the very first time in a nationwide organization where they had to speak Persian, interact with

¹⁷⁴ *Īnjahānī* is an old term in Persian literature. The Dehkhuda dictionary traces its use back to *Kalīlah va Dimnah*.

¹⁷⁵ As an example, see Kadīvar, *Daghdaghah'hā-yi hukūmat-i dīnī*.

other groups in the nation, and pay daily allegiance to the state.¹⁷⁶ The old so-called ministries, such as the foreign affairs, finance, and justice ministries, grew to become substantial bureaucracies. New ministries were created as well on industry, roads, and agriculture.¹⁷⁷ They expanded their reach deep across the nation. The ministry of post and telegraph, for instance, started a telephone network and launched Radio Iran in 1939.¹⁷⁸ In addition, Reza Shah dismantled old forms of local governance and autonomy, built the trans-Iranian railway, and as previously mentioned, created a uniform education system. Mohammad Reza Shah continued modernization, adding his “White Revolution” that included reforms on women’s issues (e.g., increase in marriage age) and land reform. Consequently, from 1921 until its collapse in 1979, the Pahlavi monarchs built a substantial state structure and introduced reforms, in emulation of major industrial powers, that penetrated deep into society to disrupt traditional patterns.¹⁷⁹

These modernization reforms, however, did not privatize religion. It is true that in contrast to older dynasties the Pahlavis prioritized the creation of a strong central state over the procurement of religious “legitimacy.”¹⁸⁰ However, this did not mean that religion in the domain of politics was a mere “rhetorical ornamentation,” to borrow from secularization theory. Reza Shah did give the state a three-tiered rhetorical motto of *Khudā* (God), Shah (king), and *mīhan* (nation), but religion entered his politics more substantially as well.¹⁸¹ For example, the

¹⁷⁶ See Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 77. For a study on the Iranian army in the Reza Shah period, see Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1921-1926*.

¹⁷⁷ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 71.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁸⁰ On premodern “dynastic newcomers” seeking “legitimacy” through the patronage of Sufis who held sway with the populace, see Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 126.

¹⁸¹ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 66.

education ministry mandated scripture classes in state schools.¹⁸² It is true that his aim was not to Islamize public schooling but to bring religion under state supervision. But his very anxiety over supervising religion evidenced the fact that religion was not merely a private affair of individual choice. Reza Shah's politics tied into religion in other ways too. He funded seminaries, paid homage to senior clerics, and undertook pilgrimages even to non-national sites like Najaf.¹⁸³ His son too pursued policies that attested to the publicness of religion. He too took a number of well-publicized pilgrimages, promised the senior mujtahed in Najaf that he would no longer wage his father's campaign against women's veil, and relinquished the religious endowments which his father had transferred to the ministry of education.¹⁸⁴ Accommodation of the clerical establishment went hand-in-hand with opposition to it, depending on the political climate and strength of the Shah. For example, the Shah claimed at one point to be the spiritual as well as the political leader, and in 1976, he replaced the Islamic calendar with a new imperial calendar.¹⁸⁵ The dual policy of accommodation-opposition was intended to keep the publicness of religion subordinate to state power.

The strongest indication against the privatization thesis was not seen in the actions of state builders, but in oppositional movements. Starting in 1963, the opposition to the Shah shifted center. The Mossadeq-allied nationalists no longer led the struggle for sovereignty as they had in 1953; the religiously-motivated revolutionaries under the leadership Ruhollah Khomeini

¹⁸² Ibid., 85.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 152.

led this fight.¹⁸⁶ The most popular intellectual during the 1970's was Ali Shariati (1933-77) who blended Marxist and anti-colonial ideas with Shi'ism to create a localized revolutionary ideology. And, it was his ideas that resonated with the public the most, influencing a wide range of political groups. In fact, Shariati was so effective that the most charismatic leader of the revolution, Ruhollah Khomeini, borrowed terms from Shariati's Islamic discourses to better communicate with the younger and politically-active generation.¹⁸⁷ In his lectures titled *Hukūmat-i Islāmī* or "Islamic Government," Khomeini theorized that political and executive authority must be exercised by a "guardian jurist" (*walī-i faqīh*).¹⁸⁸ Religious oppositional politics had penetrated Iran so deeply that political collectives (in certain periods, parties) who were, in the Mossadeq era, organizers for national sovereignty without the benefit of religion became religiously oriented. For example, the Liberation Movement (*nihzat-i āzādī*) was the oldest opposition group to the Shah active during both the nationalist interregnum (1941-53) and the ascendancy of religious politics (1963-79). They evolved from opposing the Shah, without the primacy of religion, to an increasingly religiously-oriented group and a constituent element of the ineffective provisional government in 1979.¹⁸⁹ In short, the opposition to the Shah from 1963-1979 primarily made public demands in Islamic terms.

Thereafter, the consolidation of an Islamic Republic was the decisive evidence against the privatization thesis. After 1979, religion went public to establish a theocratic republic. The

¹⁸⁶ See Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini*, 12.

¹⁸⁷ For the life and works of Ali Shariati, see Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati*.

¹⁸⁸ See Khomeini, *Vilāyat-i faqīh*. For a translation, see the Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, trans. by Algar.

¹⁸⁹ For the evolution of the Liberation Movement, see Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini*, 305. Compare the party program drafted in 1961 with the later one in 1980. The latter marks a clear increase in its religious content, compare *ibid.*, 313 with *ibid.*, 317.

agents that brought religion to the center of public life were primarily former students of Khomeini, which Ervand Abrahamian calls the “clerical populists.”¹⁹⁰ They were of the *ḥujjat al-Islām* rank (the junior rank among modern Iranian-Shia clergy) who had the strongest version of a public religion in mind. Their main goal was to create a theoretic state envisaged in Khomeini’s *Islamic Government*, which they attempted by organizing the Islamic Republican Party. Others had weaker versions of a public religion in mind. For instance, some members of the Liberation Movement desired a government where Islamic ideology did not play a major role.¹⁹¹ To combat the weaker demands made for public religion, the Islamic Republican Party organized gangs of *chumāq’dārān* (“club-wielders”) and *ḥizbullāhīs* (partisans of God) whose main function was to disrupt the activities of anti-IRP groups, often through physical intimidation. In their attempt to institutionalize Khomeini’s vision, the clerical populists set up new neighborhood organizations called *kumītah*, which were under the leadership of a central *kumītah* set up by Khomeini himself. By end of the 1979 summer, the *kumītahs* were active in almost all population centers. Part of their function was the enforcement of law and order as well as *Sharī‘a* rules, and fighting those whom they perceived to be anti-revolutionaries. The clerical populists also took over the highly influential National Iranian Radio and Television Organization to propagate their reading of religion and politics. Other paramilitary organizations also came into existence at Khomeini’s direction that supported his vision for a theocratic government. The judiciary that was differentiated in the Pahlavi period remained organizationally intact, without reviving the pre-Pahlvai order of a *Sharī‘a* judges differentiated

¹⁹⁰ Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin*, 42.

¹⁹¹ An example was the deputy minister of the provisional government and later political prisoner, ‘Abbās Amīr-Intizām. For biographical information on Amīr-Intizām along other Liberation Movement leaders, see Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, 87.

from the state. However, the Islamic revolutionaries replaced many of the state-trained jurists with seminary-educated ones, and codified more features of the *Sharī'a* into state laws.¹⁹² The Islamic Republican Party was able to pass the constitution Khomeini had envisaged through a referendum, because of its organizational strength and the popular support it enjoyed, but also because of intimidating the opposition. The constitution was a hybrid of representative democracy and theocracy that attempted to give institutional form to the rule of the clergy, while also enlisting democratic and workers' rights.¹⁹³ The Islam of the Islamic Republican Party had thus gone fully public. The state and the constitution were Islamic and new cultural ministries such as the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance were established to Islamize society as well.¹⁹⁴ Islam was made public not only through state action, but via the collective participation of the nation (*millat*). As Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi argues, of the most enduring consequences of the Iranian revolution was that “the entire edifice of Islamic knowledge production” was democratized.¹⁹⁵ The debates on Islam were not only conducted in the “private” or in the seminary, but significantly in the “public,” in the newspaper, the journal, the classroom, TV and Radio programming, and the parliament.

Accordingly, the evidence in favor of privatization during the Pahlavi era is weak and the rise of the Islamic Republic provides every indication against privatization. Now, it might be objected that Iran did not undergo “real” modernization for privatization to follow (and instead an Islamic Republic resulted). This objection may be anticipated from the contemporary position

¹⁹² Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 177.

¹⁹³ See *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, trans. from the Persian by Algar.

¹⁹⁴ No studies have been done on this ministry, which is still active today and monitors cultural production for their compatibility with “Islamic values.” For more information, see their website at <https://www.farhang.gov.ir/>, accessed November 18, 2021.

¹⁹⁵ For this argument, see Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran*.

held by a number of “secularist-modernist” and “religious reformist” intellectuals of Iran and the diaspora.¹⁹⁶ They hold that Iran is in the “waiting room” of history and has yet to encounter modernity.¹⁹⁷ This position is based on a highly Eurocentric interpretation of modernity, and has been persuasively argued against by a number of scholars.¹⁹⁸ An assessment of this position, against the “multiple/alternative/indigenous modernities” theses shall not occupy us here.¹⁹⁹ If we accept the premise of an Iran-traversing colonial modernity, in conjunction with the modernizing character of Pahlavi reforms, then we cannot draw a teleological association between modernization and privatization. We shall thus state rather boldly that secularization theory in its privatization subthesis has no utility in a historiography of modern Iran.

1.6 The Decline and Expansion of Religion

The next question is whether the decline thesis carries explanatory value for Iranian historical difference. We can designate two types of religious decline: subjective and objective. Scientific inquiry is limited in what it may tell us about subjective decline. This is shown persuasively (although indirectly for our present purposes) by the philosopher, Thomas Nagel. In the context of the mind-body problem, Nagel provides a critique of the physicalist theory of

¹⁹⁶ I borrow these categories of “secularist-modernists” and “religious reformists” from Mehran Kamrava’s study of postrevolutionary intellectual culture in Iran. Kamrava maps intellectual developments in Iran after the revolution under these two along with “religious conservatives” but leaves out a category for left intellectuals. See Kamrava, *Iran’s Intellectual Revolution*.

¹⁹⁷ As an example of this position, in the broader context of “Islam and the West” debates, see Ganji, *The Road to Democracy in Iran*, 89-110. His rather ludicrous ending suggestion is that Islam can “adapt to the modern path of the West, or risk becoming increasingly weakened by its failure to address people’s needs.” Ibid., 106.

¹⁹⁸ As an example, see Miresepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran*. Examining the works of Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, Miresepassi argues that their “discourse of authenticity” was a dialogic mode of reconciling local Iranian-Shia culture with modernity. For Miresepassi, the Islamic revolution, based on this discourse of authenticity, was one of the “significant faces of modernity of our time,” and not a rejection of it. See *ibid.*, 128.

¹⁹⁹ For an edited collection of essays on this theme, with a useful introduction by the editor, see *Alternatives Modernities*, ed., Gaonkar.

consciousness that reduces consciousness to the physical.²⁰⁰ To do so, Nagel asks us reflect to on the subjective experience of a bat. The essence of the belief that bats have experience, he claims, is that there is something that it is like to be a bat *from the bat's perspective*.²⁰¹ This means that there is *one* point of view that is only accessible to the bat (and not to humans). If this is true, then it is a mystery, he writes, “how the true character of experiences could be revealed in the physical operation of that organism.”²⁰² This “true character of experiences” is from the bat’s perspective alone that is not contained with the physical operation, or the domain of objective analysis, the kind that can be observed and understood from many points of view and by individuals with differing perceptual systems.²⁰³ In short, there is a subjective experience of an organism irreducible to the physical, and inaccessible to science and the domain of the objective.²⁰⁴ We can extend the same argument to religious experience. We may never know the decline, stability, or expansion of inner religious experience, especially across different time periods. A sixteenth-century nomad may have felt “less religious” compared to a twentieth century seminary student, while a seventeenth-century carpet weaver may have felt “more religious” when put against a contemporary poet. This is not to say that human-to-human subjective experience is as inaccessible to social science as is the bat’s inner experience to humans. But that there is something about subjective religious experience that is inaccessible to scholarly inquiry. However, we can still make some generalization about the decline of religion based on (available) objective manifestations of how religion is experienced.

²⁰⁰ Nagel, “What Is It Like to be a Bat?,” 445.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 438-39.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 442.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 442, 444.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

We have already discussed in some depth the question of differentiation. This meant that under modernity, institutions separated themselves from religion, which itself became a distinct sphere. Religion specialized in its own emerging “religious” function and dropped or lost many other “nonreligious” functions it previously had within its purview. Religion thus became functionally distinct from the modern state, economy, science, and education.²⁰⁵ This appears to indicate the decline of religion, since religion had to surrender many of its previous functions to the institutions of the modern state. However, decline was not an inevitable outcome of differentiation, as religion could play an active role in differentiated institutions of modern life. The 1979 Islamic revolution Islamized many of these institutions, at least on an apparent level, with numerous clerics who became active in the three branches of the government. Ruling and protecting a territory thus became more religious than it had been in premodern Persiantate courts, in which the ulema were separate from the court elites.²⁰⁶ On cognitive differentiation too, decline was not a necessary outcome. The modern concept of religion emerged, and in certain historical contexts in mutual cognition with secularity. This resulted in two different outcomes, depending on the historical context: it either meant that religious belief and practice declined as it was subjected to the power of secular thought and science.²⁰⁷ The very opposite could also occur: after cognitive differentiation, religion was no longer a given. It was now an identifiable category that was zealously asserted alongside modern formations. This was the case in twentieth century Iranian history, the second half in particular, as previously discussed. We saw this in the politics of the Devotees of Islam that anticipated later Islamic thinkers and

²⁰⁵ See the section of this chapter, entitled “The Theses of Secularization.”

²⁰⁶ See the section of this chapter, entitled “Iranian Historical Difference and Secular Differentiation.”

²⁰⁷ For a historical perspective on secular science versus religion in the European context, see Chadwick, *The Secularization of European Mind in the Nineteenth-Century*, 161.

movements and their attachment to religion as liberation.²⁰⁸ Thus, the decline of religion did not necessarily follow from functional or cognitive differentiation.

The aforementioned Islamic politics demonstrates that the uniform decline thesis of secularization, as the privatization thesis, is not a good fit for modern Iranian history. However, this does not mean that there was no decline. In certain contexts, religion did indeed lose its previous centrality. A good example is found in literate culture and in writing, the way scholars and writers of multiple genres wrote and communicated with their readers. The institution of Persian manuscript demanded that the opening, preceding “and then” (*ammā ba’d*) that dealt with the main subject of the text, would be grounded in the Islamic worldview, gratitude to the Creator, and the praise of the prophet among other sacred personalities. This opening material was not simply a formulaic formality, akin to “best wishes” at the end of an e-mail or when an academic introduces another at a talk—the most intolerable part of any talk—by listing the details of her CV. This view of prefatory praise as a mere formality is perhaps why translators skip over the preface, as is the case in Dick Davis’s otherwise excellent translation of the *Book of Kings* or the *Shahnameh*. In fact, a common orientalist reading of introductory verses in the *Shahnameh*, before Firdawsī sang the main story, was that these are mere formalities, custom-bound praises of God, the prophet, and the king.²⁰⁹ A closer look, however, reveals that they were much more than that, and told the reader a good deal about the mind of Firdawsī and the broader intellectual climate of his time. One introductory line in praise of God expressed a deeply controversial theological issue of Islamic history, whether God could be seen by human

²⁰⁸ See the section of this chapter, entitled “Cognitive Differentiation.”

²⁰⁹ I thank Hamid Dabashi for his *Epics and Empires* seminar, in which I learned to read the prefatory praise beyond the formulaic position.

eyes; Firdawsī sided with the Mu'tazila school that held eyes are incapable of seeing their Lord even in paradise. Or, as Firdawsī put it:

به بینندگان آفریننده را
نبینی، مرنجان دو بیننده را

To our eyes, the Creator is unseen
Leave your eyes free of hurt, as you will not see²¹⁰

The gravity and centrality of the God-centered opening was seen across genres, from epic poetry (*himāsaḥ*) to historical writing (*tārīkh*), and was nearly universal among authors, practiced by the most conservative *faqīh* to the most rebellious scholar. Abū al-Faḏl, who belonged to the latter category, showed a deep commitment to the God-centered opening. He was a scholar (*‘ālim*) in Mughal India, historian, officer, chief secretary, and confidant of the Mughal emperor Akbar I, and the younger brother of Fayzī, Akbar’s first poet-laureate (*malik al-shu‘arā*).²¹¹ While at Akbar’s court, Abū al-Faḏl composed one of the most enduring texts of Mughal courts, the *Akbar’-nāmah*, which narrated the genealogy of Akbar, the history of Babur, Humayun, and Akbar himself, and concluded with the *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, in which we learn about the details of court life and administration, in part communicated via Akbar’s personal views, on such topics as the upkeep of treasury, the order of markets, and even those domains of life outside imperial control like children’s education.²¹²

²¹⁰ See Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah*, ed., Khāliqī Muṭlaq, *daftar-i yikkum*, verse 5. The centrality of God is also evident in *Shāhnāmah* manuscripts. The page on which praise came was decorated most elaborately. As an example, see Lewis O 50 *Shāhnāmah*, fol. 6 verso. UPenn Special Collections. Also available online at https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0023/html/lewis_o_050.html.

²¹¹ See R. M. Eaton, “ABU’L-FAḌL ‘ALLĀMĪ”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_4563>

²¹² See *ā’in-i āmūzish* in Abū al-Faḏl, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, vol. 1, 143. I cite to a manuscript of the text I studied in India. From the identifying information, I only have the upper cover in my possession, which does not give information beyond the title and the author. The reader may correspond the citations that follow to the same subject-matter in the published translation. See Abul-Fazl Allami, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, trans., H. Blochmann.

The prefatory praise in the *Akbar'nāmah* began with a set of reflections on the subject of speech and its marvelous qualities. In a highly florid sentence where the connection between the subject, the object, and the verb was almost lost, Abū al-Faḥr wrote that those who were “sharp” (دقیقه‌رس) and were of “enlightened nature” (روشن‌ضمیران) had “found the elemental synthesis in speech alone” (در ترکب عنصری... غیر از سخن... نیافته‌اند).²¹³ In simpler prose, this meant that speech was the only thing through which the connection between the material and the spiritual realms (i.e., elemental synthesis) was made. Citing to a poem, Abū al-Faḥr continued to praise speech: “speech...throws off the veil from the eighteen thousand [worlds...] it solves all problems... the heart says with the tongue and speaks into the ear everything that comes into the minds of people of awareness” (هر چه در آمد بدل اهل هوش دل بزبان گفت و زبان زد بگوش).²¹⁴ Abū al-Faḥr added that among several other qualities, speech was the “chief commander of the council of meaning” (سپه‌سالار), (موبد موبدان دانش آتشکده خاطر), “the chief priest of the temple of mental awareness” (انجمن معنی), “prince of poetry” (شهریار سخنوری), “lamp of those who dwell in dark huts” (چراغ کلبه تاریک‌نشینان), and that which “increases the internal pain of those who yearn for the path of seeking God” (دردافزای باطن مشتاقان کوی خداجوئی).²¹⁵ This already-exalted speech, when used in praise of God, was of particular excellence, Abū al-Faḥr added.²¹⁶ However, he retreated from this position throughout the preface; he had serious reservations for spoken word when it was put in service of

²¹³ See, Abū al-Faḥr, *Akbarnāmah (The History of Akbar)* ed. and trans. Thackston, vol. I, 2-3. I use Thackston’s translation. I note a few places where I use a different choice of words. In Thackston, “enlightened minds.”

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3. In Thackston, “commander in chief of the army of intrinsic meaning.”

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5. In Thackston, a *kasrah* is misplaced on the *kāf* of *tarīk*.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

God's *direct* praise. Abū al-Faḏl, writing in context of a much longer Islamic philosophical discourse on God's ineffability, viewed speech as incapable of praising God whose essence and attributes humans could not know.²¹⁷ In his own words, "gratitude to the [incomparable] God is outside the perimeter of possibility...the praise of the [incomparable] Lord is beyond the number of all existing things."²¹⁸ Expressed poetically, "although the arm of speech is far reaching, it breaks its head against the stones of [God's] palace" (پای سخن را که دراز است دست/سنگ سراپرده تو) (سرشکست).²¹⁹

This inability of verbal praise for God was linked, through a set of rhetorical questions, to the vast gap that separated the human realm from the divine. On this, Abū al-Faḏl inquired if there can be any relationship between the temporal and the atemporal. Since there was no "generic connection" (رابطه مناسبت) between "earthlings" (زمینیان) and "celestials" (آسمانیان), he wrote, and the created could not succeed in knowing the creator, how could it be right for created humans to enter the realm of God's praises? Just as one who was not admitted to the king's court would expose himself to ridicule if he were to speak of the king's private quarters, the human could not praise what he did not know (i.e., God).²²⁰ Abū al-Faḏl went so far to say that God has not made praise obligatory, as he has not bestowed on us the knowledge of his essence and attributes.²²¹ In his recognition that the direct praise of God presented such problems, Abū al-

²¹⁷ As examples of this philosophical discourse, see the primary writings of Ibn al-'Arabī, as compiled and commented on by Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, II 557.11.

²¹⁸ Abū al-Faḏl, *Akbarnāmah*, vol. I, 6-7. Thackston translates بیچون as unqualifiable, which I rendered as incomparable.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

Fazl was left with the following conundrum: could he proceed with this manner of praise as others do, or was there another path?²²² After much inner struggle, holding a conversation between himself and his heart, Abū al-Fazl rejected the first option. Instead, he chose to inspect his inner states, which he believed would lead him to the praise of God. What allowed for praise, he concluded, was the restraining of the “gratitude-loving” (سپاس‌دوست), “self-aggrandizing” (خودآرای), and “arrogant” (خودفروشی) carnal soul at the level of “need” (نیاز), “chagrin” (سرافکندگی), and “servitude” (بندگی).²²³ This control of the ego was achieved once the person “reformed himself” (اصلاح خود) and “cleaned the dust from depths of his heart” (نہانخانہ دل خود را از غبار پاک سازد).²²⁴ Only after this internal process of reform could one praise the “nurturer of the interior and exterior” (پروردگار درون و بیرون).²²⁴ In short, praise was much more of an internal process than an external expression. Abū al-Fazl was uninterested in following authors who performatively praised God in their “prefaces.” This kind of praise, Abū al-Fazl thought, degenerated into fray of “imitation” (تقلید), “borrowed phrases” (استعارات مستعار), and “pedestrian phrases” (عبارات مبتذل), or it became a mere exercise in “pomposity” (خویشتن‌آرائی) disguised as divine praise—this “pomposity” was likely (and ironically) a jab at authors who indulged in their command of language.²²⁵ Abū al-Fazl added that this was the practice of “glib” (چرب‌زبان) and “empty-handed”

²²² Ibid., 12-13.

²²³ Ibid., 10-11.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 12-13. In Thackston, “cast-off phrases.”

(تهیدست) authors who sold words at the expense of meaning.²²⁶ Instead of this external prefatory performance of praise, Abū al-Faḏl opted for inner reform. This, in his view, was what the real praise of God consisted in.²²⁷ This critique of his predecessors' "imitative" praise did not mean that Abū al-Faḏl saw praise before him as a mere formality. Rather, his criticism was attempting to populate praise with new intentions, moving it away from borrowed prose about an ineffable God towards a mystical journey in proximity to God.

We thus see another example of how grave the God-centered opening was. The premodern prefatory praise of Firdawsī and Abū al-Faḏl among countless others externalized subjectivity in relation to a God-centered world. This subjectivity had a deeply-held commitment to a worldview in which God was put first and at the center of human thought and activity. As Iran entered the twentieth century, the God-centered introduction was gradually replaced, in most genres of writing, with a short invocation of God's name. We thus see a decline of religion in literary culture and in textual production. At the same time, we saw (as previously discussed) a stability, even an expansion, of religion in the emergence of public Islamic politics.²²⁸ Briefly, we may mention other areas of life. In the production of law as in textual production, religion declined and this decline persisted after the Islamic revolution. As previously examined, the Pahlavi reforms pushed the ulema as *the* legislators and judges to the realm to "spiritualists" who had to operate in the shadow of the new parliament and the judiciary, limiting themselves to ritual and family matters. The Islamic revolution incorporated more of the ulema along with Shia

²²⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

²²⁷ Other works of *tārīkh* also began with God's praise. In a manuscript by an Indian historian, entitled *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, a "paragraph" was devoted to God's praise and preceded the "and then" (*ammā ba'd*) section, wherein the benefits of history, the author's name, the date of composition, the content of the work, and the sources were stated. See Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān Tabātabā'ī, *Siyar al-muta'akhhirīn*, fol. 1 recto, XVIII B 122, National Library of Czeck Republic.

²²⁸ See the subsection in this chapter "Religion's Privatization as an Empty Set."

fiqh into the legal order. Despite this incorporation, the underlying structure of law had much more affinity with the structure of the modern state than it did with classical *Sharīʿa*. This might be why the majority of ulema who today sit as judges or practice as lawyers obtain a university degree in addition to their madrasa training.²²⁹ But then other areas of life indicated the reverse—pilgrimage (*zīyārat*) culture, for example. Faster travel and communication technology enabled more frequent visits to shrines, and thus, a stability or even an expansion in religious exercise.²³⁰

Our analysis thus presents a mixed picture under modernity. In some areas of life such as the production of law and texts, religion declined; whereas, in other areas such as the emergent field of politics (*sīyāsat*) and pilgrimage, religion endured and even expanded. The decline thesis, as with differentiation, is only partially applicable to Iranian experiences. Related to decline is the question of optionality, to which I now turn.

1.7 The Question of Optionality

In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor interrogates the question of optionality (although he does not use the term) in some detail by drawing on changes in Western histories.²³¹ For Taylor, optionality began in the eighteenth century when a viable alternative to Christianity in form of exclusive humanism emerged, which in its notion of human flourishing made no reference to

²²⁹ A good work in English on the legal history of the Islamic Republic remains to be written. For an older work on the Iranian constitution specifically, see Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, trans. by John O’Kane. For an interview-based article on the everyday workings of the legal system and the legal profession in the postrevolutionary period, see Banakar & Ziaee (2018) *The Life of the Law in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, *Iranian Studies*, 51:5, 717-746.

²³⁰ See *Muslim Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, ed., Babak Rahimi and Peyman Eshaghi, 15. The editors contrast pre and post nineteenth-century experiences. In the former period, “travel for the purpose of performing pilgrimage across long distances...was hardly viewed as an ordinary experience.” Pilgrims in “the nineteenth century and beyond,” by contrast, experienced “more accessible, efficient, speedy, and centralized travel.” Pilgrimage might still not be an ordinary experience today because of its spiritual status, but it is far more ordinary logistically. In addition to more speedy travel, “cyberpilgrimage” is allowing more pilgrims to “travel electronically” to their sacred sites. See *ibid.*, 35.

²³¹ I borrow the term optionality from a course taught by Partha Chatterjee.

something higher which humans should reverence or love or acknowledge.²³² Exclusive humanism accepted no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true, Taylor adds.²³³ This period ushered in what Taylor calls the “nova effect” (pluralization in Berger’s terminology), or the steadily widening gamut of new positions—some unbelieving, some believing, and some hard to classify—which became available options. Initially, this occurred among the social elites, sometimes—when it came to the development of new forms of unbelief—only among the intelligentsia. And this process of elite pluralization continued throughout the nineteenth century, at different paces, and with differently spaced interruptions in different societies.²³⁴ The nineteenth century was a time of a great rise in unbelief, which meant that in addition to many people losing their faith and abandoning their churches, they also devised new positions, new niches or spaces for unbelief.²³⁵ An example of new positions were that of nineteenth-century Romantic poets and painters who distanced themselves from the “established gamut of references” and traditional iconography, also relating to the cosmos and to nature in ways not based on Christian conventions.²³⁶ Although Taylor rejects a linear narrative of uniform decline, he does contrast the eighteenth century world of “some elite unbelief” to the twenty-first century world of “mass secularization.”²³⁷ Taylor conceptualizes these transformations under three categories of secularity, which share overlaps. The first is secularity 1 or the retreat of religion in

²³² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 245.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 423.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 322, 374.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 353-54.

²³⁷ For his rejection of the linear model of decline, see *Ibid.*, 530. For his contrast between the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries, see *ibid.*, 437.

public life (what we have examined in this chapter as the privatization thesis). The second category is secularity 2 or the decline in belief and practice (the decline thesis).²³⁸ The third kind of secularity, least explored in the literature, is secularity 3 or change in conditions of belief.²³⁹ Secularity 3 inquiries into the conditions of life that changed to make options for belief, unbelief, and choices in between possible. What is distinctive about Taylor's work, compared to works previously reviewed in this chapter, is that his main objective turns on an accounting for secularity 3.

In accounting for optionality, Taylor proposes a rupture from the "ancien régime" into the "age of mobilization" (approximately 1800-1960).²⁴⁰ Modern transformations, including elite opposition to popular religion, dominance of horizontal/equal over vertical/hierarchical relationships, industrialization, and urbanization undermined and removed ancien régime forms replacing them with the age of mobilization.²⁴¹ According to Taylor, the ancien régime (AR) was an enchanted world based on a "pre-modern idea of order," grounded in the cosmos and/or higher time. AR forms were "organic", in the sense that society was articulated into constituent "orders" (nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie, peasants), organizations (assembly of clergy, parliaments, estates), and smaller societies (parishes, communes, provinces), such that one only belonged to the whole through belonging to one of these constituent parts. AR forms pre-existed the actual human beings that belonged to them. They defined their role and status. In other words, AR

²³⁸ Taylor rejects uniform decline in the West, but admits that "'modernity' (in some sense) tends to repress or reduce 'religion' (in some sense)." See *ibid.*, 429.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 423.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 471.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 441, 443. Taylor does link urbanization to his secularity 3 but rejects a teleological connection between urbanization and secularity 2 (decline), writing that "[s]ome have argued that the reverse [urbanization engendering more religion] seems to be true for the U.S.A. And the generalization may not have held of the U.K. during the nineteenth century." See *ibid.*, 426.

forms existed and persons fell into them by accidental factors of birth, and were then generally fixed into their pre-existing social status.²⁴² The age of mobilization (AM), on the other hand, involved greater and greater disenchantment. AM was related to the “modern moral idea of order,” as a way of coexistence among equals, based on principles of mutual benefit. AM societies were also “direct-access”; the individual was a citizen “immediately,” without reference to preexisting collectives that could now be made and unmade at will.²⁴³ Under AM persuading, pushing, dragooning, or bullying people into new forms of society, church, and association became ordinary. This meant that people were induced through the actions of governments, church hierarchies, and other elites but also their equals to adopt new structures. For instance, collectives of people in industrialized and national setting, where previous AR structures no longer served as the unchanging backdrop to all that was legitimate, were able to frequently persuade people to join them through construction of space for meetings, production of literature, and institution of regular service. Instead of being enjoined to remain in or return to their preexisting places, persons were induced to take their parts in newly-formed structures. AM forms allowed for optionality. People could now escape their pre-determined role within a religious world and become active creators of new structures—religious or secular or things in between—that they could make and unmake, enter and leave.²⁴⁴ Taylor does not mention that under the ancien régime too, people were persuaded or bullied into new associations, by such persons as messengers and messiahs and such events as conquests; although, being mobilized into a new structure was not an ordinary event as it was under the age of mobilization. Even if

²⁴² Ibid., 459-60.

²⁴³ Ibid., 460.

²⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 445.

we do not find all the defining distinctions between AR and AM convincing, there is one fact that we cannot deny: optionality is unique to the age of mobilization.

A manner of optionality coterminous and following the age of mobilization is what Taylor calls authenticity. This is the understanding of life, he writes, which emerged with the Romantic expressivism of the late eighteenth century, that each one of us had our own individual way of realizing our humanity, and that it was important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority.²⁴⁵ This must be contrasted, Taylor warns us, from the philosophy of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke where individual freedom was still compatible with a strong, commonly-enforced virtues of character. The ethic of authenticity originated in the Romantic period, but it utterly penetrated popular culture only since the Second World War, if not even closer to the present, which at the time of Taylor's writing was in 2007.²⁴⁶ In this sense, the ethic of authenticity transformed into the *age* of authenticity.²⁴⁷ Today, we are on a search for personal fulfillment, all of which are equally tolerable, and this is coded in popular expressions of authenticity, such as "I am finding my way," "I am discovering my own fulfillment," "I am doing my own thing," and above all, "I am finding myself."²⁴⁸ And, this finding of oneself is pursued in the context of optionality: it can be sought out through belief, unbelief, or "ways" in between.

Taylor's *Secular Age* is an original and courageous undertaking, despite being wandering and repetitive at times, and leaving the reader, in some cases, with more questions than answers.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 475.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 299.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 430, 473.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 507.

Still, the question of optionality it raises is highly important and relatively unexplored, and deserves testing against historical difference. My awareness of optionality in the Iranian case is in part autobiographical. Iranians, including myself, know intimately or through retellings of others, family and peers in the past or present, who were/are fully compliant with the demands of *Shari'a*; they pray daily, fast all Ramadan, and go on *hajj*. But we also know others who exercise options somewhere between belief and unbelief. I propose five categories for them. These categories are not exhaustive and do not cover every possibility. Moreover, they are not mutually exclusive and someone might find themselves moving from one to another throughout his or her life. They are as follows: 1) those who do not practice minus a few, received practices, such as placing a Qur'an at the Norouz table. This is the category that is often called "culturally" religious; 2) Self-identifying Muslims who may fast and pray every now and then, and partake in Islamic holidays when they can. More passionately than practice, they attend to the literary and intellectual traditions of Islam (among other traditions and new philosophies) for their self-definition. But beyond these, they are not compliant with *Shari'a*. Even though this group shares the lack of legal compliance with the first category, they differ because they have a very intellectually-active way of being a Muslim;²⁴⁹ 3) Muslim-born people who become followers of "new age" religions, including its indigenous forms such as *'irfān-i ḥalqah* and imported forms such as Eckankar that originated in the United States;²⁵⁰ 4) fourth are those Muslim-born persons who do not show an interest in Islam, even if in some ways they might be influenced by

²⁴⁹ Shehab Ahmad's work on Islam would include categories one and two under what is Islamic/who is a Muslim. See Ahmed, *What is Islam?*.

²⁵⁰ *'Irfān-i ḥalqah*'s founder, Muḥammad 'Alī Tāhirī, has written several books such as *'Irfān-i kayhānī-i ḥalqah*. For a collection of their medias, see <https://erfanhalgheh.tv/>. I personally knew Eckankar practitioners in the 1990's and some of their teachings were translated into Persian. There are even critical responses in Persian to this new religious movement. As an example, see *Eckankar va za'f-i falsafi-i ān dar shinākt-i adyān* (*Eckankar and its Flawed Philosophical Comprehension of Religions*), available at <https://hawzah.net/fa/Magazine/View/3814/7126/86776>, accessed November 17, 2021.

Islamicate cultures, instead following a self-made, “authentic” spirituality, to borrow from Taylor, or a salvation promised by materialist ideologies such as communism; 5) the last category includes those who take an oppositional position against Islam, in some cases, even make a mockery of Islamic belief and practice, or of sacred personalities.²⁵¹ This category is not the equivalent of ideological atheism in the West as represented by “new atheism” and its Islamophobe advocates such as Sam Harris.²⁵² To the best of my literary knowledge and personal experience, Iranians never showed an interest in atheism as an organized ideology. In fact, as with secularism, there is no Persian term for atheism. On some occasions, the French *laïque* is used, literally transliterated as لائیک, and there is also the neologism *khudā'nābāvar* (literally meaning “unbeliever in God”), but both, and especially the latter, are quite artificial and rarely used. The reasons for this deserve a separate study, but I like to briefly suggest that state repression is not one of them, despite what Western observers might hold, in their characteristic orientalist and speculative fashion. Although atheism as an organized ideology has not been part of the Iranian experience, there are still those who take an oppositional position against Islam (i.e., category 5).

Now, an important question is whether these categories are historically significant, that is, if they are distinct modern formations. As Taylor correctly remarks, “what is the past we are comparing ourselves with? Even in ages of faith, everybody wasn’t really devout. What about the reluctant parishioners who rarely attended?”²⁵³ An argument can be made for the premodernity of the first three categories. The repeated and immense reminders, sometimes

²⁵¹ A literary record that would approximate this fifth category is very thin. These views show up in more informal settings, via orality or virtually, for example, in comment sections of social media pages.

²⁵² For a survey of new atheism, see James Taylor, *The New Atheists*, available at <https://iep.utm.edu/n-atheis/>, accessed November 17, 2021.

²⁵³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 427.

punishments, to follow the laws of Islam imply that there were more passive practitioners of *dīn* in premodernity, even if their passivity was less possible because of the greater social compulsion to religion. Muslim intellectuals, such as Abū al-Faḏl discussed earlier in the chapter, might approximate the existence of something close to the second category. On the third category, new religious movements are indeed new in some sense. An Iranian in the year 2000 was able to connect via the internet with a U.S.-based religious movement, influenced by Indian religions but showing no signs of the Islamic tradition. This was a new option. However, “new” religious movements were also old, having continuity with premodern practices such as meditation, spiritual healing, occultism (*rammālī*), sorcery, jinn possession, and dream visions.²⁵⁴ Category three indicates a new option for belief, but not a clear break from the inevitability of belief in premodernity.

Categories four and five provide the strongest indication of optionality. Available literary sources, to the best of my knowledge, do not point to their existence in premodernity. Although this does not necessarily rule out the possibility that something comparable existed. We do not know how a nomad in medieval Iran, from whom and about whom we have no record, conceived of his relationship to *dīn*. But textual sources provide us with no traces of either category. Even rebellious poets like Hafez composed their poems within Islamic ontic commitments. Hafez was anchored in the *dīn* of Islam, contrary to popular and anachronistic misinterpretation of him as a non-Muslim!²⁵⁵ Although, in delivering his rebellious poetics, he castigated sacred persons such

²⁵⁴ For a historical and ethnographic work on these practices in premodernity (primarily late nineteenth century) as well as more contemporary interest in them, see Doostdar, *The Iranian Metaphysicals: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny*.

²⁵⁵ To the best of my knowledge, this position has not been argued for textually. But it is something one hears from time to time when conversing with Persian speakers on Hafez, and even more so, with English readers of Hafez because of the “fake Hafez” phenomenon, which includes both made-up translations and an “erasing” of Islam from his translated poetry. On this, see Safi, *Fake Hafez: how a supreme Persian poet of love was erased*, available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/6/14/fake-hafez-how-a-supreme-persian-poet-of-love-was->

as the ascetic (*zāhid*) and the preacher (*vāi 'z*), and defiled sacred objects such as the prayer rug, Hafez also revered Islam through his love for the dervish and the Qur'an. Moreover, he interpreted the cosmos through Islamic *'irfān*.²⁵⁶ Compare this with the poetic imagination of twentieth-century poet, Sohrab Sepehri, in which *dīn* no longer has the same central place. While Islamic references are made, they are much fewer in quantity and also harder to classify on the spectrum of Islamic belief/unbelief. Consider the following memorable stanza from Sepehri that comes near the beginning of his beloved poem, "The Sound of the Water's Footsteps":

من مسلمانم
 قبله‌ام یک گل سرخ
 جانمازم چشمه، مهرم نور
 دشت، سجاده من
 من وضو با تپش پنجره‌ها می‌گیرم
 در نمازم جریان دارد ماه، جریان دارد طیف
 همه ذرات نمازم متبلور شده است، سنگ از پشت نمازم پیداست
 من نمازم را وقتی می‌خوانم
 که اذانش را باد گفته باشد سرگلدسته سرو
 من نمازم را پی تکبیره الاحرام علف می‌خوانم
 پی قد قامت موج
 کعبه‌ام بر لب آب
 کعبه‌ام زیر اقاقی‌هاست
 کعبه‌ام مثل نسیم، می‌رود باغ به باغ، می‌رود شهر به شهر
 حجرالاسود من روشنی باغچه است

I'm Muslim
 my qibla a red rose
 my prayer spot the spring, my prayer-tablet light
 the plains are my prayer rug.

I perform ablution with the corridors' thrums and pulse
 in my prayer, the moon flows, and rainbow colors move,
 stones behind my prayer show

[erased](#), accessed November 17, 2021. For the viral thread on the same issue, see "Thread: The Orientalizing of Moulana Rumi," available at <https://twitter.com/PersianPoetics/status/1261745279860080641>, accessed December 8, 2021.

²⁵⁶ For an extended discussion of Hafez's castigation of sacred authority, see Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

my prayer's particles shine and glow.

I pray when,
the wind calls through the cypress tree
I pray after the green grass says, God is good.
I pray after the waves call to rise.

My Kaaba is on the water's edge,
under the locust trees.
my Kaaba, like a breeze, goes garden to garden, town to town
its Black Stone is a garden's glow.²⁵⁷

Sohrab Sepehri told us that he is a Muslim. But then the way of his prayer (*namāz*) might raise eyebrows. One approach is to bring his poem under the mystical traditions of Islam—Ibn al-‘Arabī’s unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), for example —because Sepehri prays upon nature and with nature, thus seeing God in all creation.²⁵⁸ Another is to identify it with Taylor’s “authentic self,” that Sepehri is finding *his own* way of being Muslim. A third approach, and probably the least defensible one, is to view Sepehri’s prayer as something else, not Islamic even though he lays claim to being Muslim. The ambiguities in Sepehri’s imagination are not so modern. But, then, *dīn* and its demands are thin in his thought, with the cited stanzas being one of the only explicit bits in the entire *Hasht kitāb*. The same cannot be said of premodern poetry, even when the subject was this-worldly.²⁵⁹ And, Sepehri is just one example of twentieth-century poetry and prose dim in their recognition of *dīn* and its demands. In Miḥdī Akhavān *Sālīs*, we have isolated references to God (*khudā*), Jesus (*masīḥ*) and Mary, and ablution, but without any

²⁵⁷ Sohrab Sepehri, *Hasht Kitāb*, 314. My translation.

²⁵⁸ For some of Ibn al-Arabi’s writings with a learned commentary, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*.

²⁵⁹ See the section entitled “The Decline and Expansion of Religion” of this same chapter. We saw this with Firdawsī’s *Shahnameh*. Despite its this-worldly epic content, the opening was God-centered.

clear commitments to *dīn*.²⁶⁰ In his eulogy for the novelist, Šādiq Hidāyat, God is never called upon for mercy or console.²⁶¹ In fact, in one poem on gratitude (*shukr*), *shukr* is extended to many things—life, excitement, friendship, compassion, and wine—but none is given to God.²⁶²

There is more direct evidence for optionality in documented autobiographical accounts where the question of being religious (*mazhabī*) or not is directly raised. In an interview conducted in 2019, with the late economist, Farīburz Ra’īs’dānā, who recently died of Covid-19, we see that religion is an option for him as it was for his parents. It is very telling that Ra’īs’dānā’s interlocutor framed the question on religiosity in the following terms, “tell us where and in what kind of a family were you born? Was your family *political or religious* [*mazhabī*], or...”²⁶³ Ra’īs’dānā responds:

“I was born in Tehran...my family wasn’t religious [*mazhabī*]. The photos we have show my father with a tie and my mother isn’t wearing a head covering. But our family wasn’t categorically opposed to religion either. When it came to social issues, they would address them through a religious channel as well... I was religious towards the end of high school to the beginning of college, although this wasn’t the case starting the second year ... [during the six-day war] in 1967, the Arabs were defeated by Israel...we formed a group and collected our money...and wrote letters condemning the Shah’s government that they’ve smuggled oil to the Israeli state [information Al-Ahmad had falsely given me]. This Israel had occupied the land of God’s messenger and the first *qibla* for Muslims... in those times, the residues of religious feelings were still with me. Those feelings are not with me anymore, but I am still a staunch supporter of the Palestinian people and the resistance against Israel.”²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ For each reference, see respectively, Akhavān *Sālis*, *Akhavān Sālis*, 197, 96, 300, 201. For another example, see the collected writings of Sā’idī in *Shinākhtnāmah-i Ghulām Husayn Sā’idī*. In interviews, self-authored letters to friends and family, and writings in multiple genres of plays, short stories, and travelogues, God and *dīn* played no role in Sā’idī’s thinking.

²⁶¹ Akhavān *Sālis*, *Akhavān Sālis*, 206.

²⁶² Akhavān *Sālis*, *Akhavān Sālis*, 265.

²⁶³ *Previously Unreleased Interview with Farīburz Ra’īs’dānā*, July 28, 2020, available at <http://tarikhirani.ir/fa/news/8498/> (my emphasis), accessed November 17, 2021.

²⁶⁴ *Previously Unreleased Interview with Farīburz Ra’īs’dānā*, July 28, 2020, available at <http://tarikhirani.ir/fa/news/8498/>, accessed November 17, 2021.

This passage is very telling of optionality. Ra'īs'dānā had the option of being “political” and “religious” and moved between these—as did his parents—and after college his religious identity faded away. What Farīburz Ra'īs'dānā described represents the experiences of many in contemporary Iran: the possibility of options, a world between here and elsewhere, between religion and irreligion.

Following our analysis in this chapter, we see the distortion of social theory when tested against historical difference. More precisely, the theses of secularization thin in their explanatory value when laid against Iranian history. Secularization theory is, to borrow from Chakrabarty, inadequate. However, the inadequacy of Eurocentric social theory does not mean that modernity did not undermine religion in some ways. Related to *some* decline in religion was the emergence of options between religion and irreligion. Taylor theorized optionality in reference to Western historical events, such as the advent of “exclusive humanism,” the shift to the “age of mobilization,” and most recently, the formation of the “authentic self.” These events did not necessarily follow into Iranian history. In fact, Iranians never showed a serious interest in humanism, for which the term *insān'girāyī* was coined, but without a corresponding social reality or a literary historical record. Despite this difference, one proposition cannot be ignored: optionality is valid as a purely *descriptive* statement. As I demonstrated, in the twentieth century *mazhab* and *'aqīdah* became options for some Iranians. The important question turns on its causality: how did optionality become possible? Put differently, how did Iranians “secularize” towards optionality but without secularity and secularism? The next chapter attempts to answer this question with reference to one of the most central institutions of modern life: education reform.

Chapter 2: To Educate an Immiserated Nation

“There is no country on the face of the planet today more miserable than Iran.”¹

Iranian intellectual, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn Marāghehī (1895)

“The Iranian nation is drowning in an ocean of misery.”²

The *Naw’Bahār* Journal (1923)

“The fact you’re born in Asia,
is called geographic determinism.

The fact you’re screwed,
with tea and fags for your food,

the fact you’re born in Asia,
is called geographic determinism.

[And] one day, you’ll get up to see, you’ve gone to waste...”

Lyrics to a song by Mohsen Namjoo (2008).³

With the inception of the constitutional movement (1906), an idea emerged, that of a profound Iranian misery (*badbakhtī*), which its intellectual advocates believed was a calamitous condition afflicting all of life in Iran, whether it was the state of the infrastructure and knowledge, or that of cultural and political organization. The immiseration of Iran further developed in the intellectual sources of the Reza Shah period (1925-1944), and gradually entered popular culture to leave a mental imprint on the collective consciousness, all the way into the present day, as attested by the popular Namjoo lyrics (2008) quoted at the outset of this chapter. The song’s audience interpreted “geographic determinism” as their immiserated life assignment—a misery from which there was no redeeming—with the exception of emigration to “the outside” (*khārij*). When the idea of immiseration formed for the first time in the late nineteenth century, so did ideas on how to deal with this supposed misery. In the constitutional

¹ Marāghehī, *Siyāhatnāmah- i Ibrāhīm Bayk, Yā, Balā-Yi Ta’aşşub-i ū*, 234.

² This quote is from a 1923 journal article entitled, “What is Misery and Who is Miserable?” See *Naw’Bahār*, 1923, no. 17, 258, Columbia University Libraries.

³ One version of the song can be accessed at the following link: Mohsen Namjoo, *Jabre Joghrafiayi*, <https://youtu.be/W131KoNp-4>, accessed November 18, 2021.

and Reza Shah periods, intellectuals, writing in the context of the newly-formed Iranian transnational public, appeared optimistic.⁴ They advocated for *nijāt* or redemption, and believed that the right set of reforms would undo Iranian misery. They proposed that “new education” (*m‘ārif-i jadīd*) and the distribution of “correct” knowledge would have major redeeming qualities, and some viewed education reform, at the primary level in particular, as *the* key to redemption.⁵

As part of this dissertation’s methodology against Eurocentric social theory, I center the historical turn towards reform on the terminology and cognition of primary sources, instead of modernization theories. It is true that the discourse of immiseration and modernization are related; it was the idea of misery that resulted in the yearning for *nijāt*, and thus modernization reforms. Still, the former tells the story of how Iranians themselves thought about their encounter with colonial modernity, and the other gives primacy to how social scientists conceived of this encounter years later.⁶

Existing historiography in the Anglo-American academy has analyzed Iranian reform in the late nineteenth century. However, it has paid minor attention to the discourse of *badbakhī* central to reform and its lasting impact on how Iranians conceive of their relationship to the outside world.⁷ I argue that intellectual sources of the late nineteenth century invented the

⁴ For the theory of the Iranian transnational public, see Dabashi, *Iran without Borders: Towards a Critique of the Postcolonial Nation*.

⁵ See Kasravī, *Tārīkh-i mashrūṭah-‘i Īrān*, 54. His precise phrasing is that “the people” (*mardum*) viewed the *dabistān* as “the only way out of the country’s pains” (*tanhā chārah-‘i dardhā-yi kishvar*).

⁶ For a critical review of the existing literature’s use of modernization in the context of education reform, see the introduction to this dissertation. For an exploration of colonial modernity in the context of Iranian history, see Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted*, 50.

⁷ One exception is the recent article, Mostafa Abedinifard (2021) Iran’s “Self-Deprecating Modernity”: Toward Decolonizing Collective Self-Critique, 406. Abedinifard devises the concept of “self-deprecating modernity” in partial reference to *badbakhī*/misery.

immiseration discourse. These sources presented an imagination of Iran that contrasted sharply with the content and confidence of pre-immiseration prose. I then make an inquiry into education reform, which intellectuals and state officials, from about 1889 to 1934, viewed as release and redemption from supposed misery. I contend that education reform presented two significant changes. First, it changed how one was educated, that is, the means of education changed from “learner etiquette” (*ādāb al-muta‘allimīn*) to documentary discipline. Rules via the bylaw document (*Nizāmnāmah*) among other instruments disciplined learners (and in some contexts teachers) into the obedience of such abstractions as order and timeliness, such instruments as the transcript, and such persons as the school disciplinarian (*nāzim*). Disciplinary learning replaced ulema-produced *ādāb* advice, on normative learning and on student-teacher relationship, which had formerly brought the learner into God-centered virtue, as the precondition for knowledge acquisition and transmission. The second significant change was a transformation in the why or the purpose of education. Education reform prescribed knowledge and its practice in school, with an eye on postgraduate service for the nation’s redemption from her supposed misery. This was a significant departure from the primary purpose of education previously, which was proximity to God and salvation in the hereafter. I connect this educational transformation to a larger thematic and theoretical concern of this dissertation, namely the relationship between education and religion. I suggest that the disciplinary means of new education, coupled with its this-worldly purpose, brought with it an unintended consequence: it made the literate vulnerable to religious optionality.⁸

I reconstruct learning before the emergence of the immiseration discourse by reading the literature of *ādāb al-muta‘allimīn* in Arabic and Persian. These sources extend from the

⁸ For a discussion of religious optionality, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation, specifically the subsection “The Question of Optionality.”

thirteenth to the eighteenth century. In probing the change towards new education, I draw on Persian reformist journals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This includes *Rūznāmah-i ma'ārif*, first published in 1898 by *anjuman-i ma'ārif* or “The Education Society,” a pioneer “civil” organization for reform of primary education. This journal, which was made available to me by Iran’s National Archives, has not been previously examined in English-language scholarship. I also read several bylaws (*Nizāmnāmah*) and documentary sources produced in furtherance of education reform, which demonstrate the shift towards the documentary, discipline regime. In what follows, I read early nineteenth-century Persian travelogues, contrasting them with late nineteenth-century intellectual sources, to clarify the discursive context in which new education formed.

2.1 A Discourse is Born

“Granted they drink tea in England, but it is served with milk and not in the same heavy color consumed by Iranians, or in the same amount, one after another, cup after cup. The English drink it in the morning and on an empty stomach, with bread and butter, and in the evening too it is served with some bread and butter, so that its bad effects are eliminated. This is in contrast to Iran: as soon as a guest arrives the host goes, “tea, everyone!” Then the tea flows without interruption. [In addition to ill effects on the body such as poor digestion, tea has caused most Iranians to look dark and frail].”⁹

Dated to approximately 1925, Iranian intellectual, Mīrzā Mihdī Khān Kawkab, wrote these words from Hyderabad, India. Around this time, reformist intellectuals saw immiseration everywhere and found causal links to it in the most unexpected of things, in this case the consumption of tea. Diagnosing misery was not a deep-rooted intellectual exercise, however. In fact, through most of the Qajar period (1798-1921) and up until the last few decades of the nineteenth century, Iranian intellectuals viewed the order of life in Iran with confidence. This

⁹ *Īrānshahr Journal*, 1925, no. 9, 554. The first volume of *Īrānshahr Journal* that contained this opinion was published in 1922. The header page for this volume was missing in my scans, but it appears to have been published sometime in 1925.

view changed in the years leading up to the constitutional revolution of 1906. A number of reformists began to generate the idea of Iranian misery. Attempting to make sense of colonial modernity, they held that Iran suffered from deep misery. Their idea of misery was a comparative one, measured in relation to Europe as well as other (semi)-colonies of the world, such as the Ottoman Empire, Caucasia, and Japan.¹⁰

In examining the discourse of misery, I analyze four texts. The first two are from the period before the change towards immiseration discourse occurred. They are travelogues, and this choice of genre is purposeful, because both authors encountered the world, through metropole and colony visits, and their differing organization of life. Mīrzā Šālih Shīrāzī wrote the first text, *Safarnāmah*. Simply meaning, *travelogue*, in it, he described his travels from Iran to England. The Qajar crown prince, ‘Abbās Mīrzā Nā’ib al-Salṭānah, commissioned Mīrzā Šālih Shīrāzī and four other students in this journey. According to Shīrāzī, the trip’s goal was to learn natural philosophy (*ḥikmat-i ṭabī’ī*) and languages, in particular Latin, English, and French, and inquire into foreign religion and law, but excluding crafts (*ṣan‘at*), which two other students were tasked with acquiring.¹¹ The style of the text was a mix between a chronicle, ethnography, and history. Shīrāzī chronicled mundane daily events in chronological succession. He also provided a series of ethnographic and empirical observations on the social and urban organization of the places he visited.¹² Thirdly, the text can be read as a historical account: it informed the reader, but without specifying its sources, the histories of foreign territories he

¹⁰ Marāghah’ī compared cleaner mosques in Egypt and Istanbul to Iran, see Marāghah’ī, *Siyāḥatnāmah-i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 155. Ākhund’zādah compared superior and cleaner bathhouses in Istanbul to Iran. See Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt : Nāmah’hā-yi Shāhzādah Kamāl al-Dawlah bih Shahzādah Jalāl al-Dawlah*, 307.

¹¹ Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah’hā*, 93, 95. The two students were Āqā Muḥammad Kāzīm Ḥakkāk and Ustād Muḥammad ‘Alī who was a craftsman in Tabriz’s arms production facility.

¹² With the exception of Georgians, these observations did not have a domineering sense of superiority as found in European ethnographies. For the section on Georgia, see *ibid.*, 117.

visited, in particular the dynastic histories of the Tsars, the Ottomans, and the English.¹³ Anticipating the objection that Shīrāzī was restricted by court patronage in what he could write about the (immiserated) condition of Iran vis-à-vis the places he visited, I analyze a second travelogue not dependent on the Qajar court. This text, titled *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam*, was completed about 14 years before the *Safarnāmah*, in 1801-02 (1216), by Iranian scholar, Mīr ‘Abdul Laṭīf-Khān Shūshtarī (d., 1804-05 or 1219). Shūshtarī lived during the power transition from the Safavids to the Qajars and the ascendancy of the Zand dynasty (1751-94). He had traveled to India where he authored the text, and dedicated it to the Indian ruler, Mīr ‘Ālim Bahādur, with the purpose of informing him on the “conditions” of “heavenly” (*bihisht tamāsul*) Shūshtar (a city in Iran’s southwest where he was from) and the “virtues of its ancestors.”¹⁴ The text described Shūshtar and its Sayyid-scholar families, and further described Shūshtarī’s travels to India. It also explicated, with some historical context, the Americas, but more substantially, Europe and England in particular.

I contrast these two texts with two reformist texts of the later Qajar years that, for the first time, articulated the idea of an incomparable Iranian misery. The first text was titled *Maktūbāt* (“Letters”) by Mīrzā Faṭḥ ‘Alī Ākhund’zādah (1812-78). Ākhund’zādah was an Azeri intellectual who left Iran for the Caucasus at an early age, but remained firmly in Iran in his emotional, intellectual, and reformist commitments. The text was one of his most-known works in the Persian language, although originally, he wrote it in Azeri Turkish.¹⁵ Another major text that helped form the idea of Iranian misery was *Siyāḥatnāmah-’i Ibrāhīm Bayk* or *The Travel Diary*

¹³ For Shīrāzī’s exposition of English political history, see *ibid.*, 297.

¹⁴ Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam* ; *va*, *Zayl al-Tuḥfah* : [*Safarnāmah va Khāṭirāt*], 31.

¹⁵ Āryan’pūr, *Az Ṣabā Tā Nīmā: Tārīkh-i 150 Sāl-i Adab-i Fārsī*, vol. I, 348.

of *Ibrahim Beg*. This was a fictional travelogue; although fictional, the story of the main character, Ibrahim Beg, was very much autobiographical, resembling the life and travels of its author, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn Marāghehī (1840-1910). Marāghehī received schooling until the age of sixteen and then joined his father’s trade. After agitating officials in Iran (of the *kadkhudā* and *farrāsh* ranks), he left Iran for Tiflis where he worked as a small merchant. The Iranian consulate employed him there, but his perception of disorderly affairs caused him to leave. He eventually took up residence in Istanbul and became involved with constitutionalist papers like *Shams* in Istanbul and *Ḥabl al-matīn* in Calcutta.¹⁶ The story’s protagonist, Ibrahim Beg, was also a merchant who lived outside Iran, in Egypt, but maintained a deep emotional bond with Iran, so much so that he refused to speak Arabic and was grieved whenever someone told him something unpleasant about Iran.¹⁷ Ibrahim Beg travelled to Iran, for the first time, in his adult life. There, his idealized picture of Iran quickly shattered and he began to diagnose Iranian immiseration.

Shīrāzī travelled from Isfahan to Caucasia and Russia, after which he went to England where he spent about three years and nine months, returning to Iran via Istanbul. Beginning his travels in Iran, Shīrāzī traveled from Isfahan to the peripheral towns of Kashan, and then from Qom to Tehran. He described the geography and the infrastructure in some detail. A frequent term describing the state of Iranian infrastructure was “*istiḥkām*”—a term used to describe such things as caravans and castles (*arg*).¹⁸ This term, meaning “strength” or “stability,” informs us a great deal about Iranian self-perception before the immiseration discourse emerged. According to Shīrāzī, the productive Qajars had brought about *istiḥkām*, reversing abandonment and decay

¹⁶ Ibid., 305-6.

¹⁷ Marāghehī, *Siyāḥatnāmah-i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 29-30.

¹⁸ For use of *istiḥkām* in Shīrāzī, see as examples Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah'hā*, pp. 64, 70, 71, 79.

before them replacing it with construction and prosperity (*ābādī*), although not entirely, as in a city like Qom he recorded several ruined mosques and madrasas.¹⁹ Shīrāzī acknowledged construction and prosperity undertaken by previous dynasties, but gave most emphasis to his contemporaries.²⁰ He gave credit to the Qajar-appointed ruler (*ḥākim*) of Isfahan, Amīn al-Dawlah, in particular. He wrote, “old infrastructure that were buildings of Safavid Sultans had become wasted and defective. Now, architects, bricklayers, painters, and stonemasons are brought [by Amīn al-Dawlah for repair].”²¹ He credited Amīn al-Dawlah with several new constructions as well, including the bazaar and the *chahār ’bāgh* built in formerly ruined areas.²² Shīrāzī took some delight in describing this “prosperity.” He was awed by the aesthetic beauty of Iranian infrastructure (*imārat*), so much so that in certain passages he refrained from their detailed description “not to prolong speech,” also commenting that words fail to express their quality.²³ Among the infrastructure, the chancery (*dīvān ’khānah*), caravans, mosques, madrasas, gardens, and castles were praised for their grandeur.²⁴ Similarly, Shūshtarī was content with Iranian infrastructure, also using the word *istihkām* to describe it. Specifically, he wrote that *salāsīl*, the castle of Shūshtar, benefited from *istihkām* and that it was “without parallel” (*bī shibh va nazīr*) in the world.²⁵ Matching its impressive peculiarity was a certain minaret in Shūshtar, which, Shūshtarī confidently stated, was “of the wonders of the world...with a height

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 64, 68. For the observations on ruined Qom constructions, see *ibid.*, 72.

²⁰ For examples of Safavid construction, see *ibid.*, 67. Shīrāzī also credited Afghan Ashraf who ruled parts of Iran, 1725-29 (1137-42), and also the Zand dynasty with the development of infrastructure, see *ibid.*, 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

²² *Ibid.*, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 48, 55.

²⁴ In that order, see as examples *ibid.*, 80, 63-64, 56, 68, 67, 79.

²⁵ Shūshtarī, *Tuhfat al-’ālam*, 60. Parts of this castle stand to this day.

rarely seen in other lands.”²⁶ The strength of Iranian infrastructure was not limited to Shūshtarī’s immediate locality either. He praised other cities in Iran, like Shūshtar’s neighboring city of Ahvāz, writing that in all the world one would rarely see a city with its grandeur.²⁷ He was also fond of Kirmānshāh, through which he travelled, describing it as a “prosperous city where all the necessities [were] plentifully available.”²⁸

The infrastructural picture in Ākhund’zādah and Marāgheh’ī transformed radically from the description we read in Shīrāzī and Shūshtarī. For Ākhund’zādah, Iranian infrastructure was thoroughly deficient. Among other constructions, he criticized supposedly ill-planned cemeteries, defective roads, underdeveloped villages, desolate cities, narrow avenues, filthy bathhouses, and deficient printing houses.²⁹ Similarly, for Marāgheh’ī (narrated through his traveler’s voice, Ibrahim Beg), infrastructural problems were numerous. Only one form of infrastructure impressed Marāgheh’ī (as it had impressed Shīrāzī and Shūshtarī’s voyaging gaze): caravans. But it was the Safavid Shah Abbas (ruled, 1588-1629) who received credit for them. All the good infrastructure in Iran, including caravans and the *Nārīn* castle in Ardabīl, were viewed by Marāgheh’ī as remnants of Safavid glory, unrelated to the allegedly idle, misery-generative Qajars.³⁰ Qajar cities, Marāgheh’ī wrote, were desolate, dirty, and underdeveloped, in particular comparison to European cities, where unlike “lazy” (*tanbal*) Iranians, all citizens were

²⁶ Ibid., 74.

²⁷ Ibid., 66.

²⁸ Ibid., 176.

²⁹ Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 305. According to Ākhund’zādah, Iran did not have the most basic of infrastructure such as a functioning bookbinding industry; pages of a book, he wrote, would fall apart quickly as did the laws of the government. There was no good printing press, he claimed, despite print having a 400-year history in the world. Ākhund’zādah added that print only existed in lithographic (*sangī*) form in Iran, a deficient technology he thought, because lithographic print allegedly contained plenty of mistakes and did not produce mass copies towards mass learning, see *ibid.*, 303.

³⁰ Marāgheh’ī, *Siyāhatnāmah-’i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 68, 164, 166.

uninterruptedly occupied with increasing national wealth and prosperity.³¹ Iran was also contrasted with parts of Caucasia. In comparison, Iran was a failure, Marāghehī thought, because of “governmental negligence and people’s laziness,” to extract oil and natural resources and facilitate foreign investments and industries around them.³² In contrast to Egypt, he added, Iranian bathhouses were unsanitary and the water was idle and filthy, causing contagious illnesses.³³ Hospitals lacked in cleanliness, equipment, medicine, and qualified doctors.³⁴ Travel in Iran was difficult because of underdeveloped roads and lack of railways, Marāghehī added.³⁵ The state made no effort, Marāghehī charged, to create companies for production of goods and participation in global markets.³⁶ Marāghehī contrasted Iranians’ alleged lack of interest in modern industry to the Japanese. He wrote that a group from Japan had gone to Germany as tourists. While visiting a cannon factory (*kār’khānah-yi tūp’rīzī*), they took careful (mental) notes and duplicated their production in Japan.³⁷ Iran lacked industries, he wrote, for production of arterially and modern weaponry.³⁸

Compare Marāghehī’s prose with pre-immiseration observations on foreign industry. In Russia, Shīrāzī described industries in the production of stone (*hijārī*), gun, chariot, sword, knife,

³¹ Ibid., 154.

³² Ibid., 51.

³³ Ibid., 61.

³⁴ Ibid., 62.

³⁵ Ibid., 74. The only exception to railway construction, the author wrote, was a small railway made by Belgians.

³⁶ Ibid., 66, 206.

³⁷ Ibid., 138.

³⁸ Ibid., 76.

and other weapons.³⁹ These industries, he wrote, had either acquired material from Europe or had brought European experts. This Russian strategy had resulted in production and duplication of European products.⁴⁰ In England, Shīrāzī documented industrial capacities and commanded their orderly production.⁴¹ Two sites in particular occupied his attention, a wool-making factory in the city of Ashburton, which he lauded for its incomparable grandeur.⁴² He was equally impressed with a naval ship in Plymouth, which “resembled a small town.”⁴³ Shūshtarī too described English industry, which he viewed as easing British lives.⁴⁴ He specifically described new inventions such as the telescope (*durbīn-i falak’farsā*), vents (*havākish*), thermometer, the compass, and naval ships, the last of which he said brought “utmost grandeur” for the British.⁴⁵ Shīrāzī and Shūshtarī simply recorded their observations on foreign industries; but, these observations, though at times laudatory, were not coupled with anxiety about what Iran lacked. Nor did they express an interest in Iran’s need for the same industrial and inventive capacities. with the exception of Shīrāzī’s importation into Iran of a print machine to produce a

³⁹ Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah’hā*, 195. According to Shīrāzī, other industries developed in St. Petersburg twelve years after the city became a major center. They included industries for making of paper, cotton, gunpowder, and cannon balls, see *ibid.*, p. 186.

⁴⁰ Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah’hā*, 195. Shūshtarī did not write on Russian industry, only making general observations. For example, he wrote that Russia had a kind of glory that no other Christian sect had, and that they were a cause of fear and anxiety for European powers. See Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam*, 337.

⁴¹ Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah’hā*, 447.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 284.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁴⁴ Contemporary of Shūshtarī, Mīrẓā Abū Ṭālib Khān, a Lucknowi East India Company tax administrator and Persianate traveler writer, also linked new inventions in England to easing of affairs (*tashīl-i umūr*), see Abū Ṭālib Khān, *Masīr-i Ṭālibī, yā, Safarnāmah-’i Mīrẓā Abū Ṭālib Khān*, 264.

⁴⁵ Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam*, 303, 308, 309, 311, 312.

newspaper.⁴⁶ Unlike Ākhund'zādah after him, Shīrāzī did not link print to Iran's enlightenment. He simply wrote: "If I can take something from this country [England] to Iran, which would be of use to the lofty government, it might be good."⁴⁷

Self-confidence of pre-immiseration intellectuals was further evident in an exchange between Shīrāzī and his friends, who advised him against traveling abroad. Before departing for his travels, Shīrāzī met with them and "each one reproached and reprimanded [him] separately."⁴⁸ Shīrāzī attempted to justify his trip to a certain friend and merchant, named Aqā Ismāīl Burūjirdī, reasoning that it was of an educational nature. His friend validated his desire for learning, but objected that such an objective would not be fulfilled by travelling to Europe as "everyone [there] will be ignorant, so what benefit lies in their companionship?"⁴⁹ This opinion made Shīrāzī insecure to the point that at a later point in his trip, he reprimanded himself thinking that "I [was] a fool to have left my own home, becoming entangled with this journey."⁵⁰ In his friends' estimation, therefore, Europe was not a place of comparative advantage or enlightenment, but a place of ignorance.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Contrary to Ringer's reading, Shīrāzī did not suggest that Iran should copy Russia's industrial projects. See Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 55 where she wrote: "The Russian experience of modernization and the promotion of 'progress' was upheld by Shīrāzī as a model for Iran."

⁴⁷ Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah'hā*, 496.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵¹ Abū Ṭālib seemed to have faced a similar kind of prejudice against his desire to travel. He began his travelogue by noting alleged Muslim arrogance in regards to learning, writing that the Muslim elites (*buzurgān va aghniyā*) wrongly thought they possessed all the relevant knowledge. See Abū Ṭālib Khān, *Masīr-i Ṭālibī*, 5. The discourse of misery reversed this perception, with Iranians themselves, the masses and ulema in particular, becoming the stand-in for ignorance. For an example, see Ākhund'zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 306, 307, 313, 320.

Despite his friends' reprimand, Shīrāzī went to England to learn about their educational order. He linked progress in the sciences, in England and British India, to the kingship of George III, and commended in particular the “incomparable” progress of chemistry (alchemy's successor for Shīrāzī).⁵² He also described higher educational curriculum in a Moscow school and the subjects taught there unavailable to Iranian students, such as painting (*ṣūratkishī*) and dance (*raqqāṣī*).⁵³ On primary education, Shīrāzī wrote that at age of four to five, the English started to teach their children, and by age seven, each child was able to read.⁵⁴ Shīrāzī simply documented curricula and pedagogical difference in primary and higher education but made no indication that this difference evidenced an Iranian lack. He did not interpret lower, functional literacy rates in Iran as a sign of misery. This was a sharp contrast to the reformist discourse of his forerunners some 70 years later who viewed lower functional literacy in Iranian children as a cause of collective misery.⁵⁵ Shūshtarī did not deal with education as such but wrote on English knowledge production more broadly. He commended just English kings who had allowed an environment that granted highest honor upon scholars whose numbers he wrote were numerous.⁵⁶ He connected the proliferation of scholars and their theoretical contributions on the art of government to orderly governance and industry. The combined effect of good governance and industry made dominion over distant lands like India possible, he wrote.⁵⁷ Shūshtarī further

⁵² Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah'hā*, 360.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 142. For Shīrāzī's descriptions of English middle education curriculum, see *ibid.*, 458.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁵⁵ One of the earliest works to argue for mass, functional literacy was *Maktūbāt*. Ākhund'zādah argued that state power was possible through national education (*tarbīyat-i millat*), which needed to be achieved through mass literacy (*kasb-i savād barā-yi 'umūm-i nās*). See Ākhund'zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 325. For a more extended discussion on mass literacy, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁵⁶ Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-'ālam*, 113.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

considered England's "desirable conditions" (*uzā'-i pasandīdah*) to be the following: production of the newspaper (specifically its archival value), the post (*irsāl-i khuṭūṭ*), statistical reports, and advancements in medicine.⁵⁸ Shūshtarī appeared more impressed with English knowledge than his contemporary, Shīrāzī; nonetheless, his observations were not used to envision Iranian misery.

In Ākhund'zādah and Marāgheh'ī, by contrast, European knowledge served as a measuring board against which Iran fell miserably short. According to Ākhund'zādah, to receive proper training as a scholar, one was compelled to travel abroad.⁵⁹ European historians, Ākhund'zādah complained, knew more about and wrote more detailed accounts on Iran than Persian historians. European historians, he insisted, wrote more substantially on Iran's recent history, such as the Afghan siege of Isfahan as Safavid power dwindled, and after that, the life and military strategies of Nādir Shāh (d., 1747).⁶⁰ According to Ākhund'zādah, it was not simply the production of historical content that was lacking in relative terms; Persian historical methodology was also deficient. Ākhund'zādah branded Afsharid scholar, Mīrzā Mihdī Astarābādī, a "stupid historian" (*muvarrikh-i ahmaq*) who merely occupied the reader with distasteful verbosity. The flowery style of Persian writing was more about impressing the reader than it was about informing her, he wrote.⁶¹ In Ākhund'zādah's judgment, Iranian literature was filled with "delusions," such as rules on ritual purity and "baseless fantasies" (*afsānah'hā-yi bī'aşl*), such as exposition of miracles. Astrology found special reproach with Ākhund'zādah. He

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 263, 269, 284, 296. On the benefits of the newspaper, also see Abū Ṭālib Khān, *Masīr-i Ṭālibī*, 195.

⁵⁹ Ākhund'zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 322.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 315-16.

⁶¹ For an example cited by the author, see *ibid.*, 317.

criticized astrologers for what he thought were absurd and embarrassing statements made in relation to celestial movements, for instance, calendar notes according to which star positions indicated excellent digestion (*mazāj*) for the king in a particular month.⁶² Similarly, Marāghehī found the astrological calendar to have no value.⁶³ Marāghehī criticized Iranian schools for lacking in proper pedagogy. He wrote that the curricula were free of new sciences, thus disabling Iranians from preventing and curing deadly diseases, such as smallpox.⁶⁴ In particular, for Marāghehī, medical knowledge was deficient and “every high dervish, every herbalist...and every village woman-elder” claimed to be a doctor without proper training or a certificate (*shahādat’ nāmah*).⁶⁵ On statistical knowledge, Marāghehī departed from Shūshtarī, who viewed statistics as desirable but without a recommendation for its adaptation in Iran. Marāghehī castigated the Qajars for not using numbers in their governance. He wrote that no state-commissioned annual statistics existed, and that no one in the country kept a record of important dates such as birthdates.⁶⁶ Similarly, Ākhund’zādah viewed Iranians’ failure in dating correspondences as an indication of misery.⁶⁷

Similar to education and knowledge production, Shīrāzī and Shūshtarī converged on their praise of England’s legal order but without inferring Iranian immiseration from it. Shīrāzī

⁶² Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 310. Shūshtarī, although observing that English scholars did not believe in astrology, did not castigate the subject as absurd and embarrassing, but simply described it, see Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam*, 36.

⁶³ Marāghehī, *Siyāḥatnāmah-’i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 249.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 117, 224.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 242-43.

⁶⁷ In addition to the failure to date documents, Ākhund’zādah criticized Iranians for their archiving practices. He specifically mentioned *Sharī’ah* documents where, he claimed, the stamp only contained a common name that made it impossible for someone like the ruler (*ḥākīm*) to make out its author or authenticity. See Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 314-15.

commanded English liberty (*āzādī*) and legal organization in the context of his narrative on a shopkeeper on Oxford Street in London.⁶⁸ English authorities, whose positions he did not specify, attempted to close a shop for a period of six months, and the shopkeeper refused closure. With some exaggeration, Shīrāzī wrote that the entire army (*sipāh*), if it tried, could not take it by force, nor could the prince inflict financial or bodily harm on the shopkeeper.⁶⁹ England has achieved a legal order, in which, all from the king to the beggar are bound by the country's order and are punished for their violations, Shīrāzī told his readers.⁷⁰ Shūshtarī was equally impressed with this equality before the law (although he did not use the concept nor did he seem particularly interested in its limitations based on class, gender, race, and religion). If the king or his officials overstepped their authority with their inferiors, he wrote, the inferior could complain before a court of law.⁷¹ Shūshtarī believed that the English stood out in their respect for the “rights of those endowed with them” (*ra'āyat-i huqūq-i zu'y al-huqūq*).⁷² Shīrāzī and Shūshtarī praised English liberalism, but neither chose to prescribe its emulation or to compare it with a legal lack in Iran. Instead, Shīrāzī compared English legal organization to an Arab deficiency, writing that before England's new legal order (read: liberalism) emerged, the English were like the people of Arabia (*Arabistān*), filled with “evil, corruption, and bloodthirst.”⁷³

Ākhund'zādah converged with Shīrāzī and Shūshtarī in his admiration of liberal legality; he diverged from them, however, in extending this admiration into negation of law and orderly

⁶⁸ Shīrāzī wrote that no country in the world was “orderly in this manner or organized in this way” (*bih īn naḥv muntazim ast va na bih īn qism murattab*), see Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah'hā*, 429.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 328.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 296.

political administration in Iran. Overlooking the limitations imposed by the *Sharī‘ah* on the king’s rule, he asserted that the Qajar king controlled the life and property of his inferiors and the masses without limitation (*taslluṭ-i bī’ḥadd*).⁷⁴ The king was able to corporeally punish his high officials (*umarā*) by the bastinado, in contrast to France and England where even donkeys, horses, and cows could not be harmed, he wrote. All sorts of cruel and unusual punishments such as public executions and cutting of bodily organs, considered barbaric in “civilized” nations, were legal, he added.⁷⁵ If someone assaulted another, the victim did not have clarity of legal authority for redress; redress may have laid with the Shaykh al-Islām, the mujtahid, the Friday prayer leader, the prince’s *mazālim* court, the tax collector (*dārūghah*), or senior governors (*biglar’bīgī*). Ākhund’zādah added that the punishment was not uniform either: one authority would fine the accused, while another imposed corporal punishment, and still others forgave him.⁷⁶ The alleged disorder extended to the court’s financial incompetence, Ākhund’zādah wrote. The financial administration of customs and the *dīvān’khānah* were allegedly disorderly, and the treasury income was low in part because the royal court did not collect any income from the powerful landlords and ulema who administrated charitable endowments (*awqāf*), while it supposedly tortured the poor masses with tax collection. Taxation, Ākhund’zādah alleged, operated chaotically without clear laws on acquisition or spending of taxes, with each province (*wilāyat*) acting in accordance with the whims of its ruler (*ḥākim*). As with other problems, this alleged financial disorder was compared to the outside world, where finances were claimed to be in order. Even the Ottoman government had achieved financial order, Ākhund’zādah wrote.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 295.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 308.

More generally, the king, the court, and appointees in the provinces were ignorant on the conduct of government and neglectful of their proper duties, Ākhund'zādah contended. He added that the king had no knowledge of changes around the world, thinking that governance was summed up in wearing of fancy attire and eating of fine food.⁷⁸ Provincial governance was also in disarray, Ākhund'zādah thought. Ākhund'zādah charged appointed princes in provinces with ignorance. He wrote that they failed to protect their subjects' life and property, and also failed to protect them from outside intrusions like Turkoman invasions.⁷⁹ Marāghehī too represented Qajar political authority as incompetent, oppressive, and corrupt. Their corruption was widespread inside Iran, he wrote, but also extended beyond its frontiers. He charged Iranian consulate officials with embezzling passport fees from Iranian subjects abroad.⁸⁰ Inside the country, he alleged that everyone from high officials, like the king, ministers, and governors, to their inferiors like the *dārūqeh* and *kadkhudā* were incompetent and corrupt. He added that officials were undeservedly given (or even bought) numerous available courtly titles available.⁸¹ He added that officials thrived on material grandeur, took bribes, and appropriated *awqāf* or inheritance of Iranian subjects abroad that by *Sharī'ah* did not belong to them.⁸² Marāghehī alleged that taxation practices were arbitrary, according to the whims of local rulers, with no

⁷⁸ Ibid., 295.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 317-18.

⁸⁰ Marāghehī wrote that this fee was four *manat* annually, see Marāghehī, *Siyāhatnāmah-i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 49. When the main character ended his travels and left Iran, officials demanded that he pay them 2 *manat*, see *ibid.*, 230.

⁸¹ Ibid., 90. For a satirical criticism from the same period on the sale of high-sounding titles, see Dehkhuda, *Charand o parand*, 5. For a translation, see Afary, *Charand-o-parand: revolutionary satire from Iran, 1907-1909*, 73-74.

⁸² For allegations of materialism, see Marāghehī, *Siyāhatnāmah-i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 137, 239. For the lack of merit, see *ibid.*, 111. For the appropriation of inheritance, see *ibid.*, 50. For *awqaf* appropriation see *ibid.*, 166. Marāghehī charged the *mutiwallī* and his agents as the primary people who appropriated the *awqāf* income.

uniform, central taxation law that would generate revenue for the state.⁸³ More generally, no uniform guidelines (*dastūr al-‘amal*) existed for governors (*ḥukkām*) based on which they would know their duties and govern, he wrote.⁸⁴ Marāghehī went on to say that officials’ (*kār’pardāzān*) oppression was so severe that poor classes escaped to the Caucasus and performed the most difficult manual labor or sold merchandise on streets, while those wealthier renounced their Iranian citizenship (*tābi ‘īyat*) seeking the protection and commercial support of foreign states.⁸⁵ To make matters worse, political authority was allegedly not responsive to complaints. Marāghehī’s traveler-narrator, Ibrahim Beg, secured meetings with the interior and foreign ministers (ironically, rather easily for their supposed lack of reception). In meeting with them, he diagnosed Iran’s miseries and suggested a path to reform. Their only response, however, was reprimand, and in the case of the Iranian foreign minister, corporeal beating.⁸⁶

Shūshtarī, who did not depend on the Qajars for patronage, sharply contrasted with Marāghehī. He characterized Iranian political authority as attentive and competent.⁸⁷ He wrote that good governance had allowed Iran to minimize foreign domination.⁸⁸ He saw in Iranian kingship legitimate prowess, so much so that he wrote, whoever is tasked with Iranian kingship is qualified to rule all the world.⁸⁹ Similarly, Shīrāzī took no quarrels with the political authority

⁸³ Ibid., 125, 137.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 209, 272.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 109.

⁸⁷ The only exception was his comment when he observed ruined infrastructure around the rivers of Ahvāz. He wrote this was because of the lack of organization and initiative from the court in repairing the ruined infrastructure (except when the king became directly involved). See Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ālam*, 65-66.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 270.

⁸⁹ This observation was made in reference to what he had heard from “one of the intelligent English officials.” See *ibid.*, 339.

of his Qajar patrons. One particular episode in his travelogue was quite telling. When in England, Shīrāzī hoped to fulfill the main objective of the trip and receive instructions from his hosts. But he was left without the necessary funding and coordination to obtain these instructions. In his narrative, Iranian officials did not receive any significant reprimand. The real culprit, Shīrāzī wrote, was a man named Joseph D’Arcy (d. 1848).⁹⁰ D’Arcy was a British officer who in 1811, after Iranian setbacks against Russia, had come to Iran with the British ambassador, Sir Gore Ouseley, to provide arterially training to the men of ‘Abbās Mīrzā. Upon D’Arcy’s return in 1815, ‘Abbās Mīrzā commissioned five students, including Shīrāzī, to accompany him and study in England.⁹¹ Shīrāzī blamed delays in obtaining lessons almost entirely on D’Arcy’s administrative incompetence, personal selfishness, and financial greed.⁹² According to Shīrāzī, D’Arcy fell far short of the well-known and effective English official he pretended to be. D’Arcy, Shīrāzī alleged, did not want students to communicate with other English officials or seek lessons on their own.⁹³ This was because he alone wanted to be in charge of their coordination, and for this labor he hoped to be paid by the British government.⁹⁴ In other words, if the students themselves or English persons other than D’Arcy were to coordinate lessons, D’Arcy would be left without his payment.⁹⁵ The payment he had hoped for never came, Shīrāzī

⁹⁰ Shīrāzī claimed that all the English officials were unkind to the students except for Sir Gore Ouseley, and English officers in Iran dishonestly deflected blame to the students, alleging that they were spending their time idly. For a summary of Shīrāzī’s frustration with D’Arcy and the British government, see Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah’hā*, 511.

⁹¹ Abbas Mīrzā provided D’Arcy with rank of colonel, also giving him the title of Khan. Shīrāzī called him “Qūlūnīl Khān” for this reason in his narrative. On Joseph D’Arcy, see Kambiz Eslami, “D’ARCY, JOSEPH”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_8061>

⁹² Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah’hā*, 269.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 256, 294.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 257.

wrote, so he did not coordinate lessons and the students were left idle. A distraught Shīrāzī sold scarfs (*shāl*) in his possession to secure finances for private lessons that he arranged himself.⁹⁶ Shīrāzī had no significant frustration with the Iranian side. He believed that the British, D’Arcy in particular, failed to secure his comfort in England, and because of the same vices, such as financial greed, that immiseration intellectuals associated with Qajar’s entire political organization.

Accordingly, we see a transformation in the Iranian imagination of self-vis-à-vis the other. Immiseration intellectuals transformed their forerunners’ perception of firm Iranian infrastructure, functioning order of education and knowledge, and qualified political authority. The reformist discourse of the later Qajar years viewed Iranian infrastructure and knowledge as deficient, and political authority as incompetent and corrupt, and these in turn generated collective misery of an incomparable degree. They declared Iranians miserable, not only compared to Europe, but also compared to their neighbors, such as the Ottomans. If pre-immiseration intellectuals admired a certain aspect of organization in Europe, say, liberal legality, they did not follow this admiration with a castigation of Iran. The reformists, on the other hand, used difference to generate a discourse of lacks, absences, and miseries. The reformists were not fatalists, however, and believed that with the right set of cures Iranians could be redeemed from their supposed miserable state. Curative prescriptions were several and included, through the constitutional movement, the implementation of liberal law.⁹⁷ But the

⁹⁶ On sale of personal possessions for securing of lessons, see *ibid.*, 253, 259, 260, 265, 269, 511.

⁹⁷ See Ākhund’zādah, *Maktūbāt*, 322. Another prescribed cure to misery was the “redemption of religion” (*taslīyat-i mazhab*). See *Naw’Bahār*, 1923, no. 17, 258.

intellectuals believed one cure to be most fundamental for undoing of Iranian misery: the cure of education reform.⁹⁸

Constitutionalist scholar, Ahmad Kasravi, reflecting back on the inception of the constitutional movement (1906), noted that Iranians at the time believed, rather credulously he thought, that the new primary schooling of the *dabistān* would be the “only way” out of national misery.⁹⁹ Reformers did indeed give special emphasis to primary schooling.¹⁰⁰ Kasravi’s reformist contemporary, Ḥasan Taqīzādah, declared boldly that “the purview of primary education in the nation [was] so significant and valuable that it [was] not even comparable to the importance of higher education.”¹⁰¹ Taqīzādah reasoned that historical experience “prove[d] conclusively” that “true progress” in a nation was only possible through the reliance of the “managerial class” (*tabaqah-yi mudīrah*) on shared popular belief in reform. This popular uniformity in belief, Taqīzādah argued, needed to be implemented through compulsory primary education.¹⁰² Intellectuals also spoke of education reform more generally and beyond primary schooling. The same Taqīzādah drew an intimate link between public education and redemption from misery. It is worth quoting him at some length:

⁹⁸ As an example, Marāghahī wrote that the main reason for Iranian immiseration was the absence of correct knowledge through education. See Marāghahī, *Siyāhatnāmah-’i Ibrāhīm Bayk*, 140. For other examples, see what follows in this chapter.

⁹⁹ His precise phrasing is that the people (*mardum*) viewed the *dabistān* as “the only way out of the country’s pains” (*tanhā chārah-’i dard’hāyah-yi kishvar*). See Kasravi, *Tārīkh-i mashrūṭah-’i Īrān*, 54. Qajar prime minister, Amīn al-Dawlah, who was one of the first courtiers to support education reformers, viewed education reform as fundamental, writing in his diary that he supported it as “education would be the best memory that would remain of him.” See Amīn al-Dawlah, *Khātirāt-i siyāsī-yi Mīrzā ‘Alī Khān Amīn al-Dawlah*, 258.

¹⁰⁰ The educational work of Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah is one example. See Navid Zarrinnal (2021) *The Origins of Dabestān: Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah and the Quest for New Education*, *Iranian Studies*, 54:1-2, 247-279. This article overlaps with Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

¹⁰¹ Taqīzādah, *Maqālāt-i Taqīzādah*, 36.

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 36, 39-40. Taqīzādah claimed that progress linked to primary education was “proven conclusively” by “thousands of years” in evidence from world history. He either did not realize that national primary education was a modern development or disregarded this fact for the propagation of his cause. See *ibid.*, 39.

A firm public belief [must] be produced and fed down the public's throat as milk that redemption lies in [public education], which is the one and only path to freedom, life, salvation, progress, wealth, power, preservation of religion, morals, and national sentiments, peace and security, happiness, honor, liberation from bondage, and the whole of what leads to salvation in the world and the hereafter. In my opinion, until this belief does not become evident and is not excessively spread among all classes of people, there is no way to redemption for Iran.¹⁰³

Reformist intellectual, Ḥusayn Kāzīm'zādah, better known as Īrānshahr, also believed in a link between redemption and education reform, which he thought was “the first responsibility and the most effective step in saving the [Iranian] nation.”¹⁰⁴ He believed that a “spiritual revolution” in the depths of national psyche was needed, which was possible *only* through education (*ta'lim va tarbiyat*).¹⁰⁵ Īrānshahr added that all of Iran's supposed miseries—mass wealth plundered, families distressed, and talents buried and forgotten—were due to lack of correct education.¹⁰⁶ The reformers who produced one of the earliest organized literature on education reform in 1898 known as the *Rūznāmah-i ma'arif* or *The Education Journal* agreed, that, knowledge would be redemptive only if Iranians instituted reformed schools nationally.¹⁰⁷ Another journal, *Uṣūl-i ta'lim* or *The Principles of Teaching*, in an editorial called “The True Path to Reform” noted that Iran is “miserable” and “calamitous and ruinous.” It went on to

¹⁰³ Ibid., 20-21.

¹⁰⁴ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 3, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 1, 12. At the turn of the twentieth century, the term *ma'arif* was used to designate education. By the 1920's, *ta'lim va tarbiyat* was the preferred term that was later Persianized to *āmūzish va parvarsh*.

¹⁰⁶ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 2, 87.

¹⁰⁷ *Rūznāmah-i ma'arif*, no. 28: 2-3, no. 50:2, National Library and Archives of Iran, Periodicals (*Nashriyāt*).

propagate that “the only solution and the sole cure is education” and that education reform would redeem the “soul of the collective” foundationally and fundamentally.¹⁰⁸

2.2 The Paradox: *Shar ṭah* Education Reform and Religious Optionality

In Chapter 1, I argued that received theses of secularization theory confound more than they clarify. I also argued that modernity undermined religion in some ways, in particular making religious belief and practice (in the literary record at least) into an option. We shall now return to the question of causality we ended Chapter 1 with: how did education reform produce religious optionality? I answer this question in the rest of chapter, arguing that it was not *what* was taught (i.e., the curriculum) of education that made optionality possible; rather, it was the *how* and *why* of education. Optionality became possible because of a change in how one was brought into education or the means of education—more precisely, a shift from the institution of *ādāb* to that of documentary discipline. Second, and more significantly, the literate became vulnerable to optionality because of a change in the purpose of education, from an other-worldly purpose for salvation in the hereafter, to a this-worldly purpose, for national redemption from immiseration.

What was taught did not undergo secular differentiation. The curriculum was in fact *Shar ṭah*-centered at the primary level, and with the exception of early Polytechnic Colleges, *Shar ṭah*-inclusive at higher levels of education. The Education Society or *anjuman-i ma'ārif* implemented a *Shar ṭah*-centered program for reformed primary school. This Society was one of

¹⁰⁸ *Uṣūl-i ta'līm*, no. 1:8, Columbia University Libraries. For a similar claim in another reformist journal, see *Musāvāt*, vol. 1, 304, Columbia University Libraries. The author claims that “the entirety of a nation’s progress is dependent on the distribution of education.” For the connection between redemption and education reform in the writings of Education Society pioneer, Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, 58, 82, 219, 344, 404. On page 219, he specifically connected education to redemption (*nijāt*). In the footnotes, I cite to a new edition of *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, which I had in my possession. See Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, Mojtaba Farahani, ed. Tehran: Firdaws Publishers, 2008-2009 (1387). However, this edition is replete with editing and punctuation errors. I therefore cite to an earlier edition of this text in the bibliography, which the reader should consult for their own use.

the earliest organized attempts around the cause of education reform. Although certain Qajar courtiers were members who funded the Society, it came into existence as a “bottom-up” intellectual effort and as a reaction to the conservatism and perceived ineffectiveness of the official Science Ministry (*vizārat-i ‘ulūm*).¹⁰⁹ Lack of uniformity and discipline in reformed primary schools were common complaints among reformists, so the Society attempted to regulate schools, by, for example, drafting a twenty-article bylaw on their operations.¹¹⁰ The Society fundraised for and administrated the schools financially.¹¹¹ It held its first meeting on Rushdīyah school premises in 1898, the same year the school opened in Tehran.¹¹² The attendees were education reformer and the school’s principal, Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah, the Qajar science minister, Nayyir al-Mulk, Dawlatābādī, Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, Miftāḥ al-Mulk, Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah, and ‘Alī Khān Nāzim al-Dawlah.¹¹³ Additional courtiers and intellectuals were invited and joined in future meetings.

The Education Society documented its activities, aiming at transparency, in a journal it produced called the *Education Journal* (*Rūznāmah-’i ma ‘ārif*), which began production in late 1898 (Sha‘bān, 1316). Its mission was to publish content from its own members, solicited opinions, and reproduced articles from other reformist journals on “national schools” (*madāris-i*

¹⁰⁹ For the reformist dissatisfaction with the Science Ministry, see Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭāneh*, 323.

¹¹⁰ Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma ‘ārif Rushdīyah*, 43.

¹¹¹ For fundraising and financial administration in the association, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, 230; Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭāneh*, 325; Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i ‘umr*, 39; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma ‘ārif Rushdīyah*, 43.

¹¹² On the Islamic calendar, the date was Shavvāl of 1315. See Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, 230.

¹¹³ See Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma ‘ārif Rushdīyah*, 43. Dawlatābādī further included Mīrzā ‘Abbās Khān Muhandis’bāshī, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, 230. Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah only listed himself, Rushdīyah, Dawlatābādī, Miftāḥ al-Mulk, Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah, and added Muhandis al-Mamālik. See Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah*, 325.

millīyah) and on “public welfare” (*favā'id-i 'āmmah*). “National” in this context did not indicate state-organized schools yet, but new schools organized by reformist individuals, some of whom had affiliation with the Qajar court. The journal accepted “all contents consistent with [the demands of] religion [*dīn*] and state [*dawlat*],” and began publication after receiving permission (*imtīyāz*) from the reformist king, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh, after whom the Society named the new schools, referring to them as “the national *Muẓaffarīyah* schools” (*madāris-i millīyah-i Muẓaffarīyah*).¹¹⁴ The journal’s content was supposed to be written in a simple language on advise of editors that submissions avoid “flowery language, intangible exaggerations, conventional flattery...and in mentioning the names of elites...avoid wholly the expression of fancy titles...”.¹¹⁵ The prosaic style nonetheless oscillated between the flowery and the simple: ironically, a short few pages after the instruction on refrain from use of fancy titles, the king’s name came with the following language: “the most elevated of God’s servants, his grandeur excellency, the holiest of the auspicious, the cultivator of knowledge, the refuge of religion, the King of kings, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh Qājār, to whom our souls surrender.”¹¹⁶

Education Society’s members believed that a cure for Iranian misery was to instruct the nation on right knowledge, at the primary level in particular.¹¹⁷ Right knowledge involved the combination of new sciences with the old that emphatically included Islamic knowledge. One editorial, reproduced in the journal from another reformist paper, advocated that, the high ulema put aside their obstruction to new sciences and industries, for the “doors of progress” (*abvāb-i taraqqī*) to open, but added that new subjects must be taught along with the Qur’an, Hadith, *fiqh*,

¹¹⁴ *Rūznāmah-i ma'ārif*, no. 1:1.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 2:1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 4:2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 28:2.

and Arabic “as it is the language of *Sharī‘ah*.”¹¹⁸ Another highly-praised opinion reproduced in the paper instructed the nation on their obligations (*wājibāt*), which included the initiative of elites to open schools in which students would learn “sciences (*‘ulūm*), industries (*funūn*), and crafts, and [also] *religious beliefs* (*‘aqā’id-i dīnīyah*)”.¹¹⁹ The Society placed *dīnī* and *fiqhī* obligations in its discourse on education, but more significantly, it integrated them into school daily operations.¹²⁰ The twelfth article of the Society’s bylaws (*Nizāmnāmah*) stated that its knowledgeable members must make educational and curricula arrangements for new schools that heed *Sharī‘ah* rules (*aḥkām-i Sharī‘ah*).¹²¹ The bylaw was given everyday expression in how individual schools conducted daily activities. A Ramadan directive (*dastūr al-‘amal*) on scheduling and curriculum required new schools to teach, three hours after sunrise, to every class of students except beginners, the following: reading of the Qur’an, and thereafter, *Sharī‘ah* questions, and in the afternoon, collective performance of *ẓuhr* and *‘aṣr* prayers and reading of special prayers. On Thursdays, a learned preacher appeared to advise children, according to their cognitive abilities, and after, a eulogist (*ruḏah’khān*) read to them the tribulations of the Shia Imams based on “correct narrations” (*akhbār-i saḥīḥah*).¹²² At a reformed school named Islam, the Society arranged students into three hierarchical grades, departing from the more horizontal arrangement of the *maktab* where students of different learning levels gathered in the same room.¹²³ Students from these hierarchical levels all studied principles and laws of Islamic

¹¹⁸ Ibid., no. 15:2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., no. 7:2-3 (my emphasis).

¹²⁰ See the headings at Ibid., no. 1:1, and no. 21:2.

¹²¹ Ibid., no. 10:6.

¹²² Ibid., no. 3:2.

¹²³ Qāsimī’pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-‘i Qājārīyah*, 46.

jurisprudence (*uṣūl va aḥkām*) as well as Qur’anic interpretation (*tafsīr*).¹²⁴ The Tabriz school of Luqmānīyah, despite introducing several new subjects to students—they included astronomy (*hay’at-i jadīd*), physics, chemistry, hygiene (*ḥifz al-ṣiḥḥah*), photography, painting, mapping (*naqshahkishī*), pharmacy, physiology, botany (*gīyah ’shināsī*)—devoted entire afternoons to the art of Qur’anic reading (*tajwīd*) and acquisition of religious questions (*masā’il-i dīnīyah*). On Thursdays, a eulogist read to students about the tribulations of Shia Imams, and on religious holidays, students spent time in mourning for the Imams.¹²⁵ During the second year of instructions, on opening day, with roughly 500 of “notables,” ulema, merchants, and students’ parents invited, teachers tested student knowledge, before all else, on *Sharī’ah* obligations and Qur’anic memorization.¹²⁶

Similarly, reform of higher education was not secularist. The first expression of reformed higher education were the Qajar polytechnic colleges, namely the Tehran and Tabriz polytechnic colleges. Despite teaching new technical subjects in which *Sharī’ah*-centered subjects, or in a more modern idiom, religion, was absent, nothing in the program suggested support for separating religion into a private space. The Tabriz polytechnic’s expressed purpose was “the articulation of the sciences” (*’ulūm*) and “the distribution of industries” (*funūn*).¹²⁷ These science and industries were new “technical” subjects that were, keeping with the classical discourse on knowledge, taught for their inherent value. According to the Tabriz Polytechnic College’s journal, *Dānish*, which published its first issue on June 10, 1882, the benefits of knowledge (that

¹²⁴ *Rūznāmah-’i ma’ārif*, no. 21:3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 32 (?)–1–2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 42:1.

¹²⁷ *Dānish*, no. 2:5, University of Bonn (Universitäts Bonn) Digital Collections. Under the direction of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh-era Science Ministry, the *Dānish* journal documented the activities of Tabriz’s Polytechnic College (*Dār al-funūn*).

presumably included new knowledge) were intrinsic. The journal compared knowledge to a “bright light,” to a “valuable gem” and its benefits, though hidden as they are also apparent, were stated to be evident to all those discerning.¹²⁸ More importantly, the college taught technical subjects for the purpose of producing an epistemic foundation for conduct of politics against the colonial menace. The Tabriz college invested in the teaching of new sciences, as Tehran’s *Dār al-funūn* before it, for which it hired Iranian and European (*farangī*) teachers. The Tabriz college taught new subjects, among them mining engineering (*muhandisī-yi ma’dan*), music, painting, French, chemistry, physics, mineralogy, artillery, and infantry (*pīyādah niẓām*).¹²⁹ The last two had received particular emphasis in Tehran’s Polytechnic, inaugurated some thirty years before the Tabriz college on December 29, 1851.¹³⁰ Its founder, Prime Minister Amir Kabir, stressed the military and technical nature of the subjects to be taught at the new academy in his initial letter of instruction (dated, August 1850) to first secretary at the Persian legation in St. Petersburg, Jān Dāwūd. The intention behind this new academy was to improve the cadre of Qajar officers, hence the importance of military subjects. The breakdown of first-year enrollment of roughly 105 students demonstrated this focus: infantry 30, cavalry 5, artillery 26, and engineering 12. In medicine there were 20, in pharmacy 7, and in mining 5. Above all else, the Polytechnic Colleges taught new technical knowledge to conduct government affairs in new ways, which were not limited to military reform. For example, the journal of Tabriz polytechnic college

¹²⁸ Ibid., no. 3:11.

¹²⁹ Ibid., no. 3:7, and no. 7:25.

¹³⁰ Ekhtiar, Maryam 1994. “The Dar al-Funun: Educational Reform and Cultural Development in Qajar Iran.” Ph.D. dissertation, 9. See also John Gurney and Negin Nabavi, “DĀR AL-FONŪN”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_8031. See also Fischer, *From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, 58. Fischer corroborates the opening date given by Nabavi and Gurney. According to Dawlatābādī, the school was constructed in 1849-50 (1266), some two years before its inauguration in 1851, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1, 390.

reported that Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh took note of unskilled physicians “daring” to treat people in the capital. Given his interest in “protection... and promotion... of the people of the nation” (*hiḏz...va tarḏiyah-’i ahālī-yi mamlikat*), the journal reported, he thus ordered the Science Ministry to administrate an exam for qualified physicians. The names of those who qualified were announced in the journal. Moreover, the ministry sent physicians to villages and cities from the Tabriz school. Those on summer vacation (*yiylāq*) in villages of Shimīrānāt were accompanied by a physician from the college. Another physician was appointed in Qom, which unlike other cities, it was reported, did not have a physician from the college.¹³¹ Moreover, the ministry was tasked with “correcting” (*taṣḏīḥ*) the work of apothecaries and herbalists (*’aṭṭar*), implementing “firm rules” and “necessary principles” to protect “souls” (*nufūs*) from the danger of faulty medicine.¹³² Therefore, the college, under the authority of the Science Ministry, taught new subjects in order to generate technical expertise for the state and manage health of the inhabitants it ruled over. The lack of religion in the curriculum had neither an ideological purpose—rebellion against ulema power in education—nor a theoretically meaningful interpretation—differentiating religion into private spaces. This lack was meaningful as a move toward new, technical expertise for sake of state longevity.

Reformed higher schools of education soon overshadowed the polytechnic colleges. Unlike the polytechnic, *Sharī’ah* subjects were part of the curriculum. They gave these subjects less emphasis compared to their primary school counterpart; however, religion was still very

¹³¹ *Dānish*, no. 3:10.

¹³² There is no elaboration on what these firm rules were and what role the Tabriz college may have played in them. See *ibid.*, no. 4:8. Medical regulations expanded in later years. For a study on the convergence of official nationalism and state-trained physicians’ control of national occupational markets between 1900 to 1950, see Schayegh, *Who is knowledgeable, is strong : science, class, and the formation of modern Iranian society, 1900-1950*.

much part of the learning experience. One of the earliest reformed schools, established in late 1899 (Sh‘abān, 1317) after the medicine college, was an affiliate of the foreign ministry, called the college of politics (*madrasah-i ‘ulūm-i sīyāsī*).¹³³ The school taught one grade of students, *fiqh* and *uṣūl*, in addition to new subjects such as international law (*huqūq-i millal*) and French.¹³⁴ In 1921-22 (1339), the Higher College of Law (*madrasah-i ‘ālī huqūq*) was formed and it taught Arabic grammar (*ṣarf va naḥv*) at the beginner level and *fiqh*, specifically legal obligations to God and the people (*‘ibādāt va mu‘āmilāt*). At the advanced level, it taught *fiqh* covering contracts (*‘uqūd va īqā‘āt*).¹³⁵ This *Sharī‘ah*-inclusive curriculum continued after 1927-28 (1306) when the schools of politics and law were integrated into a single college.¹³⁶ The license provided for this new integrated School of Politics, Law, and Economics required examination in *fiqh*.¹³⁷ Furthermore, when the Ministry of Education, through a parliamentary law, instituted the University of Tehran, an entire college was devoted to religion, named The College of Rational and Transmitted Sciences (*‘ulūm-i ma‘qūl va manqūl*), while other colleges also taught religious subjects. The College of Rational and Transmitted Sciences taught subjects that were historically taught at the madrasa, and depending on the instructor, through the

¹³³ *Tārīkh-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 1, 142.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 145-46.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 150. *‘ibādāt va mu‘āmilāt* are more general categories that include *‘uqūd va īqā‘āt*. As I am not aware of English equivalents in common law, I have translated the first category somewhat literally, as legal obligations to God and the people. Second category refers to two-sided (*‘uqūd*) contracts and one-sided contracts (*īqā‘āt*). The latter is where one party has a contractual right to take an action, for example, debtor cancelling the creditor’s debt, or a divorce in which one party to the marriage can initiate divorce proceedings.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 143.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 143.

madrassa, “confessional” methodology or more “critical” methodologies.¹³⁸ Subjects taught included Hadith studies, Qur’anic interpretation, *fiqh*, *kalām*, and Arabic.¹³⁹ In 1936-37 (1315), the government established The Preach and Sermon Institute (*va ‘z va khatb*) at the university. The intention was to train those men who took to the pulpit. Preaching was an old practice. But according to reformers, those who preached lacked in proper knowledge.¹⁴⁰ The university established the Preach and Sermon Institute to remedy this perceived lack, teaching old and new knowledges together.¹⁴¹

Accordingly, both primary and higher education included *Sharī‘ah* content in their instructions. The first government-instituted university taught *Sharī‘ah* subjects as did the old madrasa. When the ulema objected to education reform—for example, their opposition to the Preach and Sermon Institute—they were not objecting to irreligious curriculum, but to state intrusion into their epistemic authority. Religion was an essential and fundamental part of reformed primary education, and it formed part of reformed higher education, and in some cases, as in the College of Rational and Transmitted Sciences, the majority of instructional content. So, the paradox remains: if education reform was either centered around or inclusive of *Sharī‘ah* content, how did it produce religious optionality among the literate? To resolve this paradox, we shall turn from *what* was taught to *how* and *why* it was taught.

¹³⁸ Tūysirkānī, *Naqd-i barnāmah-‘i dānishkadah-‘i ma‘qūl va manqūl*, 4, 19, 35, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center. See Chapter 5 of this dissertation for an extended discussion of this unpublished thesis in regards to the college’s program.

¹³⁹ *Tārīkh-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 1, 581, 589.

¹⁴⁰ For a fuller account of the classical and modern dislike of the preacher character, see chapter 5 to the present dissertation.

¹⁴¹ *Tārīkh-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 1, 579.

2.3 The Transformation of Disciplinary Education

With the advent of reform, how a person was educated changed from *Sharī'ah*-centered *ādāb* to the documentary-centered discipline.¹⁴² In the classical period, *ādāb* had two major meanings. First, it indicated norms that regulated the life of a good Muslim.¹⁴³ Second, it referred to a category of knowledge, often dubbed “Islamic humanism,” which inquired into the world outside transmitted sacred scriptures of the Qur'an and the Hadith and their interpretations.¹⁴⁴ Here, we are concerned with *ādāb* in its first sense and specifically with its subspecies of *ādāb al-muta'allimīn*. These *ādāb* were advisory rules written by the ulema that learners and the teaching ulema had to follow. In this literature, the ulema specified fewer rules for teachers, the majority of rules being directed at learners. The rules brought the learner into a virtuous character to qualify for knowledge acquisition and transmission. Before all else, learners had to fight off vice in preparation for study and contemplation. Among other things, they had to refrain from excessive speech, gossip, backbiting, jealousy, grudge, quarreling, arrogance, boast, hypocrisy, greed, and forbidden lust.¹⁴⁵ The only permissible vice was flattery (*tamalluq*) towards those of higher learning who, motivated by such flattery, would benefit the learner.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Education Society, reformed schools, parliament and the Ministry of Education, and gradually the university produced numerous documentary bylaws. For some examples of disciplining higher education, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, 239, 242, 259, 279. This section contains several other examples as well.

¹⁴³ See Lapidus, “Knowledge, Virtue, and Action: The Classical Muslim Conception of Adab and the Nature of Religious Fulfillment in Islam,” 38 in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed., Metcalf.

¹⁴⁴ See Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*, 136.

¹⁴⁵ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 258, 267. On forbidden lust, Tabrīzī mentioned specifically lust for young men (*amradān*), see *ibid.*, 266. Ṭūsī's *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn* also contained plenty on the relationship between virtue and learning. See as examples 49 (25), 86 (45), 98 (59), 100 (59), 112 (68). The numbers in the parentheses are corresponding citations to the Persian translation of the work by Kitābchī, entitled *Āyīn-i dānish'andūzī: tarjamah va sharḥ-i kitāb Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*.

¹⁴⁶ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 110 (64).

The learner needed to take care in his relationship with the teacher. He was to carefully and patiently choose the teacher, seeking the most learned, pious, and eldest of them.¹⁴⁷ He had to respect and revere the teacher.¹⁴⁸ Once in the teacher's company, he had to bow, greet him extensively, and greet all those present before him. He had to sit facing the teacher, and with at least a bow's distance when space permitted.¹⁴⁹ While before the teacher, he had to give the teacher his full attention. If the teacher made a mistake, the learner could neither reproach nor ridicule.¹⁵⁰ The learner was not allowed to hold the teacher's robe, nor point at the teacher's hands and eyes.¹⁵¹ He was not allowed to cite authorities in excess contrary to the teacher's interpretation of them.¹⁵² The learner was not allowed to seek superior status (*taqaddum*) over his teacher nor raise his voice at him unless the teacher was seated at a distance.¹⁵³ He could not ask too many unnecessary questions; however, freedom in questions for understanding of relevant subjects was highly encouraged.¹⁵⁴ If a question was asked from the teacher by someone else, the learner did not have the right to answer. The learner could not speak to another in the teacher's company nor could he speak ill of someone in the teacher's presence. If someone spoke ill of the teacher while the teacher was not present, to the extent possible, the learner had to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 52-53 (29-30).

¹⁴⁸ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 262.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. For the bow's distance between the learner and the teacher, see Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 58 (32).

¹⁵⁰ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 262.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 263.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 262.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 263.

prevent this. The learner was advised not to frequent the company of his teacher's enemies nor make enemies with his friends.¹⁵⁵

Ādāb further dealt with the learner's relationship to his object, namely learning. The learner had to have sincerity (*ikhhlās*) in education.¹⁵⁶ This meant that he had to seek learning for God's satisfaction and preservation and vitality of *dīn*, and not for such things as material success or verbal quarreling (*mujādilah*) with others.¹⁵⁷ Once knowledge was acquired, he had to preserve it and resist the urge to forget. Dependence on the transient world, sins, excessive occupations, and despair brought forgetfulness.¹⁵⁸ Sour apple and green coriander caused one to forget, as well as urination in stagnant water, cupping therapy on the neck (*hijamat az qafā*) and the back, reading inscriptions on tombs, looking at a person on the gallows, passing through a line of camels, and throwing living lice on the ground.¹⁵⁹ To remember things learned, certain prayers and invocation of blessings were prescribed.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the learner had to eat little, avoid greasy food and foods, including excessive water, that caused phlegm (*balgham*) in the body.¹⁶¹ Foods preserving memory were dry bread, raisin (on an empty stomach in particular), honey, and *Boswellia* (*kundur*) with sugar, while acts for the same purpose were brushing of

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 262-63.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 247.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 248. Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 48 (25).

¹⁵⁸ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 117 (74).

¹⁵⁹ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 257. See also Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 119 (75).

¹⁶⁰ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 115 (73).

¹⁶¹ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 257. See also Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 71 (37).

teeth, vomiting (*al-qay*), and napping before noon.¹⁶² The learner was advised to welcome learning in his younger days when the mind was most fresh.¹⁶³ In his studies, the learner had to choose the contents with care, in addition to how and when he studied them. For the beginner, the content was supposed to be simple to understand and short in length, and the workload needed to be light enough so two reviews (*i'ādah*) would suffice for its understanding (*fahm*).¹⁶⁴ Frequent repetition of contents learned was advised along with discussion (*mubāḥithah*). The latter was preferable as long as one's interlocutor possessed fairness (*inṣāf*).¹⁶⁵ Understanding the content was superior to memorization, and its memorization was superior to hearing it.¹⁶⁶ The learner was advised to write something down only upon understanding. He needed to carry a pen (*qalam*) and notebook (*daftar*) with empty pages at all times to write on upon hearing beneficial speech, or to read from upon need.¹⁶⁷ The learner had to write down what he had learned, but not in excess and neatly, that is, he had to avoid writing words on the margins of the page or writing them entangled.¹⁶⁸ Still, he had to prioritize the content of writing over its aesthetics.¹⁶⁹ When writing Hadith, he had to put short vowels on the narrations.¹⁷⁰ While writing, he had to observe

¹⁶² Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 257. See also Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 71 (37), 115-16 (73-74). Ṭūsī also provided a detailed list of acts to refrain from or act upon, which brought an increase in livelihood of people in general and learners in particular. See Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 123 (80), 127 (82).

¹⁶³ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 260. See also Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 67 (36), 95 (55).

¹⁶⁴ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 76 (41).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 79 (43).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 78. Contrast with the Persian translation that does not mention memorization. It only states understanding to be superior to hearing. See Ṭūsī, trans. Kitābchī, 42.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 113 (69).

¹⁶⁸ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 265. See also Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 57 (31).

¹⁶⁹ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 265.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

the *adab* of extending honorifics to the prophets, the Shia Imams, and the ulema.¹⁷¹ He had to have ablution (*ṭahārah*) before touching not only the Qur'an but books in general.¹⁷² For the study schedule, the learner was advised to begin study on Wednesday among other days of the week.¹⁷³ The end of night into the early morning (*saḥar*) as well as hours between sunset (*maghrib*) and midnight (*'asha*) were advised.¹⁷⁴ Other study times were acceptable so long as one did not content himself with study merely during the day.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the learner needed purpose (*himma*) and hard work (*jadd*) together in his task and was even advised *not* to take days off.¹⁷⁶ Although hard work was not supposed to generate fatigue, and one *ādāb* writer emphasized moderation.¹⁷⁷ For commitment, the learner was further advised to avoid marriage until later in life, but travel was encouraged if it served the purpose of learning.¹⁷⁸ He also had to choose his study partners with care, ensuring that they do not have vices such as idleness.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 56 (31).

¹⁷³ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 74 (41). Contrast Tabrizī, in addition to Wednesday (based on prophetic hadith), he deemed Thursdays, Saturdays, and Fridays desirable to begin one's study. See Tabrizī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 265.

¹⁷⁴ Tabrizī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 260, 264. Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 67 (35). It is not clear if the shorter time between *maghrib* and *'asha* prayers is intended here, or the longer time between sunset and midnight.

¹⁷⁵ Tabrizī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 260-61.

¹⁷⁶ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 65 (35), 70 (36). Tabrizī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 269.

¹⁷⁷ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 88 (46). Contrast this with the same author, writing that it is befitting the learner studies all his time, referencing the scholar, Muḥammad bin Ḥassan Ṭūsī, who would drink water to fight off sleepiness. See Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 95 (55).

¹⁷⁸ Tabrizī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 261, 264. Contrast Ṭūsī who appeared less amicable on travel compared to Tabrizī. He held that it wasted the learner's time, and only advised it when it was necessary for learning. See Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 53 (30).

¹⁷⁹ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 54 (30).

Teachers at the madrasa were bound by *ādāb* as well, although the sources provided fewer rules for them. They needed to practice kindness (*shafaq*) towards their students.¹⁸⁰ They also had to accommodate learners for which God would grant them an increase in their knowledge; those who withheld instructions were punished by God, losing their reputation and favor with the people.¹⁸¹ Teachers had to teach those with bad intentions because this group had the potential to transform bad intention into good with instruction.¹⁸² At the start of and during instructions, teachers needed to follow prescribed *ādāb*. They were to invoke God's remembrance (*dhikr*) until arriving in the classroom and God's name before instructions.¹⁸³ They were advised to wear tidy clothing to class gathering (*majlis*), and when seated in class, they had to face the *qibla* but in such way that all attendees would see them.¹⁸⁴ During instructions, if they did not know the answer to a question, they had to admit ignorance.¹⁸⁵ They were advised to end instructions by encouraging students to purify the inner soul (*bāṭin*) and undertake hard work in the task of learning.¹⁸⁶

Reformed education had *ādāb* of a new nature. These were less so *ādāb* in their classical sense, and more so, documentary rules. These rules were not advice, communicated by a scholar, towards the cultivation of character virtues for knowledge acquisition and transmission; rather, these rules were disciplines via impersonal bylaws produced and distributed by educational

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 99 (59).

¹⁸¹ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 270.

¹⁸² Ibid., 275.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 277.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 276-77.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 277.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

organizations, including education societies, reformed schools, and the state (specifically, the parliament and state ministries). These disciplines were the new means by which education happened. The aforementioned Education Society formulated one of the first organized attempts to introduce such discipline into education. It frequently used the nomenclature of “order” (*intizām, nazm*), “orderly” (*munazammah*), and “ordered” (*murattab*).¹⁸⁷ It took delight in documentation of “orderly” society meetings and school operations.¹⁸⁸ This discipline was introduced into education via bylaws, called the *nizāmnāmah* in Persian, literally meaning the “book of order.” The bylaw, produced by the Society and approved by the king, disciplined the operation of the Society itself. It required the Society to hold regular meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays from four hours before sunset until sunset with a disciplinarian (*nāzim*), appointed every three months, to manage the meeting.¹⁸⁹ Order was to be kept during the meetings. Bylaw article nine required everyone to wait their turn to speak with the disciplinarian’s supervision.¹⁹⁰ Other rules ordered the meeting, such as determination of next meeting’s subject in advance, rules on voting process, confidentiality of meeting’s contents, prohibition on favoritism from the science minister, and orderly accounting of fundraising and expenses.¹⁹¹

The Society’s bylaws also disciplined schools’ operations.¹⁹² Education Society’s members monitored school order via regular inspections.¹⁹³ The science minister was supposed

¹⁸⁷ See as examples, *Rūznāmah-i ma‘ārif*, no. 1:1, 1:3, 1:4, 5:3, 6:1, 10:5.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 1:3.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 3:1, 6:1, 6:4.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 6:2.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 6:4, 10:5.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, no. 30:4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, no. 1:3.

to visit a school, once or twice weekly, along with a few members of the Society, for inspection (*mu'āyinah*).¹⁹⁴ On one occasion in the year 1889, the science minister, Nayyir al-Mulk, accompanied by all of the Society's members, visited the Ifitāhīyah school, which had been open and managed by Miftāh al-Mulk for three months before the visit. They first inspected the organization of classrooms, after which they examined students on the alphabet, Arabic, Persian, grammar (*naḥv*), conjugation (*ṣarf*), calligraphy, accounting, and geography.¹⁹⁵ On another occasion, they went for inspection and the principal provided them with a report of names and numbers of students, teachers, and staff—this anticipated a key practice of the Reza Shah state in generating statistics and managing education through numbers.¹⁹⁶ For Ramadan, Education Society issued a special directive (*dastūr al-'amal*) for school order. It required the principal and school disciplinarian (*nāzim* in Persian, literally meaning “an agent of order,” a position that exists at schools to this day) to arrive at school two hours after sunrise to ensure that necessary arrangements such as cleanliness (*tanẓīfāt*) are made. It further required teachers to arrive on time. The directive was much more focused on the disciplines of time, order, and cleanliness, than it was on God-consciousness during the holy month.¹⁹⁷

Individual bylaws of schools, in the capital and provinces alike, laid out detailed disciplines as well. Disciplines of time, in addition to covering attendance and scheduling, produced an educational timeline. The Luqmānīyah school of Tabriz issued certificates

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., no. 6:1.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., no. 1:3. Public examination of students was a frequent occurrence at reformist schools, see *ibid.*, no. 1:4, 6:2. Education reformer, Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah, examined students during public events as well, see Zarrinnal, “The Origins of Dabestān,” 260.

¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, the report recorded the name of the person announcing the call to prayer, see *Rūznāmah-'i ma'ārif*, no. 6:2. For statistical policies of the Reza Shah state see Chapter 4 of the present dissertation.

¹⁹⁷ *Rūznāmah-'i ma'ārif*, no. 27:2.

(*shahādat'nāmah*) to students after seven years of study. This was in contrast to the *maktab* that lacked a formal certification process. These certificates were authorized not by the personal authority of the teachers, as was the case with the madrasa *ijāza*, but under the joint authority of the school's director (*riyāsat-i kull*) and the Ministry of Science (*vizārat-i 'ulum*).¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, school bylaws produced unprecedented prerequisites for student admission, the likes of which were not part of the *maktab* practice. One school, free of charge for needy and orphan children, had age, health, and referral (*kafīl*) requirements. Other requirements, which existed before in some form, but not in bylaw form, were also formulated: the child had to be a Muslim and free of “undesirable qualities” and “ugly conduct.”¹⁹⁹

Discipline extended to appearance, of students in particular. The Būshīhr school of Sa'ādat required students to wear clean uniforms, in a matching color.²⁰⁰ The Iftitāhīyah school had students wear uniform, which included hats and specific shoes, with distinctive signs of their grade seniority.²⁰¹ Discipline also accounted for students' bodily position and movements. The Sa'ādat school began with the old way of instructing students, placing them into the classroom without grade distinction. However, after a month of instruction, a determination of their “merit and talent” was made, irrespective of wealth and family status, which placed them into three distinct grades. Students were further ordered based on their performance. Students with higher “merit” sat closer to the teacher.²⁰² Before entering the classroom, students were required to form

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., no. 32 (?), 2.

¹⁹⁹ See *ibid.* no. 31:3, 26:2. For the Muslim faith requirement, see the Luqmānīyah school bylaw, *ibid.*, no. 31:3.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., no. 39:3.

²⁰¹ Ibid., no. 37:1.

²⁰² Ibid., no. 39:3.

queues. At the Kamāl school in Tabriz when public visits by parents, ulema, and city notables took place, 150 students entered the school courtyard (*ṣaḥn*) via military drill (*ḥarikat-i nizāmī*).²⁰³ The Dānīsh school, funded by the Ifitāḥīyah school to teach indigent students, required students to engage in military drills, which the Education Journal linked to the “science of jihad” (*‘ilm-i jihād*).²⁰⁴ Disciplines of bodily movement were rather specific. The fifteenth article of Sa‘adat school bylaws instructed the disciplinarian (*nāzīm*) that students must be monitored for “movement at odds with etiquette” (*ḥarikat-i mughāyir-i adab*) during break times between classes. Moreover, with a “special order and arrangement,” students spent time in leisure outside the city of Būshīhr twice weekly, and as the rule went, under the supervision of a school disciplinarian (*nāzīm*).²⁰⁵

In the following years, reformist intellectuals continued to advocate for discipline in education, reinforcing Reza Shah state’s (1925-1944) disciplinary education policy as pursued by the Ministry of Education.²⁰⁶ Husayn Kāzīmzādah Īrānshahr’s *Rāh-i naw*, written the same year the Pahlavi dynasty was founded (in 1925), was demonstrative.²⁰⁷ Similar to the Education Society, Īrānshahr advocated for discipline in areas of time and bodily movement. He used, as his model of right education, the disciplined scheduling at a German school where the day was divided, from early morning to late evening, into clearly-designed slots for personal hygiene,

²⁰³ Ibid., no. 42:1.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., no. 55:1.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., no. 42:2. Movement into school was also to be monitored; the school’s guard (*qarāvil*) was not permitted to allow entry to anyone without the permission of the principal. See *ibid.*, no. 42:2.

²⁰⁶ See Chapters 3-4 of this dissertation.

²⁰⁷ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 1, 17.

food consumption, study, arts and crafts, physical exercise, rest, and other activities.²⁰⁸ Interest in bodily discipline was reflected in constitutional-era journals. A writer for the reformist 1904 journal, *Da 'wat al-ḥaqq*, lauded the supposed awakening of Iranians, writing that ten years ago (presumably in 1894), children would spend their time in the alleys and streets “moving about savagely” (*ḥarikāt-i vahshīyānah*) but are now learning and developing in “new, sacred schools” (*madāris-i muqaddasah-'i mujjadad*).²⁰⁹ Advocacy for bodily discipline became much more detailed in the early Reza Shah years. Īrānshahr, relying on European models and Maria Montessori’s ideas in particular, wrote that discipline in movement did not equate to inactivity. Rather, it allowed for the child’s freedom in movement and action so long as they were in harmony with “etiquette” (*ādāb*).²¹⁰ Īrānshahr believed that customary upbringing of children in Iran negated etiquette. For example, he thought that parents and teachers allowing children to play outside the home or the school courtyard and in the streets was unruly; by contrast, games at the school and under the supervision of teachers were appropriate.²¹¹ Īrānshahr prescribed many of these games, such as a game to train the learner’s listening skills—a simple game, he wrote, would have children close their eyes, sit with their back to the teacher, and listen their names called gently by her. The called student would then move next to the teacher. The game’s purpose was to train children’s attention to instruction.²¹² Īrānshahr believed that the Education

²⁰⁸ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 2, 45.

²⁰⁹ *Da 'wat al-ḥaqq*, no. 2:4.

²¹⁰ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 3, 85.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 85, 92.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 96.

Ministry needed to organize formal programs for children’s play, which individual schools then needed to implement.²¹³

Approximately at the same time as Īrānshahr’s *Rāh-i naw*, intellectual and novelist, Muḥammad ‘Alī Jamālzādah, advocated for discipline in education. Specifically, he argued that the Education Ministry ought to turn discipline—including all the rules on time, bodily movement, and appearance—into a distinct, graded subject. Taking inspiration from Germany, he wrote that graded discipline is of “utmost importance,” and “perhaps more important than studying itself.”²¹⁴ It is worth quoting at some length here:

[In Berlin they have a grade that] I wish would become commonplace in Iranian schools...this grade is for the care and attentiveness of students, not in their learning tasks, but concerning order and discipline [German, *ordnung*] in all areas, for example, teachers are obligated to see if on a daily basis students comb their hair, cut their nails, and attend in a timely manner...in their schoolwork, clothing, movement, sitting and rising, they are to fully comply with the disciplines of time, space, and hygiene. [In Germany] when it is still completely dark children are forced, with utmost burden, to leave their soft and warm bed...so that they are not in trouble once they are at their school...if it were up to the Iranians, they would allow students to sleep in and would begin instructions in the afternoon...²¹⁵

Jamālzādah also believed that discipline had to extend to teachers and school staff. He castigated “famous teachers of the capital” who allegedly arrived to class 15 to 20 minutes late, and who supposedly had no socks on, displayed unbuttoned shirts, kept untidy beards, and wore unclean turbans or hats, all the while smoking cigarettes during instructions.²¹⁶ They would forget, Jamālzādah wrote, their handkerchief, which forced them to leave the classroom every time they needed to blow their nose. Moreover, when it was time to teach, they would suddenly

²¹³ Ibid., 92.

²¹⁴ Jamālzādah in Īrānshahr Journal, 1925, no. 4, 205-06.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 205.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 210. On teacher and staff needing to be role models for hygiene (*hifz al-ṣiḥat*) and cleanliness (*nizāfat*) also see, Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 1, 133.

realize their lesson plan (*daftar-i dars*) had been forgotten at the kebab shop. Jamālzādah prescribed that the Education Ministry implement careful rules of conduct which all teachers and staff would have to follow.²¹⁷ Another intellectual compared the allegedly idle *maktab* teacher to the reformed teacher of the *dabistān*, writing that the *dabistān* teacher no longer had a comfortable seat with a hookah at his disposal to remain idle while students left for play, but this teacher still sat comfortably for hours on end unless he wanted to straighten his throat—an action which only brought disruption in order and etiquette, he wrote—all the while his mucus fell on students.²¹⁸ This teacher should be taught, the writer added, that he needed to teach standing, so to project control and command over students, while observing them for proper bodily posture.²¹⁹

The Education Society and later reformists of the early Reza Shah era converged on their interest in disciplining such things as timeliness and bodily movement. They had an important difference, however. Education Society formulated its many bylaws for “right” conduct in education, but without an explicit emphasis on their impact on the learner. Later reformists, by contrast, were more emphatic on the relationship between education and its subject (i.e., learners). Īrānshahr argued that obedience through discipline had to become second-nature to the child-learner, writing that “a child must be raised so that she brings herself, in heart and in spirit, to obedience. In other words, she must feel that it would be beneficial for her to obey and harmful for her to disobey. This means that she would experience reward and enjoyment in obedience, but [non-physical] punishment and hardship in disobedience.”²²⁰ Ḥasan Taqīzādah

²¹⁷ Jamālzādah in Īrānshahr Journal, no. 4, 209.

²¹⁸ Īrānshahr Journal, no. 1: 404.

²¹⁹ Ibid., no. 1:405.

²²⁰ Īrānshahr Journal, no. 1:117.

had the same opinion. He drew a comparison between the believer's love for the household of the prophet and education. He wrote that as eulogists have succeeded in instilling a firm belief in people that salvation lied in shedding of tears for the prophet's household, "discipline" needed to instill the belief in the nation that redemption from misery lied in new education.²²¹ Jamāl-zādah corroborated this position, again using the example of Germany. He wrote that Germans cared about discipline so much that the student-child operated as a clock, or as someone in a medically-sedated state following the will that controlled her in all his movements and stillness. The student's clock-like function then carried into later life stages, Jamāl-zādah added—just like her childhood years, when she arrived to the classroom at a specific "second" of the hour, in her adult life, she will be punctual, being disciplined in all his actions, major or minor, such as paying debt on time and dating her letters.²²² Iranians too, Jamāl-zādah believed, could become such orderly subjects if the right discipline was implemented.

Higher education also attempted to discipline learners, although in a less robust and comprehensive way. The Teacher's College provided an organization for disciplined teaching in which future teachers formally "learned" the practice of teaching. The 1923 (1302) bylaw of the Teacher's College oscillated between the old *ādāb* and new disciplines. Similar to the old *ādāb*, the bylaw mandated that the teachers and the college administration habituate students into avoidance of vice and cultivation of virtues such as honesty and empathy, which they would then transfer to their own students.²²³ Yet, the bylaw provided for disciplines intended to

²²¹ Taqīzādah, *Maqālāt*, 22. He literally transliterated from English into Persian the word "discipline" as *دیسپلین* followed in parentheses, by order and obedience in Persian, *naẓm va iṭā'at*. See *ibid.*, 48.

²²² Jamāl-zādah, *Īrānshahr Journal*, no. 4, 208.

²²³ *Niẓāmnāmah-i dār al-mu'allimīn-i markazī*, 1302/1923-24, 6-7, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

institutionalize new, uniform, and orderly admission, certification, and exam procedures.²²⁴ The emphasis on discipline expanded in later years replacing virtue altogether. The 1934 (1313) and 1939 (1318) *āyīn 'nāmah* of the Teacher's College laid out detailed disciplines for students to follow. In addition to timely registration, students had a duty to be present for courses and teaching "practices" (*'amalīyāt*), which the college administration noted down.²²⁵ If students had an unexcused absence for more than ten hours in a single course, they could not take the final exam, and if they failed an exam two years in a row, they could no longer study at the college.²²⁶ The college prepared an "individualized report" (*parvandah-'i makhšūš*) for students that recorded their grades and character fitness (in more familiar terms, a transcript with a behavioral discipline grade comparable to that envisioned by novelist Jamālzādah for children).²²⁷ Punishments reserved for student wrongdoing (unspecified) were verbal and expletory. The college president could orally reprimand the student, either privately or before professors and students. For more serious offenses, the president administrated three levels of discipline: written reprimand displayed publicly and recorded in the student's transcript, expulsion warning, and actual expulsion.²²⁸ Students, but also teachers and administrators, had to comply with detailed regulations in time and scheduling, including how and when exams were to be produced, administrated, and taken.²²⁹ The college put students "on notice" of the disciplines that were to

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²²⁵ *Sālnāmah-'i dānish'sarā-yi 'ālī*, 1318-19/1939-40, 60, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

²²⁸ *Sālnāmah-'i dānish'sarā-yi 'ālī*, 1313-14/1934-35, 36. See also *Sālnāmah-'i dānish'sarā-yi 'ālī*, 1318-19/1939-40, 61.

²²⁹ *Sālnāmah-'i dānish'sarā-yi 'ālī*, 1318-19/1939-40, 51-52.

follow them, requiring them to sign a document with the following “obligation”: “during the entirety of [their] education, [they will] thoroughly obey the internal regulations of the college.”²³⁰

Accordingly, classical *ādāb* attempted to bring the learner into cultivation of virtue, in a world in which God was always present, as the precondition for knowledge acquisition and transmission. The new educational order, on the other hand, attempted to discipline the learner into education, through the ever-present authority of the document and the bylaw. This *ādāb*/discipline dichotomy as the means to education suggest a lessening of God’s consciousness in how knowledge was acquired and transmitted. As explicated earlier, the bylaw no longer required major obligations towards God and the *Sharī‘ah*. The teacher was no longer advised to keep God’s remembrance before instructions, but to follow and implement orderly classroom activities. The student no longer studied around *Sharī‘* times, having to follow the clock instead, including such disciplines as mandatory early morning attendance. We thus see a relationship between the means of education—*ādāb* versus discipline—and the production of religious optionality. However, the end goal of education—not the means—was where religious subjectivity was negated most forcefully. Classical *ādāb* viewed the purpose of knowledge to be primarily an other-worldly purpose: salvation in the hereafter, which was fulfilled through the practice (*‘amal*) of knowledge. In contrast, education reform saw the end of knowledge as service to the immiserated nation for this-worldly redemption, which the educated prepared for by the practice of knowledge as well, although as we shall see in what follows, a practice of an entirely different nature.

²³⁰ *Vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqaf va šanāyi‘-i mustazrafah, qānūn-i tarbīyat-i mu‘allim*, 1313/1934, 54, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

Ādāb al-muta'allimīn connected the purpose of knowledge to the hereafter. This did not mean that knowledge and its practice did not have purposes in the present. The theory and practice of knowledge aimed at happiness in this life as well as service to others.²³¹ However, in the *ādāb al-muta'allimīn* literature, the primary purpose of knowledge turned on the learner's proximity to God.²³² In pursuit of knowledge, both the teacher and the student had to set their intention (*nīyya*) on the other-world (*dīn*) instead of this-world (*dunyā*).²³³ The right intention combined with observation of *ādāb* brought the learner to knowledge's end, or God's closeness.²³⁴

Indeed, the highest *'ilm* was that which instilled God's fear in the learner's heart.²³⁵ On the hierarchy of *fiqhi* knowledge, fear-inducing *'ilm* was superior to “conventional *fiqh*” (الـفـقـه المتعارف/المسائل المدونة). For example, *fiqhi* knowledge that showed the path to God was superior to that which dealt with protection of property or the body. The latter ultimately had an other-worldly purpose as well, to protect the body that was the vessel for the soul in the journey to the hereafter. However, the former, dealing more directly with God's knowledge, was superior.²³⁶ The learner who contended himself with conventional *fiqh* was compared to a person on hajj

²³¹ On the connection between knowledge and action for “happiness in this world and the next.” See Lapidus, “Knowledge, Virtue, and Action,” 43.

²³² See as an example, Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 25, 34. For further examples, see what follows.

²³³ Ibid., 32-33 (106). Numbers in parenthesis are to the Persian translation by Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥujjatī entitled *Ādāb-i ta'līm va ta'allum dar Islām*. The translation contains additional prose and quoted sacred narrations added by the translator, which are not found in the original text.

²³⁴ For the necessity of following correct *ādāb* in learning, see Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 17-18 (28-29). See also Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 238.

²³⁵ Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 47 (159).

²³⁶ See *ibid.*, 47 (159). The example on the knowledge of body's protection is in the Persian translation only, see *ibid.*, 159.

who was content with logistical arrangements, such as arranging for drinking water and proper shoes, while neglecting the metaphysical dimension of the pilgrimage.²³⁷

The connection between knowledge on the one hand, and the fear of and proximity to God on the other, was invoked through sacred authority, such as the Qur'anic verse that "only those of Allah's servants having knowledge fear Him," or the Prophetic Hadith that "a slight amount of *'ilm* is better than plenty of worship."²³⁸ Through numerous Hadith narrations and their repetition, *ādāb* writers reminded the learner that she had to go after knowledge for God's sake alone. One hadith in particular is worth quoting in translation:

A man [was brought before God on Judgment Day] who was a learner, a teacher, and a Qur'an reciter. He was presented with his life blessings, which he recognized. He was then asked: "what did you do in return?" The man said: "I learned, taught, and recited the Qur'an, in pursuit of You, my Lord." He was told: "You have lied, as you learned so people say that you are a scholar, and you recited the Qur'an so they say, you are a reciter, and these were said about you!" Then, it was ordered that the man be dragged by his face until he is thrown into hellfire.²³⁹

Another hadith told the learner that if she pursued knowledge for four worldly purposes, she would suffer hellfire: boasting to scholars, quarrelling with the simpleminded, seeking of attention, and obtaining wealth from rulers.²⁴⁰ According to another hadith narrated from the sixth Shia Imam, Ja'far Ṣādiq, learning was summarized in the knowing of God, in knowing what He had done for the learner, knowing what he demanded of the learner, and knowing what separated the learner from God's path.²⁴¹ Writers of *ādāb* further advised the scholar to

²³⁷ Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 47 (160).

²³⁸ The Qur'an, 35:28. Quoted in Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 25.

²³⁹ Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 33 (112).

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35 (113-14).

²⁴¹ The hadith was cited in Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 239. The original text used the second-person singular, you, instead of the learner.

recognize and shun the devil's deception, which would distance her from God's proximity. For example, if a teacher became distressed at the sight of her student seeking the knowledge of other teachers who also benefited the student, this teacher had fallen into devil's deception, and thus, away from God's proximity. A teacher, free of devil's deception, would be delighted that another teacher shared with her in *dīn*'s advancement through the transmission of knowledge.²⁴²

Knowledge had to be put into practice (*'amal*) to fulfill its other-worldly purpose.²⁴³ *'Ilm* was divided into two categories: gnosis (*'ilm al-ma'rifah*) and behavioral knowledge (*'ilm al-mu'āmilah*).²⁴⁴ The learner/scholar had to have both; her inward knowledge had to be followed by outward behavior. For example, the inward knowledge of God meant that the scholar had to behave according to His rule, to *do* the permissible acts (*ḥalāl*) and refrain from doing the forbidden (*ḥarām*).²⁴⁵ Excessive preoccupation with “theory” over the practice of knowledge ran the risk of stripping the learner of the fear of and proximity to God.²⁴⁶ Numerous Hadith narrations required the scholar to apply her knowledge, to be spared of hellfire.²⁴⁷ This practice was not merely about the scholar's own salvation, but impacted other believers. One hadith narrated that the scholar's failure to act on her knowledge caused her advice to be disregarded by believers, slipping from their hearts, as rain slipped on a smooth rock.²⁴⁸ Further natural allegories were used: knowledge was compared to a tree and its fruits to knowledge's

²⁴² Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 39 (130).

²⁴³ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 241, 244. See also Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta'allimīn*, 46 (21).

²⁴⁴ Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 43 (143).

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-favā'id*, 245.

²⁴⁷ Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 35, 41.

²⁴⁸ This hadith is only cited in the Persian translation, see Hujjatī, *Ādāb-i ta'līm va ta'allum dar Islām*, 138.

application. As the fruit tree failed to meet its purpose without bearing fruits, so did knowledge fail to meet its purpose without practice.²⁴⁹ We can provide a concise picture of classical education as follows: the means of education, or the *ādāb*, brought one into virtue, which made possible knowledge acquisition and transmission, that had as their purpose an other-worldly salvation, and this purpose was fulfilled only if the scholar applied her learning. As we will see below, the purpose and practice of knowledge changed rather drastically with national education reform.

Reformists held that for the immiserated nation to find redemption, what counted as knowledge needed to expand and include “practical” (*‘amālī*) fields beyond text-based, literary learning. Crafts, trades, and industries—previously acquired outside an academic setting, via, for example, the organization of guilds and apprenticeships, or by family trade—moved under the purview of education.²⁵⁰ The primary Iftitāhīyah school, instituted before the turn of the twentieth century by the Education Society, attempted to teach science (*‘ilm*) and industry (*san‘at*) jointly. It thus instituted a carpet weaving workshop (*kār’khānah-‘i qālī’bāfi*).²⁵¹ The teacher was a certain Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān from the Azerbaijan province.²⁵² By parental insistence, he taught the craft of carpet weaving to 24 students who were of “notable” families. Students spent one hour per day on carpet weaving in groups of four. In addition to hands-on work, such as dying wool (*pashm*), booklets on weaving were produced for students to study.

²⁴⁹ Shahīd al-Thānī, *Munyat al-murīd*, 43.

²⁵⁰ For an example of this change in the profession of painting in particular, see Āzhand, *Az kārgāh tā dānishgāh : pizhūhishī dar nizām-i āmūzishī-i ustād- shāgirdī va tabdīl-i ān bih nizām-i dānishgāhī dar naqqāshī-i Irān*. For an examination into the organization of Iranian guilds shortly before education reform, see Floor, *Guilds, merchants, & ulama in nineteenth-century Iran*.

²⁵¹ *Rūznāmah-‘i ma‘ārif*, no. 6:3.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, no. 6:4.

Another example was the Shirāfat school in the city of Rasht where students learned the craft of embroidery (*gul'dūzī*).²⁵³ According to *Rūznāmah-i ma'ārif*, craft training in school was intended to prepare the nation for “machine” and factory production that would produce national wealth and trade.²⁵⁴ To facilitate craft production, Education Society’s bylaws determined that, after member consensus, the Science Ministry had to provide equipment for craft work to teachers.²⁵⁵ The Dānish school had as its primary purpose the teaching of industry to 60 students, most of whom were poor orphans and indigent *sādāt* (presumed descendants of the prophet). The school intended for children to learn literary subjects, but also hands-on work for when they graduated. So, it instituted three workshops with “skilled masters,” namely painting, sock-weaving, and tailoring, and divided the students between them. Students spent half the day on craft training and the rest on elementary literary subjects.²⁵⁶

The interest in practical knowledge was very visible in the writings of early Reza Shah-era intellectuals as well. Īrānshahr believed that educational training had to be “practical and sensory” (*‘amalī va ḥissī*).²⁵⁷ School activities needed to draw, he thought, on such things as objects that put student hands to work in craft production, cooking, painting, and tailoring. Moreover, students needed to learn how to work in labs, use maps, and apply hygiene kits for preservation of health. Other practical aspects of education needed to be frequent fieldtrips for the observation of the natural world, and visits to exhibitions for observation of students’ hand-

²⁵³ Ibid., no. 50:3.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., no. 6:3.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., no. 15:3.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., no. 55:1.

²⁵⁷ Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 2, 162.

made works.²⁵⁸ Īrānshahr did not merely advocate for “practical and sensory” education, but also for the creation of schools devoted entirely to “practice” not previously taught in school. He believed that in agrarian areas, children had to be sent to schools devoted solely to the practice of farming as other types of schools would not prepare them for their agrarian future. According to Īrānshahr, teaching these children literacy would become appropriate only when enough arrangements were made in their villages and provinces for a postgraduate future in which literacy was useful.²⁵⁹ Īrānshahr advocated for business (*tijārat*) as well as farming schools. He wrote that “our merchants do not yet consider business a science and do not believe that business too is acquired in school.”²⁶⁰ If Iranians were to acquire business as a science, he argued, it would produce national wealth, and once this was realized, merchants themselves would devote resources to schools teaching business.²⁶¹ Business schools, he added, needed to teach principles of trade and rules of international economics in both theory and practice. On practice, Īrānshahr took inspiration from a primary school in New York in which a “bank room” resembling a real bank was created. Inside, students learned, not “dry and theoretical accounting [*ḥisāb*], but the opening of a checking account and conducting of other transactions.”²⁶² Īrānshahr believed that farming and business (and also teacher training) schools formed the foundation of new education. The nation, he added, was also in need of schools for crafts and industry (*ḥirfatī va ṣan‘atī*). According to budgetary resources and provincial demands, he wrote, crafts such as

²⁵⁸ In the order that these activities were mentioned, see Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 2, 313, 163, 165, 169, 171, 178, 313.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 303.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 308-9.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 310-11.

ironmaking, tailoring, leather making, shoemaking, carpentry, and bookbinding needed to be taught. Once such schools were instituted, Iran would be freed, he predicted, of reliance upon Europe in the production of goods.²⁶³

Before the primary schools of the 1890's, practical learning was also pursued in higher education. The pursuit began in 1851 when Tehran's Polytechnic College opened. In contrast to primary teaching of the 1890's, the objective was not national education; the objective at the polytechnic was limited to meeting the specific needs of the Qajar court in response to the colonial menace. In 1861-62 (1278), Tehran's Polytechnic College taught subjects that were not taught in a school setting previously: infantry and artillery, engineering, mining, physics, telegraph and communications, and mapping.²⁶⁴ In later years, as practical curricula were developing in primary schooling, secondary and higher schools showed an interest in practical knowledge as well. Trade (*tijārat*) became an object of knowledge in secondary and higher education. In 1926 (1304), the Ministry of Public Welfare and Trade (*vizārat-i favā'id-i 'āmmah va tijārat va filāḥat*) instituted the school of trade to provide secondary education on trade. Two years later, this school was put under the supervision of Ministry of Education. In 1930-31 (1309), with its integration into the school of law, it transformed into a higher education school. In 1933 (1312), the school produced its first two graduates.²⁶⁵ The introduction of agricultural learning was of the most significant examples of integrating industry and trade into education. Several initiatives brought agricultural work, formerly differentiated from school, under the purview of the state's educational authority. The first attempt was in 1901 (1319). At the

²⁶³ Ibid., 311.

²⁶⁴ *Tārīkh-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 1, 50-51.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 164.

suggestion of Mīrzā Naṣrullāh Khān Mushīr al-Dawlah, the main agent behind the political science school mentioned earlier, the grand vizier at the time, Amīn al-Sultān, agreed to hire a certain Belgian to direct the Muẓaffarī Agricultural School (*madrasah-i filāḥatī-i Muẓaffarī*), named after the king.²⁶⁶ The Muẓaffarī School taught (unspecified) agricultural knowledge and general education subjects in Persian, Arabic, French, accounting, and geography.²⁶⁷ Moreover, it emphasized “practical activities” (*‘amalīyāt*). During the summer, students had to perform these activities on agricultural sites. The bombardment of the parliament in 1908 brought the school’s operations to closure.²⁶⁸ About ten years later in 1918 (1336), an agricultural council (*shurā’-i filāḥat*) under the authority of the Public Welfare, Trade, and Agriculture Ministry (*vizārat-i favā’id-i ‘ammah va tijārat va filāḥat*) instituted, for the purpose of transforming existing agriculture into “scientific” agriculture, a primary school. The council referred to one of these schools as the “applied *maktab*” (*maktab-i ‘amalī*). The ministry established the school in the Karaj village near Tehran. It was intended to educate children of agrarian families on new methods of farming with its budget being met by the ministry itself.²⁶⁹ The school was not able to fulfill this purpose, however, due to lack of qualified teachers and instead operated for two years as an adult literacy school with enrollment of 25 and 30 students in each successive year. In the third year, the school closed due to operational challenges.²⁷⁰ The ministry intended to organize another school at a secondary level (*dabīristān*), and thus, prepared an agricultural plot of land in the Qajar palace for its construction. In 1922 (Shahrivar, 1301), the proposed school

²⁶⁶ *Tārīkh-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 2, 1005.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1005-6.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1006.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1007.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1008.

began operations in the Amīn al-Mulk garden under the name of Tehran's secondary school of agriculture (*dabīristān-i filāḥatī-i Tihrān*).²⁷¹ It invited prospective students from across the nation via notifications published in newspapers. Number of prospective students exceeded school capacity, so the school instituted an entrance exam along with the more routine health inspections. It admitted 200 students for a one-year program. Students spent six months of the year learning theoretical subjects, while the rest was devoted to practical activities. Once the school increased the duration of the program to three years, students spent the first two years doing coursework in Tehran and their last year doing practical activities in Karaj's agricultural land.²⁷² The school developed the first modern technologies for beekeeping, and offered classes on operations of agricultural machinery. Three cohorts of students completed their education at the school.²⁷³

Six years after its opening, in 1928 (1307), the Ministry of Public Welfare initiated plans to transform Tehran's secondary school of agriculture into a college of agriculture, because of the former's limitations, in particular the Tehran garden's limited capacity in providing for agricultural practice.²⁷⁴ The College of Agriculture (*madrasah-i 'ālī-yi filāḥat*) opened two years later on December 18, 1930 (Azar 26, 1309), in Karaj where students previously performed agricultural practice.²⁷⁵ Reza Shah attended the opening ceremony. This was the most ambitious agricultural education project so far. Laboratories, dormitories, a library and a health facility, farm machinery, and lands reserved for farming, gardening, and animal husbandry were

²⁷¹ Ibid., 1009.

²⁷² Ibid., 1009-10.

²⁷³ Ibid., 1010.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 1011.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

reportedly available to students.²⁷⁶ 37 students enrolled at the school in 1931, staying at the dormitories. Due to low enrollment, the college also offered a one-year program to produce graduates who would work in agricultural administration.²⁷⁷ Because of the lack in qualified Iranian teachers, in and after 1934, the school received a number of authorizations from the parliament to hire European teachers with training in such fields as plant science, agricultural engineering, agricultural chemistry, and infectious diseases. These European instructors along with German and French-educated Iranians taught at the college.²⁷⁸ The college taught, among other subjects, machine-operated agriculture, *Shar'īah* and customary law on agricultural contracts, gardening, plant science, elimination of crop failure, water management, forest management, agrarian craft production, animal husbandry and dairy production, beekeeping, and hygiene.²⁷⁹ New sciences, such as evolutionary theory, agricultural engineering, chemistry, agricultural chemistry, and biochemistry were also taught.²⁸⁰ As with agricultural education before it, students also acquired a general education.²⁸¹ In 1936-1937 (1315-1316), the curriculum devoted the most hours of instructions to animal husbandry, plant science, gardening, and agricultural engineering.²⁸² Student theses published in 1936-1937 (1315-1316) had some of

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 1013.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 1016.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 1014, 1031, 1034.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 1012, 1059, 1060-62.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 1055-56.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 1013.

²⁸² Ibid., 1083. University of Tehran's Council (*shurā'-yi dānishgāh*) agreed in 1939 (1318) to review a request on behalf of the teaching faculty at the College of Agricultural in Karaj to integrate the college into the university, see *ibid*, 1040. However, it took several years for the college to join the university. This happened on February 28, 1946 (Isfand 9, 1324), see *ibid*, 1045, 1050. The newly-integrated college offered six majors as follows: agriculture and animal husbandry, gardening, forest management, agricultural machinery, water management, and crop failure. See *ibid*, 1085.

the following titles: animal husbandry, infectious diseases of sheep, the importance of fertilizer in agriculture, new methods in beekeeping, the process of drying fruit, and dealing with odious plants.²⁸³

As with the first agricultural college in 1901 pursuing “practical activities,” the *asās’ nāmah* or founding document of the Secondary School of Agriculture and The College of Agriculture distinguished practice from theory. The *asās’ nāmah* of the Secondary School of Agriculture mandated that students spend mornings in the classroom and the rest of the day on agricultural activities.²⁸⁴ The Council for Higher Education (*shurā-i ‘ālī-yi m’ārif*) produced a series of founding documents for the College of Agriculture, from May 22, 1928 (1307) to April 5, 1932 (1311), all of which distinguished theoretical education from practical. Practical education meant experiences and activities in the school’s laboratories, activities carried out in the agricultural lands of the college, and fieldtrips under the supervision of teachers for inspection of agricultural work in the villages.²⁸⁵ The same distinction held on examinations. The Secondary School distinguished between theoretical and practical examination, testing students orally and in writing on “theory.” It also examined students on their ability to carry out practical activities.²⁸⁶ The college continued this testing distinction: it examined students separately on their course learnings (*imtiḥānāt-i nazārī*) versus practical activities (*imtiḥānāt-i ‘amalī*)

²⁸³ Ibid., 1038-39.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 1072.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 1052, 1067. When a proposal for joining of the College of Agriculture to the University of Tehran was drafted on February 2, 1941 (1319), practical activities expanded to emphasize operation of agricultural machinery, fieldtrips to places of agrarian craft production, and summer internships (*kār’āmūzī*) in spaces (*bungāh*) belonging to the Chief Agricultural Administration (*idārah-’i kull-i filāḥat*). See *ibid.*, 1085.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 1073.

performed in the field and in the labs.²⁸⁷ In fact, the agricultural schools made it their explicit goal to train students practically. The Secondary School and the College of Agriculture's founding documents stated that their chief purpose was the training of "practical individuals" (*ashkhāṣ-i 'amalī*) to meet the pressing agricultural needs of the nation.²⁸⁸ Such individuals for government and national service were indeed produced. The graduates did not become farmers working the land, however; they took up managerial and administrative positions in agriculture. Data recorded graduates doing the following after their education: continued education in European countries, posts in administrative positions of agricultural and education ministries, management positions in agricultural facilities across the nation, agricultural positions as specialists (*'uzv-i fannī*) and engineers who attended to such needs as crop failure.²⁸⁹

The Teacher's College was another prominent example of the practice of knowledge. In 1918 (1297), the Education Ministry established the first "Central House of Teachers" (*dār al-mu'allimīn-i markazī*) with an affiliated primary school intended for teaching practice. With the growth of new schools and increased demand for trained teachers, the ministry transformed the "house of teachers" into the Teacher's College in 1928 (1307).²⁹⁰ In 1934 (1313), the college became part of the first university, the University of Tehran. Literature and the sciences were joined to the college to form a singular unit, housed in the same building.²⁹¹ Together, they offered the following majors: philosophy and pedagogical sciences, Persian literature, foreign

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 1053, 1094.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 1063. For the Secondary School using a slightly different language, see *ibid.*, 1072.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 1098.

²⁹⁰ *Sālnāmah-i dānishsarā-yi 'ālī*, 1318-19/1939-40, 2, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

²⁹¹ *Tārīkh-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 1, 488.

languages, history and geography, archeology, natural sciences, mathematics, and physics and chemistry.²⁹² Students intending to obtain a degree from the college studied one of these majors, while undergoing a shared program in pedagogy theory and teaching practice.²⁹³

Teaching practice received robust execution. An annual report stated “education scholars agree that teaching must be accompanied by experimentation and practice, so that the learner acquires the material well. Generally, subjects taught theoretically, and without application and experience, are very difficult to understand and are also forgotten soon after...this is why the Teacher’s College attempts to make students fit for service based on knowledge acquisition but also its application.”²⁹⁴ The report went on to add: “in the pedagogical sciences, just as the natural sciences, application and experience must be the basis... [furthermore], new pedagogy brings our attention to the following: instructions given to students should not be made simply via books. Students should not be deprived of the application of their learning...knowledge not accompanied with practice is totally devoid of value.”²⁹⁵ This value of practice required what the college called “teaching exercise” (*varzish-i dabīrī*).²⁹⁶ For such exercise, the college established a “laboratory” of pedagogical sciences (*āzmāyishgāh-i ‘ulūm-i tarbiyatī*).²⁹⁷ The lab reportedly examined students’ physical and mental preparedness as well as family history to ensure that they are prepared for their task as educators. The lab further required third-year students to spend 50 hours in a secondary school and observe classroom teaching, after which they wrote a report

²⁹² *Sālnāmah-i dānishsarā-yi ‘ālī*, 1318-19/1939-40, 2, 42.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101, 106.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

of their observation and submitted it to the laboratory. The director of the lab then chose a few students from each major to teach a session at the same secondary school they had made observations at, with college evaluators present. Evaluators, who were professors and fellow students, critiqued student teaching after the class ended.²⁹⁸ From 1934 (1313) to 1939 (1318), the number of schools affiliated with the Teacher's College for pedagogy practice increased sharply from 2 to 34 as well as the hours of student practice, from 1239 to 13,519.²⁹⁹ Students practiced their teaching in their chosen major, with 120 male and female students in 1939-1940, from various majors, participating in the lab's teaching practice.³⁰⁰ The later novelist, Sīmīn Dānīshvar, majoring in Persian literature at the time, taught a practice session on the classical poet, entitled the "life of Sa'dī."³⁰¹

Practice also meant observation, not only of classroom teaching, but of the outside world. One college document stated: "in the past, education was merely about what went on in the classroom...but because of the uninterrupted research done in the past century in sociology [*ilm-i jāmi'ah*] and psychology, it is now proven that the purview of education is larger... in such a way that things like the family, society, and nature are deeply integral to education."³⁰² It added that scientific and historical trips were means to advance this new vision of pedagogy.³⁰³ The college therefore sent students, from a number of majors, to fieldtrips in which they

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 100.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 103.

³⁰⁰ There appears to be a calculation error and number of students in individual majors is incorrectly added to 110, instead of 120. See *ibid.*, 102.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 104.

³⁰² Ibid., 68.

³⁰³ Ibid.

observed what they had acquired through their textbooks. These trips included trips to natural and historical locations as well as a mental hospital (*tīmāristān*).³⁰⁴

Accordingly, educational reform unified theoretical learning with its application but in a very different way than classical *ādāb* had done. Trades such as trading, farming, and teaching, that were previously differentiated from the organization of education, became integral to schooling. Learners studied the theory of trade but also “did” business while at school, with the purpose of postgraduate work that would increase national wealth. Students learned farming through courses in the classroom, while applying course learnings in real or artificial agricultural settings. They would then transform the theory-practice combination into national service, or more precisely, the management of national agriculture. Teacher’s College introduced teaching as application, a skill one learned through practice at school, for the purpose of teaching the nation. Practical (*‘amalī*) education attempted to make of learners agents who would serve the nation in way of its redemption.

The practice of knowledge in *ādāb* literature had nothing to do with what reformed education considered practical learning, such as trades, industries, crafts, and activities in business, farming, teaching, production of handmade goods, and fieldtrips. In fact, classical education drew a clear spatial distinction between trade (*ḥirfah*) and study. One 13th century *ādāb* writer, in the context of shunning greed in the learner, wrote that learners who first acquired a trade (*ḥirfah*) and then went after knowledge (*‘ilm*) had become self-sufficient and uninterested in the wealth of others.³⁰⁵ This spatial distinction was further evidenced in a much later source—a scholar’s autobiography—who reflecting on his *maktab* days in year 1885 in a

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 69, 108.

³⁰⁵ Ṭūsī, *Ādāb al-muta‘allimīn*, (45-46).

village northwest of Iran, wrote that at age seven he attended the *maktab* from beginning of winter until spring, while the other three seasons he spent working alongside his father. One month into the spring, he occupied himself with planting and farming (*zirā'at*).³⁰⁶ In a different year, once spring came and he was freed from the *maktab*, as it was customary, he wrote, he played “games” (*bāzī*) and “ordinary sports” (*varzish-i ma'mūlī*) for a month, after which he again attended to planting and farming but also sheep herding.³⁰⁷ This was in contrast to reformed education that considered sports and physical exercise (*varzish-i badanī*) as part of education, and for some writers, a part that the Education Ministry needed to make compulsory.³⁰⁸ There was thus a spatial distinction between, literary study at the *maktab* or the madrasa on the one hand, and trade, industry, crafts, and physical activity on the other. Practice of knowledge in the classical literature did not mean doing of trades and activities at school; rather, it meant the practice of God’s knowledge in everyday life for salvation in the hereafter. In contrast, reformed education demanded “doing” in educational settings for the sake of national salvation. Put differently, the classical learner/subject applied knowledge for salvation in the *next* world; whereas, the reformed subject applied knowledge to redeem the supposedly immiserated nation in *this* world. The end purpose of education therefore changed, from an other-worldly to a this-worldly purpose, and with it the literate consciousness became vulnerable to religious optionality.

On the urgency of reformed education, Ḥasan Taqīzādah had written the following:

³⁰⁶ Qūchānī, *Sīyāḥat-i Sharq yā zindigīnāmah-i Āqā Najafī Qūchānī*, 3.

³⁰⁷ Qūchānī, *Sīyāḥat-i Sharq*, 27.

³⁰⁸ As early as the 1914 (1293), reformist journals emphasized physical exercise (*varzish*), arguing that it ought to be compulsory in schools. See Īrānshahr Journal, no. 1 and 2, 59. For the same position in a later writing, see Īrānshahr, *Rāh-i naw*, vol. 1, 134.

“The most fundamental task and the first step in redemption of this immiserated and wretched nation is that its pioneers as well its educated, patriotic youth converge on the unwavering acceptance of and firm, unshakeable faith in this most evident truth of the social world, namely the exclusivity of redemption in knowledge. Thereafter, this righteous and fine group must unite to selflessly spread this belief among each and every Iranian by any means necessary, in the same way that these eulogists [*ruḏah’khān*] gentlemen, in the past two hundred years, have attempted to create a firm, popular belief in the exclusivity of salvation in the hereafter through mourning and tears, in which they succeeded.³⁰⁹

Taqīzādeh’s prescription became a reality and education reform succeeded. As Iranians went through the twentieth century, new education gradually gained in authority to become the normative model of teaching and learning, and its disciplinary means and this-worldly purpose became transparent values. Despite the success of new education, intellectuals, artists, and popular culture at large held on to the idea of immiseration. This meant they had to look for cures outside of education, with some falling into hopelessness and rejecting that there is any redeeming for Iranians’ supposed misery at all (with the exception of emigration).³¹⁰

New education did not have its intended result in that it did not remove (the idea of) immiseration from Iranian cultural discourse. As examined in this chapter, it had an unintended consequence: the literate became vulnerable to religious optionality. The policies of the Islamic Republic have not undone the optionality new education generated. Increasing the Islamic content of the curriculum has failed to revive the near inevitability of religious subjectivity. It would appear that as long as the disciplinary means and the this-worldly purpose of education remain intact, so will optionality. In the following two chapters, I shall deal with the new

³⁰⁹ Taqīzādah, *Maqālāt*, 22.

³¹⁰ A group of contemporary intellectuals have turned to such abstractions as modernity as the curative. Their underlying assumption, and arguably false assumption, is that Iranian politics and culture failed to undergo modernity, and this has brought about the supposed misery. As an example, see *Iran Between Tradition and Modernity*, ed., Jahanbegloo. For a critical assessment of intellectual engagement with modernity, see Mirsepassi, *Democracy in Modern Iran: Islam, Culture, and Political Change*.

organizations of elementary and higher education, the *dabistān* and the *danishgāh*, which institutionalized the turn towards disciplinary education.

Chapter 3: The Origins of *Dabistān*: Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah and the Quest for New Education

In contemporary Iran, to be literate is to attend the *dabistān*. A new institution with approximately a hundred-year history, the name *dabistān* emerged, or more precisely was revived from old nomenclature, in the first Pahlavi period and was used to designate state-administrated primary education.¹ The pedagogical and disciplinary qualities associated with the *dabistān* preceded the Pahlavi dynasty, however; they dated back to about 1889 when the first new primary school opened in the city of Tabriz. The *dabistān* was neither a direct colonial intervention nor a political project of the state in its origins—in contrast to much of Asia and Africa, new primary education in Iran began through the initiatives of lower-ranking ulema who later transformed into the new intellectuals of the Pahlavi period. In the late Qajar period, they, in alliance with individual courtiers of a reformist disposition, gathered around the cause of education reform. As shown in Chapter 2, the reformists were motivated by an intellectual discourse that linked collective salvation to education reform, and did not benefit from an *organized* scheme by the Qajar court. A key agent of this reform was a lower-ranking ‘*ālim* from the city of Tabriz by the name of Mīrzā Ḥasan Tabrīzī (later Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah). A critical examination of his educational work allows me to trace the origins of the *dabistān* and make three major arguments. First, I emphasize its new character: the *dabistān* was different from the

¹ For early usage of the term, see the Ministry of Education’s annual report in *Vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi’-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah va iḥṣā’īyah*, 1932-33 (1311-12), 2, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center. Under primary education (*ta’līmāt-i ibtidāyī*) heading, the document reported that in the year 1313 (1934), “97 *dabistān* were established in the capital and provinces.” For naming conventions, with primary school designated as *dabistān*, see *ibid.*, 124.

maktab that preceded it, in terms of spatial organization, demographics, curriculum, pedagogy, and discipline and punishment.² Rushdīyah implemented new pedagogy in furtherance of mass, functional literacy, and also took an interest in disciplinary power of modern life to manage teaching and learning. His new pedagogy and disciplines were inspired by his travels in the world surrounding Iran, Caucuses and Ottoman Beirut in particular. Second, I argue that the *dabistān*'s formation was not an amicable transition but a contested one. Reformers disputed with the pro-*maktab* ulema and conservative courtiers on the right manner of educating children—disputes that were to become violent and deadly at times. Third, I emphasize the intellectual initiative behind new education and a concurrent absence of an organized modernization program by Qajar political power. Political power did not organize primary schools as a state program. However, it aided, appropriated, or obstructed intellectual initiative towards new education, and new schools were either facilitated or hampered depending on the turning tides of the Qajar court.

In English and Persian scholarship, we lack a substantial empirical history of Rushdīyah's new schools.³ Drawing on previously unexamined sources, including his Iran and Ottoman diaries, this chapter examines Rushdīyah's educational work in the broader intellectual and political history of the period, including the history of the transition from the *maktab* to the

² I use new, instead of modern, in fidelity to the period's primary sources, which use the phrase "new schools" (*madāris-i jadīd*) as opposed to modern schools.

³ The most substantial scholarly work on Rushdīyah is Baqāyī Shīreh'jīnī, *Zindagīnāmeḥ, Ārā', Nazārāt va Khāṭirāt-i Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah = Biography, Ideas and Memoirs of Mīrzā Ḥasan Roshdīeh*. This is an edited compilation of his diaries with an introduction published in 2015 for the Iranian National Archives. Non-scholarly biographical works written by his family are Rushdīyah, *Savānīḥ-i 'umr*; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*. Both works border on hagiography, and must be read with caution. In modernist historiography, he receives marginal but celebratory mention. See as an example Kasravī, *Tārīkh-i mashrūṭah-'i Īrān*. English-language historiography also covers Rushdīyah, but briefly and without reliance on his diaries. For one of the more complete accounts, see Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 155-160.

dabistān.⁴ Following Rushdīyah inevitably brings the *dabistān* to the center of the narrative. However, unlike previous studies I do not treat the *dabistān* as an “enlightened” successor to the “underdeveloped” maktab.⁵ Rather, via a study of Rushdīyah’s travels, pedagogy, and school administration, I attempt to explain, without modernist value-judgments, his break from the *maktab*.

My sources include his diaries, letters to/from newly-established Qajar ministries, school textbooks, and internal school documents on records like finances and daily schedule. In addition to Rushdīyah-centered sources, I consult memoirs by his contemporaries, Persian newspapers from the period, Persian-language secondary sources on the *maktab*, and Persian and English secondary literature on education reform in Iran and the surrounding world. Using as my central sources the diaries of Rushdīyah is not without methodological challenges. In contested cases where other sources are unavailable for cross-reference and confirmation, we are left only with our skepticism as to whether Rushdīyah’s account holds—this skepticism is particularly warranted as Rushdīyah’s contemporary, Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī, regarded him as overestimating his role in educational (and we might add political) reform.⁶ I therefore alert the reader to my skepticism when Rushdīyah’s account cannot be confirmed. However, Rushdīyah’s occasional

⁴ This chapter does not exposit Rushdīyah’s political activities in any detail. Rushdīyah was also a supporter of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and kept a diary of his activism during the interim constitutional period. This diary is held at the National Archives but is also printed in Baghāyī Shīreh’ Jīnī. Part of the political events diary appears to have been lost and is not available in manuscript or printed form.

⁵ Three previous studies in English must be noted. Ordered by date of publication from oldest to newest, they are, Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*; Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*; and, Matthee, “Transforming Dangerous Nomads.” Matthee branded the *maktab* as “underdeveloped.” See *ibid.*, 314. Arasteh called it “limited” in Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 6. And, Menashri wrote “students were not prepared for any useful occupation. The syllabus was totally irrelevant to the country’s needs.” See Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 41-42. For use of awakening and enlightenment language, see as an example Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 99. See the introduction to this dissertation for a more detailed discussion on premodern representations in the existing literature.

⁶ Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, vol. 1, 226.

pomp is not without justification either; as we shall see below, he pioneered the first new primary school in Iran and remained a consistent advocate of new education in turbulent times.

I proceed chronologically. I begin with Rushdīyah's own education as a child, and then examine the events that transformed his vocation from a local preacher to cosmopolitan educator setting him on his Ottoman travels. Then, I narrate his acquisition of new pedagogy in Beirut, after which he instituted new primary schools in Yerevan, Tabriz, Mashhad, and Tehran, with the aid of reformist allies. I narrate the opposition he faced from *maktab* custodians, and demonstrate the new qualities of the schools, in particular, the use of disciplinary power in the management of teaching and learning, and the phonetic method for teaching the alphabet, which, in contrast to the *maktab*, generated rapid and functional literacy.

3.1 The Early Years

Available sources provide different dates for Rushdīyah's birth. Two family biographies provided the dates March 27, 1860 (Ramadan 5, 1276) and an unspecified day in 1851 (1267).⁷ Rushdīyah himself recorded his birthday as March 6, 1862 (Ramadan 5, 1278).⁸ Elsewhere in the diary, he implied that he was born in 1854.⁹ The contradictions make the setting of an exact date difficult, but we do know that Mīrzā Ḥasan Tabrīzī (later Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah) was born near the middle of the nineteenth-century and into a clerical family in the city of Tabriz. His

⁷ Compare Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr.*, with Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*. Fakhr al-Dīn Rushdīyah does not provide the day or month of the year, but since other accounts provide Ramadan as the birthdate, the Gregorian equivalent would be 1851 (not 1852).

⁸ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*. June 15, 1915, National Library and Archives of Iran, 998/4311. In Baqāyī Shīreh'Jīnī's printed edition, 86. For the reader's ease of access, the remaining page citations are to the printed edition, cited with the title "Diaries." The editor of the diaries, Baqāyī Shīreh'Jīnī, argues that Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah's date must be the correct one but he seems to make a mathematical mistake in rejecting the date given by Rushdīyah, see *ibid.*, 26. For this dissertation, I use Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah's 1860 as the date of birth.

⁹ Rushdīyah dated the composition of the diary to June 15, 1915 or Sha'bān 2, 1333 and then wrote that I am 63 today, which would mean he was born in 1270 or 1854. See Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 85.

forefathers before that had lived in Ṭālīsh, Gīlān. Once Ṭālīsh fell to the Afsharid king, Nadir Shah, the family were held as captives until they fled to near Tabriz where they settled.¹⁰ Rushdīyah’s childhood coincided with the rule of the fourth and the longest-ruling Qajar king, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. The Qajar monarchs shared their political power with the social and epistemic authority of the Shia ulema, a collective that had consolidated its power in the Safavid period and had become more secure under the congeniality of Fath‘Ali Shāh (d. 1834).¹¹ As epistemic authority, they operated the educational system that taught and schooled all those across social class who chose to learn. Rushdīyah’s father, a reclusive (*gūshih ‘nishīn*) mujtahid by the name of Ākhūnd Mullāh Mihdī Tabrīzī, sent Rushdīyah to a public *maktab* by age six—the *maktab* (short for *maktab ‘khānah*, plural *makātib*) was the traditional institution of primary learning in Iran. Muslims used the term *maktab* in a number of contexts, but all in reference to knowledge production, teaching, and learning, including the place where children were educated.¹² The Persian variations on the Arabic word, *maktab*, were the *maktab ‘khānah*, (*a*)*dabestān*, and in some sources like *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqqī*, *dabīristān*.¹³ Under the Reza Shah administration (1925-1941), *dabistān* and *dabīristān* came to designate primary and secondary schooling respectively.¹⁴ Despite terminological variations, Persian sources up until the end of the Qajar period generally referred to the space where children learned to read and write as the *maktab*. For

¹⁰ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 85-86.

¹¹ For an excellent account of Shia ulema power consolidation under the Safavids see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*. For a history of ulema under the Qajars see Algar, *Religion and State in Iran (1785-1906)*.

¹² Ṣafā, *tārīkh-i ‘ulūm va adabīyāt-i īrānī*, 7.

¹³ Ḥaydarī and Zū al-Faqārī, *Adabīyāt-i maktab ‘khānah-yī dar Īrān*, 16-17. The Arabic word *kuttāb* was also used occasionally in Persian literature to mean *maktab*, see *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴ See the Ministry of Education’s annual report in *vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqaf va ṣanāye‘-i mustazrafeh, Sālnāmah va iḥṣā‘īyah*, 1932-33 (1311-12), 124.

example, the twelfth-century Persian poet, Niẓāmī Ganjavī, describing the early development and childhood of Khusraw in *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, wrote:

پس از نه سالگی مکتب رها کرد
حساب جنگ شیر و اژدها کرد

After turning nine, he left the *maktab*
Going in battle with the lion and the dragon¹⁵

In nineteenth-century Iran, three forms of *makātib* educated children: the sister-mullah *maktab* (*makātib-i ākhūnd bājī*), the “public” *maktab*, and the “private” *maktab* for the children of prominent ulema and court aristocracy.¹⁶ Sister-mullahs, loosely comparable to English school-dames, were generally of limited learning and taught children ages four to seven and in mixed-gender settings.¹⁷ Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī (b. December 27, 1862) described them as women who were mostly in urban areas and their job was to nurse children either in their own homes or houses of elites (*muḥtaramīn*). He added that these “women could read simple expressions and had, based on religious belief, painstakingly acquired the Qur’an, [while] most of them were unable to write, and [he] wasted away his life not knowing what he had learned from them.”¹⁸ Sister-mullah *maktab* served anywhere between a few to over a hundred students, with more experienced students serving as aids to the teacher—for example, by teaching the alphabet (orally) to an incoming student. All ages and levels of learning assembled in the same room and received individualized instructions. The educational mission was to acquaint students with the alphabet, the Qur’an, social etiquette, and Sharī‘ah obligations, such as the performance of

¹⁵ Ibid., 15 (quoted here).

¹⁶ Qāsimī’pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-’i Qājārīyih*, 45.

¹⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹⁸ Dawlatābādī, *Hayāt-i Yaḥyā*.

ablution and prayer. Writing was not part of the curriculum, and everything was taught orally. Material for writing was thus not made available to students. Each day, students gathered around the instructor in a simple, carpeted room as she laid against a large, hard pillow (*tushakchah*) with a small table in front of her. The teacher instructed students to memorize their readings, kneel behind the teacher's desk, and repeat what they had committed into memory.¹⁹ Rote memorization was the routine examination method in sister-mullah schools, as it was in their more elaborate counterparts, the public *maktab*. Students would either start their education at the public *maktab* right away, as Rushdīyah had done, or would go there after some schooling in the sister-mullah schools. The public *maktab* met at mosques, shops (*dukkān* in the singular), and private homes. There, students would make the transition from oral learning into writing and benefit from a more comprehensive curriculum.²⁰ The textbooks children read were not authored by the teachers themselves nor written specifically for children. They were fragments from already-known texts or personal writings. Dawlatābādī recounted that their teacher would give them his own transactional writings (*sanad'hā-yi mu'āmilātī*) no longer in need that he had written for his patrons.²¹ Teachers at the public *maktab* were lower-ranking mullahs and although they were supposed to be more learned than their sister-mullah counterparts, modernist memoirs hold them in contempt; they were described for their teaching incompetence and harsh use of physical punishment, although some did receive praise. The reformer Ākhūnd'zādah, for

¹⁹ Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-yi Qājārīyah*, 47-48.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

²¹ Dawlatābādī, *Hayāt-i Yahyā*.

instance, praised his teacher Mullāh ‘Alī Asghar, because when the mullah taught him, his “hatred for reading was fully eliminated.”²²

Motivations for schooling were not uniform. Learning the Qur’an was the primary motivation for many parents who sent their children to school, especially those who came from more indigent ranks. Merchant families wanted their children to learn more such as writing and basic math for everyday use—for instance, to take an accounting of family income and expenses. Some went to the *maktab* with the intention of becoming a madrasa student, and thus a mullah or a mujtahid. After the *maktab*, one could study further and become a mullah in his locality.²³ Those with higher ambition went to prominent centers like Najaf and study for many years to become a mujtahid. Aristocratic families (*amīr*, *mustufī*, and *dīvānī*) sent their children to private *maktab*, which was spatially and demographically segregated but had a pedagogy and curriculum similar to the public *maktab*. In the Qajar period, some parents hoped that after the private *maktab* their children would travel abroad to study new sciences.²⁴

At the *maktab*, the young Mīrzā Ḥasan displayed impressive learning abilities; the mullah therefore selected him as his aid (*khalīfah*) so he would help other students.²⁵ His classmates met Rushdīyah early in the morning and sought help with their subjects, in an attempt to mitigate the mullah’s frequent application of physical punishment for lack of comprehension.²⁶ Physical punishment was routinely applied without complaint from parents. This practice instilled in the

²² Qāsimī’pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-’i Qājārīyah*, 52-53 (quoting Akhūndzādeh).

²³ Examples, from the period under study, are Rushdīyah himself as we will see later in this chapter and Kasravī. See Kasravī, *Zindagānī-yi man: az kūdakī tā sī sāligī*, 50.

²⁴ Qāsimī’pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-’i Qājārīyah*, 60.

²⁵ Rushdīyah, *Savānīh-i ‘umr*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

young Rushdīyah an early dislike for the *maktab*, an aversion he shared with his intellectual contemporaries including the newspaper discourse that argued against the compatibility of physical discipline on the one hand, and good teaching and upbringing on the other.²⁷

3.2 From Local Preacher to Cosmopolitan Educator

Rushdīyah studied at the *maktab* for five years and then continued his studies for another eleven in subjects such as *fiqh* until he gained the authority of a local preacher at age 22 (in 1882).²⁸ With his father's permission, he became a preacher (*vā'iz*) at the local *Imāmzādah* mosque named *Charandāb*. While preaching, his life trajectory changed after a supposed encounter with the crown prince (*valī 'ahd*), Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh. The crown prince liked to spend leisure time in a garden north of the capital and would occasionally choose Tabriz as his return route. When the prince was returning via Tabriz, he decided to visit the *Imāmzādah* where Rushdīyah was preaching against the injustice of "the oppressor." Upon seeing the sight of the crown prince, Rushdīyah immediately changed the content of his speech, thus thinking to himself that he "must be the most hypocritical of people, that [in fear of] a certain oppressor he has abandoned the application of God's command to him and has interrupted his speech to talk about something else."²⁹ After this incident, Rushdīyah left preaching altogether for a brief period of solitude and inactivity, until with parental permission, he intended to leave for pilgrimage to Mashhad. Before going to Mashhad, Rushdīyah went to Yerevan and spent

²⁷ See as an example *Akhtar*, *Sukhanī chand dar tarbiyat-i kūdakān*, in *Akhtar*, vol. 7, 5323, National Library and Archives of Iran, Periodicals (*Nashriyāt*).

²⁸ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*. This level of education was confirmed in Yahyā Dawlatābādī's account as well. He wrote that "Rushdīyah [had] roughly elementary level knowledge among the ulema." See Dawlatābādī, *Hayāt-i Yahyā*, vol 1.

²⁹ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 86-87.

Ramadan there.³⁰ Prior to the nineteenth century, the Safavid dynasty exercised control over Yerevan. In 1828, the Qajars surrendered control to Russia, according to the Treaty of Turkomantchay. Iran's past political power over Yerevan and the geographic proximity between Yerevan and Tabriz connected the two cities together, and many from Tabriz would reside or visit there.³¹ While in Yerevan, Rushdīyah reported that he was spending time in a public park (*bāgh-i 'umūmī*) when he saw a door open. Several hundred students wearing hats and backpacks existed and dispersed in different directions. Two of them passed Rushdīyah, and he heard them speaking in Turkish calling them over to inquire about where it was that they were coming from, and they replied: "we study." The subjects they studied included Islamic jurisprudence. Rushdīyah asked the children a few questions and was astonished at their level of comprehension—superior to what children of Tabriz would learn at the same age.³² This raised the curiosity of Rushdīyah who then arranged a meeting with the teacher of religious sciences, Hājī Mullāh Bāqir Ākhūnd, with whom Rushdīyah had previous acquaintance. Mullāh Bāqir had been a student of Rushdīyah's father for eight years prior to his residence in Yerevan. He informed Rushdīyah of the children's program, and although it remains unspecified in his diaries, the program must have presumably included new pedagogy. Hearing of the school's program, the former preacher found new inspiration and decided to act in "God's path" and establish something comparable for the "children of Islam." Mullāh Bāqir then advised Rushdīyah that he must go through several steps: he must first acquire new pedagogical principles. Then, he must receive a certificate from Russia's teacher's college, learn Russian, and

³⁰ Ibid., 87.

³¹ For a description of some of these connections, see the 1811 travelogue by Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah 'hā*, 104.

³² Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 87.

become a Russian subject.³³ Per Russian regulations, he would then be permitted to teach Islamic subjects to Muslim children at public schools for one hour per week. Muslims, Rushdīyah was then informed, were not permitted to institute independent schools in the city because Russian authorities wanted to keep them mixed with non-Muslim students.³⁴ It appears these regulations were not wholly enforced or that Rushdīyah was able to receive exemption from them by instituting his school as one for foreign (Iranian) subjects, because when in 1884 he returned from his Ottoman travels he established a school exclusively for Iranian-Muslim children, and without meeting the specified conditions.

After this conversation, Rushdīyah abandoned earlier plans to go to Najaf for further studies, and instead, decided to acquire new pedagogy and turned to the reformist newspaper *Akhtar* for direction.³⁵ *Akhtar* was a Persian-language paper edited and produced by exilic intellectuals in Istanbul and sent into Iran where it had a sizable audience. The young Rushdīyah had learned via the newspaper that in Tabriz, each *maktab* would only produce one functionally literate student for every ten it would train.³⁶ And, this was in sharp contrast to Europe where almost all students would become literate.³⁷ Rushdīyah's aim was to find a teacher's association that suited to and accepted Muslim teachers and trained them in new pedagogical principles. He

³³ According to the Educational Act of 1873 imposed upon Armenians in 1874, the teachers in public schools were required to be citizens of Russia. See Sarafian, *History of Education in Armenia*, 265.

³⁴ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 88.

³⁵ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 88. Contrast with Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah's account that did not record the Yerevan inspiration but did mention Rushdīyah's interest in reformist newspapers motivating the quest for new pedagogy. See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*.

³⁶ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 1936, 5, Behdokht Roshdieh Private Archives.

³⁷ For a survey of literacy in Europe, see Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*. This study confirms *Akhtar*'s information at the time. In 1880 England for example, both male and female illiteracy was slightly under 20 per cent. By the final third of nineteenth century in much of northern and western Europe, functional illiteracy was driven down to 10 percent and below, see *ibid.*, 9-10.

wrote the *Akhtar* editors with his query, and they informed him of a soon-to-be instituted association by the British in Cairo. Thereafter, Rushdīyah set out for his Ottoman travels.³⁸

3.3 Iranian Educator in the Ottoman World

Travelling via Tiflis, Rushdīyah began with the capital, Istanbul. He traveled to the Ottoman empire in about 1882, thirteen years after an imperial decree on education reform.³⁹ Before this decree, education for Muslims subjects of the empire consisted of the *sibyan mektebi* (“Qur’an school”) at the elementary level and madreses at higher levels. Responsibility of providing education for children of common people was left not to the imperial center, but to persons within the community acting on their own initiative as was the case in Qajar Iran. A typical *sibyan mektebi* consisted mostly of one room, which was often located at the vicinity of a mosque and directed by a member of the lower ulema, called hoca. Wealthy Muslims mainly founded these schools, and their maintenance was secured by religious foundations for public purposes (*vakif*) as well as by the weekly payments of parents to the *hocas*, and there is no evidence that these institutions were controlled or inspected by a central organ, but in many cases the donors monitored the qualifications of the *hocas*, such as ensuring that they are informed about *fiqh* and led a righteous a life. Like in Iran, Ottoman *sibyan mektebi* had a diverse student body all in the same room with varying degrees of age and knowledge.⁴⁰ In 1869 an imperial decree on education, based on French models, attempted to modify the character of premodern

³⁸ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 88. Rushdīyah did not mention Beirut or Istanbul in this diary and simply said he went to Egypt for two and a half years. Contrast this with the *Ottoman Diaries* where he wrote about his travels to Istanbul, Cairo, and Beirut (in that order) and spent the most time (about two years) in Beirut. See the details that follow for his time spent in each city, in addition to Yerevan. I covered a number of archives in Yerevan and Beirut, but they did not hold any sources about him. For a list of these archives, see the bibliography and the names of Lebanon and Armenia archives under “Other Archives Covered.”

³⁹ The *Ottoman Diaries* did not provide an exact date.

⁴⁰ Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire: 1839-1908*, 17-29.

education. Broadly, the decree provided for centralization, discipline, and compulsion in education for all subjects.⁴¹ It attempted to undo the mixture of students, separating them based on age and knowledge under several tiers all the way from primary education to higher education. The primary level carried the same name of the *sibyan maktab*s but had to operate under new rules. In addition to being compulsory for all and under the general supervision of Istanbul, the *sibyan* was reserved for girls aged 6-10 and boys aged 7-11 with duration of four years where the alphabet among other subjects such as Ottoman history and the Qur'an were to be taught.⁴² As was the case previously, non-Muslims communities would have their own religious instruction. The second tier were the *rüşdiye* schools. Children would enroll at the *rüşdiye* schools at age ten (girls) and eleven (boys), also for a duration of four years. They were to be taught introduction to “religious” subjects, Ottoman grammar, orthography and composition, Arabic and Persian through new methods, bookkeeping, arithmetic, drawing/drafting, introduction to geometry, general history and Ottoman history, geography, gymnastics, and the language commonly used in the school’s vicinity. Certain “motivated” students living in trade zones could also study French in their last and fourth year. Rushdīyah’s assessment of the Ottoman schools he visited was mixed. He commended the children for their efforts, writing that they did not evade their learning responsibilities and all enjoyed their time at school. He opined that this was because of the teachers’ approach: they treated children with extraordinary compassion and kindness. However, his opinion was negative otherwise. He found the supposedly reformed schools of Istanbul to be in an inferior state. He found no principles of

⁴¹ For a translation of this decree, see Evered, *Empire and Education under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks*, 206.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 208.

pedagogy for generating functional literacy.⁴³ This assessment was probably true in context of Rushdīyah's interests, because early attempts at educational reform in the Ottoman empire did not meet expected goals. For example, the intent of reformers was for children to acquire functional literacy at the *sibyan* level to spare the *rüşdiye* schools of this task. But in practice, many children would come to the *rüşdiye* schools still illiterate.⁴⁴

Having lost hope in the Ottoman center, Rushdīyah then travelled to Cairo. There, he visited the manager of the Persian-language *Hikmat* newspaper, Mīrzā Mihdī Khān Tabrīzī. He desired to be introduced to those known in the organization of schools and the arts of pedagogy. Mīrzā Mihdī Khān Tabrīzī took Rushdīyah to what he claimed was the new, reputable *Baladīyah* school the next day.⁴⁵ At the primary level, the school consisted of fourth through sixth grades. According to Rushdīyah, children spent first through third grades at the *maktab* (in Ottoman nomenclature *sibyan mektebi* and in Arabic *kuttāb* in the plural), after which they enrolled at the *Baladīyah*.⁴⁶ The Iranian traveler soon learned that in terms of pedagogy, the *Baladīyeh* school was not terribly different from its *maktab* counterpart. Rushdīyah thought instructions in the fourth grade were deficient. Most children, he wrote, had memorized prayers written in their textbook, but could not recognize the letters nor read the prayers. Even though most of their reading had short vowels (*mu'arab būd*), students were unable to read because of the teacher's lack of alphabet pedagogy.⁴⁷ Rushdīyah tried his luck with the sixth grade at the school as well. Students read a text on *akhlāq*. Even with the use of short vowels, they committed plenty of

⁴³ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 12.

⁴⁴ Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire: 1839-1908*, 46-47.

⁴⁵ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

mistakes. The teacher did not seem to care, Rushdīyah wrote, and incorrect reading and writing even at higher grades were thought to be how things were and always would be. In fact, one teacher told Rushdīyah that children were “accustomed to” to incorrect writing.⁴⁸ What Rushdīyah had failed to find at the *Baladīyah* school, rapid and functional literacy, began to appear in Egypt a few decades after his visit. Egyptian schooling at the turn of twentieth century was differentiated from previous educational projects in its unrelenting focus and success in achieving basic, functional literacy.⁴⁹ Rushdīyah seemed to have recognized this change in his diaries at the time of its writing. Citing 1915 statistics on schools in Egypt, he wrote, “today [i.e., 1936], Egypt is known as the abode of knowledge.”⁵⁰

Overall, in Istanbul and Cairo Rushdīyah learned nothing on principles of pedagogy. He thought that the children who did become literate and continued with their education achieved this only because of the mutual compassion between teachers and students.⁵¹ The mutual compassion he saw during his Ottoman travels was absent in schools of Tabriz, and he added that physical punishment and mutual enmity were the norms in his city.⁵² As mentioned previously, in *makātib* of Tabriz and Qajar Iran more broadly physical punishment was routinely applied without complaint from parents. Popular idioms would even celebrate this practice:

چوب معلم گل است هر که نخورد خل است

The teacher’s stick is a flower, whomever is not hit is a lunatic

از ضرب چوب خرس ملا می شود

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁹ Yousef, *Composing Egypt: Reading, Writing, and the Emergence of a Modern Nation, 1870-1930*, 83.

⁵⁰ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 19, 28.

From the stick's hit, the bear becomes a mullah⁵³

Though corporeal punishment of children was an accepted fact of life, some restrictions did exist. According to one source, teachers did not generally punish children under the age of ten. In most cases, contact with head and face was to be avoided, although there were reports of children losing eyes or ears because of excessively hard punishment applied to their face and heads.⁵⁴ Students were beaten by thin wood, or were positioned lying down with feet up on a *bastinado* (*falak*) and then struck on their feet. Alternatively, children were imprisoned for brief durations in dark basements (*sīyāh'chāl*) of homes in which classes were held.⁵⁵ Punishment was sometimes gendered; pinching and inserting nails into skin were applied to girls only. A less physical method of punishment was for the teacher to join voices with students and curse the wrongdoer.⁵⁶ Iranian novelist, Muḥammad 'Alī Jamālzādah (b. 1892), recounted corporeal punishment in some details in his memoirs. He wrote that the teacher would have the children recite the following: "I must say the *tashdīd* roughly. I must recognize the *hamza* on *alif* as an *alif*. If I do not, I shall be hit on my palm and feet a hundred times to know it as such."⁵⁷ He added:

From that very first day I set foot in the *maktab*, I was like a bird in a cage. My heartbeat had not slowed down yet, when the *akhund*, in enmity and anger... as if he had a prolonged grudge against me, an innocent child, asked my name. I said, with a shaky voice, "Sayyid Muḥammad 'Alī." He said to me, "Sayyid Muḥammad 'Alī, know that they call this place *maktab*. It's not a place for fooling around nor for playing. If you move an inch, I will put your nails on the

⁵³ Ḥaydarī and Zū al-Faqārī, *Adabīyāt-i maktab'khānah-yī dar Īrān*, 62 (quoting the idioms).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁵ Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-'i Qājārīyah*, 51.

⁵⁶ Ḥaydarī and Zū al-Faqārī, *Adabīyāt-i maktab'khānah-yī dar Īrān*, 67.

⁵⁷ Jamālzādah, *Sar va tah-'i yak karbās, yā, Isfahānnāmah*.

bastinado...” Hearing this, I became speechless; I lost my breathe and began to cry.⁵⁸

Soon after this directive, Jamālzādah was punished and put under the bastinado for not understanding what homework was expected of him. “In that hour,” he wrote, “at once I became fearful and uninterested in knowledge, literacy, and writing.”⁵⁹ This lack of compassion was reciprocated by children, who would punish their teachers in calculated ways. Rushdīyah wrote that a few of the *makātib* in Tabriz were known for students forming into a group, two or three times per year, to beat their teacher with his own stick. The animosity between teachers and children would go so far, he wrote, that children would bury a jar of explosives (*bārūt*) under the teacher’s seat, which would be set off to injure the teacher.⁶⁰ The Qajar diplomat and Rushdīyah’s reformist-rival in education reform, Mīrzā Mihdī Khān Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah, wrote that he was severely punished for another child’s inattention. In retaliation, the young Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah managed to purchase some fireworks. Before the teacher entered the room, he created a large hole (*gudāl*) under the teacher’s seat, hid the fireworks there and connected them to their head-string (*fiṭīlah*) which he had control over. When the teacher came in and was about to sit, he set it off causing him to be thrown upwards hitting the ceiling and breaking his hand. The circle of violence continued, with the teacher punishing both children so severely that they attempted suicide—one by stabbing his stomach and the other by jumping off the balcony—but failed. Their failed attempt compelled their fathers to replace the ākhūnd with another teacher.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁰ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 19.

⁶¹ Qāsimī’pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-yi Qājārīyah*, 86-88 (quoting the memoirs of Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah).

Rushdīyah converged with his intellectual contemporaries in his conviction that corporeal punishment was antithetical to learning. In Istanbul and Cairo, he had seen how the lack of punishment and mutual compassion enabled some learning even in the absence of principles of pedagogy. Not having found these principles, or as he put it, not having found “the medicine for his sickness” in Cairo, Rushdīyah set out for Beirut.⁶²

Rushdīyah spent two years (1882-84) in Beirut where he acquired his new pedagogy, which he then introduced to Muslim children in Yerevan and Tabriz.⁶³ In Beirut, Rushdīyah met with a former acquaintance, Mīrzā Javād Khān, who was employed at the Iranian consulate (*qunsūl*). Mīrzā Javād Khān recommended a French-instituted school, which was established via local requests to train teachers for the reform of primary education.⁶⁴ Rushdīyah did not seek foreign nor missionary schools like the Alliance Française or their teachers in Iran, and instead came all the way to the Ottoman world. In fact, memoirs of Iranian educational activists, including Rushdīyah, made no significant mention of missionary and foreign schools in Iran.⁶⁵ Rushdīyah did not clarify the reasons for why he went to the Ottoman world, instead of seeking new pedagogy at Iran’s missionary schools. Based on our incomplete information about missionary schools around the year 1882, two reasons may be given.⁶⁶ First, these schools appeared to have primarily taught Christian subjects to Iranian Christians, and when Muslims

⁶² Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 32.

⁶³ Beginning in the nineteenth century, Beirut attracted Iranian intellectuals visiting there. Some of them are covered in Chehabi, “‘The Paris of the Middle East’: Iranians in Cosmopolitan Beirut” in *Iran in the Middle East Transnational Encounters and Social History*, ed., Chehabi et al.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ringer, *Education, Religion, and Discourse of Cultural Reform in Iran*, 143. Ringer does not make specific mention of Rushdīyah.

⁶⁶ For a study of missionary schools (those operated by the French in particular) in the Qajar period and after, see Nāṭīq, *Kārnāmah-’i farhangī-yi farangī dar Īrān*. See also Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 114.

enrolled, their curriculum was heavily focused on foreign languages and sciences, such as French language and literature.⁶⁷ It is not clear if in the period at issue, these schools were teaching Persian or Arabic alphabet, language, literature, and Islamic subjects. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, Rushdīyah may have believed that association with missionary schools would imperil his already-precarious plan to go against *maktab* education. Acquiring new pedagogy by Ottoman Muslims and for Muslims (even if it was under the direction of the French), without a missionary connection, was less of a liability.

Rushdīyah did not seek mission educators in Iran or elsewhere, but he did receive the tutelage of French educators in a Beirut school intended for Muslim children. The school's French director (*ra'īs*) was perplexed that locals needed instructions on how to teach their native (Arabic) alphabet. His hope was that when French alphabet was taught to children, local teachers would gradually apply the same method to Arabic alphabet instruction.⁶⁸ Appearing anti-colonial in his views, the director thought educating young children in a foreign language first would have a negative impact on their body (*jism*), soul (*rūh*), and manners (*khulq*).⁶⁹ After Rushdīyah expressed interest to the director that he wanted to apply their methods to the teaching of Arabic alphabet, he was provided with a contract and an eight lira salary per month, subject to an increase.⁷⁰ Before the first day of instructions, the director conversed patiently with Rushdīyah on the first-grade program and the principles of pedagogy. Rushdīyah saw this

⁶⁷ For an explanation of the curriculum in Alliance Française in the constitutional years, with “the most important” subjects being French language and literature, see *ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁸ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 33.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

opportunity as “God-sent,” although he was anxious as much of what heard was in French. Still, he was informed of what went on (presumably, a translator was present).⁷¹

On opening day, in addition to 700 students in other grades, 30 students between the age of five to seven enrolled in first grade.⁷² The 30 beginning students entered the classroom sitting on their seats (*nīmkat*) facing two blackboards one of which had horizontal lines and the other slanted lines.⁷³ The boards were used for interactive teaching of the alphabet, not seen in the *makātib* of Tabriz. An English teacher speaking in Arabic taught the class. He had an understanding of pedagogy, Rushdīyah wrote, and spoke simply and slowly.⁷⁴ On the first night of school activity, Rushdīyah claimed to have suggested to the director that he teach the Arabic alphabet as follows: he wanted to teach one letter and its writing one day, and another letter the next, which students would then combine to create words that they would write and pronounce. The sounding of Arabic letters was crucial; Rushdīyah thought if they were sounded out and pronounced correctly, students would make no mistake in writing them. He intended to break up words into their sound constituents, so the child knew which letters were pronounced and how. The director and other teachers approved of this method, and informed Rushdīyah about phonetic approaches to learning the French alphabet invented years back.⁷⁵ In this context, Rushdīyah learned the effectiveness of teaching the Arabic alphabet phonetically as opposed to the name-based method used at the *maktab*. In the *maktab*, the alphabet was taught based on the names of

⁷¹ Ibid., 36. He mentions a translator (no name is given) who accompanied him in Beirut, see *ibid.*, 51.

⁷² Ibid., 37.

⁷³ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 42.

the vowel and the letter. The word *bār* (meaning load), for example, was taught as follows: ب به صدای/B by the sound of alif, bā, and by the silent R becomes bār. In contrast, the phonetic method approached the word based on how each individual letter *sounded*. B sound combined with ā sound becomes bā, combined with r sound becomes bār (ب-ا میشود با-ر).⁷⁶ Rushdīyah wanted to change the *maktab* approach to the phonetic method he had learned (or in his own estimation, discovered in conversation with the director). He believed that the phonetic teaching of the alphabet would enable rapid and functional literacy. This proved true, he wrote. In one week, five lessons were completed and students were able to break up a word, distinguish the sounds, and spell it when the word was read out clearly. Rushdīyah then arranged a public exam for students in front of the director, other teachers, and other guests that included the children's parents and notables of the city including modernist mufti Muḥammad 'Abduh. They were to ask students to read and write any word from the following taught letters: ا ء د ذ ر ز و. On examination day, the attendees dictated certain words to students which they first pronounced and then wrote down, all correctly.⁷⁷ The phonetic method is what Rushdīyah later became known for upon his return to Iran. The method was widely adapted including in the emerging teacher's colleges. Dawlatābādī who was otherwise critical of Rushdīyah's claim to senior status in education reform did concede that it was Rushdīyah who pioneered the new, phonetic teaching of the alphabet.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*. For similar examples, see Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-yi Qājārīyah*, 72, 201.

⁷⁷ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 46-48.

⁷⁸ Dawlatābādī, *Hayāt-i Yaḥyā* vol. 1.

Although Rushdīyah was very much committed to phonetic method of teaching the alphabet toward rapid literacy, he did not show an interest in changing the form of the Arabic-Persian script. Intellectual arguments that connected the alphabet to higher literacy, and more broadly, to large-scale reform of society were common in the late nineteenth century. The Tiflis-based intellectual covered in Chapter 2, Mīrzā Fath‘Alī Khān Ākhūnd‘zādeh, who directed his critical energies towards Qajar Iran, was the most radical advocate of alphabet change, connecting its transformation to Iran’s salvation. Arguing that the Arabic script disabled literacy thus obstructing the spread of new sciences and ideas, which in turn prevented large-scale reform, he invented a new script and presented it to an certain educational association (*anjuman-i dānish*) in Istanbul, but it was never pursued seriously either via intellectual consensus or educational initiatives.⁷⁹ Newspapers too had occasional entries on the reformation of the “Islamic script,” arguing that the supposedly easier “Western script” was tied to their children’s effective learning and broader civilizational progress. Others tried to provide for the legitimacy of change in the so-called Islamic script from the perspective of *Sharī‘ah*, relying on the historical precedent of the Kufī script. The Qur’an was initially committed to writing in this script, but the Abbasid official and calligrapher, ibn Muqla, with juristic approval, changed the Kufī script to *khaṭṭ-e naskh*, from which many other calligraphic forms emerged. If the original script of the Qur’an could change substantially, the argument went, so could the Arabic script.⁸⁰ Rushdīyah did not share the same anxiety over the form of the script nor did he, as far as our evidence suggests, partook in the conceptual debate; his concern was the *manner in which the*

⁷⁹ See Akhūndzādeh, *Alifbā-yi jadīd*.

⁸⁰ As an example of this argument, see Akhtar, *Iṣlāḥ-i khaṭṭ va kitābat*, vol. 3, 1785-86.

alphabet was taught and he believed sound-based teaching of the alphabet would enable early and functional literacy irrespective of what the script looked like.

As the term progressed, Rushdīyah authored his own lessons, a practice that was entirely foreign to the *maktab* teachers who selected existing texts for children. In three months, he taught fifty lessons from his self-authored textbook, “The Foundations of Learning” or *bidāyat al-ta’līm*.⁸¹ After the program, students took three months off. Rushdīyah took this time away from the school in the flower-filled Levant countryside, Mount Lebanon, along with the director and his family.⁸² Rushdīyah returned to teach functional literacy to elementary students and also added lessons from Sa’dī’s *Gulistān*. In one year, students read three chapters from the *Gulistān* that included about a hundred stories. Rushdīyah reported, probably with some exaggeration, that students memorized the stories, recited them from memory, and translated them from Persian into Arabic.⁸³ Once the year ended, Rushdīyah asked for a “recommendation” (*shahādat*) from the director before his planned return to Iran. The director wrote one on his behalf stating that the Iranian educator entered the “*dār al-mu’allimīn*” in Beirut—which must be a reference to the French-run school and not a state-run teacher’s college comparable to those that gained prominence a few decades later—to learn principles of school management and pedagogy, where he spent two years, and that he was qualified to manage a school at the elementary and middle

⁸¹ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 48.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 53.

levels.⁸⁴ Rushdīyah intended to put his training and the new pedagogy in use upon his return to Tabriz, but fearing *maktab* opposition at home he went to establish a school in Yerevan first.⁸⁵

3.4 The First Yerevan Schools

In about 1884, Rushdīyah met with his brother, Mīrzā Hājī Aqā, who had moved to Yerevan and led a simple life there, where he had a much bigger family than in Tabriz. Rushdīyah sought his brother's help in opening a school. Fearing communal opposition to new education, he accepted reluctantly and began recruiting his connections to have their children study there. Meanwhile, Rushdīyah attempted to obtain permission for his educational enterprise not from Russian authorities but from the local Muslim judge (*qādī*). Mullāh Bāqir had advised him that he must visit the *qādī*, but refrain from informing him on the specifics of what he intended to do. Maintaining an air of innocence, Rushdīyah submitted his request along with sweets, and obtained written permission to begin work.⁸⁶

Rushdīyah combined reading with writing instruments from the first day of instruction—this puzzled the residents because the old *maktab* would teach students orally for five or six years before they had any engagement with the pen.⁸⁷ Rushdīyah saw a link between literacy and directing children to write words from their mother tongue, which for the Iranian children at his school was the same Turkish spoken in Tabriz.⁸⁸ Principals (*mudīr* in the singular) of other

⁸⁴ Ibid., 54. In his diaries, Rushdīyah wrote that the letter was dated 1281/1864. This date is incorrect because Rushdīyah was a child on this date.

⁸⁵ Rushdīyah also reported that he stopped in Istanbul where, through contact with the Iranian ambassador, he experimented with his new method and successfully taught reading to 30 elementary Iranian students, see Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 54.

⁸⁶ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 88-89.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁸⁸ According to Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah, the children in attendance were Iranian. See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*.

makātib complained to local authorities about the unconventional teaching of Turkish, saying that Rushdīyah had been sent by the Ottomans to convert their children from Shia to Sunni Islam. City inspectors (*mufattishīn*) thus came and saw that the writings were in Azeri Turkish and not Ottoman Turkish. One inspector, who appeared most senior in age, refused to side with residents telling them that they should thank Rushdīyah as he was eliminating the need for government-operated and regulated schools—which were seen in many localities to intrude upon age-old ulema and communal ways of life. He thus wrote a report that would not alarm his superiors, but the local *qādī* had a different opinion. He sent an agent (*ma'mūr*) to inform Rushdīyah that his teaching methods constituted innovation (*bid'at*) under Islamic law and were thus illegal, informing the educator he must either teach according to old principles or close his school.⁸⁹ Thereafter, Rushdīyah voluntarily closed his school but began to rent properties for new schools in adjacent lands. He hired teachers who had graduated from public Russian schools and asked them to teach in Turkish until he was able to hire Persian-speaking teachers and author textbooks in Persian, which along with Arabic were lettered languages in Iran where he intended to establish new schools. He employed his brother for religious studies, and at his suggestion, named the new school “Rushdīyah”—an Ottoman term (*rüşdiyye*) used for reformed middle schools of the *tanzimat* period—which Mīrzā Ḥasan Tabrīzī later adopted as his own surname. In contrast to the mixed *maktab*, the Rushdīyah school had three separate grades and he provided students with leisure time in between classes. Rushdīyah was careful not to provide his agitators with easy cause for attack. As it was considered unbelief (*kufṛ*) to ring a bell, he came up with poems that students would sing in a rhythm mimicking the music of the *adhān*, to declare the beginning or end of the period, and to implement order, for instance to alert students that break is

⁸⁹ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 89.

over and it is time to form a queue and return to class. Students would thus sing as follows: “whoever seeks knowledge and wisdom/ know that it’s time for queues to be formed.”⁹⁰ The song substituted the bell.

Rushdīyah’s newly-opened school increased in enrollment, which meant additional tuition fees. With the extra revenue, Rushdīyah subsidized indigent children. The school became popular across the Caucasus, he wrote. Russian, Armenian, and Muslim parents visited and examined the program. They would test children’s learning during break times and were very pleased.⁹¹ One day, Rushdīyah wrote, the Russian science minister (*vazīr-i ‘ulūm*) visited the school, the result of which was a personal invitation, with the carriage provided, to a nearby city for a meeting with the minister during which he reportedly applauded Rushdīyah’s pedagogical achievements.⁹² Rushdīyah spent long hours devising the curriculum and his passion took him all the way through the night until he would hear the morning call to prayer. He authored two books in Turkish for the teaching of alphabet, one designed for students and the other for teachers. The new textbook fanned the fire of fear in the community because of the use of Turkish language. Just as reformers (*mutijadidīn*) would send their praises to him, so did the “fanatics” (*fanatik’hā*) send their curses.⁹³ The textbooks’ publications costs were taken care by the Russian minister of science. Furthermore, the minister was said to have ordered the Yerevan ministry representative

⁹⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Rushdīyah had the benefit of local translators in this meeting. See Ibid., 92-93. Rushdīyah was also invited to and attended a Tsar coronation ceremony before he opened the first Tehran school. The invitation came from his Caucasian friend, the intellectual ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Ṭālibuf. It is narrated at length in Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 97. Later, Ṭālibuf donated to the cause of education reform. It is reported that Ṭālibuf had arranged for a monthly donation of 20 *tuman* starting on date March 8, 1905 to be sent to Rushdīyah (after the educator had a falling out with Amīn al-Dawlah’s son and opened the new school named *maktab*). See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i ‘umr*.

⁹³ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 95.

to provide the school with operational support in form of teachers in Russian language, mathematics, and natural sciences, as well as one hundred chairs and tables.⁹⁴ How the official support for what appears to have been a private school for Iranian Muslim subjects squared with the aforementioned Russian regulations is not clear. The curriculum consisted of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Russian, literature (unspecified), *Sharī'ah* obligations, geometry, algorithmic, geography, natural history, painting, and calligraphy.⁹⁵ The school operated fruitfully for three years. In the fourth year, Rushdīyah began to implement measures that resembled new schools elsewhere and a modern disciplinary regime. He required students to wear uniforms without which entry to school was not permitted. The uniform included an Iranian hat, *labbādih*, *qabā-yi rāstah*, and short-heeled shoes.⁹⁶ When school opened for the fourth year, 250 students wearing identical uniforms entered. Twenty indigent students were admitted for free, and the rest were asked to pay five *menta* (Russian currency) in tuition. After completion of the fifth year, fifty students received diplomas, either going in search of work or entering governmental schools in disciplines of sciences, political science, medicine, engineering, crafts, and philosophy.⁹⁷ The practice of granting diplomas became standard at future Rushdīyah schools, in contrast to the *maktab* where no certificates or diplomas were given.

An important visit took place at the end of the fifth year, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh visited the school. From Rushdīyah's perspective, this visit was especially significant because his ultimate

⁹⁴ Ibid., 94.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Contrast Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah who wrote that the school operated for four years. See Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*.

aim was to bring the new schools to Iran.⁹⁸ The king had decided to visit several regions in Iran and also took three trips to Europe, which he documented in his diaries. The end of the fifth school-year coincided with Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's third and last trip to Europe.⁹⁹ He was travelling through Yerevan on the way back to Tehran when he noticed the front steps of the Iranian school, which Rushdīyah had decorated with an Iranian carpet, flags, and a picture of the Shah.¹⁰⁰ This display intended to lure the Shah and succeeded. Rushdīyah explained to the king the school's accomplishments in rapid, functional literacy and informed him of his wish for a comparable school to be instituted in Iran. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh then ordered Rushdīyah to travel with his entourage and establish a school in Tabriz. A delighted Rushdīyah did not hesitate and put his affairs in order, asking his brother to supervise the Yerevan school and left for Tabriz with the Shah. On their way to Tabriz, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh inquired more about the school and Rushdīyah spoke at length of the benefits it would have for the people and polity of Iran. Once they reached Nakhchivan, a region between Yerevan and Tabriz, Rushdīyah was left to stay with the director of the post office (*chapar'khānah*). The director told the educator that he must stay until the Shah leaves Tabriz for Tehran, and upon hearing this, Rushdīyah realized his mistake. Reflecting back, he wrote:

It became apparent to me that when I was before the king as he was asking me about the impact the school would have, my inexperience and ignorance of the king caused me to describe its benefits at length, that indeed it won't be long until, under his majesty, the God's shadow, schools would be instituted all over to liberate Iranians from ignorance,

⁹⁸ The second half of the *Ottoman Diaries* narrated the events that unfolded once Rushdīyah went to establish schools in Yerevan and Tabriz, including the Shah's visit to the Yerevan school. See Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 70. For the Yerevan events, there is significant overlap between the two diaries. For the Tabriz events, there is overlap with Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah's biography but with additional mundane details.

⁹⁹ For a diary of this trip, see Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, *Rūznāmah-i khāṣirāt-i Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh dar safar-i sivvum-i farangestān*. Contrast Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah wrote that the Shah was returning from his second European trip, see Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*.

¹⁰⁰ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*.

the masses would gain in knowledge and wisdom, learn of their rights, acquire profession and industry, possess wealth and property, each person acquiring, according to his or her ability, politeness and principles of good manners, free of need for police or city inspectors. Knowing their rights, as they do in civilized nations, they would gain in respect and salvation and be forever grateful to the king...¹⁰¹

We do not have a narrative from Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's perspective on what occurred between the two and why he may have left Rushdīyah behind. But given the Shah's broader approach to reformist activities, Rushdīyah's belief that the reformist implications of his educational enterprise alarmed the Shah is plausible. So much so that, if the diaries were true, the Shah secured the closure of the Yerevan school. When Rushdīyah returned, the school was closed and its properties were confiscated by an Iranian representative (*kārguzār*) in Yerevan who presumably had authority over Iranian subjects there.¹⁰² A distraught Rushdīyah returned to his hometown of Tabriz. Although Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh had opposed his educational mission, Rushdīyah decided to act against the Shah's desires. Remaining quiet about the Shah's disapproval, he began to pursue his original mission of educating Iranians in his hometown of Tabriz, instead of Tehran. Rushdīyah opened the first school in rooms owned by a mosque in the Shishgilān neighborhood, which he considered most prepared and least likely to declare someone an unbeliever for education reform, as "most [residents] were social elites [*a'yān*] and well-educated."¹⁰³ In the year 1889, a long-held vision turned into a reality.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 98.

¹⁰² This closure was not recorded in Rushdīyah's diary, but is documented in secondary sources, see for instance Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*.

¹⁰³ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 99.

¹⁰⁴ Rushdīyah gave the date May 8, 1883 (Rajab 1, 1300) in his diary and on letterheads for letters he would send for official purposes to indicate the beginning of his educational enterprise in Iran. This date must be incorrect because he had just left his role as a local preacher in 1882, had travelled for two years in the Ottoman world, and had worked in Yerevan for another five. The correct date therefore must be 1889. See also Shīreh'Jīnī' estimation of

3.5 The Tabriz Schools

Tabriz residents were informed about the new school by a public notice (*i'lān*). The posting took note of the poor state of existing education, claiming that only three out of 100 students leave the *maktab* literate, and that most children had a deep dislike of the *maktab'khānah*. It stated Rushdīyah's teaching qualifications and the conditions for admission, which were more restrictive than the existing *maktab* system that opened its doors to students of different ages and abilities. Students had to be beginners and thus illiterate, and between the ages of seven to ten. Moreover, they had to meet certain health conditions, be free of favus, chickenpox, contagious diseases, and be circumcised (thus Muslim boys). The tuition was between five *qirān* to one *tuman* per month—a clear departure from the old ways of the *maktab'khānah*.¹⁰⁵ Unlike some of the prominent ulema, the mullahs who ran and taught at the *maktab* led simple lives. They would not charge a fee from students, or if they did it was on a “sliding scale” and as little as five to ten *qirān*. Instead of fixed tuition, teachers would receive gifts from the student's families, which were given at the end of the year or when the student had finished reading the Qur'an in its entirety. The gifts included foods, sweets, money, or wood intended for physical punishment.¹⁰⁶ The new curriculum and scheduling too were very different from what went on in the *maktab*. Under the old system, students did not have a summer break. They attended the *maktab* from morning until evening without short breaks in between, but had an extended period for lunch. Some went home to eat, while others brought their lunch with them. Students had days off on Fridays and on religious and *Nawrūz* (New Year) holidays.

the date, which is the Muharram of 1889 in Baqāyī Shīreh'jīnī, *Zindagīnāmah, ārā', nazarāt va khāṭirāt-i Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah = Biography, Ideas and Memoirs of Mīrzā Hassan Roshdieh*.

¹⁰⁵ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 99-100.

¹⁰⁶ Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-'i Qājārīyah*, 56.

Moreover, school was not in session when certain women in the community gave birth, or when families left to spend time in their gardens and villages.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, they may have left learning periodically to assist in the family trade.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, Rushdīyah held classes for 250 days and thus summers were off. Classes met for four hours per day with thirty-minute breaks between classes. The curriculum covered the following subjects, although not equally as more time was allotted to certain subjects: phonetic alphabet in Azeri Turkish, reading in Turkish and Persian, grammar lessons in Turkish, Persian and Arabic, Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudence, arithmetic, oral history, geography based on the map of Tabriz, calligraphy, dictation in Persian, Turkish and Arabic, drawing and painting, and physical wellness.¹⁰⁹ The curriculum differed from the *maktab* where students were acquainted, based on the teacher's preference, with some of the following: the alphabet, Qur'anic readings, *Shari'ah* obligations, social etiquette literature, Arabic language, Persian literature, and Islamic and Iranian history, writing composition (*tarassul*), calligraphy (*khatt*), basic math, and *sīyāq*.¹¹⁰ Local languages were generally not taught, and new sciences like physics and chemistry were not taught at all. Creative arts, with exception of singing and poetry composition in a few schools, were not part of the curriculum.¹¹¹ Texts were not uniform and their selection depended on the instructors, but some were widely used in the subject of history, for example, the preferred text was *Nāsikh al-tavārīkh*, a Qajar-commissioned nine-

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 70-71.

¹⁰⁸ As an example, see Qūchānī, *Sīyāhat-i Sharq*, 27.

¹⁰⁹ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 100-101. 600 hours of homework (*vazā'f-i shab*) was also assigned for 1000 hours of instructions throughout the year. See *ibid.*, 101.

¹¹⁰ Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-'i Qājārīyah*, 62-63. Īsā Ṣadīq defined *sīyāq* as being the same subject as accounting (*'ilm-i ḥisāb*), which was created for court administration and written with abbreviated Arabic words based on Pahlavī signs. At the time of his writing (1957), *sīyāq* was still in use by merchants (*kasabah*) but defunct in the primary school curriculum. See Ṣadīq, *Tārīkh-i farhang-i Īrān*, 364.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 63, 68.

volume text on world history authored by Muhammad Taqī Sipīhr Kāshānī. The selected texts did not match the learning abilities of young students.¹¹² As we saw, Rushdīyah attempted to distinguish his approach by authoring textbooks specifically intended for children.¹¹³

The Tabriz school began its first day of instruction with roughly 150 students. Rushdīyah began instructions all the while he was seeking teachers and drafting textbooks. Meanwhile, he had to go against his critics. In Tabriz too, the custodians of the old *maktab* system and the ulema to whom the community had complained were putting up resistance against Rushdīyah's unfamiliar enterprise. In Yerevan, the teaching of Turkish led to charges of imposing Sunni over Shia Islam. In Tabriz, the charges were different. Public notices were posted claiming that the new teacher was an agent of American freemasons. Even though the Qur'an was part of the curriculum, others claimed he was neglecting the Qur'an in favor of Turkish.¹¹⁴ Responding to these accusations, Rushdīyah asked for the school to reach its ninth-month anniversary, after which students would be publicly tested on their religious knowledge. When the public test was performed at a mosque and the students displayed superior comprehension of religious studies, the prayer leader (*pīshnamāz*), who had appeared to have run out of options to condemn Rushdīyah, cried that the extraordinary progress has only one explanation, that Satan is inspiring and dictating these children's speech. The school must close, he said. Rushdīyah responded to this, saying that these children must be compared to Jesus, instead, who spoke in the cradle inspired by the Holy Spirit. He asked the *pīshnamāz* that they speak further to resolve the

¹¹² Ibid., 64.

¹¹³ Writings that were intended for children continued well into Rushdīyah's later years. For the original text of an excerpt written some two years before his death, see Gheissari, "*Maktūbī az Mirzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah*." Bukhara Journal, issue 16.

¹¹⁴ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 102.

misunderstanding, so to reverse the ruling and not jeopardize the nation's salvation, which for Rushdīyah was firmly linked to functional literacy. Once the *pīshnamāz* heard the Jesus analogy, he said that Rushdīyah was elevating children to the status of prophets, and refused any further discussion, declaring Rushdīyah a *bābī*—an adherent of the messianic movement of *bābīyat* considered illegitimate by the Shia ulema. The *pīshnamāz* forbade future interactions by the community with the educator.¹¹⁵

This compelled Rushdīyah to close the Tabriz school.¹¹⁶ Rushdīyah then spoke to his sympathetic father telling him that he could bear the burden of opposition, and that he would persist even if they hanged him and burned his body. His father advised him to be patient and provided his blessing, after which he left Tabriz.¹¹⁷ After a six-month visit to Yerevan and Mashhad, he returned to Tabriz and discovered that the *pīshnamāz* had died; this gave him the opportunity to open a school near the *bazaar*.¹¹⁸ But opposition came anew: students (*tullāb*) of the *Ṣādiqīyah* madrasa attempted to dismantle the school, engaging in acts of vandalism and threatening the school principal (*mudīr*). Rushdīyah escaped to Mashhad and returned to Tabriz

¹¹⁵ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 102-03. Abbas Amanat suggested to me that Rushdīyah may have been *bābī*. However, there are no apparent indications in his diary that he was a Twelver Shia, see Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 144, 159, 164, 175, 183, 186. At one point, Atābak sent in a female spy into the Rushdīyah residence to find evidence that he was *bābī* and present this evidence to the ulema in an attempt to eliminate the educator's political opposition to him. But nothing emerged, and in the words of Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah, "Atābak became certain that Rushdīyah was Muslim." See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*. Scholar on Iranian educational history, Qāsimī'pūyā, also remarked that he was Muslim despite early accusations of *bābīyat* for his reformist enterprise, see Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-i Qājārīyah*, 205.

¹¹⁶ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 103. Rushdīyah wrote that he distributed the school furniture and supplies among six of its teachers and asked them to open separate schools but it is not clear whether these schools became operational, and if they did, whether they were practicing new pedagogy.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 104-05.

¹¹⁸ Rushdīyah's *Diaries* ended at the Yerevan and Mashhad visit, and did not record the activities after his return to Tabriz. Contrast with Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah who did not mention the Yerevan visit. See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 31.

after a few months.¹¹⁹ In the *Charandāb* neighborhood, whose residents “were all impoverished” and where he used to preach, he opened another school where admission for indigent children was free of cost. Rushdīyah enrolled 370 students and employed twelve teachers. Now, the managers of old *makātib* went after Rushdīyah and warned his father that Rushdīyah must close the school. He complied leaving for Mashhad, but returning yet again.¹²⁰ To avoid another attack on his school, Rushdīyah tried a new approach. He maintained his pedagogical principles but kept the spatial organization of the *maktab* intact. For instance, he had children sit on the ground as opposed to chairs and tables and avoided new subjects that were not taught at the *maktab*.¹²¹ Nonetheless, students (*tullāb*) of the *Şādiqīyah* madrasa that had vandalized the school before were agitated and Rushdīyah left for Mashhad again to return for a fifth time, reopening the school in the *bazaar* neighborhood.¹²² Vandals attacked again, this time mercilessly throwing a child down the stairs killing him.¹²³

Seeing little hope in a stable enterprise in Tabriz, Rushdīyah went to Mashhad where he established the city’s first new school. Although the governor of Mashhad appeared supportive, vandals were quick to act, attacking the school and breaking the educator’s hand.¹²⁴ Mashhad

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah’s account of the Tabriz school openings and closures were borrowed into Qāsimī’pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah-i Qājārīyah*, 192.

¹²⁰ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i ‘umr*, 31.

¹²¹ This was also the strategy at the *Sharaf* school of Tehran established for indigent children in 1898. In fear of opposition, children were made to follow customary ways of sitting on the ground, instead of using chairs and desks. The school was thus carpeted. See Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1.

¹²² Rushdīyah recorded this pattern of school operation and closure in the *Ottoman diaries* as well, and in context of negotiating with pro-*maktab* ulema and *tullāb*. See Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 91.

¹²³ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i ‘umr*, 32.

¹²⁴ Ibid.; and Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 94.

appeared no safer than Tabriz, so Rushdīyah returned to Tabriz.¹²⁵ Prior opposition had made renting a place difficult, since landlords feared the destruction of their properties. Instead, Rushdīyah sold a property he owned to a Qajar official, and bought a mosque across from the *Dār al-funūn* of Tabriz. With permission from the ulema of Najaf, he repaired the mosque to create a space suitable for teaching children.¹²⁶ After two years of teaching, Rushdīyah felt secure enough to hold a public examination. Local residents seemed very impressed by students' progress, when they were interrupted by an attendee who complained that this rapid learning was dangerous, since it would distance children from religion.¹²⁷ A crowd of vandals from Aqā Sayyid Alī Aqā Yazdī's mosque appeared with clubs and batons. Children and school staff left before the vandalism began, and Rushdīyah escaped to the roof of the *Dār al-funūn* building across the school where he stood watching, along with an aid (*pīshkār*) of the crown prince, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh. The vandals threw a grenade inside the building, causing bricks to scatter around. Rushdīyah laughed at this and the man accompanying him, bewildered, inquired about the cause of his laughter, to which he responded: "Each one of these bricks will become part of a school. I am laughing at that day, and I hope that I am alive to see it."¹²⁸

A question deserving of consideration is why it was that new education, rapid literacy in particular, caused so much anxiety for certain ulema, and by extension, their *tullāb* and the community. A study of ulema writing against new education, if available, would bring us closer to a response more satisfying than simple ideological explanations that juxtapose (enlightened)

¹²⁵ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 96.

¹²⁶ Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 32.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²⁸ Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*.

modernism against traditional stagnation.¹²⁹ I make three initial suggestions as alternative hypotheses. The most immediate one is a material explanation, having to do with the ulema's financial interest. In fact, this is how the reformer, Yahyā Dawlatābādī, saw it, writing that madrasa students (*tullāb-i dīnī*) opposed new education because the movement of the social elite's children to the new schools meant loss of income for them.¹³⁰ The less obvious but I think more interesting explanation belongs not to the material realm but the realm of ideas. Rapid literacy for all meant that everyone had quick access to *'ilm*. There would arise the danger of the masses gaining the confidence to read and know on their own. They would then do away with the guidance of the learned ulema misread what they read, and disseminate false knowledge in the community. In other words, mass illiterates guided to the truth by the learned ulema were preferable to mass literates (mis)reading on their own. A third reason, related to the second, has to do with the issue of religious optionality, which I analyzed in Chapters 1-2. The ulema may have feared that new education would transform religion into an option for the literate. This was certainly implied in how the pro-*maktab* ulema reacted to new schools, for example, the dramatic connection the prayer leader drew between rapid literacy and Satanic inspiration. This is a hypothesis that requires testing in a separate study. For now, we shall content ourselves with the observation that many among the ulema were adamantly opposed to new education and did not shy away from confrontation with reformers.

¹²⁹ Printed writings of anti-constitutionalist ulema dealt primarily with the political question of constitutional government, and arguments against new education were on the periphery. Shaykh Faḡl Allāh Nūrī, for example, in his broader argument on the allegedly un-Islamic character of constitutional government, referenced new schools, Dawlatābādī's Sādāt among them, which he said would cause children to leave Islam. However, he did not develop neither an argument nor a polemic on why new schools were a threat. See Nūrī's *Tadhkarat al-ghāfil va irshād al-jāhil*, printed in Ābādīyān, *Mabānī-yi nazārī-yi ḥukūmat-i mashrūṭah va mashrū'ah*, 156.

¹³⁰ Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1.

3.6 In Tehran, From Patronage to Exile

After this incident, a patient Rushdīyah left for Mashhad again and returned after some time. Although Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh had opposed his enterprise earlier, reformists within the Qajar court were in increasing sympathy and extended their support for a new school. The Tabriz schools had received some support from the crown prince but more substantially from the soon-to-be prime minister, Amīn al-Dawlah.¹³¹ The crown prince provided for some children's tuition, and during his Azerbaijan stay, Amīn al-Dawlah provided school supplies, clothes, and food to the students.¹³² Going against convention, he also encouraged aristocratic families to remove their children from the private *maktab* and enroll them in the Rushdīyah School. Mixing was not practiced previously, since the elite thought the public *maktab* to have a corrupting influence on their children's etiquette. This perception of corruption turned on social class, not pedagogy or curriculum that were quite similar, the only difference was that private teachers generally had a higher level of learning and received a more substantial pay.¹³³ When in 1897, Amīn al-Dawlah was appointed prime minister by the now king Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh, he became a committed patron of Rushdīyah. He invited the educator to Tehran where they established the capital's first new primary school a year later in 1898 (Ramadan, 1315).¹³⁴ Enrollment reached 200 students in the first few days, and in later years it was estimated at 270 to 330.¹³⁵ The student body was

¹³¹ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 143.

¹³² In his political diaries that have very little on education reform, Amīn al-Dawlah made a single reference to his relationship with Rushdīyah, writing that the minister was “in the beginning, the first person to bring about the establishment of the Rushdīyah school in Tabriz.” See Amīn al-Dawlah, *Khāṭirāt-i sīyāsi-yi Mīrzā ‘Alī Khān Amīn al-Dawlah*, 243.

¹³³ Qāsimī'pūyā, *Madāris-i jadīd dar dawrah- 'i Qājārīyah*, 85.

¹³⁴ Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1.

¹³⁵ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i ‘umr*, 50; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma ‘ārif Rushdīyah*, 40.

mixed: Amīn al-Dawlah enrolled 40 orphans at the school and took care of their tuition, lunch, and uniforms. The rest were children of middling families (*mutivassiḥīn*) and the elites (*a'yān*), the latter's carriages would form a queue in the evenings to provide for their children's transportation back to their residences. These families paid anywhere between 15 *qirān* to 3 *tuman* in tuition, but also had to pay for the school-provided lunch.¹³⁶ According to one source, teacher-training courses were also provided at 25 *qirān* per class.¹³⁷ The school was composed of six grades, with nine classes in total, each having about 25-30 students. The curriculum included the study of the Qur'an, S'adī's *Gulistān*, *Shar'iyāt*, calligraphy, dictation, ethics, *fiqh*, grammar, composition (*tarassul*), *sīyāq*, introduction to accounting (*madkhal al-hisab*), geography, history, Russian, and French. Some of these subjects, in the first grade in particular, were taught through textbooks written by Rushdīyah himself.¹³⁸

Tehran reformists instituted several other new schools, and these were heavily enrolled.¹³⁹ Four months after the *Rushdīyah* school, the *Ibtidāīyah* School was established under the direction of Mukhbir al-Saltāneh, grandson of Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, who had returned from nine years of study in Berlin and in this period held posts in the telegraph office and Azerbaijan customs.¹⁴⁰ At the same time as *Ibtidāīyah*, the *Ilmīyah* School was instituted by Iḥtishām al-Saltānah, Qajar courtier who served in several official positions. Two months after this pair, the *Sharaf* School, and later in that same year of 1898 the *Iftitāḥīyah* and *Muẓaffarīyah*

¹³⁶ Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 41.

¹³⁷ Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 43.

¹³⁸ For the curriculum and names of these textbooks, see Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 67.

¹³⁹ Iḥtishām al-Saltānah, *Khāḥirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Saltānah*, 325; and Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 52. For more on these schools, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁰ 'Alavī, *Rijāl-i 'aṣr-i mashrūḥīyat*, 99.

schools were instituted under the direction of two reformists, Mīrzā Maḥmūd Khān Miftāh al-Mulk and Hājj Shaykh Mihdī Kāshānī respectively. The *Khayrīyah* School was also established in 1898 and under the direction of Hājj Shaykh Hādī Najmābādī, a prominent cleric and strong ally of Rushdīyah, its purpose was to provide new schooling for orphans. In 1899, *Dānish*, *Adab*, and *Islām* were instituted as well as *Sādāt* under the direction of Dawlatābādī.¹⁴¹ All these schools were connected to an organization that came to be known the Education Society (*anjuman-i ma'ārif*).¹⁴² This society was one of the earliest attempts to organize around the cause of education reform. Although certain courtiers were members and funded the association, the association came into existence as a “bottom-up” intellectual effort and a reaction to the conservatism and perceived ineffectiveness of the official Science Ministry (*vizārat-i 'ulūm*).¹⁴³ In addition to instituting the new aforementioned Tehran schools, the Education Society was responsible for fundraising and financial administration of these schools.¹⁴⁴ Lack of uniformity and discipline in how primary schools operated was a common complaint among reformists, and the Education Society attempted to regulate them, by, for example, drafting a twenty-chapter bylaw on how the schools ought to operate.¹⁴⁵ Our sources conflict on the emphasis they give to Rushdīyah's centrality to the formation of this society. Family biographical sources claimed it came into formation under his leadership and its original name was the “Society of Rushdīyah

¹⁴¹ Rushdīyah, *Savāneh-i 'umr*, 53. Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn Rushdīyah who listed a few more schools in this period. See Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*.

¹⁴² For a history of this association in English, see Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*, 187.

¹⁴³ For reformist dissatisfaction with the Science Ministry, see Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah*, 323.

¹⁴⁴ For fundraising and financial administration in the association, see Dawlatābādī, *Hayāt-i Yahyā*, 230; Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah*, 325; Rushdīyah, *Savāneh-i 'umr*, 39; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmeḥ-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 43.

School's Aiders" (*anjuman-i imnā-yi madrisah-'i Rushdīyah*).¹⁴⁶ Rushdīyah himself did not claim leadership in his diaries, and gave the impression that it was a collective effort.¹⁴⁷ Rushdīyah's contemporaries agreed. According to Dawlatābādī, Rushdīyah, based on his Tabriz efforts and the sponsorship he had received from the prime minister, viewed himself as the foremost pioneer in new education when he entered Tehran. Dawlatābādī, however, saw Rushdīyah as *a* player among many others in new education and in the Society. He opined that many were in fact superior to him in their knowledge and experience.¹⁴⁸ Our sources converge on one point regarding the association: the first meeting took place on Rushdīyah school premises in 1898, the same year the school opened.¹⁴⁹ The attendees were Rushdīyah, the Qajar science minister, Nayyur al-Mulk, Dawlatābādī, İhtishām al-Salṭānah, Miftāḥ al-Mulk, Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah, and 'Alī Khān Nāẓim al-Dawlah.¹⁵⁰ Additional courtiers and intellectuals were invited and joined in future meetings.

Soon after the Education Society formed, discord broke out between Rushdīyah and others on the right manner of operating new schools. İhtishām al-Salṭānah became agitated with Rushdīyah's spending of the society's budget on daily school lunches and high salaries, and tried to limit and eliminate the lunches.¹⁵¹ The collective decision of the society was to limit

¹⁴⁶ See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 39; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 53.

¹⁴⁷ Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 154.

¹⁴⁸ Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1, 226.

¹⁴⁹ The date was Shavval of 1315. See *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁵⁰ See Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 43. Contrast with Dawlatābādī who further included Mīrzā 'Abbās Khān Muhandis' bāshī, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, 230. Contrast with İhtishām al-Salṭānah who only listed himself, Rushdīyah, Dawlatābādī, Miftāḥ al-Mulk, Mumtaḥin al-Dawlah, and added Muhandis al-Mamālik. See İhtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i İhtishām al-Salṭānah*, 325.

¹⁵¹ For different accounts of the conflict over Rushdīyah's spending, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, 230. Contrast Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 47. Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah even believed that the raised budget belonged to the *Rushdīyah* School alone, and was appropriated by the association to be spent for all the new schools, see *ibid.*,

Rushdīyah's spending.¹⁵² The meetings were also transferred from the Rushdīyah school to the residence of Nayyur al-Mulk.¹⁵³ Moreover, Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah acted against Rushdīyah, by using his power as foreign minister to divert 2,000 *tuman* sent specifically to Rushdīyah, adding it to the funds of the society.¹⁵⁴ Amīn al-Dawlah, though not resisting these decisions, remained supportive of Rushdīyah until the very end of his service. Before leaving his post as prime minister, he provided the society as well as the science minister with a letter recommending that they treat him as senior with respect to affairs of primary education.¹⁵⁵

The real challenge in Tehran, however, did not come from Rushdīyah's reformist colleagues, but from Amīn al-Dawlah's successor, Mīrzā 'Alī-Aṣḡar Khān Amīn-al-Sulṭān (later he was known as Atābak for the title of Atābak-i A'ẓam conferred on him by the Shah in December of 1900).¹⁵⁶ The new minister ended court support for Rushdīyah and withdrew funding from his school, which caused him to fall into debt.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, he took over the Education Society, placed it under the direction of the Science Ministry, and gradually purged it of reformists including Rushdīyah and his reformist rival Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah who was sent off

47. For a detailed account of the conflict, from a perspective favorable to Rushdīyah, see Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 45. It is noteworthy that in his diaries Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah was neutral on his relationship with Rushdīyah. He did not record anything about the quarrels between the two found in other sources, perhaps in fear of appearing obstructive to education reform. Contrast this with his castigation of Amīn al-Dawlah writing that "inwardly, the Shah and the minister did not have the slightest interest in the education and upbringing of the people." See Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah*, 326.

¹⁵² For decisions made against Rushdīyah in these meetings, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, 232-33, 236.

¹⁵³ See Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 45.

¹⁵⁴ Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1, 233.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹⁵⁶ See Jean Calmard, "ATĀBAK-E A'ẒAM, AMĪN-AL-SOLṬĀN", in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_6040>

¹⁵⁷ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 46.

on a mission to Kurdistan.¹⁵⁸ Atābak's opposition to Rushdīyah frightened elite parents who withdrew them from the school.¹⁵⁹ Part of the reason for Atābak's enmity with Rushdīyah was the latter's political activities for the constitutional cause and against the person of Atābak. Four of the school staff, including Shaykh Yaḥyā, teacher of grammar (*naḥv*) and logic and later editor-in-chief of *Iran* newspaper, had gathered after work and on school premises. With Rushdīyah's knowledge, they composed constitutionalist propaganda called night-letters (*shab'nāmah*) against Atābak's premiership. Atābak was able to trace this activity back to the Rushdīyah School. This was because the school's *nāzim* had a falling out with Shaykh Yaḥyā and reported their activity to Atābak. Atābak arranged for the "police" (*naẓmīyah*) to issue an order for the arrest of those involved. Two of the staff suspected of authoring night-letters were captured and imprisoned.¹⁶⁰ Another was struck on the head and his body was thrown onto the street from the school's roof (it is also reported that he may have fled the police chase to the rooftop, jumping to commit suicide).¹⁶¹ Shaykh Yaḥyā was captured and exiled to Ardabīl. Rushdīyah was more fortunate. He sought refuge with prominent cleric, Shaykh Najmābādī, who had established the first new school for orphans. The cleric refused repeated requests from Tehran to send Rushdīyah to Atābak.¹⁶² Thereafter, Rushdīyah left for hajj, while his school

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 52. For another example of this purging, see the diaries of Iḥtishām al-Salṭaneh where the reformist courtier was removed from the society and sent on a mission to Kurdistan. See Iḥtishām al-Salṭaneh, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭaneh*, 338, 345.

¹⁵⁹ Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 46. Elite children were reenrolled when Atābak's second exile attempt failed. See *ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶⁰ These were Musmar al-Mamālik and Mīrzā Sayid Ḥasan Kāshānī, brother to the manager of reformist *Ḥabl al-matīn* paper, who was reportedly put into chains and sent off to Mubārak'ābād in the Fars province. See Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 48. Contrast with Dawlatābādī who did not mention Musmar al-Mamālik in list of those arrested. See Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, 348.

¹⁶¹ This was a school-teacher by the name of Sayid Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī Khān, age 25. For the two accounts of his death, see respectively Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 48, and Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, 348.

¹⁶² Rushdīyah, *Savāniḥ-i 'umr*, 49.

continued to be active.¹⁶³ Upon his return from hajj, Atābak's previous intimidation did not deter him from his political activities; he continued to produce and distribute night-letters. In response, Atābak decided to exile Rushdīyah. The educator was informed about this decision through his court connections and fled to Qom, while Atābak forced the school's closure.¹⁶⁴ While in Qom, Rushdīyah was able to communicate with Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh through telegraph. The reform-friendly Shah reportedly expressed concern about the educator's absence in the capital, contrary to Atābak's wishes, and demanded that he return. Rushdīyah complied and reopened the school. A second exile attempt by Atābak, this time to Ardabil, failed when Rushdīyah outmaneuvered the prime minister, again through communications with the Shah.¹⁶⁵

Atābak's efforts to exile Rushdīyah thus failed twice. Still, Rushdīyah's fortunes turned for the worse. A few years before the constitutional order was issued by Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh, two of Rushdīyah's key supporters died, Amīn al-Dawlah and Shaykh Najmābādī.¹⁶⁶ Amīn al-Dawlah had willed his son, Muḥsin Khān Mu'īn al-Mulk, to continue the supervision of the Rushdīyah School after his death. The son transferred the school to a property known as Amīn al-Dawlah's Ḥusaynīyah, with the intention of constructing a new building.¹⁶⁷ Soon thereafter, Rushdīyah found himself in conflict with Mu'īn al-Mulk who was allegedly persuaded by Shaykh Yaḥyā to elevate him from position of teacher to co-principal. Rushdīyah refused to share his authority and left the pioneer school he had started with when he first came to

¹⁶³ Ibid.; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 90.

¹⁶⁴ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 54.

¹⁶⁵ For the full story of Rushdīyah's strategy, see Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 58-59.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 65.

Tehran.¹⁶⁸ Rushdīyah opened another school and simply called it *maktab*. The school carried on with new pedagogy and free admission for the poor, with enrollment reaching about 100 students in the first month.¹⁶⁹

The second turn towards misfortune resulted from pressure by Atābak's similarly anti-constitutionalist successor, 'Ayn al-Dawlah. The new prime minister became agitated with Rushdīyah for his continued writing and distribution of night-letters, this time against his premiership. However, Rushdīyah's opposition to 'Ayn al-Dawlah was not simply something distributed in the secrecy of the dark night. It was communicated in a tense personal exchange between the two. Rushdīyah informed the minister of people's dissatisfaction with him, and also suggested that he undertake financial reforms and fire the notoriously unpopular head of Iranian customs, the Belgian Joseph Naus.¹⁷⁰ A displeased 'Ayn al-Dawlah ordered the closure of the Rushdīyah *maktab*, and unlike Atābak before him, his attempt to exile the educator succeeded. He sent Rushdīyah to Kalāt, Khurāsān shortly before the triumph of constitutionalism, along with fellow constitutionalist Majd al-Islām, the manager of *Adab* newspaper.¹⁷¹ Accompanied by a colonel (*sarhang*), they were taken to Kalāt where they were received by Āsif al-Dawlah who supervised them while in exile.¹⁷² A few months later, telegraph reached Kalāt that Muẓaffar al-

¹⁶⁸ For a partisan account of this conflict, see Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 65, 75-76; and Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma 'ārif Rushdīyah*, 104, 113.

¹⁶⁹ He could not choose the name Rushdīyah for this school over Mu'īn al-Mulk and the Science Ministry's objections on name duplication. See Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 112-13.

¹⁷¹ Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah gave the date of June 21, 1906 for the exile order, see Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 97. Contrast with Fakhr al-Dīn Rushdīyah who wrote that the departure date from Tehran to Kallāt was on June 13, 1906, see Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma 'ārif Rushdīyah*, 152.

¹⁷² Incidentally, Rushdīyah was also warmly received by a former orphan-student, Farajullāh Najjārzādah, whom he had schooled free of cost in his childhood. See Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 132.

Dīn Shāh has issued the constitutional order and prisoners must be released. Thus heartened, Rushdīyah returned to Tehran and continued his educational activities. Starting in 1907, he briefly worked with a new school named *Hayāt-i jāvīd*, which the nascent Education Ministry instituted as an alternative to the American missionary school.¹⁷³ The constitutional order of affairs was soon put on a hiatus when the congenial king was replaced by his anti-constitutionalist son, Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāh. Rushdīyah left Tehran, and attempted to organize against the Shah from the northern provinces where the constitutionalists had gathered. In his diaries, he claimed a central role for himself in the organization that led to the restoration of the constitutional order, even claiming that he united nomads (*īlāt*) to rise against the anti-constitutionalist Rashid-Mulk, and persuaded commander Sipahdār to give up his alliance with ‘Ayn al-Dawlah and the Shah in favor of the constitutional cause.¹⁷⁴ In the interim constitutional period, Rushdīyah became for the first time in his life primarily occupied with politics over education, although he did undertake a few educational activities in this period such as procurement of teachers for and revision to a program of a school in Caspian shore city of Lankirān.¹⁷⁵

When the constitutional order was restored, Rushdīyah continued his activities but now under the shadow of a new government that was attempting to regulate education and transform its spontaneous, bottom-up intellectual leadership into a project of the state.¹⁷⁶ Rushdīyah

¹⁷³ The American school’s Muslim students complained about the exclusion of Islamic subjects and the teaching of the Bible, as well as their day-off being on Sunday as opposed to Friday. The ministry therefore established a different school for 123 students without interruption to their studies, see Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i ‘umr*, 132-33.

¹⁷⁴ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 212.

¹⁷⁵ Rushdīyah, *Diaries*, 178.

¹⁷⁶ As an example of increase in government management of education, see 1913 document from the newly-instituted Teacher’s College on requirements for teacher certification. Certificate of Tehran Teacher’s

accepted provincial assignments by the Education Ministry in Qazvīn in 1914 (1332) and in Gīlān in 1918 (1336).¹⁷⁷ Eventually and under the rule of Reza Shah, Rushdīyah settled in Qom where living costs were lower than Tehran. In 1926, Rushdīyah asked Reza Shah's American appointment to the ministry of finance, Arthur Millspaugh, to establish a bank to fund a proposed educational foundation in Tehran. Although Millspaugh was sympathetic, he denied the request for its impracticality.¹⁷⁸ In the same year, Rushdīyah also solicited a number of Western companies for free supplies for his schools such as typewriters, and all these requests were denied as well.¹⁷⁹ In 1936 with aid from the increasingly expanding Education Ministry, he established a primary school in Qom composed of six classes.¹⁸⁰ Rushdīyah taught there in old age even falling sick while teaching on one occasion. He died in Qom in 1944.¹⁸¹

Under Reza Shah's rule, the *dabistān* became the normative institution of schooling in the nation with the gradual disappearance of the *maktab* in the second Pahlavi period. Political power appropriated what had begun as an intellectual project of new education. The Pahlavi state tasked itself with public education (*ta'lim va tarbiyat-i 'umūmī*) and the generation of mass,

College (*Taşdīqnāmah-i dār al-mu'allimīn-i Tehran/ Certificat De L'École Normal De Téhéran*), 1913, National Library and Archives of Iran, Tehran, Iran. 280/4314.

¹⁷⁷ Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 229. These posts were not mentioned in Shams al-Dīn Rushdīyah's account.

¹⁷⁸ Administrator General of the Finances, Arthur Millspaugh, to Rushdīyah, June 23, 1926, Library, Museum, and Documents Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (uncatalogued).

¹⁷⁹ As an example, see Seidel & Naumann to Rushdīyah, August 24, 1926, Library, Museum, and Documents Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (uncatalogued).

¹⁸⁰ Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 146. The same source also reported that in the same school he offered a class for blind to acquire literacy, see *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ See Rushdīyah, *Zindigīnāmah-yi pīr-i ma'ārif Rushdīyah*, 236; and Rushdīyah, *Savānih-i 'umr*, 147.

functional literacy.¹⁸² Furthermore, the disciplinary order of education Rushdīyah had introduced to Iran via French-instituted training in Beirut was intensified under Reza Shah; Rushdīyah who had instituted one of the first bylaws (*Nizāmnāmah*) for the uniform administration of primary schools had to comply with new, expanding disciplinary regimes. A Ministry of Education report from 1932 listed 40 rules (*qavānīn*) and bylaws, from those regulating minor affairs such as renewing teacher contracts to those on general affairs like teacher training or school administration, including orders (*dastūr*) on implementation of particular subjects such as physical wellness (*varzish*).¹⁸³ Similar to Rushdīyah, the state drafted textbooks intended specifically for primary education.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, students were ordered according to their age similar to Rushdīyah schools, not in mixed-age settings as was the case with the *maktab*. The curriculum and schedule too resembled changes implemented by Rushdīyah, for example, new subjects like physical wellness were included and the long break was scheduled for summer months. As with Rushdīyah's approach, the state schools required students to meet registration requirements and wear uniforms. Up to the fifth year, boys uniformly wore shorts. Like Rushdīyah who emphasized examination to measure student performance, on functional literacy in particular, the Ministry of Education scheduled examinations for all students. The examination regulation of 1933 specified that a committee should be appointed for each school to supervise tests in the first six grades.¹⁸⁵ But, the *dabistān* also broke from Rushdīyah in certain respects.

¹⁸² For some data on primary education growth in numbers of schools and pupils under Pahlavi administration, see Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 84.

¹⁸³ Ministry of Education's annual report in *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqāf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafeh, Sālnāmah va iḥṣā'īyah*, 1932-33 (1311-12), 11-14. These bylaws covered other levels of education in addition to primary education. For fuller account of the bylaw order, see Chapter 2 and 4 of this dissertation.

¹⁸⁴ Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, 56.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

For example, it became more nationalistic and monolingual in character and Rushdīyah's practice of teaching students in their local languages like Turkish was eliminated. Despite praise for Pahlavi administration of education, Rushdīyah was critical of the supposedly irreligious subjectivity produced by Reza Shah's education policies.¹⁸⁶ In his diaries, he rebuked Iranian schools and students in the 1930s. Students, he claimed, "lack knowledge [and] are enemies of religion and religiosity... [t]heir knowledge rests on breaking from Arabs and Arabic; their names are devotees of homeland but their deeds produce harm for the same homeland and its inhabitants, outwardly they're European-like but inwardly are simpletons...if they ask a student what is your religion, the student is either compelled to say I am without one or that I have this or that religion, which is anything but Islam."¹⁸⁷ In a way, Rushdīyah was expressing frustration with what I have been calling religious optionality. And, his statement provides support for a major argument of this dissertation, that, education reformers did not intend to bring about religious optionality, but this was an inadvertent result of their efforts.

The *dabistān* also gained favor with religious power and remained the normative institution under the Islamic Republic. A 1916 letter documented a conversation between the principal of a new school in Isfahan (the school was named *Rushdīyah*) and a prominent mujtahid in the city of a more conservative disposition. He applauded the curriculum and approved of the school.¹⁸⁸ Despite some talk of reviving the institution of the *maktab* in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979, the *dabistān* remained firmly intact and a prerequisite to studies at the seminary (*hawzah*). Rushdīyah's remark to Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's

¹⁸⁶ For this praise, see Rushdīyah, *Ottoman Diaries*, 25.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ *Umūr-i mukhtalif-i madrasah-'i Rushdīyah*, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Najafī to the Rushdīyah School and its principal, Iṣfahān, *Ṣafar* 1335/1916, in National Library and Archives of Iran, 297/26102.

aid in Tabriz, that each brick from his school shattered by the pro-*maktab* vandals will one day be re-laid to become part of a new school proved true—the *maktab* was replaced by the *dabistān*.

Chapter 4: The Management of Knowledge and the Birth of the University

تا چنین دانشگاه عالی ز نو فرمود طرح
و اهل دانش را از این دانش پژوهی شاد کرد

He [Reza Shah] designed anew such sublime place of learning
And made joyous seekers of knowledge in their pursuit
-Mohammad-Taqi Bahar (d., 1951)-

اگر تو بر شمردی کارهای بسیارند
یکی ز بسیار اینک بنای دانشگاه...
ز فیض حکمت شاهش قوی و تازه نمود
چو جای کشور پژمرده دید در هر راه

If you count, his deeds are many
One of the many now is the university...
When he saw in every path a withered nation,
he made them by kingly wisdom strong and new
-Badī al-Zamān Furūzānfar (d., 1970)-¹

Bahar and Furūzānfar were scholars in transition between the old and new orders of knowledge. Their loyalties were not with the old order of learning but with the new order. They composed these verses in praise of Reza Shah and the construction of the first university, which they viewed as a new institution that had made “joyous” the “withered nation.” In this chapter, I examine the emergence of the first university. I build on a theme the previous chapter on *dabistān* ended on: the relationship between the state’s political authority and new educational organization of early twentieth-century Iran. I argue that the university is a particular instance of a much broader transformation in education and knowledge making. Drawing on Qajar-era court and juridical sources, state ministerial archives, university documents, and memoirs of scholar-administrators, I contend that education, after the formation of the constitutional government, was governmentalized in the sense that Foucault theorized the term. This process intensified with Reza Shah’s rise to power. The Reza Shah state managed education for the emergent Iranian

¹ Both poems are reproduced in Hikmat, *Sī khātirah az ‘aṣr-i farkhundah-’i Pahlavī*, 364-65.

population through a fourfold process: 1) measuring it through numbers and statistics; 2) restructuring the *awqaf* or the endowments system; 3) creating disciplinary order out of perceived disorder of the past; and 4) eclipsing the *ijaza* system in that the state became the ultimate grantor of intellectual authority. I make my argument in reference to the knowledge order and intellectual traditions that preceded the new governmentality. In what follows, I provide an empirical overview of the formation and early development of the university.

4.1 A University is Born

The Reza Shah state composed of the king himself, the Education Ministry, and a new group of scholar-administrators created the nation's first university. The university was not created *ex nihilo*, however. It formed against a longer history of new knowledge formations. The Polytechnic College of Tehran (*Dār al-funūn*) was one of the earliest organizational predecessors to the university. It was officially inaugurated on December 29, 1851, soon after Amir Kabir's appointment to the prime minister post.² Amir Kabir stressed the military and technical nature of the subjects to be taught at the new academy in his initial letter of instruction (dated, August 1850) to first secretary at the Persian legation in St. Petersburg, Jān Dāvūd. In subsequent letters and in the official newspaper of *Waqāyi'-i ittifāqīyah*, Amir Kabir referred to this new academy variously as *ta'līm'khānah*, *madrasah-i jadīd*, *madrasah-i nizāmīyah*, and *maktab'khānah-i pādshāhī*. The later word for the university, *dānishgāh*, was a subsequent neologism. The intention behind this new academy, which later came to be called *Dār al-funūn* (literally, the “Abode of Crafts”) was to improve the cadre of officers, who were held responsible for the perceived inefficiency of the Persian army. However, from the outset the curriculum was much

² John Gurney and Negin Nabavi, “DĀR AL-FONŪN”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_8031. See also Fischer, *From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, 58. Fischer corroborates the opening date given by Nabavi and Gurney. According to Dawlatābādī, the school was constructed about two years before its inauguration in 1266/1849-50, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1, 390.

broader than military subjects and included new medicine, physics, chemistry, mining, mathematics, history, geography, painting, and foreign languages. The “deputy director” (*nāẓim*), Rīzāqulī Khān Hidāyat, along with Austrian instructors shaped the curriculum and activities, subject always to the approval and encouragement of Naṣir-al-Dīn Shāh. In the first year, about 105 students were accepted and enrolled free of charge with their clothing and lunch provided.³ They enrolled in seven main subjects. The breakdown reveals the emphasis placed on the military sciences: infantry 30, cavalry 5, artillery 26, and engineering 12. In medicine there were 20, in pharmacy 7, and in mining 5. Length of study was initially conceived as twelve years but was later reduced to less than five years in some instances. Over the years, *Dār al-funūn* employed instructors from diverse origins, Iranian, Armenian, Czech, Italian, Swiss, Austrian, and French.⁴ Iranians familiar with foreign languages served as translators between foreign instructors and students.⁵ The creation of new higher education schools in the closing years of the century undermined the centrality of *Dār al-funūn* as the new institution of higher education. These were the Military College (*madrasah-i niẓāmī*) established in 1885 (1302), the College of Political Sciences (*madrasah-i ‘ulūm-i sīyāsī*) established in 1899 (1317), and the Medical School (*madrasah-i ṭibb*) that was first planned in 1906 and became operational in 1918. The following year, colleges for dentistry, music, and the fine arts were also established. By the 1920’s, the presence of these schools joined by broader state-led educational reforms

³ Nabavi and Gurney write that students were “from a broader range of social strata.” Contrast this with the diaries of Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah writing that they were all from elite classes. The list of 20 students he gave enrolled in a mathematics class is revealing of this statement. See Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭāneh*, 26, 316. Moreover, the number 105 must have increased in later years. Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah wrote that as far as he remembered (without specifying the exact year) that number of students were approximately 250. He attended *Dār al-Funūn* from about 1873 to 1879, see *ibid*.

⁴ The Armenian teacher was hired to teach Russian language, see Iḥtishām al-Salṭānah, *Khāṭirāt-i Iḥtishām al-Salṭāneh*, 30.

⁵ Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1, 390.

transformed the *Dār al-funūn* into a secondary school (*dabīristān*). In the 1930's, the separate schools that had undermined *Dār al-funūn* were themselves undermined by the creation of the nation's first university called the University of Tehran (*dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*).

The law that authorized the university's formation passed in May 29, 1934. It provided the necessary permission to the Ministry of Education to establish an institution by the name of *dānishgāh*. This word was a Pahlavi-period neologism for the institution of higher education resembling the European university, and it literally meant the "place of learning." The newness was not simply in name, but also in the legal concepts upon which the university was founded. Article seven of the law stated that the university had "legal personhood" (*shakhsīyat-i huqūqī*).⁶ Previously, Islamic law had recognized, not an abstract organization as having legal rights and responsibilities, but the physical person. The madrasa, for instance, was not incorporated and did not have legal rights and responsibilities as an organization (its individual members did), in contrast to the European university which had an incorporated status since the early days of its foundation. The University of Tehran's legal status was based on this European tradition, not the Islamic madrasa.⁷ The law also provided for a new administrative structure of the university, discarding old Islamic titles in favor of new terms such as the university president (*ra'īs*). Several amendments (*tabşarah*) in the law were on the appointment of presidents, selection of instructors and their hierarchy, composition and duties of the university council (*shurā*), and the management of finances.⁸ The parliament therefore provided the legal authorization for the

⁶ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif awqāf va şanāyi'-i mustazrafah: qānūn va Niẓāmnāmah'hā-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, 1935 (1314), 3, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

⁷ For a discussion on incorporated status of the university in context of Islamic and Western history, see Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 224, 229.

⁸ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif awqāf va şanāyi'-i mustazrafah: qānūn va Niẓāmnāmah'hā-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān* 1935 (1314), 16. Rules on appointment and hiring were further clarified in *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

university anchored in new terminology and concepts. It was up to the labor of the Education Ministry to turn an abstract legal entity into social reality.

In March of 1934 (1313) scholar-administrator, Ali Asghar Hikmat, who served the Pahlavi state in several different positions and in that year as the education minister, searched for a suitable land to commence the university's construction. He chose the Tehran *Jalālīyah* garden, an area exceeding 200,000 square meters. Qajar prince, Jalal al-Dawlah, had built the garden in 1882-83 (1300 A.H.), after whom it was named. During Hikmat's life, and before the expansion of urban Tehran, the garden was located in Tehran's northwest.⁹ The garden was under the possession of a merchant by the name of Ḥājj Raḥīm Āqā Ittiḥādīyah Tabrīzī from whom Hikmat bought the property at the price of 100,000 *tuman*.¹⁰ On the newly-purchased land, the medical college was the first building that was constructed. The state viewed the production of doctors trained in new medical knowledge as having urgency in maintaining a healthy population.¹¹ The medical college that started its operations in a hospital (*marīz'khānah*) on Shaykh Hādī street was transferred to the new building when it was completed. University of Tehran's medical college added to prior instructions of the 1918 medical school and the *Dār al-funūn* before it. Despite this continuity with the recent constitutional and Nasiri past, the medical college formed its identity as a radical break from the old order of knowledge. Before the introduction of new

⁹ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 332. Today, the university is located in the approximate city center.

¹⁰ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 335. This was about 20 million *tuman* at the time of this writing. Taking into account Central Bank of Iran price index but without necessarily accounting for real estate fluctuations, today's price would be in billions. 100,000 *toman* today in Tehran would be enough to purchase a restaurant meal for four people. For Central Bank of Iran price index rates, see <https://www.cbi.ir/InflationCalculator/>, accessed November 24, 2021.

¹¹ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 344. *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh* from 1314-15 indicated that the medical college's construction was near completion, while the technical college is supposed to start construction the following year in 1937 (1316), see *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 3.

medical science, students acquired their education in fundamental subjects of the day, after which they learned natural sciences (*ḥikmat-i ṭabī‘ī*), including the study of the classical canon such as Avicenna’s Canon of Medicine (*al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb*) and Nafīs ibn ‘Iwaḍ’s *Explanation of Causes and Signs* (*Sharḥ al-asbāb wa-al-‘alāmāt*), and would train in the offices of eminent physicians. Pahlavi sources had a disparaging view of this pre- *Dār al-funūn* medical training and practice. They claimed that “assessment of scientific fitness was not at issue, and anyone who willed, could, without a problem, and after acquiring limited information, introduce oneself as a physician and begin treating people.”¹² Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh took one of the earliest initiatives to reorganize medical practice. He ordered the court’s French doctor (*hakīm ‘bāshī*), Louis André Ernest Cloquet, to train Iranian men under his supervision, and later approved of new medical instructions at the *Dār al-funūn*.¹³ The 1918 medical school benefited from new methods, but its spatial character was unsuitable for medical training and practice, Pahlavi sources claimed. The same sources alleged that the presence of adequate space for education was a larger problem inherited from Qajar governance (or lack thereof).¹⁴ The primary feature that distinguished the new medical college was thus the space and facility in which doctors trained.

After the medical college, the two colleges of law and technology (*fannī*) were built on the western side of the university. Like the medical college, the law college was not entirely new and had roots in an earlier Foreign Ministry initiative. A political science school was instituted in 1898 (or 1899) by the initiative of Mushīr al-Dawlah (Ḥasan Pīrnīya), and with the permission of

¹² *Angīzah ‘hā-yi ījād va siyr-i tarīkhī va takāmulī-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, 8, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

¹³ For his profile, see Lutz Richter-Bernburg, “CLOQUET, LOUIS-ANDRÉ-ERNEST”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_7758>

¹⁴ As an example, see Hikmat, *Sī khāṭirah az ‘aṣr-i farkhundah-‘i Pahlavī*, 168-69.

Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh. It resembled the political science school of Paris.¹⁵ The intention was to train men for service in the Foreign Ministry. In 1923-24 (1302), the justice and education ministers changed its program, formed the school in the Golestan Palace, and changed the name to the school of law (*madrisah-i ḥuqūq*). They intended to train diplomats and judges.¹⁶ In 1926-27 (1305), the Education Ministry received supervisory authority over the school, instead of the Foreign Ministry, combining political science with law to form the “higher school of law and political sciences” (*madrisah-i ālī-yi ḥuqūq va ‘ulūm-i sīyāsī*).¹⁷ When the university was founded in 1934, this school, under the leadership of eminent scholar Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, became part of the university.¹⁸

The technical college was another early creation of the university. It was founded in 1934 (1313). Prior to this, no specific school was designated for the teaching of engineering and technical subjects. Teaching of these subjects had begun in *Dār al-funūn* where engineers such as Abdul Raziq Baghayiri were trained.¹⁹ The Reza Shah state intended to significantly expand technical instructions. The king himself, Pahlavi administrators reported, opposed the hiring foreign technicians, what the Qajars had relied on previously. The Shah had told the education minister, Ali Asghar Hikmat, that he rather sees no students are sent abroad in the year that arrangements were made for a 100 of them to travel.²⁰ This is where the university came to play

¹⁵ Hikmat diaries gave the date 1899-1900 (1317 A.H.). Contrast with *Angīzah’ hā-yi ījād va siyr-i tarīkhī va takāmulī-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, which gave 1898 as the date.

¹⁶ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az ‘aṣr-i farkhundah-’i Pahlavī*, 359.

¹⁷ *Angīzah’ hā-yi ījād va siyr-i tarīkhī va takāmulī-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, 15.

¹⁸ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az ‘aṣr-i farkhundah-’i Pahlavī*, 359.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 360.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

a role: it was supposed to provide for skilled national subjects to reduce and eventually eliminate the need for foreign technicians and even make the training of Iranians abroad unnecessary. Technicians and engineers were needed for the ministries of road and railroad as well as the Administration of Crafts and Factories. The technical college was thus a serious matter for the Education Ministry, so much so that Hikmat wrote: “all hope was directed at the students of the [technical] college.”²¹ When the university opened in 1934, there was no space for the technical college so it was held in the upper floor (*bālā'khānah*) of the newly renovated *Dār al-funūn*, which in 1934 had transformed into a secondary school. The following year, four-year programs in areas of electric, mechanical, civil, and road engineering were taught. Specifically, there were five majors: civil engineering, mine engineering, mechanical engineering, electric engineering, and industrial-chemical engineering.²² The first graduates received their degrees in 1939-1940 (1318-1319).²³ The number of specializations increased substantially in the following decade. One document from 1943/1944 (1322), right before Reza Shah abdicated the throne, listed several more specialized subjects.²⁴ At least on paper, there appeared to be a thriving indigenous educational order for production of engineers in service of constructing national infrastructure. Reza Shah’s goal of reducing dependency on foreign training had been met to some extent before his kingship came to a closure.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 360-61.

²² *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 21.

²³ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭirah az ‘aṣr-i farkhundah-‘i Pahlavī*, 361. Later Hikmat appeared to contradict himself as he wrote that the colleges of sciences, law, and technical did not become operational until the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah in 1941-42 (1320), see *ibid.*, 347. Based on internal university documents, there were operational in the early years. It seems Hikmat was referring to their physical location being outside university premises in the early years.

²⁴ *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihhrān*, ed., Aṣīlī, 56-59.

The modernist interest in teaching as practice coupled with the need to teach the Iranian population propelled the state to devise plans for the training of teachers. This occurred before the formation of the university. The Ministry of Education found a teacher training school in 1918 (1297) under the Arabic-Persian macaronic of *dār al-mu'allimīn-i markazī*, literally “the central abode of teachers.”²⁵ The college had an affiliated primary school intended for teaching practice. In 1928 (1307), the Ministry of Education transformed this “abode of teachers” into a higher education Teacher’s College known by the Persian phrase of *dānīshsarā-yi ‘ālī*, or “the higher abode of knowledge.”²⁶ When the University of Tehran was founded in 1934 (1313), the college became part of the first university. Literature (*adabīyāt*) and the sciences (*‘ulūm*) were joined to the college to form a singular unit, housed in the same building.²⁷ Together, they offered the following majors: philosophy and pedagogical sciences (*‘ulūm-i tarbiyātī*), Persian literature, foreign languages, history and geography, archeology, natural sciences, mathematics, and physics and chemistry.²⁸ Students intending to obtain a degree from the college studied one of these majors, while undergoing a shared program in pedagogy theory and teaching practice.²⁹

Another one of the university’s colleges was the college of rational and transmitted sciences (*ulūm-i m’aqūl va manqūl*). The curriculum was as old as the madrasa itself with subjects such as *fiqh* and *tafsir* being taught. These subjects had, through the ulema, a long history of instructions in Iran, and had remained their exclusive domain. Some ulema approved of the college despite the apparent encroachment on their power. These included Bihbahani,

²⁵ See *Vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqāf va ṣanāyi‘-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah va iḥṣā‘īyah*, 1932-33 (1311-12), 1.

²⁶ *Sālnāmah-i dānīshsarā-yi ‘ālī*, 1939-1940 (1318-1319), 2.

²⁷ *Tārīkh-i Dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān*, vol. 1, 488.

²⁸ *Sālnāmah-i dānīshsarā-yi ‘ālī*, 1939-1940 (1318-1319), 2, 42.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

Imam Jume'h Khuyi, and Tehran's Friday prayer leader. On the opening day, all three appeared for the festivities held at the *Sipahsalar* school. This school was an earlier *waqf* that the Qajar Prime Minister, Sipahsalar, had endowed for educational purposes. The college of rational and transmitted science was housed at this historical school. In 1936 (1315), two years after the university's founding, the cabinet (*hay'at-i dawlat*) with the approval of Reza Shah added the preach and sermon (*v'az va khatb*) institute to the college. Its intention was to train preachers and those who took to the pulpit. Preaching was an old practice in Iran. But according to modernists, those who preached lacked in proper knowledge.³⁰ The institute of preach and sermon was joined to the college to remedy this perceived lack. Its special classes would form at night in the same *Sipahsalar* location and on the subjects of literature, *tafsir*, *naql*, philosophy, and theology, in addition to introduction to math and natural sciences. However, the ulema did not approve of nor help this institute, and as a result, it closed in 1941-42 (1320). Yet, the ministry's effort was not in vain as in its short five-year duration from 1936 to 1941, the institute granted certificates to a number of preachers who took to the pulpit.³¹ In contrast to the institute, the college lasted much longer. It offered its first bachelor degree in 1938 (1317) four years after it had opened, and operated out of the *Sipahsalar* school until 1953 (1332). With the Shah's restoration to power after the U.S.-backed coup and at the request of ulema, the college was removed from the location.³² The *Sipahsalar* school was then made exclusive to seminary students presumably

³⁰ As an example, see Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*. He traced this critique of preachers to one of the constitutionalist ulema, Ḥusayn Taqī al-Nūrī Ṭabarsī, and his text *Lu'lu' va marjān*. For a fuller account of classical and modern dislike of the preacher character, see chapter 5 of this dissertation.

³¹ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 386.

³² Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 358.

under the direction of the ulema themselves.³³ The ulema regained control over those areas of knowledge they had to share their authority over with the state under Reza Shah.

In the first years of the university's operation six colleges formed: 1) the medical college; 2) the college of law, political science, and economics; 3) the college of rational and transmitted sciences; 4) the college of natural sciences (also referred to as the college of natural sciences and mathematics); 5) the college of literature (its full name was the college of literature, philosophy, and pedagogical sciences); and 6) the technical college.³⁴ Although most students enrolled were men, the college opened to female registration in 1937 (1316) three years after its opening.³⁵ The newly-established colleges and transformed schools of the past needed curricula design, or as Hikmat put it, the university's nascent physical structure needed "soul and spirit" (*rūh va ravān*), and this is where the Reza Shah scholars-administrators, the men of pen in transition between the old and new intellectual order, came to play their role.³⁶ A number of committees (variously called *sāzmān* or *maktab*) were formed according to distinct subjects. The men assigned to each committee were in charge of planning the new university and curricula design. The first organization was the National Culture and History of Iran, formed of an instructor at the old *Sipahsalar* school, Ḥājji Sayyid Naṣrullāh Taqvā, and the literary scholar, Badi' al-Zaman Furuzanfar, who at the time was a young scholar in transition from the old knowledge regime to the new, having acquired Islamic sciences in Khorasan. The second committee or *maktab*,

³³ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭirah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 360.

³⁴ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 5. For later name changes to these colleges, see *Angīzah 'hā-yi ijād va siy-r-i tarīkhī va takāmulī-yi dānishgāh-i Tih-rān*, 34.

³⁵ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭirah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 102. See also *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 4. This guide claimed that female inclusion was a result unveiling of women. Contrast with Chehabi's article "the banning of the veil and its consequences" in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society Under Reza Shah, 1921-1941*, ed., Cronin. He argues that unveiling and inclusion of women in the new Iranian public did not need to be codependent.

³⁶ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭirah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 351.

combined national knowledge with new subjects of European origins. The men in charge were those scholars who had studied at *Dār al-funūn*, and had learned new approaches to medicine, engineering, physics, chemistry, and natural sciences in addition to the old Iranian-Islamic canon. They were a mathematics instructor from *Dār al-funūn* named Ghulām-Ḥusayn Rahnamā, joined by Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, a graduate of the former political science school who was also the compiler of the magisterial Persian dictionary.³⁷ The third committee (with an unspecified task in the sources) was made of those scholars who had studied in Europe, specifically in England, United States, Germany, Austria, and France, such as Issa Khan Sadiq, who, at time of his appointment was the head of the teacher's college (*dār al-mu'allimīn*).³⁸ Other members were Rizāzādah Shafiq, graduate of Berlin University in philosophy and literature, Amīr A'lam who studied medicine in Lyon University, Luqmān al-Dawlah Adham, a graduate of Paris University and the head of the medical school before the founding of the university.³⁹ The committees began work in 1934 (end of 1312) with the participation of education minister, Hikmat. In addition to program planning, they made suggestions on the law of the university, which the parliament passed in May 29, 1934. By the year 1936, all the colleges had a set of foundational documents (*asās 'nāmah*) and bylaws (*Nizāmnāmah*), which as I will argue below were integral to the disciplinary regime of knowledge the Reza Shah state had envisioned for the Iranian nation.⁴⁰ "Scientific councils" were also instituted at the time of founding, which were presumably in charge of design and quality of curriculum.⁴¹

³⁷ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 353.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 355.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 3.

⁴¹ *Angīzah 'hā-yi ijād va siyr-i tarīkhī va takāmulī-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, 40.

The committees together with the administration designed the curricula at each college. For the medical college, they divided the program into three parts: medical, pharmacy, and dentistry. It was a five-year program that included “practical exercises” (*tamrīnāt-i ‘amalī*), clinical exams, and composition of a thesis, which at this time, still went by an old name of *risālah-i ijtihādī* (and in some cases, by the French word *thèse* with the same pronunciation). Later, the Persian term *pāyān’nāmah* (literally “the last book”) was used.⁴² The curriculum included Persian and foreign languages in addition to medical sciences.⁴³ The college of law, political science, and economics had four major areas of study: judicial, diplomacy, economics and administration, and trade. A graduate in each area needed to acquire French, and in some cases, Russian or English, along with knowledge of *fiqh*.⁴⁴ Rational and transmitted sciences were divided into rational, transmitted, and literary studies and had a three-year duration. In the college’s *asās’nāmah*, three additional years for a potential doctorate was raised as a possibility, with the graduates receiving the titles of *faqīh*, *hakīm*, or *adīb* upon completion.⁴⁵ Since the college was later (in 1953) removed from the university at the request of the ulema, the production of *faqīh* did not become an enduring function of the state. The conventional Islamic sciences were part of the curriculum, such as *uṣūl*, *kalām*, and *tafsīr*. Only French stood out as a new subject. The preach and sermon institute had subjects peculiar to it, such as studies in speech and sermon (*mavādd-i nuṭq va khaṭābah*) and included new sciences like physics and natural

⁴² The word is unavailable in Dehkhoda’s dictionary, which attests to its more recent use.

⁴³ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 6-7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

history, but also instructions on hygiene (*ḥifẓ al-ṣiḥah*).⁴⁶ The sources did not provide information on the methodology of teaching, meaning how these subjects were taught and whether instructions significantly differed from the old instructions on subjects such as *fiqh*. The colleges of literature along with natural sciences were held in teacher's college outside university premises. It was not until 1958 that these colleges were relocated inside the university campus, on today's beloved Enghelab street.⁴⁷ At the technical college, operations appear to have been limited in the early years, which held only one class in the first academic year 1934-35 (1313-14) and two in the following year.⁴⁸ This college had five majors: civil engineering, **mining** engineering, mechanical engineering, electric engineering, and industrial-chemical engineering, with substantial expansion in specialization in later years. In the academic year of 1935-36, 570 students were enrolled in the medical college, 212 in law, 91 in rational and transmitted sciences, and 68 in the technical college.⁴⁹

The university was continuous in some respects with the past. For example, it expanded on the reformed higher colleges of the late nineteenth-century and centralized them into a single location. Moreover, it brought certain subjects of the premodern madrasa into university teaching. Still, the university largely presented a break from the past as represented by the premodern madrasa. Available archival and print sources do not inform us much on the administration of the madrasa in nineteenth-century Qajar Iran.⁵⁰ There are references to them in

⁴⁶ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18. *Angīzah 'hā-yi ījād va siyr-i tarīkhī va takāmulī-yi dānishgāh-i Tīhrān*, 35.

⁴⁸ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 50 (the page is unnumbered but comes after 49).

⁵⁰ My archival research in Iran and conversations with my intellectual network, including a conversation with Shafī'ī Kadkanī, did not produce documents that would clarify this issue.

such texts as travelogues but with minimal amount of information, mostly dealing with who taught what subjects at a certain madrasa.⁵¹ Moreover, we have more details on the later years of the Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh period and after. One report recorded 47 mosques (many of which were also places of higher learning), 35 separate madrasa, and 1463 students in the Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh period.⁵² Based on the information we have, Qajar-era *madāris* appeared to have features in common with the Islamic madrasa that came before them in earlier centuries. According to Makdisi's authoritative study of higher learning institutions in the premodern Islamic world, there were, in classical Islam, two dependent intellectual movements of "scholasticism" and "humanism" or *adab*. The first found organizational expression in the madrasa and legal studies, and included subjects like *fiqh* and *tafsīr*, while learners pursued the latter outside the madrasa in the chancery, in royal and princely court, in private with paid tutors, or via self-learning.⁵³ These two movements were dependent insofar as *adab* studies such as grammar (*nahw*) were used as ancillary for legal studies of the madrasa: grammatical knowledge was necessary to understand classical Arabic of the Qur'an taught in the madrasa. Later scholarship has complicated the sharp separation between legal studies at the madrasa and *adab* learning elsewhere. As early as the ninth century in Egypt under Ibn Ṭūlūn's rule, there existed a madrasa in which *nujūm* was taught alongside *fiqh* and *tafsīr*. In later periods, in the Safavid period in Iran for instance, *fiqh* was at the center of madrasa teaching, but philosophy, medicine, and *nujūm* were also taught.⁵⁴

⁵¹ As an example, see Shīrāzī, *Safarnāmah 'hā*, 73. In his travelogue, Shīrāzī observed a certain madrasa in Qom instituted by Fath'alī Shāh. He wrote that students did not study anything other than *fiqh* and *uṣūl* because the mujtahid, named Mīrzā Abul-Qāsim Chaplaqī, did not allow them to read or discuss other subjects.

⁵² See Razavī, et al., *Hawzah- 'i 'ilmīyah*, 207.

⁵³ See Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges* and Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West*.

⁵⁴ Razavī, et al., *Hawzah- 'i 'ilmīyah*, 195.

As a general statement, instructions at the madrasa were heavier on “scholastic” subjects.⁵⁵ The legalistic madrasa operated out of a mosque or a separate building instituted by the governing dynasty.⁵⁶

In Pahlavi Iran, the madrasa endured, separate from the university and largely autonomous from state control.⁵⁷ The madrasa changed in some respects. For example, the ulema created new ranks among themselves and a more formal hierarchy, expressed in previously unknown ranks, from low to high, *hujjat al-Islām*, Ayatollah, and *Ayatollah al-‘uzmā*.⁵⁸ Still, the madrasa was an old, continuous organization. The university, on the other hand, was an organization of change rather than continuity.⁵⁹ It blurred the historical separation between legal sciences of the madrasa versus the *adab* studies of the court by claiming authority over law, albeit a law different than the Islamic law of the classical period, and also over Islamic subjects through the college of rational and transmitted sciences and its preach and sermon institute. It also brought the *adab* subjects from the court into the university classroom where the bulk of instructions occurred. Indeed, the university reconfigured and reduced the multiplicity of places

⁵⁵ This is the narrative in Makdisi. It is also affirmed in Razavī, et al., *Hawzah-‘i ‘ilmīyah*.

⁵⁶ The mosque was a central place for learning. Even when governing dynasties began to institute madrasas, the mosque did not lose its importance as a place of learning. For instance, in the mosque of ‘Umar ibn ‘aṣ in Egypt, more than 40 teaching circles (*majālis*) were held. See Razavī, et al., *Hawzah-‘i ‘ilmīyah*, 65.

⁵⁷ For a study of the madrasa in the second Pahlavi period leading up to the revolution, see Fischer, *Iran: from religious dispute to revolution*. See also Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*.

⁵⁸ Some have argued that the ulema formed a centralization of their own concurrent with the modern state. Behzad Moazami argues that the formation of the ulema as a distinct, “hegemonic force” in the “religious sphere” with a set of articulated goals occurred concurrently with the formation of the centralized, militarized, and bureaucratic Pahlavi state in the half-century leading up to the 1979 revolution. See Behrooz Moazami, *State, Religion, and Revolution in Iran: 1796 to present*. Arang Keshavarzian also argues that Reza Shah’s state-building policy unintentionally resulted in bounding and defining the clergy. See Keshavarzian (2003). Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier: State Building and Clergy Building in Reza Shah’s Iran. *Journal of Church and State*, 45 (1), 82.

⁵⁹ *‘uzmā* is the feminine form of *‘aẓam* meaning greater or the greatest; the title as a whole means the greatest sign of God.

in which teachers taught. Before the university, in addition to the mosque, teachers taught at the library or *dār al-kitāb* and the *dār al-‘ilm*.⁶⁰ At the *dār al-‘ilm*, research and the preservation of manuscripts were the main purposes. Some teaching still occurred. For example, in the Fatimid period in Egypt, *fiqh*, *nujūm*, and medicine were taught at a *dār al-‘ilm* called al-Ḥākim at certain points during its operation.⁶¹ Medicine was also taught at hospitals, such as the *‘azadī* hospital of Baghdad.⁶² The Sufi *khānahqāh* was another place for learning, where in addition to subjects taught at the madrasa, poetry and music were also taught.⁶³ Among Shias in particular, areas near shrines were used for teaching.⁶⁴ The outdoors, shops, and homes were also places of instruction. Muḥammad bin Maṣ‘ūd Samarqandī, for example, taught his students in his dwelling.⁶⁵ The most important among learning places, as far as the professional humanists (i.e., those who did *adab* studies for their livelihood) were concerned, were those connected to governing power and its administration. Here, the royal court played an important role. This is where the children of caliphs, sultans, prime ministers, and other high officials of the administration were educated. The chanceries were also schools for secretaries, where the novices trained and perfected their art in “work-study courses,” while they apprenticed to the famous “humanists” who headed the chanceries of the governing power.⁶⁶

Historically therefore, teaching occurred in many places in addition to the mosque. The Education Ministry reconfigured this spatial order. It brought teaching to the university

⁶⁰ Bāqistānī and Mu‘īnī, *Ta‘līm va tarbiyat dar tamaddun-i Islāmī*, 66.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 72. See also, Raḡavī, et al., *Hawzah-‘i ‘ilmīyah*, 13, 137.

⁶⁶ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 60.

classroom. This did not mean that students could not seek instructions in other settings, such as libraries, cafés, or field trips. However, university classroom attendance was required for authorization as an agent of knowledge. Moreover, it was no longer common practice to move between places in the quest for knowledge. The university classroom became the normative location for those seeking authority among the learned.

Compared to spatial transformation, the change in subject-curriculum was not as dramatic. *Adab* students and scholars studied grammar (*naḥw*), lexicography (*lugha*), poetry (*shiʿr*) including the sciences of metrics (*ʿilm al-arūz*) and rhythm (*ʿilm al-qawāfi*), rhetoric (variously called *khaṭāba*, *balāgha*, *fasāḥa*, and *bayān*) as applied in arts of letter and speech writing (*tarāssul* and *khaṭāba* respectively), history (*akhbār* or *tarīkh*), and the philosophy of conduct (*ʿilm al-akhlāq*) that included rules of government in the mirrors for princes genre.⁶⁷ *Adab* and scholastic subjects were brought, sometimes under different names or according to new methodologies, into the university classroom. For example, poetry and its branches were put under the college of literature (*adabīyāt*).⁶⁸ The most visible change in education, however, was not the blurring of lines between scholastic and *adab* studies, the reconfiguration of spatial order, or changes in curricula. It was the emergence of a new relationship between political authority and knowledge, or the transformation of education towards governmentality.

4.2 To Manage a Population

What was this governmentality that transformed education and intellectual life in Iran? Starting with the constitutional government but much more so under Reza Shah, the state

⁶⁷ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 120-21, 168-69. The names are given in Arabic here. For most the Persian equivalent is the same minus minor modification in the *izāfa* construction, so *ʿilm al-akhlāq* becomes *ilm-i akhlāq*.

⁶⁸ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), on the last page which is unnumbered. For a study on how the discipline of *adabīyāt* emerged in modern Iran, see the recent dissertation, Aria Fani, *Becoming Literature: The Formation of Adabiyāt as an Academic Discipline in Iran and Afghanistan (1895-1945)*.

intervened to restructure, create, measure, and manage knowledge institutions in general and the University of Tehran in particular. Before I examine the evidence of how this was done, I must explain the concept of governmentality, which Foucault had first theorized based on the European transition into modernity. According to Foucault, governmentality was a distinctly modern form of power. It resulted from a new, different theory and practice of power and sovereignty. This new practice came about in the context of eighteenth-century Europe where a number of general processes occurred, including demographic expansion, connected with an increasing abundance of money, which in turn was linked to the expansion of agricultural production.⁶⁹ Concurrently, there had developed and flourished a notable series of political treatises that were presented as works on the art of government.⁷⁰ Art of government in this literature was essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce “economy”—the correct manner of managing individuals, goods, and wealth within the family and of making the family fortunes prosper—into the realm of government. The question was posed as follows: how does one introduce the meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the government towards its inhabitants who live in the territory it occupies and rules over?⁷¹ The theory of governmentality thus had a territorial population as the object of government, and in fact, for Foucault, this population was the ultimate end of modern government. The act of government was not the government’s end; its purpose was the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, literacy, and health among other factors.

⁶⁹ Foucault, *Governmentality*, 98.

⁷⁰ Foucault’s precise periodization of this literature was from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century, see Foucault, *Governmentality*, 88.

⁷¹ Foucault, *Governmentality*, 92.

Administrative and territorial monarchies and then republican states (and one might add their colonial extensions) invented governmentality. This required the management of populations that was made possible by what Foucault called “tactics.” These tactics included the very laws themselves that the population had to obey along with new forms of knowledge such as the “science of the state” or statistics, which developed from an instrument for the benefit of the monarchical administration in isolation to an instrument that related the state to the population with former managing the latter. Whereas statistics had previously worked within the administrative frame and thus in terms of the functioning of sovereignty (hence, the “science of the state”), it gradually revealed that population had its own regularities, its own rates of deaths and diseases, its cycles of scarcity, its rate of (il)literacy, and so on. In addition to statistics, there were the very crucial tactic of disciplines (in the Foucauldian sense of disciplinary power) and their modes of organization in such institutions as schools, manufacturers, and armies.⁷²

This governmentality emerged out of historical processes in Western European and its extension in the colonies. In what follows I argue that in contrast to secularization, governmentality carries greater explanatory force in relation to the Iranian transition into modernity.⁷³ The practices of the Reza Shah state converged with European governmentality more congruently than the processes of secularization. At the most fundamental level, this meant that the Reza Shah state claimed a specific territory for Iran and tasked itself with managing its population in new ways.⁷⁴ Governmentality in Iran was demonstrated via four major means, or in Foucault’s terminology, “tactics,” all with the end goal of creating and managing a literate and

⁷² Foucault, *Governmentality*, 102.

⁷³ See Chapter 1 to this dissertation.

⁷⁴ For a study on the idea of an Iranian territory in context of modern nationalism, see Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*.

skilled population for the purpose of serving the nation-state. These were: 1) what I shall call management by numbers, that is the measurement and quantification of education; 2) land-control, that is state intrusion into *awqaf* properties; 3) creation of order and disciplines; and 4) appointment of the state as the ultimate authority for the recognition of valid learners and rightful agents of knowledge. I do not mean to suggest that these developments were because of the university. They were intellectual and political developments that were forming some years prior; their formation was particularly notable in the constitutional period. Yet, the University of Tehran was one area, an important one, that allowed these developments to mature. In due time, they brought lasting change to educational and intellectual life.

4.3 To Manage by Numbers

Beginning with Reza Shah's rule, the state began to measure education. This act of measuring was coterminous with a broader intellectual interest in counting of people and in census. Ali Asghar Hikmat, when he was reappointed to the Interior Ministry, propelled the Shah, in year 1938 (1318), to authorize and carry out national census gathering that had been proposed fifteen years prior.⁷⁵ But, he also wrote with intellectual interest on the "tradition of census" (*sunnat-i sarshumārī*) for administrative purposes of the governing power. Hikmat connected census to ancient civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, and China, writing that they collected numbers for organization of religious affairs, while in pre-Islamic Iran some form of census existed for the counting of the army and for measuring treasury expenses, where the word *āmār* was used, which then carried into new Persian.⁷⁶ He added that this practice of counting

⁷⁵ Although an independent census administration was not established until 1955 (1334). See Hikmat, *Šī khāṭīrah az 'ašr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 282, 287.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 279.

fell out of use in the “dark middle ages” (presumably around the world), but in the eighteenth century Europeans revived the practice because of their social expansion.⁷⁷

Hikmat did not recognize, as Foucault did some decades after him, the distinction between number-gathering for internal purpose of court or government administration versus its more modern form for the purpose of managing the national population. Still, his association of statistics with modern Europe was consistent with historical evidence. The English word “statistics” originated in eighteenth-century Germany and designated a “science of the state” (*staatswissenschaft*). It provided a descriptive and nonquantitative framework of reference and terminology offered by university professors to princes of the numerous German states.⁷⁸ Statistics in its oldest, eighteenth-century sense was a description of the state, by and for itself. This science of the state was a mirror of the prince (not the nation), and thus, not readily-available to the public as statistics become in more contemporary times.⁷⁹ Like Germany, in pre-revolutionary France descriptions of the country were intended to educate the *prince*. Moreover, administrative surveys, linked to management, involved some quantitative analyses, such as partial surveys of the population and supplies in response to a 1720 plague in Marseilles.⁸⁰ After the revolutionary period, however, a comparison of statistical experiments conducted in France during the Consulate and the Empire show how the word “statistical” lost its eighteenth-century German meaning and acquired its modern sense, of a system of quantified description produced to measure, manage, and govern populations.⁸¹ This was followed by the creation of official

⁷⁷ Ibid., 279-280.

⁷⁸ Desrosieres, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*, 179.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁸¹ Ibid., 26-27.

organs for statistics.⁸² In 1800, revolutionary France established the first “bureau de statistique.” Between 1806 and 1815, regular quantitative statistics were instituted, especially agricultural and administrative ones.⁸³ Counter-revolutionary Britain was also persuaded. In 1753 the Houses of Parliament had rejected a census as an unwanted intrusion upon “English liberty.” In 1801 the first modern census of population went ahead almost entirely unopposed.⁸⁴ Specialized bureaus in these nations were charged with organizing censuses and compiling administrative records, with a view to providing descriptions of the state and society suited to their modes of reciprocal interaction. The techniques of formalization included summaries, encoding, summing, calculations, and the creation of graphs and tables. All this allowed the new objects created by this state practice to be grasped and compared at a single glance.⁸⁵

Similar to the European development but a century later, the Iranian state turned to statistics not for its own internal administration per se, but for reciprocal interaction between state and society, specifically the management of national education. In 1925, the ministry’s report stated, for the first time, an expressed interest in statistics and even shunned the previous report of 1918—the gap was presumably due to disintegration of the Qajar dynasty—for its inattention to numbers and poorly-formulated statistics.⁸⁶ The 1925 report’s preface was addressed from the minister of education, Mīrzā Aḥmad Khān Badr Naṣīr al-Dawlah, to the president of the “investigation bureau” (*idārah-i taftīsh*). The bureau formed as a part of the

⁸² Ibid., 8, 16.

⁸³ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁴ Tooze, *Statistics and the German State, 1900-1945: the making of modern economic knowledge*, 2.

⁸⁵ Desrosieres, *The Politics of Large Numbers*, 147.

⁸⁶ *Vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi‘-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah-i iḥṣā’īyah*, 1925 (1304), 2, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

ministry to inspect the state of education across the nation and to ensure orderly administration and proper pedagogy.⁸⁷ The minister made the opening declaration that the development of education and the spread of cultural literacy (*ma'lūmāt-i 'umūmī*) had to be determined annually according to statistics (*iḥṣā'īyah*).⁸⁸ The investigation office followed this directive, and even named the entire report “statistical annual report” (*sālnāmah-i iḥṣā'īyah*). The 1925 report gave, by its own admission, higher priority to statistics of primary schools (*madāris-i va makātib*), which it declared to be the primary reason for instituting of the Education Ministry. Statistics were on the number of schools (both the new and the old *maktab*), teachers, classes, graduates, and also on types of schools, budgets, and expenses. There was no statistical interest in schools of higher education that preceded the University of Tehran in this issue. But this interest was taken up in future issues, and ministerial statistics became a way of measuring higher education, specifically, the schools of medicine, law and political science, and teacher’s college that preceded the university.⁸⁹ Starting in 1934 with the establishment of the university, statistics and census were provided to measure the newly-established university quantifying, both in a given year or over time, “factors,” human and otherwise, such as expenses, students, professors, and staff.⁹⁰

This statistical tactic of governmentality in relation to knowledge production presented a break from governance in the Persianate court tradition. Take the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* as an example, which was one of the most well-known administrative documents of this tradition. It was the

⁸⁷ The precise nature and responsibility of the department is stated in the 1918 report, see *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafah, Annual Report, 1918, 60.*

⁸⁸ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah-i iḥṣā'īyah, 1925 (1304), 2.*

⁸⁹ For example, in *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafah, Annual Report, 1932-33 (1311-12)*, see specifically Section II (*qismat-i duvvum*) under the heading of University Statistics (*iḥṣā'īyah dānishgāh*). The page is unnumbered.

⁹⁰ *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihhrān*, ed., Aṣīlī, 104-115.

third volume of the much larger work named the *Akbarnāma*, a prose chronicle written by Mughal court intellectual, Abul Fazl (d., 1602), on the rule of Babur and Humayun. In addition to description of regions under Mughal control and enumeration of names of mercantile, political, and intellectual elites, *Ā'in-i Akbarī* described the philosophy and manner (*ā'in*) of life activities inside and outside the court. In the court, issues were many and included the proper practice of a court reporter (*ā'in-i vāqi' nivīstī*), the conduct of naval power (*ā'in-i mīrbahrī*), and the manner of issuing coins (*ā'in-i dār al-ẓarb*). Outside the court, it included writing on the proper manner of such activities as marriage and education (*āmūzish*).⁹¹ The constitution was presumably written from the perspective of Akbar, even when this was not explicitly stated, hence the title of *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. In this text, there were no numbers or attempts to measure life inside or outside the court for better governance. The administrative conception was a qualitative one, and this qualitative governance was not concerned with managing a “Mughal population” either, despite Akbar’s very strong opinions on how families ought to conduct their marriages and on children’s education. Akbar had some contrarian ideas about marriage for his time, which resembled contemporary ideas, but this shall not occupy us here. On education too, he had sensibilities that resembled educational reformers of the nineteenth-century, including Mīrẓā Ḥasan Rushdīyah previously examined in this dissertation. Akbar criticized prevailing methods “everywhere” and in particular in India at primary schools that slowed down the learner’s attempt to read and write, suggesting instead that learners write and rewrite individual letters and become familiar with its shape and sound.⁹² Soon after, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* told us, they can learn joined letters in words, which needed to be put into practice by writing a verse of poetry every

⁹¹ For list of all these subjects, see the table of contents (*fihrisṭ*) in Abul Fazl, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*.

⁹² This resembled Rushdīyah’s phonetic method he had acquired during his stay in Beirut. See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

day. The instructor had to test students on five things daily: recognition of letters, words, verse, and their “homework” (*pīshīn’khāndah*).⁹³ There was no evidence to suggest that Akbar attempted to impose his position on the right manner of education, let alone craft a set of governmentality tactics to manage the learning “population”—in fact, there was no real concept of a Mughal population in *Ā’in-i Akbarī*.

This same lack of governmentality was evident in court correspondences of the Nasiri court of Iran. The vast majority of these correspondences dealt with matters of the state, such as the appointing of and the removal of ministers in foreign and war ministries, receiving of foreign ambassadors, arranging for security of foreign officials in Iran, assigning of troops, organizing finances and payments to troops and court officials, arresting and punishing of thieves, border intruders, or fleeing soldiers.⁹⁴ A few of the correspondences did turn their attention to the “population;” however, not population of the entire Iranian territory as such, but a fragment of it (i.e., a specific village) who was suffering from a major calamity such as a contagious disease, fire destruction to crops, earthquake devastation, or perceived or real food shortage.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Qajar center was also concerned with the locality in ways that involved less of a calamity and more of a social crisis, such as removal of able-bodied beggars from the city or a collective village complaint against local officials.⁹⁶ The court interacted with the village population in most cases via local officials to mitigate the effects of a certain calamity or crisis. For example, one local official, Fath‘alī Khān Sartip, corresponded with Mu‘tamid al-Mulk in Tehran who

⁹³ Abul Fazl, *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, 143.

⁹⁴ *Tiligrāfāt-i ‘aṣr-i Sipahsālār: khaṭṭ-i Tabrīz 1295-96*, ed. Aḥmadī, 15-90. See also, *Asnād-i barguzīdah, az Sipahsālār, Zill al-Sulṭān, Dabīr al-Mulk*, ed. Ṣafā’ī, 102.

⁹⁵ *Tiligrāfāt-i ‘aṣr-i Sipahsālār: khaṭṭ-i Tabrīz 1295-96*, ed. Aḥmadī, 118, 387, 405, 411.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 327, 332, 34, 115.

wrote that no one was allowed to leave or enter the village of *Āqchih'ivān* where a contagious disease was discovered.⁹⁷ Another letter instructed the local official to implement necessary procedures, such as digging of deep graves, to prevent the spread of the disease.⁹⁸ On earthquake and fire destruction, officials were only instructed to measure the extent of damage, but nothing was said on reconstruction efforts by the court. Collectively, these letters evidenced court concern with accounting of, and in some cases, management of major calamities in a specific village (presumably with an end goal such as village health). However, they did not present evidence of systematic measurement of persons and things and management of a population, especially as a quantitative practice. There was no managing of population beyond management of a particular locality faced with major calamity or crisis. Most importantly for our purposes, there was no evidence of managing village education, let alone any evidence of governmentality in this regard. Both the Akbari and Nasiri Persianate court sources showed a limited record of “state” intervention in lives of population and no intervention in regard with their education, and hence, no governmentality in education.

The statistical factor—the managing by numbers—was also largely absent during the constitutional period despite the emergence of governmentality in the thinking of intellectuals and in parliamentary proceedings. The 1918 Education Ministry’s report, for instance, gave minor attention to statistics. Its primary focus was on qualitative descriptors. Similar to the *tazkirah* tradition, but without making any explicit reference to it, the 1918 report represented scholar-administrators, many of whom later became involved with the founding and operation of the university, not in statistical terms but in qualitative terms. The 1918 report had an ambiguous identity between a *tazkirah*-style biography and a modern documentary source. Its presentation

⁹⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

of education began with and was centered around individual scholars, educators, and administrators. The report expressly stated its “good qualities” (*muḥsināt*) to be the heavier descriptive focus on the biography of scholar-administrators who ran the ministry.⁹⁹ The report was not only focused on those men hired by the ministry; it also provided biographies of all those individuals involved in educational institutions, including members (*a’zā’*) of *Dār al-funūn*, the medical school, the teacher’s college (*Dār al-mu’allimīn*), as well as principals (*ru’asā’*) and teachers of secondary schools.¹⁰⁰

The biographies of major figures within the ministry resembled the *tazkīrah*. The lineage, major life events, intellectual training, and contribution of the scholar-administrators were described. Although, as compared with the *tazkīrah*, fewer descriptive details and far fewer praise-adjectives and honorifics were used; in fact, these praises were so few that in the case of Mīrzā Aḥmad Khān Badr Naṣīr al-Dawlah, the scholar-administrator appointed as education minister, they were limited to his “abundant intelligence” and “flowing enthusiasm.”¹⁰¹ Contrasting the report further with the *tazkīrah*, independent authorial reflections on intellectual history, or on questions of theology, law, and heresy were absent. Moreover, scholars were not presented in alphabetic or chronological order, or according to their level of learning, but based on administrative logic.¹⁰² Scholars were put under a central organization (*tashkīlāt-i markazī*) divided into three groups of cabinet, accounting, and personnel administration. Each division

⁹⁹ *Vizārat-i ma’ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi’-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah*, 1918-1919 (1297), 4. The report went on to add that in future years their biography portion would be reduced in favor of their activities.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, see respectively 35, 40, 43-44.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰² Contrast with Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-’ulamā’*. I examine this text below, see the subsection “To Authorize Learners.”

listed individual members and their positions. This division was then followed by a biographical introduction (*ta'rifah-i ahvāl*).¹⁰³

Mīrzā Aḥmad Khān Badr Naṣīr al-Dawlah's biography provided his lineage (*nasab*) via his father, Āsif al-Dawlah Shīrāzī, who was of the “respected” ministers (*vuzarā*) and “eminent” scholars (*udabā*) of his time, and whose biography was preserved in the *tazkirah* of the *Nāsiri Fārsnāmāh*. Naṣīr al-Dawlah's lineage was followed by his literary education. He learned classical sciences (*'ulūm-i qadīmah*) and Persian and Arabic literature in childhood, and thereafter, studied Arabic literature, *fiqh*, and *usūl*. He also completed conventional classical sciences, such as accounting, logic, and geometry. Naṣīr al-Dawlah's also acquired complete practice in art of poetry and in history. At age 18, he studied and “perfected,” under the direction of Iranian and European teachers, subjects of mathematics, French language, and new natural sciences. His works were a translation of French *La Terre* on knowledge of the earth, a treatise (*risālah*) in accounting and qualities of numbers, and a history of Nadir Shah's rule (d. 1747). In addition to his intellectual credentials, Naṣīr al-Dawlah, had worked in several government capacities. From 1887 to 1895, he worked as the secretary to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, and in 1896, he entered a post at the Foreign Ministry. Thereafter, he served in the posts of minister plenipotentiary (*vazīr-i mukhtārī*) to Brussels, Belgium, supervisor of Iran's high court, and caretaker (*kafīl*) of the Foreign Ministry. In 1917, he was appointed as the head of the Education Ministry, a post he held at the time of the report's publication in 1918. At the conclusion of his biography, the report listed the awards in addition to services rendered at the Education Ministry, which included such activities as the forming the teacher's college (*dār al-mu'allimīn*) for both men and women, establishing new schools and reforming their programs, creating the school of

¹⁰³ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmāh, 1918-1919 (1297), 10-11.*

dentistry, and pursuing administrative reform in the ministry, including the establishment of an investigation bureau into educational affairs (*idārah- 'i taftīsh*).¹⁰⁴

The same biographical description on lineage, education, intellectual production, awards, and administrative contributions were provided for others. Examples were Mīrzā ‘Alī Asghar Hīkmat who later became University of Tehran’s president, and the intellectual, Rīzā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, a major source for the scholarship of Edward Browne and the author of well-known *tazākīr*, such as *Majma ‘ al-fuṣahā’ (Conference of the Eloquent)*.¹⁰⁵ The richness of description varied; for some scholar-administrators a sustained prose described their life and works, while for others a list was the characteristic style.¹⁰⁶ Scholar-administrators at the *awqāf* division of the ministry were described in the same ambiguous style, somewhere between a *tazkarih* and an administrative document. Aqā Shaykh Ibrāhīm, the general manager of *awqāf*, was described as coming from a group (*ta’ifah*) of seven who established the Safavid dynasty. In his early life, he went to *maktab* near the city of Zanzan where he studied Persian and the “foundations” (*muqadamāt*).¹⁰⁷ At age 25, he travelled to Atabat and studied *usūl* and *fiqh* among a number of learned men, including “Ayatollah” Fażīl Īravānī, Fażīl Sharībānī, Akhund Mullāh Kāzīm Khurāsānī, and Āqā Shaykh Muḥammad Lāhījī, all of whom provided him with *ijaza*, after which he initiated his own teaching circle (*maḥfil*). In the year 1887, he returned to Iran at age 33, and in city of Zanzan, he taught *usūl* and *fiqh*, becoming an authority at the town’s mosque and exercising it through pulpit sermons where he was viewed as “a general source of emulation” (*marja’iyyat-i ‘umūm*). According to the document, his preaching, *nuṭq*, and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 12, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Compare page 21 with 23 in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., part IV on *awqāf*, 3.

memorization abilities were noticed and admired by all in his community. In the year 1892, his interest in “progress” (*taraq̄qī*) and “liberty” (*āzādī*), the report added, motivated him to acquire books on physics and chemistry. Combining his knowledge of classical learning with the new, he translated a chemistry book from Arabic to Persian, composed an article in astronomy (*nujūm*), in which he attempted to reconcile Qur’anic verses and Hadith with modern astronomy. He also wrote a short article on light and heat, and authored an unpublished book on diseases and their cure with specific reference to the new diseases that had entered Iran. His intellectual works further included books on *fiqh*, translation of Ibn Battuta, his memoirs, and a novel.¹⁰⁸ Politically, he was a constitutionalist and was appointed as a Zanjan representative to the first majlis. With the formation of second constitutionalist government, he was appointed to the ‘*adlīyah*’ where he translated many of the regulations formulated under Ottoman rule and arranged for legal bills (*lavāyih-i qānūnīyah*). Later, he was elected to the second parliament as a representative from Malayer (a city in west of Iran) where he intervened in several commissions and in drafting of laws. After the dissolution of the second parliament, he was in charge of administrating the governmental school of Sirvat, and became a member of Education Ministry as vice president. For the third majlis he was again elected from Zanjan, and in year 1917 (1335 A.H.) he was appointed to general management (*ra’īs-i kull*) of *awqāf* branch of the ministry.¹⁰⁹

Biographies of those outside the ministry were either given as a hyphenated list or as a stand-alone line. For example, we learn of the identity of instructors at the medical school as a hyphenated list, without a supporting prose. The source listed their name, father’s name, birthplace, job title (*simat-i rasmī*), education, and government awards and recognition

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 4.

(*imtīyāzāt-i dawlatī*).¹¹⁰ For secondary schools, one line indicating name and job title were listed.¹¹¹

Two observations must be made here. One is on the identity of the scholar-administrators who were presented as custodians of knowledge in the ministerial report—they were a group of scholars in transition, schooled in both the old order of education and the emerging order. A fuller engagement with the question of what distinguished them from the old ulema, and the new ideology that elevated them over the ulema shall occupy us in the next chapter. For now, I shall reemphasize another observation connected to my argument on governmentality. The aforementioned examples of scholar-administrators, described in a semi-*taḏkiraic* way, show that in 1918 there was still little to be managed by way of numbers. The 1918 report did have a few, isolated tables with numbers on budget, expenses, and number of primary school graduates.¹¹² But, these numbers were pretty limited compared to future reports, from which *taḏkiraic* prose style disappeared and the only qualitative portions were descriptions of organizational developments in relation to state goals, such as increasing literacy or providing adequate space for teaching. After 1918, managing education and knowledge-making through numbers became a major reality.

4.4 To Manage the Land

In addition to the management by numbers, another major tactic of Reza Shah era governmentality was the management of land for declared educational purposes. Specifically, the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 40-41.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 48.

¹¹² Tables are on budget and expenses of public schools, numbers on primary school graduates, name of libraries and bookstores, see *ibid.*, 55-56, 65-70, 74-75, 80-90.

state targeted *awqaf* properties, which the ministry and the modernist discourse more broadly claimed to be in need of reordering because of alleged misappropriation and mismanagement.¹¹³ In the most fundamental sense, the *waqf* was a charitable endowment of property, and in common law nomenclature, either “personal” property (such as books) or more commonly “real” property, meaning land. The owner of a property, who was also the founder of the *waqf*, called the *wāqif*, made it available for a specified use such as education. He had great powers in managing his *waqf*, imposing his will as regards to administration of the foundation, the appointment of trustees (*mutawallī* in the singular), the designation of beneficiaries, and the distribution of incomes. He could choose to reserve the power to himself alone as trustee, stipulating that after his death his descendants assume the post to the end of his line, or he could designate someone else to the end of that person’s line.¹¹⁴ The *wāqif*’s powers were restricted by the rules of *Sharī’a*. This meant that the terms of the *waqf* instrument could not in any way contravene these rules.¹¹⁵ For instance, the *wāqif* could not create a *waqf* instrument for the purpose of wine production. Moreover, the declaration of *waqf*, in order to be valid, had to be irrevocable, unconditional, and permanent.¹¹⁶ If for some reason the charitable object of a *waqf* such as a madrasa ceased to exist, the *waqf* itself did not: its income was applied to another similar object. The *waqf* once created became inalienable and its deed was kept by a qadi.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ A good example of this is the memoirs of reformist intellectual Yahyā Dawlatābādī who wrote: “trusteeship of religious schools [*madāris-i dīnī*], with the exception of Nāsirī madrasa that was with the time’s Shah, is inherited in clerical families, and most of the trustees do not refrain from appropriating the waqf’s income. Since most madrasa students lack intellectual merit, they are content with being recipients to a small stipend and do not object to the trustees’ abuses.” See Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. 1, 411.

¹¹⁴ Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* 35-36.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹¹⁶ For full list of conditions, see *Darāmadī bar asnād-i shar‘ī-i dawrah-‘i Qājār*, ed., Rizāyī, 119.

¹¹⁷ Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 38. See also, the short commentary in *Darāmadī bar asnād-i shar‘ī-i dawrah-‘i Qājār*, ed., Rizāyī, 119.

Awqaf documents from Qajar Iran provided a more concrete and local picture of these general characteristics. One document dating back to September 9, 1867 began with God's name and His praise who was the spiritual *wāqif*. Then came prayers (*al-salawāt*) and peace (*al-salām*) for the prophet who was the trustee or *mutawallī* (presumably of God's message) and his family who were the beneficiaries (*al-muqūf 'aliyhim*).¹¹⁸ The *waqf* instrument thus drew a parallel between the material-contractual world and the spiritual-prophetic world, that is, between the *waqf* posts of founder, trustee, and beneficiaries on the one hand, and God, the prophet, and his family on the other. It further connected the bequeath of *waqf* to an other-worldly orientation and a preparation for life in the hereafter; the *waqf* was made "to request the satisfaction of God and His prophet" (ابتغائاً لمرضات الله ورسوله). The use (*maṣraf*) to which this specific *waqf* had to be put by the *mutawallī* was for the performance of the Shia passion play (*ta'zīyah*). The *mutawallī* was to spend, after upkeep and repair of the property, a tenth of the revenues from the *waqf* for himself and the rest had to be committed to the expenses of the passion play. The *mutawallī* was specifically designated to be followed by his eldest son, then the male descendants, or in their absence, the female descendants, and in case there were no heirs, the mujtahid would take over. Other legal information were the founder's full name and partial genealogy, the *waqf*'s form (*ṣiḡḡah*), which was perpetual, and the precise description of the property as one would have in a common law deed or a deed (*sanad*) in contemporary Iran.¹¹⁹

As this example shows and secondary literature on *awqaf* confirm, the chief intention behind the *waqf* instrument was other-worldly, or according to the instrument's own terminology: "drawing nearer to God" (*qurbah*). Now, the modernist Iranian sources did not

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 122.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

dispute the good intentions behind the *waqf*. They were, rather, concerned with the alleged misappropriation of *waqf* property by the powerful or its supposed mismanagement after founding. The Education Ministry represented the time before its intervention as one characterized by *mass* misappropriation and mismanagement. In a section on the activities of “the general administration for endowments,” the report recognized that it was part of Islam’s foundation to spread the good, develop charity, and disseminate knowledge, and that all Muslims especially in Iran designated *awqaf* for a wide array of good deeds. Despite this, the report was unequivocal in its reproach of the supposed misappropriation and mismanagement of *awqaf*, which dated back to many years prior. The report added: “In every period, many of the *awqaf* were destroyed and their life-tenures were possessed [illegitimately]. It is true: what exists today is being plundered in the hands of influential persons, bringing wealth and power to this or that person...”¹²⁰

Historically, there indeed were many reports of *waqf* misappropriation by the powerful. Upon the death of the founder, for example, ruling men like Caliphs and governors would misappropriate property intended for educational use and put it to other use.¹²¹ There were also reports of mismanagement. Income from the *waqf* would find its way to coffers not meant for education.¹²² The people tasked with fulfilling the founder’s intentions, such as instructors, would also fail to fulfil their duties. Mamluk scholar, Taj al-Din al-Subki, commenting on this failure wrote: “one of the most reprehensible deeds is that of a *mudarris* who memorizes two or

¹²⁰ *Vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi‘-i mustaẓrafah, Sālnāmah*, 1918-1919 (1297), part IV, 7.

¹²¹ See Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 40, with frequent references to al-Subki’s *Kitāb mu‘īd an-ni‘am wa-mubād an-niqam*.

¹²² For example, Yalbugha as-Salimi (d., 1409), accompanied by a group of jurists, is alleged to have helped himself regularly to the income of *waqf* properties of the mosques and madrasas of Cairo. See Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 42.

three lines from a book, takes his seat, delivers them, then rises and leaves the classroom. Such a person, if incapable of anything but this amount, is not fit to teach law. Nor is it lawful for him to accept a salary [*ma' lūm*]...also the resident student-jurisconsults should not be entitled to stipends, because their madrasa's professorship of law is virtually vacant."¹²³ The ministry's narrative was thus not simply a modernist fancy to justify its own break from past. Although the question remains—one that is beyond the scope of this study—whether the very gloomy, almost total image of misappropriation and mismanagement of the Qajar past would hold under historical scrutiny.

After the formation of the parliamentary government in 1906, the ministry shunned the alleged lack of intervention, record-keeping, and supervision upon the *mutiṣaddī* (a specific kind of a trustee or *mutawallī*) and the *mutiṣarrif* (person using the *waqf*'s income).¹²⁴ It contrasted its own attempt at governmentality with the meager pre-constitutional inspection. Before constitutionalism, it said, no intervention (*mudākhillah*) was in place. It added that at the end of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's rule, the court had given certain men the title of *awqaf* minister, but without efficacy. These so-called ministers may have gathered summary information about some *awqaf*, but they did not have knowledge of their details and did not question rightful possession by the *mutiṣarrif*.¹²⁵ With the constitutional period and beginning of what the report deemed to be the proper administration of ministries, Ṣanī' al-Dawlah, attempted to bring Nasiri *awqaf* under governmental supervision. However, this new form fell short too from the constitutional perspective as it lacked a *nizām'nāmah* and a budget. The second parliament attempted to go further. It had three intentions in regards to *awqāf*. First, it wanted the documents of *awqaf* to be

¹²³ al-Subki, *Kitāb mu'īd an-ni'am wa-mubīd an-niqam*, 153 (cited and translated in Makdisi).

¹²⁴ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah*, 1918-1919 (1297), 7.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

put under government possession so they could be recorded and entered into a government office, with the end goal that the *awqaf* were not wasted or possessed by illegitimate persons. Second, the majlis wanted government supervision so that *awqaf* were not managed contrary to intentions of those who directed their property towards the public good. Third, the majlis intended that monies from endowments were put toward public education and curing of diseases. The majlis drafted a law with six articles containing these goals. The report added that the law alone was not been sufficient, and thus, the attempt of second majlis fell short too. Recognizing institutional deficiency, the report added that *awqaf* officers sent to the provinces were not prepared and encountered difficulties once on site. Officers were sent to provinces without directions, a salary or budget, and once on site, influential people's objections, lack of cooperation from rulers, and lack executive power prevented them from progress. However, the ministry appeared hopeful, one, because it was attempting to gradually build institutional efficacy, and two, because of changed perceptions. The existence of *awqaf* division of the ministry, the report said, had made people understand that such supervision was needed and the government's intention in this intervention was nothing but to manage these *awqaf* for public good (*iḥsānāt-i 'umūmī*). In other words, the state viewed its efforts as having gained public consent, which it considered a big foundation for effective intervention into the *awqaf*. This effective intervention would also mean effective education, or in the ministry's own words: "if those properties designated for charity and education and those used for the unknown [were] actually administrated effectively and used for good, all children all over Iran could certainly be educated..."¹²⁶

¹²⁶ It added to education, the generation of sufficient budget for disease control and infrastructure. See *ibid.*, 8.

This “effective” administration was precisely what subsequent reports boasted the state had achieved. About ten years later, the 1935-36 (1314-1315) report claimed that the number of *awqaf* coming under state management had increased dramatically. With the exception of Makran, Kirman, Khamsa, Damghan, Yazd, Garus Savih, and Boroujerd on which statistics were not yet available, all life-tenures in farming and non-farming lands totaled 26,328 in number, and 4,686 of them were possessed by the ministry. The rest were possessed by individuals but with supervision from the ministry.¹²⁷ According to the report, this more expansive supervision of the *awqaf* generated state revenue, which the ministry then put into educational ends. This was in contrast to personal use, which was the supposed characteristic feature of the Qajar period according to reformist sources. In 1936 (1315), 15 million riyal (an increase of 5 million from the previous year) worth of endowments with designated *mutiṣaddī* and *mutawallī* came under the supervision of the *awqaf* ministry.¹²⁸ The income of the ministry from the *awqaf* was about 3.6 million, a 100% increase from the previous year. 908,311 riyal was spent on repairing of historical and educational infrastructure. Money was also put towards high schools that taught philosophy and theology. In addition to these philosophy and theology schools, 27 primary and high schools were administrated out of *awqaf* budget and 30 received help from this budget.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the state regulated *awqaf* custodians themselves preventing the *mutiṣaddī* and renter of life-tenure to conspire and bypass ministry oversight. In case of violation, the investigation bureau could designate the *mutiṣaddī* banned from intervention in the *waqf*, which would then give the ministry authority to intervene in their *awqaf*. Whatever *awqaf* did not fall

¹²⁷ *Vizārat-i ma‘ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi‘-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah, 1935-1936 (1314-15), 23.*

¹²⁸ Moreover, an ordered budget was determined for them, the report claimed. See *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

under the rightful possession of *mutisaddī* would be put under the ministry's direct control (*taht-i naẓar va mudākhilah mustaqīm*).¹³⁰ The state's intervention was substantial, especially once Reza Shah came to power, but it had to be gradual and careful, in conformity with centuries-old rules of *Sharī'ah* on *waqf* holdings. Education minister, Ali Asghar Hikmat, was attentive to this fact. Describing his activities, he wrote that he revised an earlier state proposal for complete control into *awqaf* for compatibility with Islamic law, and struck a balance that from his standpoint made all parties happy.¹³¹

The state also intruded into the realm of *awqaf* in forming the University of Tehran, in particular the college of rational and transmitted Sciences. The ministry took over the *waqf* intended for use of the Sipahsalar school. Qajar prime minister Mīrzā Ḥusayn Qazvīnī (famous as Sipahsalar) began the school's construction in 1879 (1296). The minister transferred his property for permanent use of a school. The *waqf* document was signed by certain high ulema. It mentioned specific conditions such as number of students and salary of workers. Its management (*tawlīyat*) was up to the king. He would pick a trustworthy courtier as *mutawallī* who was in charge of administrating life-tenures and spending. However, the report mentioned that in the past monies from the madrasa and masjid of *muqūfāt* were spent on various things none of which fit with the intention of Sipahsalar. All that resulted were waste of monies, ruin to construction, chaos in condition of *awqaf*, and disorder (*ikhtilāl*) in affairs of the school, the report added. According to the report, Reza Shah's orderly rule thwarted the complete destruction of the school.¹³² Under the direction of Reza Shah, the Ministry of Education officially intervened in

¹³⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹³¹ Hikmat, *Sī khāṭīrah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-'i Pahlavī*, 200.

¹³² *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1938-1939 (1317-18), part IV, 10.

the affairs of the allegedly mismanaged Sipahsalar school and brought it under administrative form in every respect. On August 24, 1931 (Shahrivar 1, 1310), new conditions for admission of students were put in place. Thirty seminarian students (*talaba*) were chosen based on a competition (*musābiqah*) and fifteen of them received a 120-riyal stipend per month. A *Nizāmnāmah* and directions for a curriculum were also devised, with the college being divided into three sections of transmitted, rational, and literary.¹³³ Based on the majlis law passed in May 29, 1934 to authorize the university, the ministry having already taken over the Sipahsalar *waqf*, joined the school to the university as the college of rational and transmitted Sciences. After this, a new *ā'in nāmah* and curriculum were designed and confirmed by the high council (*shura*) on education and the college continued its operation until 1953. At the time of the university guide's publication in 1939, the college was still in existence and part of the university under the direction of the ministry, and as the guide claimed, "in harmony with intentions of Sipahsalar."¹³⁴

The Reza Shah state, therefore, continued and expanded state intrusion into *awqaf* that had commenced after 1906. It managed old spaces of education for the benefit of national education, while also transforming these old spaces into constituent parts of the new university. The *awqaf* were governmentalized.

4.5 To Create Order

Timothy Mitchell's *Colonizing Egypt* argued that the colonial and reformist state in Egypt represented the old educational order as disorderly; it attempted to replace it with order as it did in other areas of life, such as urban planning. In their representation of disorder, reformist

¹³³ For curriculum, see *ibid.*, part IV, 13-16. In the report, the Ministry of Culture is referenced, not the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Culture was the new name for the Ministry of Education as of 1938.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, part IV, 11.

observers of the al-Azhar would write about the chaos and the absence of *nizām* (order, discipline), noting that the teachers did nothing but sit at the pillars of the mosque giving lessons, without bothering to record the presence or absence of students or their progress through different lessons. Students, lacking all direction, moved haphazardly from professor to professor, passing from one text to another, understanding nothing.¹³⁵ According to the reformists, space was also disorderly. Students suffocated beneath the endless ceiling and worse were the noise and perpetual movement. Some were sleeping on their mats, some ate, some studied, some engaged in argument, vendors moved haphazardly among them selling water, bread, and fruit. In Mitchell's own summation: "[for the reformists] movement is haphazard and undisciplined, space is cramped, communication is uncertain, the presence of authority is intermittent, individuals are all unlike and uncoordinated, disorder threatens to break in at any point."¹³⁶ To bring order, the Egyptian state devised, in addition to other laws, a comprehensive plan for institutions of elementary instruction throughout Egypt, which became law on November 7, 1868. This law determined the subjects to be taught in every school, the teachers, the administrators, the books to be used, the time-table of instruction, the clothes that students were to wear, the plan of buildings, the layout of the classroom and its furniture, the location of each school, the source of its funds, the schedule of its examinations, and the registration status of student.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 80.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹³⁷ Another way to create order was to experiment with the Lancaster method of schooling, which had developed for instruction of the industrial classes in England. The Lancaster model attempted to diffuse authority; instead of authority being concentrated in the personal command of a master, it was to be systematically diffused over the whole school. Mitchell adds "it is not known how faithfully it was modelled on the English original." See *ibid.*, 71. Another example of ordered education given by Mitchell was the 1844 Egyptian school in Paris outside the geographical space of Egypt itself, see *ibid.*, 73.

Iranian modernists had the same perception of a disordered education in the Qajar past. As discussed in Chapter 2, disciplinary power distinct from the premodern *ādāb al-muta'allimīn* tradition targeted learners at the turn of the twentieth century. However, the goal of order was not simply learned-focused discipline; it was also institutional discipline, at the university in particular. The Reza Shah state took wide-ranging initiatives to craft order through such procedures as mandatory registration, prerequisites, ministerial directives, and written guidelines across schools.¹³⁸ These procedures targeted all those who were supposed to produce or facilitate learning in some form, including teachers and administrators. They also targeted learners, all those men and women who were supposed to learn and acquire skills to become productive subjects of the nation-state. The conduct of ministry administrators and teachers were ordered via numerous *asās'nāmah*, *nizām'namah*, and *ā'in'nāmah*. These were documents that set rules and regulations for conduct of knowledge institutions and their agents, so to bring order, uniformity, and predictability to their operations. These rules and regulations were written down and distributed. They were drafted and applied to a whole range of areas, from the administrative management of *awqaf* to university curricula. The *awqaf* division of the Education Ministry was bound by an *asās'nāmah* and *nizām'namah*. The state viewed the *nizām'namah* as undoing a disorderly past in favor of an orderly present. As explored in the previous section, the *nizām'namah* would, Pahlavi sources claimed, allow state employees to properly supervise the *awqaf* and for the Sipahsalar school to function according to the educational purpose for which it was intended. More broadly, the state viewed these procedures and the order they were meant to

¹³⁸ Regarding mandatory registration, students had to be recognized by the state via their new birth certificates, and then present this birth certificate among other documents to the schools or university to become part of the community of authorized learners. For one example, see a document from the medical college where students had to register twice per academic year. In *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihirān*, ed., Aṣṣīlī, 230.

create as generative of good education. Their absence meant disorder and a poorly-educated population.

In addition to the *asās'nāmah*, *niẓām'namah*, and *ā'in'nāmah*, central to this ordering were a set of directives (*muttaḥid al-ma'āl* in Arabic, and in later Persian usage, *bakhsh'nāmah*) intended for all the nation's knowledge institutions. These directives, created in part based on the reports and advice made by the ministry's investigation bureau, obliged administrators, educators, and the learning population to act or refrain from action.¹³⁹ The directives were on numerous subjects concerning education, and those imposed on the ministry itself were many. Examples included the employees' wearing of uniform clothing and regulated work hours that consisted of eight hours of work from Saturday to Thursday (8 o'clock to noon, and then again from 2 o'clock to 6), with half-days on Thursdays. These hours applied to ministry employees but also to administrative work within educational institutions more generally. Moreover, the timeline for attendance was ordered. For example, a student was supposed to complete course requirements for a bachelor degree at the college of law, political science, and economics as well as the college of rational and transmitted sciences in three years.¹⁴⁰ This was in contrast to the past where there was no clear end date. Learners' timeline to procurement of authorization from their teachers varied, ranging from ten to thirty years.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the administration of state did not decide on the amount of time an instructor could spend teaching a particular text or subject. The professor would decide when to begin teaching a particular text or subject, in

¹³⁹ Several directives referenced an investigation bureau's finding before making their requirement on learners and educators. For example, directive 32099-10423 ("Directive on Student Hygiene") dated February 1, 1934 referenced the health investigators' report that students, mostly from primary schools, were failing to observe cleanliness in facial areas, clothes, and other parts. See *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān*, ed., Aṣīlī.

¹⁴⁰ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 10, 13.

¹⁴¹ Raḡavī, et al., *Hawzah-'i 'ilmīyah*, 76. See the following section in this chapter on how this authorization was obtained.

accordance with student needs.¹⁴² Time spent on a text was decided by the professor, in particular at the more advanced level of study at the madrasa, which was called *khārij*.¹⁴³

In addition to new disciplines of time, the nation's educator-administrators became subject to disciplines such as directives how school had to collect state-generated documents such as birth certificates (*sijill-i ahvāl*). They also had the duty to refrain from hiring teachers with temporary conscription exemptions as these teachers could be called back into the army, and thus, cause disruption to the intended order. Other requirements were placed not on the administration, but directly upon teachers. For example, teachers had to use published textbooks when available, instead of transmitting their own lessons via dictation (*juzvah*).¹⁴⁴ When it came to punishment of students, they had to abandon the ways of the old, such as physical removal from the classroom, instead, prescribing such punishment as additional homework (*taklīf*). Student-learners were expected to conform to a new order too, for example they had to appear orderly while at school, including requirements on proper clothes, haircuts, and combing. Provincial students were prohibited from migration and registration at the schools of the center when similar education was available in the province.¹⁴⁵ Directives extended to the newly-established university. One directive regulated the newly unveiled female learner and her appearance when at the university. Dated October 2, 1934, it declared:

It must be announced that the entry of female students to school with make-up is strictly prohibited; women must wear simple, national wardrobe and refrain from any adornment, self-beautification, and wearing of clothes without sleeves. If anyone acts against this

¹⁴² Ibid., 12.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 11-12, 135, 137.

¹⁴⁴ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqaf va sanāyi '-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah, 1932-1933 (1311-12), 110.*

¹⁴⁵ For these directives, see ibid., 103, 106-108. The directives also dealt with issues like budgetary needs, *waqf* management, and construction of infrastructure. For their full list, see ibid., 103-134.

directive, for the first [offense], the principal must advise and reproach her; but the second time, the principal must expel the student.¹⁴⁶

Professors too were subject to the new order. Like students, they needed to sign in attendance sheets (*daftar-i ḥuzūr va ghīyāb*). One document, signed by the university president, specifically instructed a certain professor that he had to sign the attendance sheet.¹⁴⁷ Another document on “duties of professors and instructors” from 1938 (1316) declared it a duty for them to be present during exams and college council meetings (جلسات شورای دانشکده) as well as on-time for their teaching duties, requiring them to sign in and out in relevant notebooks, and in case of violation, they were punished according to the *ā’in-nāmah* on punishments (*ā’in-nāmah-i jarā’im*).¹⁴⁸ Another document instructed heads of laboratories (*ru’asā’-yi āzmāyishgāh*) that they must, in a special notebook, record student activity, attendance, result of their questions and grades, so that one could, whenever needed, obtain necessary information about their educational past.¹⁴⁹ Directives were also produced to bring uniformity to university curricula across areas of study, detailing prerequisites to enter a college, subjects to be studied, and “testimonials” to obtain and exams to take for degree completion.¹⁵⁰

Rules on orderly conduct at the college existed in premodern education too, although they were far less thorough and also independent of the state. An example was the procedure of record-keeping on attendance at the madrasa. In fact, some of the *madāris* made stipulations in

¹⁴⁶ *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihārān*, ed., Aṣīlī.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 161, 225. Example of reporting duty was an article requiring the lab’s director to send all reports on administrative affairs of the labs with his assessment to the college administration, see *ibid.*, 226. On duties of the primary school principal, see *Vizārat-i ma’ārif, awqaf va ṣanāyi’-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah*, 1932-1933 (1311-12), 81.

¹⁵⁰ On uniformity of curricula, see *ibid.*, 229.

the deed of the *waqf* foundation about attendance. Moreover, jurists would answer legal questions on the correct practice of marking and reacting to absences. For example, jurists were asked whether a student was allowed his stipend for absence during vacation or at other times.¹⁵¹ The post of an attendance-keeper was called *kātib ghayba al-sāmi‘īn* or *kātib al-ghayba ‘alā al-fuqahā*. They kept track of attendance for hadith and law students respectively. These posts existed to prevent the distribution of *waqf* income to absentee students. One example was the attendance keeper who dismissed many students at Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, probably because they stayed in their homes.¹⁵² The *kātib ghayba al-sāmi‘īn* had the duty of keeping an exact record of the names of students present, being careful to detect those who were not taking down hadiths in dictation. He was to report unfavorably on a student who failed to do so. If permissive in this regard, he was guilty of wrong-doing and would be punished for it in the life to come.¹⁵³ The Mamluk scholar, al-Subki, explained the role of the *kātib al-ghayba ‘alā al-fuqahā* in the following terms:

Upon him is the following duty: he should not record all who were absent, but ask the reason of their absence. If the student has an excuse for his violation [*takhalluf*], the recorder should note it. If he recorded the absence without discernment, he did the student an injustice. If the recorder excuses the student for little money taken from the student-*faqih*, the place of the recorder is in the rim of hell.

These premodern rules had both a this-worldly (e.g., withdrawal of stipend) and an other-worldly consequence (e.g., punishment in “the rim of hell”). The Reza Shah era disciplines did away with an emphasis on other-worldly consequences. But the more dramatic change was that rules and regulations became far more extended and disciplinary in nature. New instruments such

¹⁵¹ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 95.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 177.

as the *asās 'nāmah*, *nizām 'namah*, or the *ā 'īn 'nāmah* were created to order education. Moreover, the state assumed an active role in eliciting compliance with rules from the learning population.¹⁵⁴ However, we should not overemphasize the reach of this disciplinary power into the minds and bodies of the learning population. It is true that the new order had numerous *asās 'nāmah*, *nizām 'namah*, *ā 'īn 'nāmah*, and *bakhsh 'nāmah*, but to what extent they were obeyed or even read by those for whom they were intended is not certain. Moreover, compliance with them over time did not necessarily mean that they were also obeyed to the same degree in the Reza Shah era. However, we do know that many of these disciplines maintained institutional longevity. For example, the grade of discipline, as we learned in Chapter 2, continues to be central to the schooling experience of every schoolchild. Indeed, the new educational order became the normative system of education for all those who wanted schooling and mobility into the world of “work” in scholarship, government, and commerce. The *maktab* and the madrasa were demoted to a secondary order of learning for “spiritual” matters, which as I will argue in the next chapter, was the combined result of state’s expansion but also of intellectual and literary discourses on “proper” knowledge producers.¹⁵⁵ In expanding its reach into orderly education,

¹⁵⁴ Some scholars have argued that the latter had a “freer” structure more conducive to learning for knowledge’s sake than the disciplinary nature of state education. As an example, see Michael Fischer’s study on the madrasa. In his study on the Shia seminaries on Iran in context of the Iranian revolution of 1979, he was very much keen on the difference between the two orders of a “freer” (his own word) form of madrasa education and the disciplined university. Fischer contrasted what he calls the secular and state education with the teaching of the madrasa. “In the state institutions,” he wrote, “students are forced to take classes they do not like. They are pressured to study for grades and for diplomas rather than for knowledge. Both teachers and students anxiously await release by the bell at the end of the class period. Students and teachers often do not respect each other...[T]he pedagogical ideal of the madrasa is just the reverse [Fischer added that this ideal “to a greater or lesser extent...also what in fact exists]. There are no grades, so student study only for learning’s sake. Students who do not study are not flunked out, but neither are they elevated by bribery or favoritism...students study with teachers of their own choice. There is thus never a disciplinary problem or a problem of lack of respect for teachers.” See Fischer, *From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, 61, 63.

¹⁵⁵ To gain normative status, disciplinary rules were not the only instrument. Often times, violence of sovereign power was also employed to which Pahlavi modernists gave vocal support. For example, Hikmat wrote Reza Shah had determined that in three centers Tehran and Bandar Shah, Gorgan and Khorramabad, and Loristan, three day-and-night schools by the title of nomadic school (*dār al-tarbīyat-i 'ashāyir*) should be instituted, and that the children of nomads (*'ilāt*) should be taken there by “force” (*jabr*) and “violence” (*'unf*) to be raised and prepared

the state also claimed for itself the ultimate authority to authorize the learned population. This was the fourth facet of governmentality to which we now turn.

4.6 To Authorize Learners

The state's authorization of learners changed the old way of granting and transmitting intellectual authority. Prior to the proliferation of state-backed certificates and degrees, the *ijaza* was the primary manner of authorizing the learned. The *ijaza* was, in the words of one Qajar jurist, rooted in the "habit of our righteous scholars" (عادة علمائنا الأبرار), that is, it was a practice with a long history in Islam. The term *ijaza* was first coined to authorize the transmission of Hadith. When used in the absolute, that is, without a complement, it referred to authorization to transmit Hadith. But with legal studies, it began to be used with complements in order to distinguish it from hadith transmission. The authorization for issuing legal opinion, or for teaching the law were designated as follows: *al-ijāzah bi al-fatwā* (fatwa authorization) and *al-ijāzah bi al-tadrīs* (teaching authorization).¹⁵⁶ As was the case with an authorization to teach, the authorization to give fatwa came from a duly authorized jurist. No matter how sophisticated the *ijaza* became, whether it authorized the transmission or teaching of one book, a whole repertoire of hadiths, the teaching of law, or the issuing of legal opinions, it remained an authorization made by one person, or if by more than one, by one at a time. The scholar receiving it could go on to collect other authorizations from other masters, and he could do this for the same book or books, for teaching law, or for issuing legal opinions.¹⁵⁷ When the *mudarris* or jurist granted the

for "society" (*jāmi'ah*). These nomadic schools operated for years, Hikmat wrote, and produced "productive fruit" (*maḥṣūl-i pur barikat*), one of whom Hikmat knew personally transforming from a Khorramabad nomad into a state servant working in the foreign ministry, see Hikmat, *Sī khāṭirah az 'aṣr-i farkhundah-i Pahlavī*, 128.

¹⁵⁶ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 270. Although authorization to produce fatwa usually implied a level of knowledge such that the candidate had already proven himself capable of teaching law, see *ibid.*, 151.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

ijaza to teach law and issue legal opinions, he acted in his capacity as the legitimate and competent authority in the field of law. He did so in his own name, acting as an individual, not as part of a group of master-jurisconsults acting as a faculty. The *ijaza* was thus a personal act of authorization, from the authorizing scholar to the newly authorized one. Sovereign power had no part in the process even if he or she was the founder of the madrasa.¹⁵⁸ Further characteristics of the *ijaza* were that it was usually granted to students at an advanced age, in their thirties, forties or even later. Although some may have received it at an early age, which was not considered ordinary.¹⁵⁹ The Syrian jurist, al-Auza'i, was said to have first issued legal opinions at the age of 13, or Taj al-Din al-Subki was reportedly authorized to teach law and issue fatwa at the age of 18 or less.¹⁶⁰ Authorization to teach law and issue legal opinions were given after an examination had taken place, which was oral. The exam took place on particular books that had been studied by the candidate. Disputation (*munāzirah*) was the final test a candidate had to pass in order to obtain his license. He was then eligible for a teaching post in the locality in which he had proved himself a disputant.¹⁶¹

Qajar scholar-jurists who studied at the madrasa partook in the *ijaza* system. They solicited their *ijaza* from their teachers.¹⁶² Their *ijāzāt* were written in Arabic and shared a similar thematic structure. They began with the praise of God and the prophet, and sometimes the Imams and the ulema as well. The recipient's character then received praise, and his

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 271.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 149.

¹⁶¹ Later Maksidi wrote that oral exam developed into disputation, thus he seemed to contradict the claim that oral exam and disputation were used as a two-stage test, see *ibid.*, 271.

¹⁶² Tunkābunī's series of *ijāzāt* he received from his teachers often began with the term *istajāzanī* followed by the subject who was Tunkābunī. This meant that the recipient, Tunkābunī, "asked me" (i.e., the grantor) for the *ijaza*. See Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā'*, 29.

intellectual accomplishments followed, which were grounded in a line of intellectual transmission connecting him to his teacher's teachers who themselves were connected to the Imams, the Prophet, and ultimately God. Prayers brought the *ijaza* to a closure. We see this thematic consistency in several *ijāzāt* that were produced for Shia scholar Tunkābunī. The *ijaza* of his teacher Sayyid Ibrahim was a good example. He began with the praise of God and the prophets with emphasis on Prophet Muhammad, and then came his praise for the ulema. The prefatory section reiterated shared truths to the interlocutor. For example, the Shia argument for the ulema as place-holder-guardians for the Imams in time of occultation was mentioned in the part on ulema's praise. In his own words, the ulema were those who "in the time of occultation, God had ordered us to follow [*itbā' al-'ulimā*]." ¹⁶³ Sayyid Ibrahim continued with a more extended praise, riddled with laudatory adjectives, to describe the recipient of the *ijaza*. Tunkābunī was described, among other praises, as the "perfect virtue," the "sea of truths," the "treasure of details," the "source of details," the "fountain of bounties," the "source of pure words and understandings," the "holder of prose and poetry," the "researcher in *furū'* and in *usūl*", the "examiner in rational and transmitted [sciences]," the "one-of-a-kind," and the "most noticed among the noted ulema." ¹⁶⁴ The virtues were followed by the recipient's intellectual work. Tunkābunī was described as having travelled away from his people (*al-ahl wa al-awṭān*) to acquire sciences and to complete manners and customs (*al-ādāb wa al-rusūm*). He was said to have written on *fiqh* and *usūl*, in genres of prose and poetry. Praise was given to his intellectual production just like it was for his character, although in slightly less flowery terms. His works,

¹⁶³ Ibid., 10. For a discussion of different positions on the extent of Shia ulema authority over the community in the absence of the Imam, see Sachedina, *The just ruler (al-sultān al-'ādil) in Shī'ite Islam: the comprehensive authority of the jurist in Imamite jurisprudence*.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

among other qualities, possessed qualities of “perfect eloquence” (*kamāl al-faṣāḥah*) and “handsome examination” (*al-tahqīqāt al-anīqah*).¹⁶⁵ The recipient was then recognized for his benefit to the community of seekers (*al-sālik*, singular in the text) and thus authorized as having intellectual and spiritual authority over them. Another teacher-grantor, Sayyid Muhammad Baqir, wrote that he personally examined Tunkābunī in “his states and found him deeply rooted in derivation of divine rules from known evidence and in reaching the degree of *ijtihād*.”¹⁶⁶ Another grantor, Shahīd Ṣalīṣ, gave names of individual texts that Tunkābunī was authorized to transmit. He wrote that “I give permission to him [Tunkābunī] to transmit what he has read and heard from me,” (فاجزتُ له أن يروى عنى مقروءاتى ومسموعاتى) such as the grantor’s 24-volume work, *Manḥaj al-ijtihād*, which dealt with the rules of Islam from ritual purity to the question of blood money.¹⁶⁷ Tunkābunī could transmit from the grantor what was passed down via a chain that connected the grantor to shaykhs before him, from whom he himself had *ijāzāt*. These shaykhs connected all the way back to the Imams, the Prophet, the angel Gabriel, and ultimately God. In certain *ijāzāt*, specific shaykhs in the line of transmission were named. Shahīd Ṣalīṣ’s *ijaza* for Tunkābunī named several Shaykhs before the grantor, all praised with their elaborate adjectives.¹⁶⁸ All of Tunkābunī’s *ijāzāt* closed with mutual prayers. Sayyid Ibrahim, for example, prayed for him in his future role as source of imitation for the Muslims (مرجعاً للمسلمين), and also

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-‘ulamā’*, 78. The quoted part is on line five counting from the bottom of 78.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁶⁸ They were in order of proximity to Tunkābunī: al-Amīr al-Sayyid ‘Alī ibn al-Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṭabāṭabāī, al-Shaykh Ja‘far al-Gharavī, al-Aqā Muḥammad Bāqir al-Bihbahānī, al-Sayyid Mīhdī al-Ṭabāṭabāī, al-Sayyid Muḥammad, and al-Amīr al-Sayyid ‘Alī. See *ibid*.

sought Tunkābunī’s prayers.¹⁶⁹ This solicitation for prayer may be evidence of a personal relationship the recipient had to the grantor. But what evidenced this personal relationship far more persuasively was that Tunkābunī followed his *ijaza* by a poem for Sayyid Ibrahim, wherein he showed his intimacy with his teacher and reciprocated the praise. Sayyid Ibrahim was “the eminent Sayyid in the cities” who was compared to the sun, who had taught 700 from the virtuous including Tunkābunī, and who had produced great works on *usūl* and *furū*.¹⁷⁰ In addition, Tunkābunī recorded the life and works of the men who provided him with *ijaza* where the level of intimate access to their personal history and also to their ideas were evidenced. In contrast to the juridical *ijaza*, those who studied the *adab* sciences outside the madrasa did not have a formal authorization instrument. But their authority was also based in a personal relationship with the master who taught them. They either taught those same subjects as their teachers, or worked in government and commerce jobs when they and their teachers felt they were prepared to do so.¹⁷¹

The new knowledge regime introduced a parallel grant of authority to the *ijaza* in form of certificates and degrees. This new regime of degrees was not intended for the madrasa. It was for those who studied at the higher education schools of the early 1900’s and later the first university.¹⁷² The degree became the distinctive feature of authority-grant in the university, and in the early years only a bachelor’s degree, “*licence*,” was to be granted—borrowed from the French word and pronounced roughly the same. A sample degree from the rational and

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁷¹ Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 271.

¹⁷² Hikmat, *Sī khātirah az ‘aṣr-i farkhundah-’i Pahlavī*, 37. Hikmat reported that in 1926 (1304), the ministry held a celebration to grant students at higher education schools diplomas, certificates, and awards.

transmitted sciences college was rather comparable to those produced at contemporary universities around the world. It was embellished with a single line of poetry by Ferdowsi, “s/he who has knowledge has power.” The lines that followed listed the Education Ministry, the University of Tehran, and the college. The degree then tapped into three sources of legal and administrative authority: 1) the ministry’s authority, specifically article 18 of its constitution (*qānūn-i asāsī-yi ma’ārif*) from 1911 (1290); 2) the 1934 parliamentary law that provided legal authorization for the establishment of the university; and 3) the degree-granting college’s *asās’ nāmah*. In addition to administrative authority, the degree listed personal authority of the university president, the college president, and the education minister. The recipient was mentioned by her name and birth certificate number. She was said to have passed her final exams, being qualified to receive the degree and take advantage of its legal benefits.¹⁷³

In the early years of the university, the conferral of the degree also required that the recipient earn a number of “testimonies” (*shahādat’ nāmah* in the singular) from her teachers in several areas of her major. For example, in the college of sciences one needed to earn testimonies in three of the following areas: general mathematics, analysis, mechanics, *hay’at* (an old science that dealt with the movements of celestial bodies), astronomy (*nujūm*), general physics, chemistry, zoology, botany, geology, biology, physiology, and introduction to medicine.¹⁷⁴ The literature college similarly required four testimonials leading up to the bachelor’s degree.¹⁷⁵ This testimonial requirement was very similar to and probably a residue of the *ijaza* system, since it

¹⁷³ *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihārān*, ed. Asīlī, 101.

¹⁷⁴ *Rāhnamā-yi dānishgāh*, 1935-36 (1314-15), 18. Biology was referred to as *ḥayāt’ shināsī* literally meaning “the knowledge of life.”

¹⁷⁵ *Sālnāmah-i Pārs*, 1935 (1314), 166, University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center.

asked for the personal testimony of a teacher on behalf of a student regarding her intellectual accomplishments. It gradually fell out of use as the preparatory stage to the degree.

The person seeking the degree had to undergo certain steps before she was to be included in the knowledge institution at all. In the chapter on *Rushdīyah* and the previous section on order creation, we covered how modernist intellectuals and the state endorsed entry requirements, such as as mandatory registration to include learners. To be included, in addition to registration, students had to take entrance exams for entry into higher education in some cases. In 1938 (1316), the medical college required an entrance exam if the number of applicants were to be higher than the college's capacity. The exam was in three areas of natural sciences (botany or zoology), general physics, and general chemistry. The questions were written by a small exam committee composed of instructors at the college, and students had one hour for each written question that was graded from zero to 20 with higher grades receiving admission.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, those who wanted to gain preaching certificate from the preach and sermon institute, and were not already enrolled at its host college of rational and transmitted sciences, had to take an exam. Alternatively, they could present a ministry-approved certificate (*taṣḍīq*) of secondary, literary education (*mutavassīṭ-i adabī*). The secondary education prerequisite was the broader requirement for university enrollment. Those who had gone to secondary school in the transition period from the old to the new needed to prove their prior learning by a visit to the Education Ministry. There, they paid a fee to obtain a certification (*taṣḍīq'nāmah*) of their secondary education.¹⁷⁷ This was in contrast to the old order where there was no administrative instrument

¹⁷⁶ *Asnād-i tārikh-i Dānishgāh-i Tihirān*, ed. Asīlī, 227-28.

¹⁷⁷ *Vizārat-i ma'ārif, awqāf va ṣanāyi'-i mustazrafah, Sālnāmah*, 1932-33 (1311-12), 46-47.

that recorded student completion or authorized them to move to higher stages, say, from the *maktab* to the madrasa, aside from the personal recognition of the teacher.

In conclusion then, significant changes occurred concerning learner inclusion and authorization from the *ijaza* to the degree order. The relationship between the grantor and the recipient of authority went from a personal, intimate one to an impersonal, abstract relationship. The grantor of inclusion and authority was no longer a person with intimate knowledge of the student. The grantors were now a set of abstract organizations and their scholar-administrators who may or may not have interacted with the learner. Moreover, the instrument that granted authority, i.e., the degree, was no longer grounded in some other-worldly order of truth or in a sacred chain of transmission as the *ijaza* was. There was not even a simple reference to God's authority; the degree was only embellished by a poetic verse. Instead, the authority of the state backed the degree. In short, authorization of knowledge changed from being highly personal, teacher-oriented, and other-worldly to impersonal, state-oriented, and this-worldly. With the expansion of state education and the establishment of the university, more students sought their authorization from the state than they did from the old ulema at the madrasa. The state had created a new system to include and grant the population epistemic authority. The authorization of knowledge too was governmentalized.

The governmentalization of education meant that the state assumed a central role in who produced and transmitted knowledge. This resulted in the emergence of a new group of knowledge producers. The existing ulema, or literally "those who knew," either changed their identity to become state-trained scholars, or maintained their old organization that ran parallel with or in opposition to the new intellectuals of the state. In order to elevate knowledge produced

through state institutions, the state intruded upon ulema autonomy.¹⁷⁸ However, these new knowledge producers were not simply a result of state action and governmentality. New intellectuals transformed much older, premodern views on the ulema into new polemics and literary representations, which disparaged them and brought into question their status as “those who knew.” I turn to these intellectual and literary representations in the next chapter. Combined with state governmentality, they made normative the organization of the *dabistān* and the university, the institution of disciplinary learning, and the authority of state-trained scholars.

¹⁷⁸ As examples of this intrusion, see Razavī, et al., *Hawzah-’i ‘ilmīyah*, 41.

Chapter 5: Disparaging “Those Who Know”: The Transformation of Anti-Ulema Imagination

Today in Iran and among Iranians in the diaspora, the popular perception of the Shia cleric is a deeply divided one.¹ For some, he merits respect, reverence, and emulation for his spiritual and communal leadership, but for others he is associated with such things as poor hygiene, sex-fixation, hypocrisy, deception, greed, ignorance, and untrustworthiness.² The following joke, told in different variations and in diverse settings like family parties and shared taxis, captures this contradictory set of social attitudes:

A man was going away for some time and wanted someone trustworthy to take care of his wife in his absence, so he asked the neighborhood cleric, hajj aqa.

When he returned, he went to greet his wife and saw her with a toddler asking who the kid was.

Wife replied, “while you were gone, I became pregnant.”

The man said happily: “*ajab!*” [meaning wow!].

Wife replied: “actually, this is Rajab; Ajab is with hajj aqa.

The joke begins with the trust for the clerics but ends with a shocked distrust of them. The distrust in them is not merely a popular sentiment. In Persian literary and intellectual history too, there was a long textual tradition of castigating the ulema, which as I argue in this article, can be put into three different periods of classical, constitutional, and modern, each with its own particularities. Proceeding historically, I argue that the literary and intellectual imagination vis-à-vis the ulema changed in quality as Iran entered the twentieth-century. In the classical period, the sources primarily berated character vices, such as hypocrisy, of *certain* ulema, but without a

¹ Contemporary Persian terms for the Shia cleric are mullah, *Ākhūnd*, and *ruhānī*. The premodern term in the plural was *‘ulimā* (simplified in the New Oxford Dictionary as ulema), literally meaning “those who know.” I shall generally use the term ulema to follow the historical and indigenous nomenclature.

² A polemical two-volume book written by former Pahlavi official is an example of a text that shares in these popular perceptions. See Pīrāstah, *Ākhūnd'shināsī: barrasi-i naqsh-i ākhūnd va mulla dar Īrān : az zamān-i ḥamlah-'i tāzīyān tā fāji'ah-'i Bahman 57 va pas az ān*. On their supposed ignorance, see *ibid.*, 123; on their supposed poor hygiene captured in the phrase “lice-infested cleric” (*Ākhūnd-i shipishū*), see *ibid.*, 136; on their supposed greed and gluttony, see *ibid.*, 136-37.

corresponding attempt to critique or undermine the underlying structure of ulema social and epistemic authority. A change occurred with the constitutional movement (1906-1911), which demanded liberal reforms, such as the drafting of a constitution and institution of a parliament. Constitutionalist sources began to treat character vices as secondary, and shifted their primary attention to the critique of anti-constitutionalist ulema for their obstruction of reforms. With the rise of the Reza Shah state, a further change occurred. The emerging state-trained intellectuals called into question the social authority of the *entire* ulema collective from whom they differentiated themselves, and further attempted to marginalize the ulema from what constituted “true,” legitimate, and mainstream knowledge.

A number of works have been written on the ulema of Iran and their organizational transformation in the twentieth-century. These works have examined the ulema’s relationship to dynasty, state, and politics on the one hand, and to education and knowledge creation on the other.³ Less attention has been paid to their passive role: how the ulema were thought of and imagined in the literary and intellectual discourses.⁴ This is the task of the present chapter with reference to classical and modern discourses in Persian. The sources I use to exposit these

³ On the first category, there are several prominent works. On the premodern Muslim ulema in relation to “the state” and “political theory,” see Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: the jurists*. On the relationship of ulema to dynastic power in the Safavid and Qajar periods, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, and Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, chapter 1 specifically. On the Qajar period specifically, see Algar, *Religion and State in Iran (1785-1906): Role of Ulema in the Qajar Period*, and Floor, “The Revolutionary character of the Iranian Ulema: Wishful Thinking or Reality?” For the impact of Pahlavi modernization reforms on the ulema, see Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period*; Moazami, *State, Religion, and Revolution in Iran, 1796 to the present*; Faghfoory (1993) The Impact of Modernization on the Ulama in Iran, 1925-1941, 26:3/4, 277-312. On the second category of education and knowledge creation, see Fischer, *Iran: from Religious Dispute to Revolution*, and Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: the ideological foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*. Fischer provided an ethnography of the madrasa in the Pahlavi period, while Dabashi focused on the epistemology of the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the ideas put forth by four of Iran’s prominent ulema.

⁴ An exception is the article by Lewisohn, “The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz’s Anti-clericalism” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed., Lewisohn. This article honed on the “anti-clerical” content of Hafez’s verse in context of medieval Persian poetry. My article, by contrast, provides a larger historical picture on how anti-ulema representations changed in Persian literary and intellectual discourses.

discourses are from multiple genres. Some are widely known, printed, and examined, while others are studied for the first time here. For the classical period, I rely on the *Dīvān* of Khājah Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiz-i Shīrāzī (“Hafez,” d. 1389), which was one of the most known and striking criticisms of the ulema’s character in Persian literary history. To avoid the impression that ulema character-castigation was unique to rebellious poets, I also analyze an understudied pre-constitutional text by a Hadith scholar, known as Muḥaddith Nūrī (d. 1902), which shared with Hafez the contempt for certain character flaws in a subset of the ulema, namely the preacher (*vā’iz*). Nūrī’s text, although written in the years leading up to the constitutional movement, was still very much articulated within the classical register and the character-castigation that defined it. I then take the reformist story, *The True Dream* (1900-1901), as representative of change in the constitutional period, from character-castigation to a social and epistemic critique of the anti-constitutionalist ulema. For the modern Reza Shah period, I take up two sources for my analysis. The first is Ahmad Kasravi’s (d. 1946) polemical book on Shi’ism by the same title, which pushed *The True Dream* much further to represent the *entire* ulema collective as agents of oppression and ignorance. The view of the ulema as obstacles to effective knowledge production was not excluded to polemical excesses of Kasravi, however. In an unpublished academic thesis (dated, 1938) by modernist scholar, Qāsim Tūysirkānī, the same argument was made. This thesis, one of the earliest produced at the University of Tehran, is analyzed for the first time in this article. Tūysirkānī extended *The True Dream*’s view of ulema’s alleged epistemic obstruction. He represented them as archaic agents of knowledge who could only gain their redemption as scholars by assimilating into the university order. In order to understand the transformed mode of imagining the ulema by

modernists, Kasravi and Tūysirkānī included, we shall begin with the anti-ulema imagination that came before these sources.

5.1 Berating Ulema Character in the Classical Period

Who were the persons making up the ulema collective, whom certain literary sources castigated? In his recent study of the Persianate ulema of nineteenth-century Bukhara, James Pickett views the ulema as a social group, although without necessarily having a corporate identity, who had shared occupations and functions, performing *Sharī'a*, asceticism, and poetry as circumstances dictated (and in some cases, non-scholarly and this-worldly functions for their livelihoods such as merchant activity).⁵ For Pickett, the ulema were the “public morality enforcer” (*muhtasib*), the madrasa instructor (*mudarris*), the legislator (mufti), the judge (qazi), the ascetic, and the Sufi. But they also included those of lesser status who showed up in the biographical sources (*taẓkirah*) less frequently, such as the person who made the call to prayer (*muezzin*).⁶ I use the same broad definition of the ulema in this article, also noting that depending on context, some of the aforementioned activities were less associated with the ulema than others. For example, with the rise of Safavid dynasty, the Iranian-Shia ulema became less associated with organized Sufi activity, compared to their Sunni predecessors in the time of Hafez whom he castigated in his poetry as we shall see in what follows.⁷

By way of a starting generalization, the Persianate-Islamic literary sources operated on the default presumption that the ulema were righteous people and that they were the agents of

⁵ Pickett, *The Polymaths of Islam: Power and Networks of Knowledge in Central Asia*, 1-2, 14. Pickett references the work of Richard Eaton on lack of a corporate identity, despite shared functions, see *ibid.*, 129. For Pickett’s argument that “many scholars were merchants but most merchants were not scholars,” see *ibid.*, 106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁷ For the decline of organized Sufism in the Safavid period, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 112.

‘ilm or knowledge, hence the designation of *‘ulimā*’ (in Persianized pronunciation, *‘ulamā*’) or “those who know.”⁸ However, a recognition to the contrary also existed, that there were the wicked among them. The literature made this recognition through the concept of the “wicked ulema” (*‘ulimā’ al-sū*). These were the ulema who manifested vices of character such as hypocrisy and greed, and, their poor character incited them to act against the demands of *Sharī‘a* and the interests of the community, which they had the duty to guard.⁹ In the classical period, poetry was the genre in which ulema-vice found its most vocal critics. As early as the Seljuk period, poets went after these vices, revealing them through parody and satire among other devices, and this continued into successive periods. The poetic genius of fourteenth-century poet, Hafez, was perhaps the most piercing of these criticisms. As the late literary critic, Leonard Lewisohn, remarked persuasively: “Although caricature and castigation of figures belonging to both the esoteric Sufi and exoteric clerical hierarchy appear among nearly all classical Persian poets—Sanā’ī, ‘Aṭṭār, Niẓāmī Qūhistānī and ‘Ubayd Zākānī in particular—Hafez’s *Dīvān* was unique in being almost entirely anti-clerical in composition.”¹⁰

⁸ This term is the plural agential word from the Arabic root of *‘a-l-m* meaning “knowledge” in noun form and “to know” in verbal form. See the Hans Wehr Arabic to English dictionary under the root of علم.

⁹ The wicked of ulema were often those who were close to the ruling dynasty. This was recognized by the philosopher-vizier of the Seljuk court, Niẓām al-Mulk. Advising the king and quoting Sufyan Thauri, a celebrated scholar of tradition and a contemporary of the first Abbasid Caliphs, Niẓām al-Mulk wrote: “the worst of learned men is he who seeks the society of kings.” See Niẓām al-Mulk Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Ishāq Ṭūsī, *Siyāsatnāmah*, ed., Iqbāl, 80. Also see the hadith that “whoever does not have piety in his pursuit of knowledge, God will inflict with one of the following three things: death in his youth, placement in village-peripheries, or the *service of kings*.” (My emphasis). Hadith quoted in Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad. *Ādāb al-muta‘allimīn*, ed., al-Jalālī, 111 in chapter 10.

¹⁰ Lewisohn, “The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz’s Anti-clericalism,” 159.

Hafez's *Dīvān* created a poetic universe where persons who represented sacred authority were transformed into wicked characters.¹¹ Those he criticized were the ascetic (*zāhid*), the preacher (*vā'iz*), and the Sufi, and to a less frequent degree, the *muhtasib*, the shaykh, the *hāfiẓ al-Qur'ān*, the qadi, the mufti, the *faqīh*, the town's imam (*imām-i shahr*), and at least once, the ulema as a collective.¹² The sacred persons-turned-wicked were set against the *rind* (libertine) and the tavern's master (*pīr-i mughān* or *pīr-i miykadah*).¹³ Hafez, refusing conventional social meanings associated with them as lowly and sinful, created them anew, as virtuous characters who should be listened to for life advice; in the *Dīvān*, they were the "supreme spiritual guide."¹⁴ The tavern's master was a character of Hafez's imagination that brought together the title of the Sufi *pīr* and attached it to the most sinful person and place, the wine-seller at the tavern where none of the ulema went. Hafez was unable to find a guide among the ulema, thus creating the

¹¹ For a verse-specific commentary on the *Dīvān* in Persian, see the authoritative two-volume account by Khurramshāhī, *Hāfiẓ-nāmah: sharḥ-i alfāz, a'lām, mafāhīm-i kalīdī va abyāt-i dushvar-i Hāfiẓ*. For an English interpretation, see Lewisohn, *Hafiz and Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*. One of the more impressive works in English, Lewisohn provided a strong interpretation because he committed to a close reading of individual verses, while being highly attentive to the broader mystical context of the *Dīvān*, in addition to secondary Persian literature on the subject.

¹² For my references to the *Dīvān*, I use the edition with explanation by Khāliqī, *Shākh-i nabāt-i Hāfiẓ: sharḥ-i ghazal'hā hamrāh bā muqaddamah, talaffuz-i vāzhagān-i dushvār, durust'khvānī-i abyāt va farhang-i iṣṭilāḥāt-i 'irfānī*. For examples of criticisms against each figure, see the ascetic (7:2, 71:1, 71:10, 74:7, 80:1, 84:6), the Sufi (7:1, 260:5, 375:1), the preacher (2:3, 83:7, 88:2), the *muhtasib* (46:10, 41:1, 78:5, 283:4), the shaykh (5:13 11:8, 71:10), the mufti (86:3), the *faqīh* (44:3), the town's imam (283:5), and the ulema as a collective (45:3). Lewisohn argued that the ascetic was "the most reviled and villainous personality, the nightmare obsession of the whole of Hafez's *Dīvān*." Contrast this with Iranian literary critic Īraj Shāhbāzī who views the ascetic, the Sufi, and the preacher as equally villainous for the poet. Compare Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz's Anti-clericalism," 160, with Shāhbāzī's lecture notes compiled into a self-published textbook, *Sukhan-i āshnā*, 51.

¹³ According to Khurramshāhī, in the *Dīvān*, *pīr-i mughān* was not used for the Zoroastrian magi, as had been the case previously in the literature, but for Zoroastrian wine-sellers from whom Muslims would acquire their drinks. For a detailed explanation of the imaginative use of this character in the *Dīvān*, see Khurramshāhī, *Hāfiẓ-nāmah*, vol. 1, 97.

¹⁴ "Supreme spiritual guide" is the fitting title used in Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz's Anti-clericalism," 164.

tavern's master as his guide.¹⁵ Hafez's second guide, the *rind*, although imagined too, was based on real social actors who lived during the poet's life. The *rindān*, viewed from the socio-historical perspective of fourteenth-century Shiraz, were hoodlums in charge of specific quarters of the city. Although they theoretically occupied the lowest rung in the social hierarchy, they were feared for their ruthlessness, for most of the city's hired assassins, professional thugs, and thieves belonged to their company. They were steady customers of vice-dens (*kharābāt*), brothels (*bayt al-lutf*), wine-shops (*sharāb'khānah*), opium-dens (*bang'khānah*), and gambling houses (*qumār'khānah*). *Rindān* were known for their sensational adventurism (*mājarājū'ī*), contempt for conventional religious orientation, devil-may-care attitude (*lā-ubālīgarī*), and deliberate courting of infamy and notoriety. In Hafez's *Dīvān*, the *rind* was not so much this dissolute character, but a nonconformist who was free from the traps of egocentrism and concerns of others' reprimand, and he benefited from a refined aesthetic and spiritual value system, and in Khurramshāhī's interpretation, he was "the perfect person" (*insān-i kāmīl*).¹⁶ Hafez therefore completely reversed the existing order of sacred authority: the ulema conventionally associated with God's religion lost their position because of their vice, while those associated with sin were redefined and sanctified. We may view the *Divān* as a story in which there were good and bad characters, with the *rind* and tavern's master standing in for good characters, while the ascetic, the preacher, and the Sufi became the main villains. The villains of the *Dīvān* were charged with the vice of hypocrisy (*rīyā* or *tazvīr*), which for Hafez, in the form

¹⁵ Other names for this character are the master (*pīr*), our shaykh (*shaykh-i mā*), the tavern's master (*pīr-i miykadah*), the vice-den's master (*pīr-i kharābāt*), and the drink-in-hand master (*pīr-i piymānahkish*). See Khurramshāhī, *Hāfiz' nāmāh*, vol. 1, 98.

¹⁶ For a fuller discussion of the *rind*, see Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz's Anti-clericalism," 31-36. See also Khurramshāhī's concise summary of the *rind* taken from his longer article on the subject in *Hāfiz' nāmāh*, vol. 1, 27. For the genealogy of the *rind* in Persian literature more broadly, see *ibid*, 404. For the interpretation of *rind* as "the perfect person," see *ibid*, 408.

of ostentatious display of piety was the worst evil. As Khurramshāhī stressed, Hafez understood “hypocrisy to be the mother of all evil [*umm al-fasād*] ...whether cloaked in the robes of members of exoteric legalistic Islam [*ahl-i sharī’at*] or concealed beneath the garments of Sufi piety [*ahl-i ṭarīqat*]. Hafez’s entire *Dīvān* was one long manifesto of opposition to religious hypocrisy.”¹⁷ In particular, preachers were castigated for their hypocrisy:

واعظان کین جلوہ در مہراب و منبر میکنند
چون بہ خلوت می‌روند آن کار دیگر میکنند

Preachers who in the minaret and the pulpit to piety pretend
When in private to that other thing attend¹⁸

Distaste for preacher hypocrisy reappeared in later texts belonging to entirely different authorial dispositions and genres, such as *Lu’lu’ va Marjān: Dar Ādāb-i Ahl-i Minbar (Pearl and Coral: On the Habits of the Preachers)*. This text, which is on hypocritical preacher-eulogists, was written by nineteenth-century Twelver jurist and Hadith scholar, Hājj Mīrzā Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Taqī ibn Mīrzā Muḥammad Alī Nūrī Ṭabrisī (d. October 1, 1902), who for his specialization in Hadith scholarship was known as Muḥaddith Nūrī.¹⁹ In *Lu’lu’ va Marjān*, Muḥaddith Nūrī did not castigate the preacher as a fundamentally bad character, in contrast to Hafez; rather, he argued that as long as there was no prohibition in the *Sharī’a* against eulogizing (*ruḏah ’khānī*), it was commendable (*mamdūḥah*) and desirable (*mustaḥsanah*) to induce tears in believers for the atrocities committed against the prophet’s household.²⁰ He then supported eulogizing via a number of hadiths. For example, the sixth Imam, J’afar Sādiq, was quoted as

¹⁷ Quoted in Lewisohn, “The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz’s Anti-clericalism,” 159.

¹⁸ See *Dīvān-i Hāfiẓ*, Khāliqī (ed.), 199:1. For more subtle criticisms of preacher, see *ibid*, 393:8.

¹⁹ See the editor’s introduction in Ṭabarsī, Ḥusayn Taqī al-Nūrī (“Muḥaddith Nūrī”), *Lu’lu’ va Marjān: Dar Ādāb-i Ahl-i Minba, alif*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

saying that a poem read for the suffering of Ḥusayn, which made as many as ten or as few as one believer cry, gained the eulogist entry to paradise.²¹ However, eulogizing needed certain internal character dispositions; it had to be practiced on the condition of sincerity of heart (*ikhlās*).²² To be sincere, the preacher's intention had to be towards God's satisfaction (and also the satisfaction of the Prophet and the twelve Imams), not for such things as material wealth or recognition.²³ Hypocrisy was the vice that brought about the negation of sincerity in the eulogist.²⁴ Hypocrisy meant that the preacher indulged in "ostentatious piety" (*zuhd-i šūrī*), or put differently, his outward lamentation for Ḥusayn did not reflect his internal state. Muḥaddith Nūrī criticized those preachers who failed in sincerity because of their desire for wealth or recognition, or because of their ostentatious piety. As we saw, for Hafez too, the range of the sin of hypocrisy extended to include such vices as putting on ostentatious displays of ascetic piety (*zuhd'furūshī*). The ulema-villains were charged with their fixation on the appearance (*zāhir*) of spirituality, as opposed to the inward (*bāṭin*) qualities. In their fixation, they boasted and bragged about spiritual qualities that they claimed to have but in fact lacked. In the following example, Hafez jabbed at the pretentious ascetic for his specious piety, while reaffirming his commitment in disregarding their reprimand:

زاهد ظاهرپرست از حال ما آگاه نیست
در حق ما هر چه گوید جای هیچ اکراه نیست

Surface-revering ascetic, of our state is unaware

²¹ Ibid., 3, 5, 9. The rhetorical style was one of repetition: the hadith was repeated with the same content until the number of believers made-to-cry decreased to one.

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Ibid., 13-14.

²⁴ Ibid., 34.

Whatever he shall say, is no reason to induce hate²⁵

Related to boast was the vice of “calling out” the flaws of others. Hafez frequently admonished the ascetics for this reprimand of others (*‘ayb-jūyī*) in an attempt to demonstrate their own supposed virtue and godliness.²⁶ In the following verse, Hafez playfully and sarcastically requested of the “righteous” ascetic not to find fault with his virtuous character, the *rind*:

عیب رندان مکن، ای زاهد پاکیزه سرشت
که گناه دگران بر تو نخواهند نوشت

O, righteous ascetic! Don’t reproach the *rind*,
On you, the sin of others will not be penned²⁷

The *Dīvān*’s antithesis to the ascetic, the tavern’s master, advised Hafez, while requesting wine because the truth was best revealed in an inebriated state (*rāstī u mastī*), that the path to salvation was the opposite of the ascetic’s approach, i.e., fault-concealment:

ز پیر میکده پرسیدم که چیست راه نجات
بخواست جام می و گفت عیب پوشیدن

The tavern’s *pīr* I asked, the salvation’s path
Demanded wine, replied: fault-concealing²⁸

In addition to fault-finding, other vices of the *Dīvān*’s villain-ulema included arrogance, power-fixation, and deception.²⁹ In contrast to Hafez, Muḥaddith Nūrī devoted far more attention

²⁵ See *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Khāliqī (ed.), 71:1. See also *ibid.*, 283:6 on Hafez castigating spiritual boast (*zuhd’furūshī*). For an explanation of the ascetic as a negative character, see Khurramshāhī, *Ḥāfiẓ’namah*, vol. 1, 365.

²⁶ See Lewisohn, “The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hafiz’s Anti-clericalism,” 165.

²⁷ *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Khāliqī (ed.), 80:1. For a similar rebuke of the preacher, see *ibid.*, 83:7, 35:1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 393:3.

to deception in his appraisal of preachers. The preachers relied on deception in their eulogies and lacked the quality of honesty (*ṣidq*), which according to Muḥaddith Nūrī was the second requirement for *Sharī‘a*-sanctioned eulogizing.³⁰ Keeping with his broad methodology in the text, Muḥaddith Nūrī attempted to demonstrate the evil of deception through formulaic Hadith reports and Qur’anic verses.³¹ He extended the general prohibition on deception to telling of lies in inducement of tears. One of the worst sins was to deceive worshippers into tears by imputing lies to the Imams, that is, to falsely claim they had said or done something.³² One lie told by the preachers was that Husayn attacked his adversaries several times on the day of Ashura, and in each attack he killed 10,000 people. This was not verified by any legitimate reports, Muḥaddith Nūrī added.³³ In addition to imputing lies to Ḥusayn, preachers embellished their speech by relying on heretical speech (*sukhanān-i kufrāh*), absurd stories, and blasphemous poetry (*ash‘ārah fajarah*).³⁴ Deception among preachers, Muḥaddith Nūrī wrote, was not an occurrence of a few occasional lies in an otherwise honest career, but lying for the men of the pulpit had become a habit and second-nature (*majbūl bar durūgh*).³⁵

Perhaps the most jarring case of preacher-vice, that evidenced lack of sincerity and honesty, was an act witnessed by Muḥaddith Nūrī firsthand when he visited a mosque in the city of Nishapur. He narrated that he saw the mosque’s servant (*khādim*) take several stones to the

²⁹ For verses on deception, see *ibid.*, 133:1. On power fixation, see *ibid.*, 7:2. On arrogance, see *ibid.*, 84:6. For a list of these and other character flaws in the ascetic, see Khurramshāhī, *Hāfiẓ‘nāmāh*, vol. 1, 366.

³⁰ Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Lu‘lu‘ va Marjān*, 49.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 57-79. For a 40-point list of the wrongs resulting from lying and deception, see *ibid.*, 79-82.

³² *Ibid.*, 82-83.

³³ *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

pulpit and leave it on the side of the preacher. The preacher then began his eulogy, and after a few words were uttered, the servant shut off the lights (*chirāgh rā khāmūsh kard*). The preacher then began to throw stones at the attendees who started to scream and cry. After a little time had passed, the lights were turned on. The preacher started to pray, and worshippers left bloodied and in tears. Muḥaddith Nūrī inquired with the preacher about his action. The preacher responded that he was reciting a eulogy and the worshippers would not mourn and cry but for the pain of stones thrown at them.³⁶ Muḥaddith Nūrī did not show much interest in the social harms that could result from preacher vice, but this incident was more than simply an instance of negation in sincerity and honesty. To induce tears, the preacher was willing to harm the community and make them bleed.³⁷ Similarly, in Hafez, we read about ulema character vice plenty, but there was less on the resulting social harm. One example where the relationship between ulema vice and social harms became more apparent was in the following *bayt*:

چه شود گر من و تو چند قدح باده خوریم
باده از خون رزان است، نه از خون شماس

What if you and I were to drink a chalice or two?
Wine is of grape blood, not of your blood.³⁸

“Your blood” here is the stand-in for the blood of the community. For Hafez, the ulema who vehemently opposed any consumption of alcohol appeared content with people’s blood being spilled. This meant that the villain-ulema gave priority to a minor violation (wine-consumption) over a much graver violation (harm to the community).

³⁶ Ibid.,186.

³⁷ Muḥaddith Nūrī did, in a few passages, connect lying to harm to the community, writing that corruption of deceit was greater than that of wine, because lies can spill blood and bring harm to people’s property and life (*ẓarar bih māl yā tan ya arz-i īshān*), see *ibid.*, 57, 61.

³⁸ See *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Khāliqī (ed.), 71:1, 20:7.

5.2 The Constitutional Turn and the Emergence of Modern Polemics

As our preceding analysis makes evident, anti-clerical literature of the classical period all the way from Hafez to the nineteenth-century primarily turned on qualities of character, on vices such as hypocrisy, ostentatious piety, and deception. Whatever social harms resulted from these vices were of secondary mention. This quality of the anti-clerical literature should be understood in the broader context of the time. The Islamic order of life, from about Abbasid times to the constitutional period (1906-1911), had endowed the ulema with firm authority, which neither the court nor the community wanted to subvert or replace with an alternative.³⁹ The court and the community respected the structure of ulema authority for centuries and allowed it to remain intact, despite the prolific literature on character-castigation (or cases of conflict between a particular king and the ulema).⁴⁰ What was this structure of ulema authority against which life in *dār al-Islām* ebbed and flowed? It had two dimensions, epistemic and social. Epistemically, only the ulema could lay claim to a knowledge of divine law and were its sole, authoritative interpreters.⁴¹ Although, in the classical period, individual ulema may have been attacked for their shortcomings in knowledge, the epistemic primacy of *Sharīʿa* and the status of its ulema interpreters as knowledge-bearers remained fundamentally intact.⁴² The ulema's knowledge of *Sharīʿa* gave rise to another responsibility, namely their social guardianship over the Muslim

³⁹ See Gleave, *Ulema*, Encyclopedia of Islam and Muslim World, vol. 2 (Farmington Hills: Macmillan Reference USA, a part of Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016). Gleave dates the securing of “political influence and popular respect” by the ulema to the Abbasid period.

⁴⁰ As an example in Persianate-Islamic history, see the conflicts between Mughal emperor, Akbar, and the ulema in Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, 100.

⁴¹ For an account of the formation of Islamic law and ulema epistemic authority, see Part I of Wael Hallaq, *Sharīʿa: Theory, Practice, Transformations*, and more specifically *ibid.*, 70.

⁴² Inter-ulema rivalry regarding epistemic superiority of one individual scholar over another also occurred, but without questioning the collective authority of the ulema. As an example, see the knowledge rivalry targeting Shaykh Hādī Tihirānī, recounted in Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yaḥyā*, vol. I, 108.

community (i.e., the totality of believers), which was called the ummah.⁴³ The ulema had the duty to guard the community from transgressions against the *Sharī'a* by the ruling dynasty and by other members of the community, ensuring justice according to divine precepts. Hadith, prose, and poetry all recognized ulema's social guardianship. In these sources, the ulema were praised and exalted for qualities like trustworthiness, and for performance of responsibilities like safeguarding the community. For example, early nineteenth-century jurist, Mullah Aḥmad Nirāqī, wrote a text, with frequent reference to the Hadith literature, by the title of *Wilāyat al-faqīh* (*The Guardianship of the Jurist*). He argued that the *faqīh* had general guardianship (*wilāya*) over the community insofar as imitators (*muqallid*) came to follow him. More specifically, the *faqīh* was the guardian (*walī*) of certain specific categories of persons. For example, the *faqīh* was tasked with protection of properties, of those who were not able to care for them on their own, particularly orphans, madmen or persons of unsound mind (*al-majānīn wa al-sufahā'*), and those absent from their residence for one reason or another.⁴⁴ It is worth quoting the scholar of Islamic law, Wael Hallaq, at length to appreciate the profound and extensive social protection the ulema-guardians were supposed to offer their community:

“[The mission of the] jurists of Islam [was] heavily inspired by the pervasive egalitarianism of the Qur'an, which is to say that they saw themselves and were seen as advocates of society, the weak and disadvantaged having first priority. They were called upon to express the will and aspirations of those belonging to the nonelite classes, interceding on their behalf at the higher reaches of power. The jurists and judges thus emerged as the civic leaders who found themselves, by the nature of their “profession,” involved in the day-to-day running of civic affairs. Jurists and judges felt responsibility toward the common man and woman and, on their own, frequently initiated action on behalf of the oppressed without any formal petition being made by these social groups or their individual members. As a product of their own social environment, the legists' fate

⁴³ It was only in recent times that ummah came to designate the global Muslim community. It used to have a more local meaning, referring to the immediate community. See Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam*, 49.

⁴⁴ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Maḥdī Nirāqī, *Wilāyat al-faqīh*, 127. In addition to guardianship over property, the jurist had *wilāya* over a marriage (*nikāh*) contract of minors without a father or an elder (*al-ṣaghīrīn al-khālīn 'an al-Āb wa al-jadd*), and also of persons of unsound mind. See *ibid.*, 133.

and worldview were inextricably intertwined with the interests of their societies. They represented for the masses the ideal of piety, rectitude, and fine education. Their very “profession” as guardians of religion, experts in religious law, and exemplars of the virtuous Muslim lifestyle made them...the most genuine representatives of the masses...”⁴⁵

There were certainly the wicked among the ulema who allied with the dynasty, acted out of selfish interest, or failed to uphold justice for the community.⁴⁶ However, transgressions by individual ulema did not provide enough impetus for a discourse on the ulema collective as representatives of ignorance and oppression. As we saw, anti-clerical literature had little interest in criticizing, let alone displacing, ulema’s epistemic and social power; rather, this literature put its critical emphasis on ulema character first and foremost. If Hafez imagined the character of the *rind* as an alternative to the authority to the ulema, this was in an imaginative escape from their alleged wicked character, not a fundamental criticism of their epistemic and social authority. “Anti-clerical” literature was to change as the constitutional movement (1906-11) came to transform Iran.⁴⁷ Character-castigation became secondary. What characterized the new anti-clerical literature was a subversion of the authority structure the ulema had enjoyed for centuries. More specifically, the pro-constitutionalist ulema (generally of middle and lower status) called into question the knowledge and social guardianship of those ulema who opposed constitutionalism. They criticized the anti-constitutionalist ulema for their opposition to reformist demands being made in the emerging constitutionalist nation.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 52-53.

⁴⁶ See the previous discussion on the “wicked ulema” (*‘ulamā’ al-sū’*) in this chapter.

⁴⁷ For one of the more influential studies on the constitutional movement in English, see Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*.

⁴⁸ I use the phrase constitutionalist nation over constitutionalist public. Persian conceptualizes “public” debate and dialogue through the cognition of the nation (*millat*) or of the people (*mardum*), without a cognition of a “public” versus a private realm.

5.3 Ulema Authority in Question

The newfound emphasis found a potent articulation in a text called *Ru'yā-yi Šādiqah* or *The True Dream*, written by a proponent of the constitutionalist nation, Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Sadr al-Muḥaqqiqīn Isfahānī. Better known as Sayyid Jamāl Vā'iz (d. 1908), he was a preacher who himself belonged to the ranks of the ulema. He directed a scathing attack against the anti-constitutionalist ulema, co-writing *The True Dream* with assistance from two other constitutional ulema at a time when the differentiation between ulema and new intellectuals was still in its infancy.⁴⁹ None of the authors lent their names to the text because they feared for their safety.⁵⁰ With the help of Mīrzā Muḥsīn Khān Tabrīzī (also known by the title of Mushīr al-Dawlah), an Iranian diplomat stationed in St. Petersburg, *The True Dream* was published in 70 to 80 copies in St. Petersburg and gradually disseminated in Iran.⁵¹ The story was told through the narrator's perspective caught somewhere between a dream and a nightmare and set on the day of judgment, where amidst mass crowds and confusion, he was instructed to stand in the desert of dread (*ṣaḥrāy-i vaḥshat*) and watch sins of several scholars and court officials adjudicated. The sinners mentioned were real-life personalities, primarily from Isfahan, and the majority belonged to the ranks of ulema.⁵² The story followed a common pattern. The divine call was made to summon a

⁴⁹ Afary writes that the other two authors were Malik al-Mutakallimīn and Shaykh Aḥmad Kirmānī, see Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, 45.

⁵⁰ The narrator recognized the danger of his ideas, ending *The True Dream* with a warning he received from his brother. He was instructed not to tell to anyone about the dream, because “they” (unspecified persons) would think that his intention was the exposure of their ugly deeds and they would harm him, see Sayyid Jamāl Vā'iz, Isfahānī, *Ru'yā-yi Šādiqah*, 72.

⁵¹ See the editor's introduction in Isfahānī, *Ru'yā-yi Šādiqah*, 8. One pair of translators via Mihdī Malikzādah date the publication to 1900-1, see Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab and Sen McGlinn, *The True Dream: Indictment of the Shiite Clerics of Isfahan, an English Translation with Facing Persian Text*, 19.

⁵² In one passage, 300-400 of high-ranking ulema (*āqāyān-i uzzām*) are called for judgment, see Isfahānī, *Ru'yā-yi Šādiqah*, 24.

certain cleric, after which he was subject to a series of statements, making him aware of all the bounties and blessings God had favored upon him in the world. These bounties were such things as good health, sound mind, good family life, dominion over the pulpit, efficacy of rulings (*aḥkām*), respect among scholars, and influence with people and rulers alike.⁵³ After these bounties were stated by the divine judge and acknowledged by the sinner, came an explanation of the sinner's failure to serve people alongside a list of sins committed, which in certain cases were followed by defenses deemed invalid by the divine judge.

The True Dream did not criticize ulema vice as constitutive of distance from good character qualities as in Hafez, nor as an offense to the duty of sincerity and honesty in preaching as in Muḥaddīth Nūrī. Rather, *The True Dream* interpreted vice as generative of action with social consequences that placed personal and material interests over communal ones. Chief among the vices were self-centeredness, greed, and God-forgetfulness.⁵⁴ These vices were all connected to alleged sins committed against the community, in particular obstruction of constitutionalism and reform. Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Mujtahid Isfahānī was the first sinner-scholar to be adjudicated and the one least guilty compared to those who came after (in fact, he was spared hellfire). The Shaykh was condemned for his ambiguous position on a 1879 rebellion against unjust inflation of prices imposed by two officials.⁵⁵ Despite initial instigation to rebellion by the Shaykh, he backed out conspiring with Mas'ūd Mīrzā, a son of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh and the governor of Isfahan, and leaving the Friday prayer leader, Mīr Muḥammad Ḥusayn, isolated, also causing long-term difficulty for the poor who would have benefited from lower

⁵³ See *ibid.*, 12-13, 21, 69.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁵⁵ These officials were J'afar Qulī-Khān and Muḥammad 'Alī-Khān who were the general supervisor (*zābiṭ-i kull*) and minister (*vazīr*) of Isfahan respectively, see *Ibid.*, 15.

prices.⁵⁶ This was all “motivated out of personal interest” (*gharaz-i shakhsānī*), *The True Dream* insisted.⁵⁷ The next cleric in line, Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥāshim Chahār Sūqī, was charged with more egregious violations against the community. “Oppressors” (*ta’ddī’kunandahgān*) had him authorize, through his stamp and signature, the transfer of properties over to themselves, and some even counterfeited his seal and signature, and their validity he later confirmed.⁵⁸ Two other clerics, violating their *Shari’a* obligation (*taklīf-i Shar’ī*), exploited the properties of the vulnerable.⁵⁹ Sayyid J’afar Biyd-Ābādī was said to have appropriated so many properties that it would take years to list all of them, including trusts (*amānāt*) belonging to widowed women and the weak.⁶⁰ The other scholar was Āqā Najafī, a well-known cleric of Isfahan and son to Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Mujtahid Isfahānī. He was also tried but spared hellfire in the story.⁶¹ In *The True Dream*, Āqā Najafī was described as a man taking advantage of those in need who had put their trust in him; they had come to him to have their properties preserved from the royal court’s confiscation only to find out that Āqā Najafī had appropriated them himself. Among his other sins were fixing of prices (*tas’īr*), hoarding grain (*jam’i ghalah*), and expanding his estates.⁶² He was guilty of instigating his followers to build a dam on the river and using this as a pretext to

⁵⁶ The text makes a real point on community suffering because of the accused’s actions. The oppressed are even said to groan and cry during the judgement for justice (*dād*), see *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶¹ Āqā Najafī was also mentioned in the memoirs of Yahyā Dawlatābādī and the novelist Muḥammad-‘Alī Jamālzādah, who was the son of *The True Dream*’s author, Sayid Jamāl Vā’iz; both memoirs described him as a greedy anti-constitutionalist cleric. See Jamālzādah, *Sar va tah-‘i yak karbās*, and Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. I, 59.

⁶² Isfahānī, *Ru’yā-yi Ṣādiqah*, 28.

confiscate the property of the poor. Moreover, he was charged with diverting *wujūhāt* away from the poor and towards his abled students (*tullāb*) to populate his teaching circle, in pursuit of recognition and self-interest.⁶³ The same Shaykh was guilty of unbridled sexual appetite, a character flaw that became a common stereotype of “the mullah” in later years as the opening joke in this article demonstrated.⁶⁴ The divine judge asked Āqā Najafī, sarcastically, whether he considered it “his *Sharī‘a* obligation to take a girl in temporary marriage [*ṣīghah*] every night, grabbing his penis [*ālat*] in hand and entering the alleys of Isfahan and its homes?”⁶⁵

The True Dream, therefore, put the much older trope of character-castigation in service of its primary focus, namely the exposure of anti-constitutionalist ulema’s sins against the community. However, it took no interest in casting ulema as a whole to represent oppression, nor did it reject ulema social authority altogether. This became the task of modernist scholars of the Pahlavi order, some of whom, for the first time, attempted to cast ulema (and all of them) as representatives of oppression, and as the antithesis to state-building and national progress. Ahmad Kasravi was perhaps the most vocal of these intellectuals. Having gone to the *maktab* and a local madrasa, he obtained clerical authority in his locality in his younger years before adapting the identity of a new intellectual.⁶⁶ In his time as a local mullah, Kasravi developed a strong distaste for clerics for such alleged misdeeds as lies told upon the pulpit, prioritizing pilgrimage trips over local suffering, and opposing social and educational reform.⁶⁷ In his later

⁶³ Ibid, 34-35.

⁶⁴ In the polemical text of *Mullalogy* cited earlier, we read: “if we say that more than three-fourth of mullahs’ books are about sex, it is not an exaggeration. Truly, the Mullahs have turned the Shia religion into a religion of carnal desires, meaning the belly and sexual relations.” See Pīrāstah, *Ākhūnd’shināsī*, 85.

⁶⁵ Iṣfahānī, *Ru ‘yā-yi Ṣādiqah*, 35.

⁶⁶ For his *maktab* and madrasa experiences, see Kasravi, *Zindagānī-i man*, 16, 37, 50.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, 56, 109.

life, he articulated this distaste into a polemical essay titled *Shi'ism (Shī'agarī)*.⁶⁸ Kasravi departed from the constitutionalist, Isfahānī, in that he did not distinguish between the good and the bad in ulema; rather, he viewed the ulema as uniformly wicked. Before the constitutional movement, he said, there were good and bad among the ulema. However, once constitutionalism gained momentum all those who benefited from sincerity (*pāk'dilī*), righteousness (*nīk'khāhī*), and empathy (*dil'sūzī*) for the people did not remain in the fold of ulema and identified with new intellectuals, Kasravi added, and only those who were after self-interest (*shikam'parastī*) and personal desires (*kām'guzārī*) remained in the fold of ulema.⁶⁹ For Kasravi, the ulema were derogatorily referred to as “mullahs” (*mullāyān*). They were a social nuisance, who, because of alleged self-interest, had much more to do with the nation's supposed misery than they did with her removal from misery towards something better.⁷⁰ In bringing people to Shia beliefs (themselves false, Kasravi held), they were after wealth and power.⁷¹ The mullahs claimed, Kasravi wrote, that they were the representative of the Mahdi and hence obtained financial tribute from people in form of zakat and the Imam's share (*māl-i Imām*), while benefiting from tragic events in Shia history such as Karbala for their financial enrichment through performance of eulogies. Kasravi overlooked the heterogeneity between the ulema and their differing participation in and legal opinion on the manner of Shia eulogies. As analyzed previously in

⁶⁸ Kasravi and those who supported his ideas clashed with proponents of the nascent Islamic ideology, in particular the *Fidā'īyān-i Islām* covered in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. On 11 March 1946, a group of *Fidā'īyān-i Islām* led by two men named Sayyed Ḥusayn and Sayyed 'Alī entered a courthouse where Kasravi had appeared and murdered him at the age of 55. See Ali Rezā Manafzadeh, Moḥammad Amini, Alireza Manafzadeh, Mohammad Amini, Lloyd Ridgeon, Elr. and M. Amini, “KASRAVI, AḤMAD”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 04 March 2022 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_11056>

⁶⁹ Kasravi, *Shī'agarī*, 216.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

Lu'lu' va Marjān, the ulema did not speak with a unified voice on the question of eulogies vis-à-vis financial interest, with Muḥaddith Nūrī condemning those preachers who lacked sincerity, being driven by wealth in their eulogizing. Kasravi's polemics did not allow for these nuances, representing the ulema as a unified bunch who had inserted eulogies into every event of social life, from weddings to funerals, all for their financial interest.⁷² In pursuit of wealth and power, Kasravi's mullahs also tried to undermine the state; they incited people to evasion of tax and conscription laws, and embezzlement of government funds.⁷³ They were, therefore, responsible for the people's ambivalence (*du'dilī*), dividing their loyalty between themselves and the state. They were not creating this ambivalence for some collective good nor for national well-being, but acted purely out of self-interest. They simply wanted easy money and authority without undertaking the responsibilities that come with authority over people, such as raising of an army (*sipāh*), providing for security and safety of people, and creating of infrastructure.⁷⁴ Kasravi appeared unaware (or purposefully ignored for his polemical purposes) the normative and historical separation of powers integral to the Islamic dynastic order, with the *dawla*, not the ulema, attending to duties like the army, security, and infrastructure.⁷⁵

Kasravi, in continuity with classical tropes on ulema character vice, contended that the mullahs were deeply opportunistic and hypocritical (*du'rang*), taking the events of the constitutional movement as his main evidence. They did not know the meaning of constitutionalism, thinking that it would bring about a transference of power from the royal court to themselves; however, after seven or eight months, Kasravi wrote, they realized that

⁷² Ibid., 187-88.

⁷³ Ibid., 211.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 213.

⁷⁵ For an explanation of this separation, see Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 53, 67.

constitutionalism was detrimental to their interests, so they reversed their support for opposition and even conspired with the Tsars to stop the constitutionalists.⁷⁶ The scholarship is divided on the question of where the ulema stood in relation to the constitutional movement. For Mangol Bayat, the ulema were the “least important agent” of the movement.⁷⁷ Fereydoun Adamiyat saw the “enlightened clergy” as a more substantial agent of the movement but motivated by a desire to establish clerical supremacy, not a parliamentary system.⁷⁸ William Floor sees ulema support as being contingent upon their material and economic interests. Since in the early constitutional period, these interests were tied to merchant interests who were largely in support of the movement, many of the ulema came out in support. But, when the parliament (*majlis*) initiated land reform that threatened ulema landholding interests they distanced themselves from the movement.⁷⁹ Hamid Algar, by contrast, sees the ulema’s participation differently. For Algar, they were a crucial and consistent agent of support for the movement, because of their perception of the court as illegitimate, a perception that had intensified after the tobacco revolt in which they played a key role.⁸⁰ Kasravi, who himself wrote a Persian history of the movement, seemed closest to Floor in his interpretation, and furthest from Algar. For Kasravi, the ulema’s character disposition was one of hypocrisy, and this defined their relationship with constitutionalism and its aftermath. Once the Tsars fell and constitutionalism was revived, Kasravi wrote, the ulema went into a quietism (*kinārahgīrī*), but gradually made peace with the new order and began to

⁷⁶ Kasravi, *Shī’īgarī*, 214-215. Kasravi gave Ḥājjī Mīr Abu al-Ḥusayn Angajī’s alleged actions as examples of opportunism and “flip-flopping.” See Kasravi, *Zindagānī-i man*, 67.

⁷⁷ See Mangol Bayat, *Iran’s First Revolution: Shi’ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909*, 21.

⁷⁸ Adamiyat, *Fikr-i dimukrāsī-i ijtimā’ī dar nahzat-i mashrūṭīyat-i Irān*, 4.

⁷⁹ Floor, “The Revolutionary Character of the Ulama: Wishful Thinking or Reality?” in *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi’ism from Quietism to Revolution*, ed., Keddie, 73.

⁸⁰ See Algar, *Religion and State in Iran (1785-1906)*.

exploit it, for example, by sending their children to new schools, finding work for their family in the new bureaucracy, or themselves accepting work from the government, all the while calling the very government that was providing them with new opportunities unjust. Meanwhile, they benefited from the old order of things, by, for example, monies they received from the Imam's share.⁸¹ Kasravi, seeing the old and new order of life as fundamentally incompatible, represented the ulema as a hypocritical lot who would not give their allegiance to one order over the other, but exploiting each one when convenient at the cost of the nation's well-being. He omitted the rather obvious objection that one can benefit from opportunities provided by the dominant order, in this case constitutionalism and the emerging state, all the while quarrelling with it for a different ideal. Kasravi thus extended the classical trope of hypocrisy in religious authority, but his primary focus like *The True Dream* before him was on the social harms that this hypocrisy brought about. But in contrast to *The True Dream*, Kasravi charged the entire collective of ulema with harming the nation.

5.4 Dispossessing Ulema of 'ilm

Like social authority, ulema epistemic authority was put into question as Iran entered the twentieth-century. In the classical period, this authority did not face fundamental scrutiny. The ulema may have been criticized for particular methodologies they used to arrive at truth. For example, Hafez reminded us that his spirituality of love ought to be preferred over the legalism of ulema (and the rationalism of philosophers).⁸² In other cases, some of the ulema criticized their ulema peers for failing to maintain scholarly standards. Muḥaddith Nūrī questioned the status of preachers as scholars, specifically their lack of care in Hadith verification. According to

⁸¹ Kasravi, *Shī'ī'garī*, 215.

⁸² *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Khāliqī (ed.), 3:8.

Muḥaddith Nūrī, preacher-eulogists narrated false speech from illegitimate or fabricated sources, and from weak reports (*akhbār*).⁸³ Moreover, they used questionable procedures in selecting those *akhbār* they narrated. These procedures included narrating stories they had simply heard or read, without investigating the truthfulness and reputation of the transmitter.⁸⁴ In Islamic epistemology, attention to the reputation of a hadith's transmitters was key to determining its truth-value, and central to the task of a scholar or jurist. Muḥaddith Nūrī added that the preacher had a duty to investigate whether the story he was narrating from one scholar was contradicted by other ulema. If so, he needed to make sense of the contradiction or mention the contradiction to the audience.⁸⁵ For Muḥaddith Nūrī, many of the preachers failed to maintain scholarly standards in their use of *akhbār* in eulogies. However, Nūrī did not question the underlying epistemological authority of the ulema simply because the subspecies of preacher-eulogists were failing to uphold standards of Hadith scholarship. In fact, he even viewed eulogists when untainted by insincerity, deceit, and hypocrisy to belong to the ranks of scholars. He correctly traced the term *ruḏah'khān* (eulogist) to scholarly origins. In year 1502 (or 1503), the prolific prose-stylist of the Timurid era, scholar, and preacher, Mullā Ḥusayn Kāshifī, authored a Persian book by the title of *Ruḏat al-shuhadā* (*Meadow of the Martyrs*).⁸⁶ This book was read in gatherings narrating the atrocity of Karbala. As it was a difficult text to maneuver, the learned ulema were tasked with reading it, and because of its name, "*ruḏat al-shuhadā*," those who read

⁸³ Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Lulu va marjān*, 167.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 136, 138-39, 183, 198.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 142, 148. Although elsewhere in the text, Muḥaddith Nūrī seemed to imply this was not always possible because the eulogist (in contrast to, say, a Hadith scholar like himself) would lack expertise and experience to distinguish between a trustworthy and false report, see *ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁶ For a biography, see M. E. Subtelny, "KĀŠĒFI, KAMĀL-AL-DIN ḤOSAYN WĀ'ĒZ", in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, © Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. Consulted online on 12 December 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_10873>

it became known as *ruzah 'khān*, literally meaning the “the *Meadow's* reader.” As time went on, those ulema reciting in memory of Ḥusayn’s suffering added other material to the text of *Ruḏat al-shuhadā*, with the aim of inducing sorrow in worshippers. *Ruḏah 'khānī* became a specialized skill (*fannī shud makhṣūṣ*), so much so that a contemporary with Muḥaddith Nūrī proclaimed once, jokingly, that it belonged to one of the sciences.⁸⁷ Muḥaddith Nūrī thus recognized that preachers-eulogists were connected to a scholarly tradition and were of the ulema. However, they were only scholars when they had sincerity of heart and followed established scholarly methods in their eulogizing to stay clear from deception. When they failed in these conditions, they fell outside the ranks of the ulema as evidenced in Muḥaddith Nūrī’s refusal to refer to them as the “people of knowledge” (*ahl-i 'ilm*), instead using such phrases as “this group” (*īn ṭā'ifah* or *īn jamā'at*).⁸⁸ The preacher who induced believers’ tears in pursuit of money was particularly undeserving of the scholar rank; Muḥaddith Nūrī compared him to a money-hungry merchant, or a “dealer” (*kāsib*) who was “lower than the lowest of professions” (*kasaba*), which in his view, was a porter (*hammāl*) or a vegetable seller (*sabzī'furūsh*).⁸⁹

Accordingly, Muḥaddith Nūrī did not question the underlying epistemic authority of ulema, only casting a certain group of them outside the ulema fold. The constitutionalist literature shared this quality with classical texts in that it did not intend to marginalize ulema learning and teaching; rather, it wanted the anti-constitutionalist ulema specifically to end their

⁸⁷ Muḥaddith Nūrī, *Lulu va marjān*, 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 92.

⁸⁹ In one instance recounted by Muḥaddith Nūrī, a famed preacher so anxious for payment physically attacked his host during the mourning ceremony, to get the remainder of the money he believed he was owed. See *ibid.*, 29-30. For the eulogist being compared to “lowliest” of professions, see *ibid.*, 18. The author qualified his comparisons, however, saying that the money-hungry preacher was worse than the porter or vegetable seller, because the latter two were not held to the same standard of sincerity in their work.

obstruction of new sciences and educational reform. In *The True Dream*, openness to new sciences and education was a requirement for the constitution of knowledge, and those ulema who stood opposed were considered to have committed sins. Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī was guilty of opposing Rushdīyah-style, new primary schools, *The True Dream* charged.⁹⁰ He claimed his opposition to new education was in preservation and advancement of *Sharī'a*. The Shaykh added that the new educators in Isfahan wanted to teach students in a “strange way,” claiming the child could learn to read the Qur'an among other books after six months, and also write. The same people, the Shaykh said, wanted to teach children the “Christian language,” which he equated with the gradual learning of unbelief. This is why, the Shaykh claimed, he had ordered the closure of the schools by whatever means possible.⁹¹ In *The True Dream*, his explanation did not suffice for the divine judge who declared it to be in the realm of ignorance, deception, and impediment to people's progress (*ṭaraqī-yi millat*).⁹² Moreover, the divine viewed the *Sharī'a* defense as specious: it was simply a cover-up for the Shaykh's interest in holding onto *riyāsat* (i.e., his status as a distinguished scholar with authority over other scholars).⁹³ An aforementioned cleric, Āqā Najafī, also had to defend himself against the charge of obstruction to learning by naming several schools that he supported and where legal subjects (*fiqh*, *usūl*, and *'ilm-i ijtihād*) were taught. The divine judge was not impressed because these schools lacked sciences like accounting, geography, mathematics, *ma'rifat al-ashīyā'*, and politics (*'ulūm-i*

⁹⁰ For a history of the new primary schools, see Zarrinnal, “The Origins of Dabestān” or Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁹¹ Iṣfahānī, *Ru'yā-yi Ṣādiqah*, 28.

⁹² *Ibid*, 28-29.

⁹³ In the early twentieth-century, there was no well-defined Shia hierarchy as there was later in the century. The notion of “*riyāsat*” did, however, exist. In this period, *riyāsat* was shared by several jurists at a time, see Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-i Yahyā*, vol. I, 43, 165.

sīyāsī). Moreover, the divine judge wanted the teaching of law in a new way, charging the ulema with turning the legal science of the prophet, which was the “most perfect of laws,” (*kāfītarīn-i qavānīn*) into difficult expressions, labeling it *fiqh*, and elevating themselves to an absolute position of authority (*‘ālim-i muṭlaq*) in its interpretation. Jurisprudential science, the divine judge ruled, was not as the ulema approached it; rather, law is a “legal science [*‘ilm-i qānūn*], which as in other nations, was published and made available in the language of the masses, sold in every market street corner, where every old woman and child was aware of it.”⁹⁴

The True Dream also questioned the learning of anti-constitutionalist ulema. One passage was quite telling: several hundred of ulema gathered who all considered themselves to have been “the proof of Islam” (*ḥujjat al-Islām*) on earth, and they all pompously caressed their robes and turbans, confirming each other’s status as such proof.⁹⁵ Divine order came that these ulema must take an examination (*imtaḥān-i ‘ilmīyah*). Whoever, after taking the exam, did not have the merit for *ijtihād* and scholarship (*‘ālamīyat*) would suffer the worst of God’s punishment and wrath. Upon hearing this, all the pompous ulema put their head down in embarrassment and joined the real group (*tā’fah*) they belonged to. Some joined the masses in Isfahan’s peripheries (*ra’āyā-i aṭrāf-i Isfahan*); others joined servants of various kinds (*farrashān* and *nukar’bābān*); and, still others joined manual laborers (*‘amalahjāt* and *navah’kashān*). They gradually decreased until none remained. For the story’s author, the anti-constitutionalist ulema were only scholars in name. To be scholars, the author held that the ulema needed more than a larger turban, guttural

⁹⁴ Iṣfahānī, *Ru’yā-Yi Ṣādiqah*, 33.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

speech, unkempt appearance, and pilgrimage to the shrines.⁹⁶ They needed to possess, in addition to classical subjects, knowledge constituted by new methods of teaching and by new sciences.

With the rise of the Reza Shah state, more fundamental challenges were put forth against the epistemic authority of the ulema, both at the political and intellectual level. The Reza Shah state initially pursued alliance with the ulema; however, state reforms in the areas of dress-code, endowments, and most importantly, the judiciary and education were deeply antithetical to ulema authority in general and their epistemic power in particular.⁹⁷ On the educational front, the mandate to educate gradually shifted from the *maktab* to the *dabistān* and from the madrasa to the university, with the newer pair of organizations dominating the normative order of things. This institutional change led to a change in the agents of knowledge as well. Ulema authority fractured into the “spiritualists” (*ruḥānīyat/ruḥānīyān*) at the madrasa and the new intellectuals produced by the state, and the latter distinguished themselves in their scholarly methodology, lifestyle, and the social and administrative networks they frequented including their proximity to the new Ministry of Education. The term “spiritualist” was a Reza Shah-era neologism. It was an attempt to fracture and transfer intellectual authority from the ulema to state-trained scholars. It meant to convey that the ulema were no longer “those who knew”; now, they were supposed to only deal with matters of the spirit (*rūh*) and with ritual. In the reformist discourse of the constitutional period, the word spiritualist still had its old meaning: an adjective that described something or someone sacred. For example, the reformist *Da‘wat al-ḥaqq* journal of 1904 described Islam as attracting souls due to its “spiritual” (*ruḥānīyat*) and “illuminated”

⁹⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁹⁷ For a study of some of Reza Shah’s reforms in clerical affairs, see Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*.

(*nūrānīyat*) nature (*zāt*).⁹⁸ In the Reza Shah period, *ruḥānīyat* gained new intentions. State-trained intellectuals gained the upper hand within the nation to define knowledge, and in their definition, created out of the ulema the “spiritualists” who no longer had a claim to the mainstream of knowledge. One of these intellectuals was Qāsim Tūysirkānī. He was a third and last-year student at the University of Tehran’s college of rational and transmitted sciences and submitted an unpublished thesis, on May 20, 1938 (1317/2/30), towards the completion of his joint studies with pedagogical sciences at the teacher’s college.⁹⁹ In his later life, he authored a number of scholarly works, publishing Persian titles that converged around his interest in the use and contribution of Iranian scholars to Arabic language and literature in the early Islamic period.¹⁰⁰ His thesis was approved and presumably supervised by the scholar, Sādiq Rizāzādah Shafāq, who was born and schooled at a time when a number of families had just begun to put their children through the new educational order. After obtaining his philosophy doctorate from Berlin University, Shafāq returned to Iran and helped establish the teacher’s college where he also taught history and philosophy.¹⁰¹ Tūysirkānī and his supervisor were therefore both products of the new educational order.

Tūysirkānī’s thesis was titled *Naqd-i barnāmah-’i dānishkadah-’i ma’qūl va manqūl ya rāhnamā-yi iṣlāh-i ān (The Critique of the College of Rational and Transmitted Sciences’*

⁹⁸ *Da’wat al-ḥaqq*, first issue, 1321 (1904), 1.

⁹⁹ The thesis is missing a y from his name and is spelled Tūsirkānī (توسرکانی). See Tūysirkānī, *Naqd-i barnāmah-’i dānishkadah-’i ma’qūl va manqūl yāmrāhnamāyah-’i iṣlāh-i ān*. University of Tehran Central Library, Manuscript and Documentary Center. The page is unnumbered and is placed before the table of contents. On the cover page, the author wrote that the thesis was written towards the completion of his study at the teacher’s college.

¹⁰⁰ As an example, see Tūysirkānī, *Tārīkhī az zabān-i tāzī dar mīyān-i Īrānīyān pas az Islām: az āghāz-i farmānrvā’ī-i tāzīyān tā baruftādan-i khilāfat-i Abbāsīyān*.

¹⁰¹ The Teacher’s College was founded before the university in 1297 [1918-19] and was later integrated, by the Ministry of Education, into the university. For the annual report of the college published in the same year as the university was founded, see *Sālnāmah-’i dānishsarā-yi ‘ālī*, 1313-14 [1934-35]. For Shafāq’s faculty mention, see *ibid.*, 16.

Program or the Guide to its Reform). Unlike intellectual production of the preceding generation, Tūysirkānī did not situate his ideas in an other-worldly-oriented prefatory praise—in fact, there was not even the name of God to begin the thesis—the preface went directly to the subject of the thesis, which as a critique of the college’s program, was an assessment of its strengths but primarily weaknesses. Tūysirkānī critiqued separately the three areas of study in the college, literary, rational, and transmitted studies, focusing, in conscious reference to the old and new orders of learning, on the efficacy of subjects from the perspective of producing effective spiritualist-scholars.¹⁰²

Tūysirkānī’s thesis dismissed the institution of the madrasa, the old ulema’s methods of teaching and learning, and their very epistemological authority as scholars and knowledge producers. Ironically, however, Tūysirkānī began by a concession to madrasa students, namely that they were overprepared and superior in their knowledge of the college’s most essential curriculum, transmitted sciences. They only suffered a notable disadvantage in French, geography, and world history. A madrasa student (of unspecified experience in the thesis) and his knowledge in what the author thought ought to be the most central subjects at the college, *fiqh* and *usūl*, was at the level of a graduating student in the college.¹⁰³ By contrast, students coming from state-run secondary schools were far less prepared. Tūysirkānī insisted that they should study for an additional three years of introductory training at the college before they study the current three-year curriculum.¹⁰⁴ This meant that in the most essential subjects, the madrasa

¹⁰² For the preface, see unnumbered page before table of contents in Tūysirkānī, *Naqd-i barnāmah-’i dānishkadah-’i m’aqūl va manqūl*. For explicit articulation of the college’s goals from the Tūysirkānī’s perspective, see *ibid.*, 44. He also viewed it as the secondary goal of the college to produce teachers (*dabīr* in the singular) in secondary and higher education and also administrative servants.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 19, 25-26.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

student had a six-year knowledge advantage over a student from a secondary school. This superior knowledge was also evident from Tūysirkānī's remark that many of the "virtuous students of old sciences" (*tullāb-i fāzil-i 'ulūm*) were only at the college for the state recognition and the conferring of privileges, not for knowledge acquisition which they already had; in fact, some of them, Tūysirkānī said, were at the level of a *mudarris* (teacher) themselves.¹⁰⁵ Despite his admission of madrasa students' superior knowledge, Tūysirkānī did not challenge the Education Ministry requirements and verification of them before they entered the college. There existed three ways of gaining admission into the college: completion of state-run secondary schools, entrance exam, and a clerical certificate (*taṣḍīq-i mudarrisī*). In the first years of operation, from 1934 (1313) until 1936 (1315), a candidate could gain entry either after completing secondary school or by taking the entrance exam.¹⁰⁶ There were two types of eligible secondary schools, either literary schools or schools of rational and transmitted studies. The latter did not have any longevity, becoming non-operational soon after their founding. In 1938, only one school retained the name of rational and transmitted school, and this school too had a literary curriculum (which also explained the lack of preparedness on behalf of state-produced students).¹⁰⁷ Thus, a certificate from a secondary school with a literary curriculum, or alternatively, the entrance exam that primarily tested the applicant on his knowledge of *fiqh* gained him admission into the college. In 1937 (1316), entrance exams were replaced by the more intrusive measure of a "clerical certificate" (*taṣḍīq-i mudarrissī*) in the rational and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁷ This school was located within Marvī madrasa in Tehran, which today is located in the bazaar of Tehran area. See *ibid.*, 28-29.

transmitted sciences.¹⁰⁸ All three means of verification for admission were determined by the state, not by the madrasa. The conclusion that emerges from these requirements is that the old order of education could not be trusted to verify an applicant on the very subjects it had taught for centuries. Evidence of attendance at the madrasa did not translate into admission. And Tūysirkānī deferred to the state: for Tūysirkānī as for the state, the old knowledge institutions and their ulema agents needed to be tested or certified by the state on their very own curriculum first, before they could enter the college.

More provocatively, Tūysirkānī believed that the madrasa was an archaic institution that was unable to produce a competent scholar or even provide the nation with a spiritualist. Tūysirkānī advocated for the madrasa-produced ulema to be replaced by the composite figure of a scholar-spiritualist, which only the state, the university, and the college could produce. He stated the goal of the college to be the training of “spiritualists” (*ruḥānīyān*) or “religious ulema” (*‘ulamā-yi dīnī*) on the one hand, and the preservation of Iran’s past sciences (*ḥifẓ-i ‘ulūm-i qadīmāh*) and knowledge systems (*m ‘ārif*) on the other.¹⁰⁹ In other words, the college needed to train spiritualists who were also scholars of a *new* orientation. However, before this was done, Tūysirkānī made clear that the old knowledge residues that he thought obstructed effective learning at the college had to be removed.

According to Tūysirkānī, a major obstruction was the premodern pedagogy practiced by the instructors at the college. He wrote that *Mughnī al-labīb*, a fourteenth-century text on syntax (*naḥv*) by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf Ibn Ḥishām, brought about little and marginal “practical result” compared to its level of difficulty. Students’ time should not be wasted, he asserted, on the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1, 26. Author added, without explaining why, that the shift to clerical certificate brought about a reduction in the number of “impressive applicants” (*dāvṭalabān-i shāyistāh*) from the madrasa poll.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 44.

“illogical” content of a book which the old ulema of syntax “were making up” (*mī’bāftahand*).¹¹⁰ More generally, Tūysirkānī viewed this text as having “medieval Islamic composition” and “incorrect principles of teaching,” which it shared with other “medieval” texts.¹¹¹ Medieval writing and pedagogy were “stagnant,” “dry,” and eliminated “enthusiasm” for learning, he added. Tūysirkānī encouraged the acquisition of these medieval texts for a historical purpose, to learn about and preserve the past, but rejected them when used as textbooks. He contrasted the medieval textbook, unfit for pedagogy, with a text like Shilbi’s *Poetry of Persia* (*Shi’r al-‘ajam*) that was a four-volume Persian-language literary history written in 1906, documenting the lives and works of Persian poets from Rudakī to Abu Ṭālib Kalīm of Shah Jahan’s Mughal court. Tūysirkānī believed it was one of the few available texts of quality, both in terms of its scholarly methodology and pedagogical value.¹¹²

Tūysirkānī further identified “medieval” flaws in the approach of instructors to rational subjects like classical logic and philosophy, and to transmitted subjects like *tafsīr* and *usūl*. There were unnamed instructors at the college who were described as “prejudiced” in their attachment to principles of classical philosophy and who, like the texts themselves, were “dry” lacking the faculty of creativity and the spirit of investigation. They simply taught texts from premoderns (*qudamā*) without criticism, treating them as certain knowledge (*ḥujjat-i qāti’*) and transmitting their content from the vantage point of belief (*bih laḥn-i bāvar va i’tiqād*).¹¹³ Tūysirkānī compared these teachers to Christian scholastics and claimed they were even worse, since the

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 9. The infinitive, *bāftan*, which literally means “to weave” and can be translated as to make up or fabricate was a common word-choice for modernists in their attempt to dismiss the old scholars and their knowledge production, see also Kasravi, *Zindagānī-i man*, 49.

¹¹¹ Tūysirkānī, *Naqd-i barnāmah-‘i dānishkadah-‘i m‘aqūl va manqūl*, 9.

¹¹² Ibid, 4.

¹¹³ Ibid, 35.

scholastics only treated Aristotelian principles as axiomatic truth, while these instructors of classical philosophy, stuck in their “medieval” method and pedagogy, treated anything written or said by a famed scholar of the past to be true.¹¹⁴ The instructors of classical philosophy were further charged with standing against the progressive view of knowledge and the “law” of science’s evolution (*nāmūs-i takāmul-i ‘ilm*).¹¹⁵ This progressivism was the dominant thinking at the modernist turn not only in Iran but elsewhere in the world, and Tūysirkānī treated it as a given for correct knowledge and pedagogy.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Tūysirkānī directed his criticism towards *usūl* and *tafsīr* instructors at the college; these unnamed teachers were not so much condemned for their reverence for the past but for their alleged ignorance in the subjects they taught. The *usūl* professor did not have enough knowledge to teach the assigned *Laws (qavānīn)* text, Tūysirkānī claimed, and some students even knew more than he did.¹¹⁷ The supposed flawed pedagogy and lack of knowledge in instructors of classical logic, philosophy, *usūl*, and *tafsīr* were contrasted with the competent teaching of modernist intellectuals at the college. One that received mention was ‘Abdul-Ḥusayn Shiybānī (Vaḥīd al-Mulk), English-educated scholar and parliament representative, who taught world history with “excellent command.”¹¹⁸ Two other instructors who received Tūysirkānī’s approval were Rashīd Yāsīmī and Ahmad Kasravi. The first was a scholar of Kurdish origins who produced many works including titles on Kurdish history, fall of Sassanid Iran, Islamic mysticism, a translation of Edward Browne’s fourth

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 35-36.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 36, 38.

¹¹⁶ Talal Asad explores this progressivism in his discussion of Europeans’ evolutionary view on religion, as an early human condition that would be superseded by modern law, politics, and science. See Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Tūysirkānī, *Naqd-i barnāmah- ‘i dānishkadah- ‘i m ‘aqūl va manqūl*, 21.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

volume on Persian literary history, in addition to his own poems. His instructions were praised as “not having a single flaw” (*hīch naqs nadārad*) as were those given by Ahmad Kasravi.¹¹⁹ Kasravi’s pedagogy was also “very good” and he did not waste student time with the dictation method (*juzvah’nivīsī*) practiced by some instructors, which was the one-sided dictation of instructor’s own notes to students, without student participation or critical engagement with textbooks.¹²⁰ Tūysirkānī contrasted this dictation method with students’ critical engagement with their lessons and assigned textbooks, with their summaries and questions presented to the class and the instructor, which Kasravi seemed to have practiced.¹²¹

Tūysirkānī viewed the production of scholar-spiritualists to depend not only on eliminating old practices but on creating a new curriculum, which provided the right balance between transmitted, literary, and rational subjects. The areas of literary and rational studies in isolation were insufficient. Tūysirkānī viewed the core of the literary studies (i.e., the study of Arabic) as a requirement for acquisition of “religious sciences” (*‘ulūm-i dīnī*), and he viewed the study of Persian as beneficial for Persian-speaking spiritualists. However, specializing in literary studies was insufficient to reach the rank of a spiritualist.¹²² The same held true for the students of rational subjects. It is true, Tūysirkānī said, that in the rational studies, *kalām*, *milal va niḥal*, *ilāhīyāt*, classical philosophy, and *tafsīr*, were all taught, which belonged to the classical curriculum under which the old ulema were trained. However, these rational subjects were only a

¹¹⁹ As an example of his scholarly output, see Rashīd Yāsāmī, *Kurd va payvastigī-i nizhādī va tārikhī-i ū*.

¹²⁰ See Tūysirkānī, *Naqd-i barnāmah-’i dānishkadah-’i m’aqūl va manqūl*, 4, 21.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 4, 19. Tūysirkānī had two modest suggestions for Kasravi, however. He wanted Kasravi to direct students to note their research questions. He also wanted Kasravi to “moderate” his views because he claimed Kasravi frequently linked the lesson at hand to his ideology (*maslak*), criticizing Persian literature, poets, and Sufis, not in “moderation” which would be beneficial, but in “extremity.” This “extremity” should be evident to the reader in this chapter’s analysis of Kasravi’s *Shi’ism*.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 44.

partial education for a spiritualist, since their training rested upon both rational and transmitted sciences, and all or most “pioneer” (*pīshvā*) ulema of the past had been from the *faqīh* disposition, and not of the *mutakallim* or philosopher disposition, and thus, most learned in transmitted sciences.¹²³ Therefore, for Tūysirkānī, transmitted studies came closest to training of a qualified spiritualist; however, on the condition that this major was reformed and did not duplicate the madrasa training, which he believed was “dry” (*khushk*) and “limited” (*maḥdūd*).¹²⁴ The length of the program needed to be extended to six-years with a three-year preparatory stage as envisioned in the college’s founding document (*asāsnāmah*). This extension was necessary as secondary schools did not train students adequately for the shorter three-year timeline. Moreover, given the importance of spiritualist-scholars’ responsibilities, their education could not be “incomplete” (*nāqis*) and “superficial” (*saṭḥī*).¹²⁵ All those trained at the college had to be “insightful” (*‘amīq*) and “inquisitive” (*muḥaqqiq*), able to preserve Iran’s old knowledge systems.¹²⁶ Therefore, the six-year program, Tūysirkānī concluded, was very much necessary. Subjects that were beneficial from literature and rational studies had to be added to the transmitted science curriculum along with new subjects, such as world history, geography, and French to produce not only spiritualists but also scholars. This curriculum combined with new pedagogy would raise qualified spiritualist-scholars “in harmony with the present age.”¹²⁷

Accordingly, Tūysirkānī questioned the very epistemic fitness of the madrasa and the old ulema. On the institution of the madrasa, he even made the bold claim that if new education

¹²³ Ibid., 44-45.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 46-47.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 45.

continued to grow in momentum, it would disrupt the operation of the seminaries (*hawzah*) and the institution of madrasa would gradually fall out of existence (*rū bih inqirāz va izmihlāl mīravād*).¹²⁸ Furthermore, the agents of the madrasa could no longer lay claim to *‘ilm*. To be within the purview of *‘ilm*, ulema had to transform into spiritualist-scholars. This meant that they needed to study new sciences in addition to the old, under new pedagogy and at the university. They needed to have command over the old knowledge regime, but not in order to transmit it as foundational principles, but to *preserve* it as historical artefacts, which could then be studied and compared to the new knowledge regime. They had to observe the “scientific law” that new knowledge completed, and in some cases, superseded the old. In the case of judicial and endowment duties, the spiritualist-scholars had to content themselves with the study of *fiqh* as a historical practice under the shadow of the new judiciary and Education Ministry. They could no longer attend to the horizontal court disputes between people; they could only attend to the academic duty of preserving *fiqh*.¹²⁹ The real *‘ālim* (scholar) for Tūysirkānī was the university-trained scholar; the spiritualist was only a scholar, an agent of knowledge, on the condition that he trained under the reformed program of the college.

Like Tūysirkānī, Kasravi placed the madrasa-trained ulema outside the realm of legitimate knowledge. But he departed from Tūysirkānī in that he used a polemical method (not the apparently disinterested approach of Tūysirkānī), referring to the ulema always as “mullahs” (and in contexts where the label implied derision).¹³⁰ Kasravi did not stop at dissociating legitimate knowledge (*‘ilm*) from the ulema-turned-mullahs, but extended the classical trope of

¹²⁸ Ibid., 27.

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, 46.

¹³⁰ The only time the ulema were referred to as the ulema was when Kasravi wrote from their vantage point, see Kasravi, *Shī‘īgarī*, 215.

self-centeredness to represent them as ignorant. He branded ulema's years-long education as a façade for self-interested living. Kasravi, commenting specifically on the Shia ulema of Iraq, wrote that they were sons of produce-sellers (*sabzī'furūsh*), mud workers (*gilkā*), or farmers. In their youth, they went to the madrasa to escape from work. While there, they lived lazily. They were free-loaders (*muft'khur*) who enjoyed themselves too much, and after some years, with financing of certain hajji went to the centers of Najaf or Karbala, and there too, spent their days free loading for years until they gained the status of mujtahid or "proof of Islam" (*hujjat al-Islām*).¹³¹ The ulema, for Kasravi, did not go to madrasa to pursue knowledge then, but to exploit money made available for learning.¹³² Furthermore, lacking proper education and knowledge, Kasravi's mullahs were intellectually irresponsible. When they were confronted with their baseless claims, they did not attempt to intellectually engage with opposition and reform their positions. They simply shifted the blame towards the masses. For example, when a mullah was pressed on why he held the twelve Imams to be the aiders of God (*yāvar-i khudā*), he resorted to the belief that God had created them from light. But once he was asked to provide evidence for this claim, he offered none, simply assigning the claim to the masses¹³³ Kasravi went so far to even dismiss centuries-long subjects of Islamic learning such as *usūl*, writing that the mullahs

¹³¹ *Hujjat al-Islām* did not yet carry its contemporary meaning to indicate the lowest clerical rank. It was an honorific used for a learned scholar. Another way the mullahs gained the status of *hujjat al-Islām*, Kasravi alleged, was hereditary: "some are also aristocratic [*āqāzādah*] because their fathers had the juridical apparatus, and they too, as soon as they opened their eyes, knew nothing but [the mullah life]." See *ibid.*, 217. Dawlatābādī also made the complaint that religious authority (and authority more generally), including the very madrasa room (*hujrah*) in which a seminarian resided, was received via inheritance (*virāṣat*), giving Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Mujtahid Isfahānī as an example who clothed all his children with the *Sharī'a* robe, in particular the unqualified Āqā Najafī. Both were also tried in *The True Dream* story covered in this chapter. See Dawlatābādī, *Hayāt-i Yaḥyā*, vol. I, 58, 86, 106, 411.

¹³² Kasravi, *Shī'rīgarī*, 217.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 153. Kasravi also viewed *t'avīl* (hermeneutics of hidden meaning) as the ulema refusing obvious meanings for another to meet their own whims. He wrote that whenever something was contrary to their wants, they refused its evident meaning and engaged in interpretive gymnastics (*bih ma'nāhā-yi dīgar pīchānand*). See *ibid.*, 229.

were still producing treatise (*risālah-i ʿilmī*) on these subjects but without knowing nor justifying their use.¹³⁴ Similar to Tūysirkānī then, Kasravi saw *fiqh* to be of no use for the “present age.” Kasravi further contended that the ulema were an impediment to legitimate knowledge and its application. If someone was sick and mentioned the name of a doctor (*pizishk*) in front of a mullah, the mullah would reply: “what is a doctor? Ask the pious Imam for your healing!”¹³⁵ For Kasravi, they were thus both productive of falsities and an impediment to production of true knowledge. The following quote captures Kasravi’s polemical sentiment well:

They [the mullahs] are men without knowledge [*bīdānīsh*], less informed about the world and its affairs than a ten-year old child. Since their brains are filled with *fiqh*, Hadīth, far-fetched fabrications and principles of [old] philosophy, there is no room left for knowledge nor awareness (*āgāhī*). Many changes have occurred in the world, sciences have appeared, and transformations have taken place. They either have not known them or have not understood them, or if they have, they ignored them. They live in this time but see the world with a 1300-year-old perspective.¹³⁶

Therefore, Kasravi’s polemics represented the mullahs as obstacles to production of real knowledge. For Kasravi, the ulema had no justified claim to knowledge. They did not belong to the community of scholars, i.e., the new intellectuals like himself, who he thought were the rightful claimants to *ʿilm*.

The classical discourse on ulema primarily focused on their character flaws, while the constitutionalist discourse gave its energies to the castigation of those ulema who opposed reform. The modernist discourse of the Reza Shah period was far more total; state-trained intellectuals attacked the social and epistemic authority of the entire ulema collective. The effect of intellectual discourse after the constitutional turn, combined with the force of institutional

¹³⁴ Ibid., 218. Also see Kasravī, *Zindagānī-i man*, 49, where he dismissed most of what was taught in *usūl* as “useless” (*bīhūdah*) intricacies that added nothing to one’s knowledge.

¹³⁵ Kasravī, *Shīrʿgarī*, 153.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 218.

change in education, was to marginalize “those who know,” the ulema, dislocating them from the normative order of education and knowledge production. The state, the university, and the new intellectuals encroached upon the newly-differentiated realm of “religious knowledge,” which the ulema-turned-spiritualists and their madrasas could no longer have to themselves. But despite Tūysirkānī’s prediction to the contrary, the madrasa did not perish and continued to operate (despite the disappearance of the *maktab*).¹³⁷ It never regained its previous prominence, however. Even the Islamic Republic (1979-) did not attempt to revive the old separation of powers between the political power of the state and the epistemic power of ulema-educators. The same state-centered institutions of *dabistān* and the university continued to dominate the normative order of learning as they had under the Pahlavis. The ulema, therefore, have not resuscitated their old epistemological dominance, despite ruling over a republic. And, this direct political rule is a development that has amplified the anti-ulema imagination of some Iranians today and is deserving of a separate study.

¹³⁷ For a study of the madrasa in the second Pahlavi period, see Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*.

Conclusion

This dissertation was premised on the argument that secularization theory generally fails to carry explanatory value for Iranian history. Based on an investigation of primary Persian sources, I attempted to show that secularization's received theses—among them, functional differentiation between state and religious institutions, or the cognitive differentiation between the concept of religion versus the secular—did not adequately explain Iranian history. Despite the absence of secularization in its received sense, the historical record provided us with the following descriptive fact: starting in the twentieth century, Iranians began to gradually experience what I called, following the work of Charles Taylor, religious optionality. For many of them, religious belief and practice changed from a near inevitably to an option.¹ This left us with the following paradox: if secularization theory failed to explain Iranian history, how can we account for the transformation towards optionality in religion?

I traced optionality to education reform. The approach of existing historiography on education reform, I showed, was one where change in teaching and learning meant an “awakening” to the “successes” of the West. This approach, I argued, sustained the dichotomies of superiority/inferiority on the relationship between the West and the rest, Global North and South, and the modern over the premodern. My historiographical approach was not one of divergence, between the supposed developed West and undeveloped Muslim nations, but of convergence of modern governance between Europe and the (semi)-colonies. Although asynchronous, this convergence produced education in the nation-state context. Drawing on

¹ Admittedly, my research was limited to religious optionality among Iranian Muslims. I speculate that adherents of other religions also experienced optionality so long as they went through the reformed educational order. This is a hypothesis that needs testing in further studies.

Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, I emphasized the disciplinary nature of Iranian education reform. I contended that new education (*ma'arif-i jadīd*) presented two significant changes. First, it changed how one was educated, moving the learner from the world of *ādāb al-muta'allimīn* into disciplines of the nation-state. Anyone who complied with the new disciplinary regime could learn and teach. The ulema-produced *ādāb*, orienting the learner towards God-centered virtue as the precondition for knowledge (*ilm*) acquisition and transmission, was no longer necessary. The second significant change was a transformation in the why or the purpose of education. The premodern student learned with the ultimate purpose of proximity to God. The practice of knowledge in this world was inseparable from obligations towards God. The reformed learner, on the other hand, learned through disciplines that tied him or her most intimately to the nation and the state. The means and end of education thus transformed in way that made educated persons vulnerable to religious optionality.

The immediate period for this educational transformation was from 1889, the founding of the first *dabistān* in Tabriz, to 1934, the founding of the first university in Tehran. I provided a history of the transition from the premodern children's schooling, the *maktab*, to new elementary education of the *dabistān*, by following universal literacy advocate, Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah. Distancing my work from celebratory historiography on reform, I attempted to contrast the *maktab* with the *dabistān*, without affirming reformist expectations of what "right" education had to be. I also examined the transition from premodern madrasa learning to the modern university. I conceptualized the politics of higher education through practices of governmentality, which Iran and Europe converged on. I paired the history of educational institutions with an inquiry into change on the intellectual agents that produced knowledge, more precisely, the change of authority from madrasa-trained ulema towards state-trained intellectuals.

I argued that it was not simply the state's regulation of ulema affairs and its attempt to absorb them into the new order of things; intellectual and literary discourse made the formation of new intellectual identities possible. In the First Majlis of 1906, many deputies had held their premodern intellectual titles such as *shaykh*, *sayyid*, *ḥājī*. By the end of the 1930s, most of the delegates in the parliament went by titles such as doctor or engineer.² In addition to new intellectual identities, educational reform established disciplinary learning and mass, functional literacy, first as aspirations and gradually as enduring norms. I argued that the aspiration towards mass, functional literacy began as initiatives by reformist individuals without a mandate from the state. By the 1930's, the state was much more involved in pursuing a policy of mass, functional literacy. The Ministry of Education instituted a number of adult literacy schools in Tehran and the provinces.³ Moreover, it issued a number of written warnings that certain professions as well as government employees needed to attend adult literacy schools or risk their jobs. One document on the Ministry of Interior (*vizārat-i kishvar*) letterhead, and signed by Rafsanjan's mayoral caretaker (*kafīl-i bakhshdārī va shahrdārī*) followed a Ministry of Education directive (*bakhsh'namah*), which in that year went under the Persian name of the Ministry of Culture (*vizārat-i farhang*). The document stated that salaries (*dādan-i kasb*) of persons working in bodegas, bathhouses, barbershops, coffeehouses, butcheries, and bread bakeries would be contingent on them being functionally literate or active in an adult literacy school.⁴ The Ministry of Education worked in conjunction with a number of other ministries and organizations to

² Faghfoory, "The Impact of Modernization on the Ulama in Iran," 286.

³ *Luzūm-i tablīgh barā-yi shirkat-i bī'savādān dar kilās'hā-yi sālmandān*, 1318/1939-40, in National Library and Archives of Iran, 297/26375.

⁴ *Ikhṭār-i katbī bah kullīyah-i aṣnāf va kasabah-yi Rafsanjān*, 1317/1938-39, in National Library and Archives of Iran, 297/14697.

promote functional literacy. For example, a 1939 letter from the Ministry of Culture (formerly, education) instructed movie theaters on adult literacy. It asked theaters in Tehran and its branches (*shu'bah*) in the provinces to display, before the movie, a three-sentence informational on the benefits of adult literacy. The information was as follows:

The fourth cycle of senior [*sālmānd*] courses for the redemption of illiterate persons was inaugurated. Guide them to these courses.

Whomever illiterate person you know, direct them to senior courses for education, so that you can make an effective contribution to happiness and public hygiene.

Senior classes would, in a short time, bring infinite capital to illiterate persons.⁵

As previously quoted, Taqīzādah insisted that “a firm public belief” was needed in the idea that “redemption” lied in public education.⁶ In this official document too, redemption was linked to functional literacy. At a more practical level, functional literacy gradually became a near requirement to partake in the life and economy of the nation-state. This new feature followed the larger global aspiration towards mass, functional literacy. Currently, I hold on to a set of unexplored documentary archives from the Reza Shah period (a few are already cited in this conclusion). These documents clarify the relationship between state building and mass literacy. Future study of these documents would complement Chapter 3 on the origins of reformed elementary schools, in which I explicated the social and intellectual interest in mass literacy anticipating state programs. Moreover, a study of these documents would provide additional elaboration on the concept of governmentality and its application (or lack thereof) to Iranian history.

⁵ See *Luzūm-i tablīgh*. This part is on a documentary page written on Ministry of Education (*vizārat-i ma'ārif*) letterhead.

⁶ Taqīzādah, *Maqālāt-i Taqīzādah*, 20-21.

It was a methodological concern of this dissertation to understand premodern life on its own terms, and not according to modernist values. Reading historical change through this method demands an inquiry into the meanings of literacy from premodern Islam into the period of education reform. If we take literacy in its modernist sense—rapid, functional, and mass literacy—then we would be compelled to interpret premodern learning as deficient. But, if we historicize the concepts and practices surrounding literacy, we can allow for variegated forms of learning without viewing the modern as better. This shall be the task of future research.

The core of my methodology turned on the question of theory and historical difference, which situated this work within broader methodological debates in the study of the Global South. I argued that any interpretation of the historical worlds outside Europe, when done through theories and concepts written for Europe and the West, distorts these worlds into deficient and undeveloped, thus producing imperialist results. More constructively, theory must be revised from the South, and populated with new intentions and meanings to explain historical difference on its own terms. It shall follow from my argument that imperialism is not only about representing the other as inferior, or committing blatant violations of sovereignty and national ways of life through war and occupation. Cognition borrowed from Europe and then applied elsewhere without revisions further entangles us with imperialism. This was why I challenged the received ideas on secularization. Further in the realm of cognition, I made use of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, also suggesting that in certain areas of Iranian life, disciplinary power failed to generate the same pacification, uniformity, and predictability in life as it had in the West. For example, in 1931, Issa Sadiq wrote that "the Fundamental Law on Education [made] elementary education compulsory for all Persian from the age of seven [yet] compulsory

attendance [was] not yet enforced.”⁷ This meant that social life and legal execution did not necessarily follow devised disciplines. The precise nature of mismatches between the disciplinary power of reform and social reality requires an independent study of its own.

I used a number of primary sources in Persian, some read for the first time in this dissertation. They included Islamic learning etiquette texts and manuscripts, ulema biographies (*tazkarah*), documentary sources from the Qajar and Pahlavi periods, endowment (*waqf*) documents, ministerial archives, in particular, those belonging to the Ministry of Education, primary school documents, annual reports (*sāl'nāmah*) of higher colleges and the first university, intellectual memoirs and letter correspondences, Persian journals, and unpublished theses belonging to the University of Tehran's earliest period. In using these sources, my attempt was to make an original contribution to the field and narrate a history that was firmly rooted in the reality of the period.

My most immediate research followed a period of rapid change and reform from 1889 to 1934. Although I read premodern texts, historical perspectives that were intentionally oppositional to reform received less attention. This was in main part due to the nature of the sources. Texts written in a premodern register, unconcerned with the new world reform advocated, carried into and overlapped with the period of reform; however, outside the realm of constitutional politics and concerning education, anti-reform sources appear sparse. Future research should inquire into oppositional perspective on education (if available) to find an explanation for resistance among the ulema to education reform. Existing literature has interpreted ulema opposition as conservatism against better pedagogy, or alternatively, as protection of ulema financial interest. In Chapter 3, I raised another possibility: ulema's fear of

⁷ Sadiq, *Modern Persia and Her Educational System*, 56.

religious optionality.⁸ Reformists did not intend to produce this optionality. However, this was the effect of education reform that came to transform intellectual and religious identities in the twentieth century. If the ulema had opposed disciplinary education in fear of religious optionality, then they had foreshadowed contemporary reality with some precision.

⁸ See the final section of Chapter 3 “The Tabriz Schools” for a fuller discussion of existing literature on this subject in addition to my suggestions.

Figures



Fig. 1: Shāhnāmah prefatory praise with illumination art (*tazhib*), showing the foundational presence of God in premodern literate cultures. See Lewis O 50 Shāhnāmah, fol. 6 verso. UPenn Special Collections.

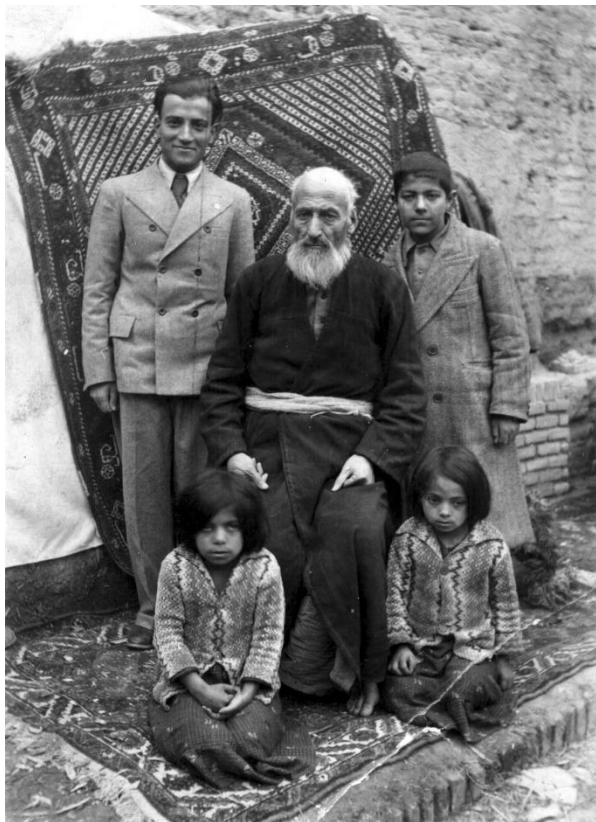


Fig. 2 and 3:
Mīrzā Ḥasan Rushdīyah, pioneer of mass,
functional literacy in Iran, seated in the
center with his family members. Photos
courtesy of the Library, Museum, and
Documents Center of the Islamic
Consultative Assembly.

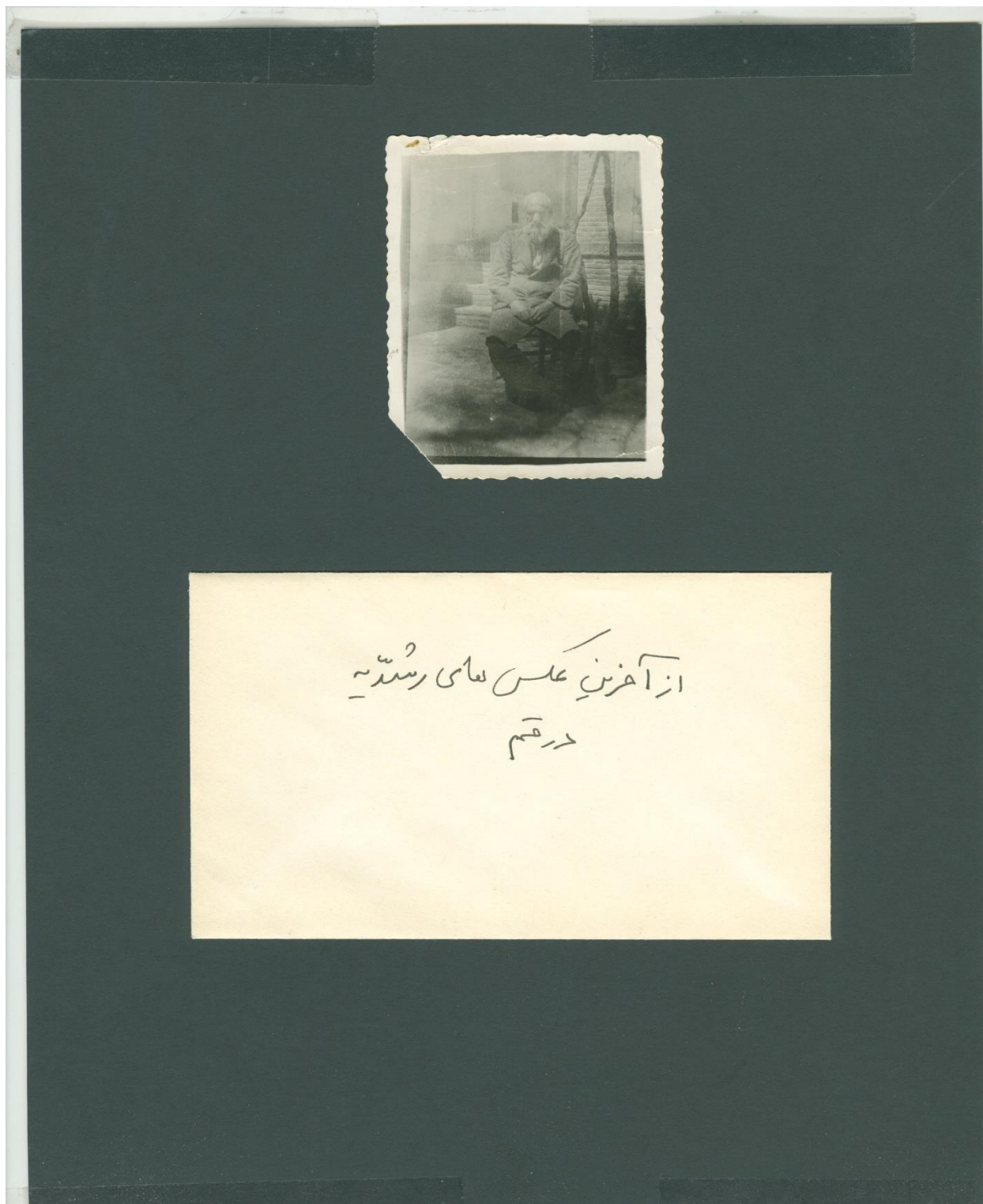


Fig. 4: "One of the last photos of [Mīrzā Ḥasan] Rūshdīyah taken in Qom," Iran. Courtesy of Behdokht Roshdieh Archives and also held at the National Library and Archives of Iran.

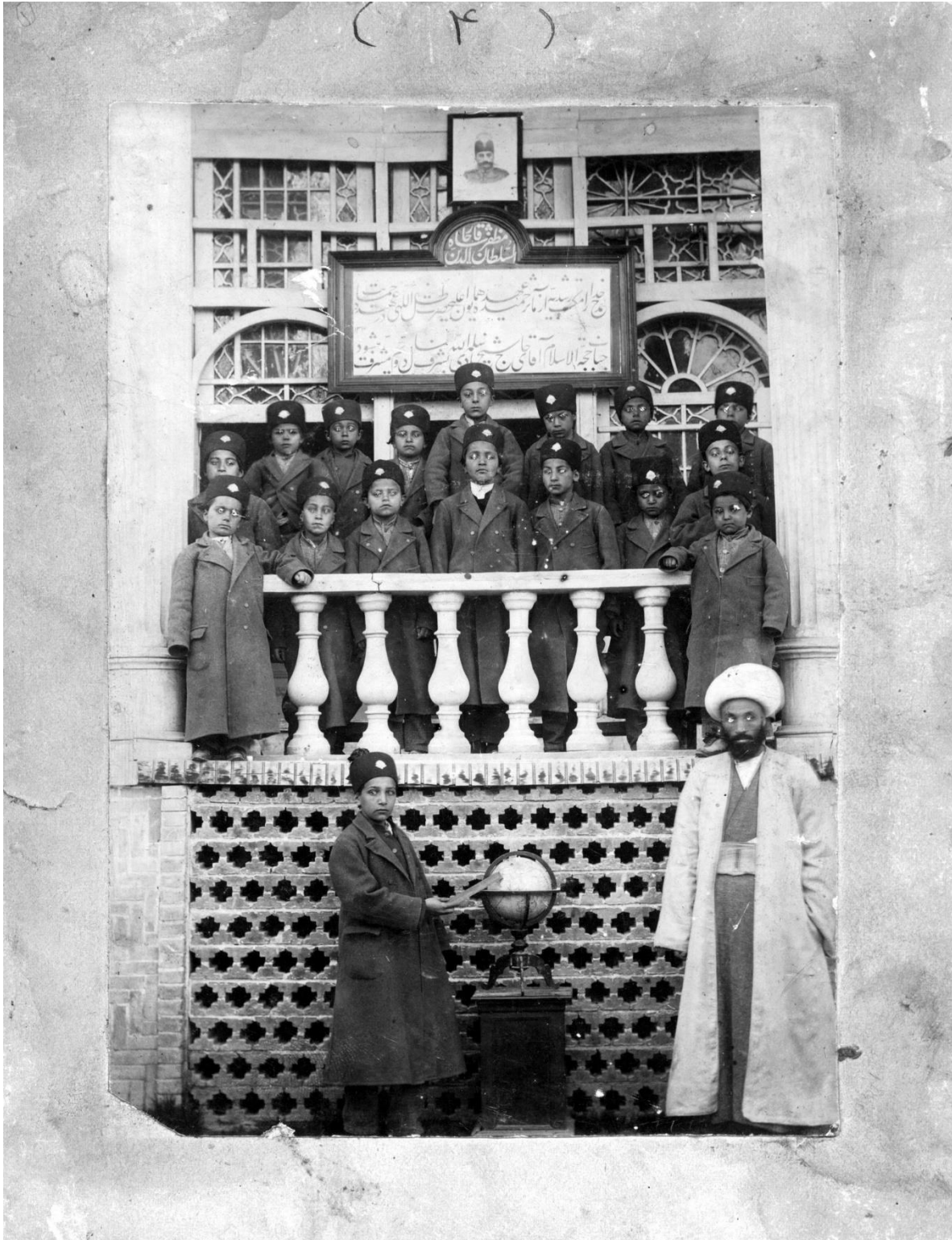


Fig. 5: a Rushdīyah School (*maktab-i Rushdīyah*) in the Muzaffar al-Din Shah period (1313-24/1896-1906), which represented new schooling. As discussed in Chapters 2-3, reformists introduced the wearing of uniforms seen in this photo.



Fig. 6: A new school named Ittihad-i Nubar, dated 15 Mehr, 1310/October 3, 1931, during the Reza Shah period, National Library and Archives of Iran.



Fig. 7-8: entry door of Dār al-Funūn, the first modernist polytechnic college of Iran. Fig. 7 is a close-up in which the founding year is visible: 1268/1851. Photos by author, December, 2020.





Fig. 9-10: The Marvi madrasa instituted in 1231/1815-16, which is located in the Tehran bazaar. Fig. 10 is a close-up of the entrance, which reads “masjid, Marvi, madrasa.” Photos by author, December, 2020.



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