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The Iranian Jewish Community in Search of Modern Social Life, 1848–1906

Abstract

Powerful European countries in late 18th and early 19th centuries supported religious minorities and expanded missionaries' activities, thus paving the way for social changes and evolutions. Having understood international circumstances and internal situations, Iranian Jews took influential and useful steps in changing social system. The Qajar Dynasty, in line with the demands of international Jew institutions, agreed with the establishment of new Jew institutions. The present paper tries to find an answer to this question: How did the Jews change their social system during the mentioned period? The paper hypothesis is that with the support of their international institutions as well as powerful European countries, the Jews urged Qajar Dynasty to provide a suitable background for the evolution of their social system.

Keywords

Qajars, Jews, Alliance, social system, missionary activities.

Introduction

During Qajar Era, powerful European countries gained more knowledge about the issues of Iran as well as its religious minorities, thanks to its specific geographical situation. In their publications, they reflected Jewish issues, trying to improve their situation. In his journey to Europe in 1873, Naser al-Din Shah

visited Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris. During this visit Adolphe Crémieux, the universal manager of Alliance, stated his discontent from the inappropriate situation of Iranian Jews. They asked the shah of Iran to decree some orders, thus preparing an appropriate background for changes in cultural, social, and educational situations of the Jews. Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar was appointed by the shah to study the Jews' circumstances and prepare a better situation for them. The shah issued the decree of establishing Alliance schools. Although domestic and foreign situations for the establishment of the schools was not prepared, the central committee of Alliance was formed in Tehran and Shiraz. The World Union of Jewish, assisted by the embassies of the European countries in Iran, put the government under pressure to take some actions in order to change the social and educational circumstances of the Jews. In 1880, Naser al-Din Shah issued a decree for the improvement of the Jews' lives, asking all counties' governors to follow it. As Alliance schools opened in Iran and its activities expanded in other regions, the Jews' educational system developed and as Jews' children along with other Iranians studied in these schools, they became an important educational centers, challenging the traditional educational system of the country. Gradually these educational centers gained new sciences and became one of the novel educational centers. During Mozaffar al-Din Shah's reign, as the Constitutional Revolution succeeded and Alliance schools' activities expanded, the educational situational of the Jews improved so much that it became utterly incomparable with what had been before.

The present paper seeks to find an answer to the question that how Jews' social system developed in the second half of 19th century and early 20th century. It hypothesizes that with the support of their international institutions as well as powerful European countries, the Jews urged the Qajar to provide a suitable background for the evolutions of their social system.

1. The Court's policy

1.1. Naser al-Din Shah's Period

In Qajar Era, likewise previous eras, resided in separate neighborhoods, facing some limitations from previous ages in terms of employment, clothing, and customs that distinguished them from other society groups (Curzon 1380: 1/648). The governments imposed some constraint for them in social terms (Loeb 1996: 139), for instance in Isfahan they were not allowed to wear hats, have a shop in the market, or build their houses' walls taller than their neighbors. They fared better in Tehran and Kashan, where their population was greater, while in Shiraz their situation was more chaotic than other cities. In Bushehr they enjoyed greater welfare, being away from bothering and annoyance (Curzon 1380: 1/648–49). In Mashhad, the Jews were used to find gold and silver in

Qanbarshah Hills (OLMCD, 54986: 1). This action can hardly be regarded as forced labor, since some documents indicate their presence in Kazem Abad and Qanbarshah hills in order to find gold and silver. However, it seems that the governor of Khorasan supervised their labor (OLMCD, 54992: 1–2).

The Jewish community in Azerbaijan did not have a specific organization too. As their chief, they knew a great Rabbi, who charged kashrut meat for his own interest. The annual passing of the Jewish Rabbi was the only ring to link Iranian Jews with those of the world. Based on a letter of credit that this Rabbi had received from Jerusalem, he dealt with their disputes in Iran and was paid between 2 and 15 Qiran, based on their economic status (Aubin 1362: 91–92).

Albert Confino, one of their cultural activists who travelled to Iran several times on behalf of the central Alliance of France, writes about the social situation of the Jews: “There was nothing more pitiable, unhealthier, and dirtier than Jewish neighborhoods. The Jewish neighborhood in Shiraz did not have much width and length; as a matter of fact, it was a narrow and dark ghetto, in which there were 220 houses and 1000 households resided in these houses in a compressed way, whereas there was only space for 150 households. The alleys were not wider than 1 meter... All kinds of filth and garbage had been piled up in the alleys... In 1902, a sum of 400 children died from typhus, diphtheria, and small-pox.” (Confino 1996: 239).

However, apart from this exaggerated report, the Jews of each city usually had a bailiff to deal with their issues, e.g. in Shiraz, where their bailiff was normally the city’s sherrif or in Isfahan where in 1295 AH/1878, Mirza Ali Isfahani was appointed as the Jews’ agent by Mirza Baqer (Saeedi-Sirjani 1362: 73). Also in Hamedan for a period of time Montakheb al-Dolah and then Asef al-Hokama became their agent (DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 188; Box 24, Case 13, 1317: 14–15). One thing in which the Jews could have an influence was their role in appointing and dismissing the bailiff, in this way that if they found out that the bailiff did not carry out his tasks or with the excuse of government’s pressure, collected tax from them in his own interest, they would dismiss him and appoint another in his place. Yet, if the bailiff was simultaneously the city steward, proving his guilt would not be very easy (ibid. 12 & 24). The Jews’ bailiff and administrator only answered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the local government had no right to interfere in his work (DDHD, Box 8, Case 24, 1312: 13). However, this issue was not specific only for one area. There are many reports from different areas concerning the interference of local governments in the affairs of the minorities (DDHD, Box 16, Case 13, 1319: 12).

During early Constitution Era, the Jews of Tehran had 20 synagogues, the most important of which was the Synagogue of late Ozra, located in the rooms of a house in Iranian style, wherein only the readings of Talmud and Torah were held. The chief Rabbi, Mulla Ibrahim, was an old goldsmith who had come

from Baghdad to Tehran. Simultaneously, he took on the duties of a priest, sanctifier, secretary, formal birth certificate officer, and judge in private affairs of the Jews. The Jewish Rabbi came to Iran once every three years to take care of implementing religious orders as well as receiving the funds (Aubin 1362: 309–310). Furthermore, in the Jewish community, the Gabbai or the administrator of each synagogue took care of the Jewish poor (Netzer 1996: 242).

The Jews always acted with caution in their interactions with other groups of Iranian society. Yet, sometimes lack of caution even in internal Jewish affairs put them in some bad situations. For example, one can refer to Heidari-Nemati Dispute among the Jews, in which some were injured and by turning over these disputes to the government, heavy fines were considered for them (Saeedi-Sirjani 1362: 220). On the other hand, they could not accumulate a lot of wealth, for governmental officials took them as tax and most of it was directly deposited to government's treasury. If some of them were poor and could not afford paying the tax, they were forced to work and their salary was retrieved as tax. In general, the tax-collector's power was infinite and could even sell the Jews' clothing in order to collect the tax (d'Allemagne 1335: 952). Perhaps, that is why that Israel Joseph Benjamin, the Jewish trader, who in 1850 during a long trip entered Iran through Iraq, writes: "Among Iranian Jews, there are some who are very wealthy and this wealth is the source of many dangers, forcing them to hide their treasure like a crime" (Benjamin 2009: 12). Although one cannot deny that the central government always tried to organize the Jews' situation, giving local governors and officers some instructions about cutting the extra tax imposed from the Jews, the governors would follow this command for some years, only to let it go afterwards (DDHD, Box 13, Case 30, 1907: 3).

In towns, the government could have influence and even put pressure on people more. Sometimes after an event, the Jews' neighborhood was almost looted, yet by sending telegraph to Tehran and dispatching soldiers by the city's governor, the riot was put down. A similar instance occurred in Safar 1294 AH/ March 1877 in Shiraz (NLAIRI, retrieval no. 280–352: 1–5). Sometimes the government ordered the soldiers that if the clergy wanted to riot, they should be suppressed (Netzer 1996: 212–217). Meanwhile, however, the role of western countries' embassies such as England, should not be overlooked in quickly resolving such unrest (Nezam al-Saltaneh Mafi 1362: 573–574). In 1309 AH/ 1892, only the interference of the central government and the English embassy was able to finish the dispute between the Muslims and the Jews (Netzer 2007a: 292).

In 1290 AH/ 1873 when Naser al-Din Shah went to Europe for the first time, different Jewish centers in Paris, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Istanbul, and other cities in their publications brought the unfavorable situations of Iranian Jews. For instance, they wrote that in Iran the most complete types of religious persecutions happened and that Iran had a biased nation along with

a weak government. Despite both incessant demands of the Iranian Jews and the persistent promises of the government for creating a more favorable environment, it seems that there existed an unalterable decline which worsened the situation in recent years (Rāvandi 1382: 9/540–549). Afterwards, every time Naser al-Din Shah entered the capital city of any European country, the Jewish committee of that city asked him to improve the situation of Iranian Jews. As a matter of fact, previously the delegation of English Jews, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, administered by Sir Moses Haim Montefiore, and Alliance Union of Israel demanded the interference of English and French embassies in Tehran in order to improve the Jews' situation (Fischel 2007: 790). Also in 2179 AH/ 1862 a Jew, named Sir Moses Haim Montefiore wrote a letter to Naser al-Din Shah, in which while admiring Abdul-Hamid the Ottoman sultan for creating a favorable situation for the Jews in Ottoman Empire, asked the shah to react to the Jews like him (DDHD, Box 10, Case 18, 1279: 1).

Finally, the central members of Jewish Alliance on 28th Jumada al-avval 1290 AH/ 12th July 1873 in one of the hotels of Paris negotiated with the shah (Naser al-Din Shah 1377: 224). After many negotiations that were conducted by Mirza Malkam Khan, the shah asked the chancellor Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar to support the Jews and end this criticized situation. The shah promised them to support the Jews and establish a school and the special court of justice for them. The petition text as well as Naser al-Din Shah's and Mirza Hossein Khan's answer was translated into Hebrew and was distributed among Iranian Jews (Fischel 2007: 790). Also in a letter to Naser al-Din Shah, the Alliance committee of Berlin explained the painful situation of the Jews (Rāvandi 1382: 9/540–549).

At the same time, the Anglo-Jewish Association in a letter to the shah, mentioned the cases in which the Iranian Jews' rights had been ignored; for example: A Jew's fault was extended to other Jews; the Jews' oath was not heard at courts; if a Jew converted to Islam, he would inherit all properties; a Moslem was released instead of executed after murdering a Jew; the guilty Jews were promised to be free if they converted to Islam; large amounts of money were collected from Jews in addition to tribute; and the possession of shops by the Jews was evaded in most Iranian cities (Naser al-Din Shah 1377: 224). Israel Joseph Benjamin has listed out all these items (Benjamin 2009: 13–14).

After Naser al-Din Shah's return, the Jewish union and foreign embassies always took care of the situation, putting the government under pressure, until eventually Naser al-Din Shah issued a decree in support of the Jews in Jumada al-Thani 1297 AH/ May 1880 (Levi 1339: 733–735). But the decree, issued by Naser al-Din Shah to establish Jewish citizens' rights only included one of the items of Anglo-Jewish Association's letter, i.e. the shah of Iran after returning to his country and evaluating the situation, maybe out of intelligence, chose an item in which the temporal constraint attracted more attention. On the other

hand, Naser al-Din Shah exercised utmost caution, choosing an item which the society and the clergy could not prevent while relying on Islamic laws. Furthermore, with this decree, the shah found no necessity anymore to execute the petition signed in Paris. Farhad Mirza, the governor of Shiraz, issued this order for the Jews of that city, which led to some protests (DDHD, Box 16, Case 15, 1296: 4).

Reports, after Naser al-Din Shah's decree, confirm that the chaotic situation of the Jews did not improve. Accordingly, Lord Curzon writes about the situation of religious minorities of Iran during late Naser al-Din Shah's reign that "the population of the Jews is 2000 and that of the Zoroastrians, about 7000. When purchasing real properties, they should give private ownership and when exiting the house, they sew a specific cloth on their clothing... The Jews of Tehran do not face genocide and plunder, like those of Isfahan, yet they do not see good behavior, either." From all reports, it can be concluded that religious prejudices as well as their consequent pressure, imposed on the minorities in southern parts and in Isfahan and Shiraz, were less in Tehran. However, apart from the situations, created by the society for behaving towards the Jews, one can find Naser al-Din Shah's real opinion about the Jews in an anecdote he narrates in his travel book. While a route from Tehran to Qom in Ramadan 1298 AH/ 1880, in a caravanserai near Qom, the shah noticed that the caravanserai's owner threw the possessions of two Jewish traders from the quarters into the yard. Having seen this scene, he writes: "Obviously the owner of the caravanserai had done this to force the Jews out. However, such behavior was not much of a wonder" (Naser al-Din Shah 1377: 242–243).

1.2. Mozaffar al-Din Shah's Period

During this period, the Jews saw important changes in their society in social and educational terms, even though the government's weakness sometimes gave an excuse to fanatics and profiteers. In the spring of 1314 AH/ 1897, one year after Naser al-Din Shah's death, Seyyed Reihan Allah issued a *fatwa* of cutting the Jews' hair and patching their clothing. Based on this very decree, any Jew whose clothing was not patched or had hair was forcefully taken to the Seyyed, there to cut his hair and patch his clothing (Levi 1339: 773). Also in Shiraz the Jews were banned to wear Iranian hats (DDHD, Box 22, Case 4/1, 1323: 87/1). At the end of this period, Isfahan with 6000 Jews had the greatest number of Jews as a single city. Agha Najafi, the high clergy of this city, banned Jewish men from selling drink and the Jewish women from entering Muslim houses (Aubin 1362: 307). He asked the people not to trade with Jews, which put Jews' market into recession, causing them to protest (DDHD, Box 31, Case 3, 1325: 1 and 3).

As a result of these actions, the situation of Iranian Jews was reflected in European publications once again and by means of political representatives of big countries Jewish Alliance took some steps for the benefit of the Jews,

sending Mr. Kazes to Tehran in order to support the Jews. Kazes' actions as well as his negotiations with political and religious figures effectively improved the Jews' situation. The haircut became prohibited and instead of patching, the Jews attached a steel emblem on their chest, which was the sign of unity (Levi 1339: 776). Although the embassy and consulates of foreign countries always defended the rights of Iranian Jewish minority, it should be taken into consideration that some of the Jews were citizens of these very countries (DDHD, Box 22, Case 4/1, 1327: 87/1; Box 24, Case 19, 1321: 4).

Despite solving some of Jews' problems in this period, they still face many more. The minorities' taxes in each locality and area had been recorded in a specific notebook, based on their population, yet this did not mean its alteration based on new conditions. On the contrary, sometimes some situations arose where the taxes had to be increased or decreased, e.g. the majority of goldsmiths in Hamedan were the Jews, which higher tax was collected from them, consequently; however, as this occupation changed and evolved and the Muslims became greater in number, the government still collected the same amount of tax from them (DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 143 and 192). Sometimes, despite the ban on a type of goods, by paying a higher amount of tax to the local government, Jewish traders could either import or export it, selling it in the country; however, discord between the government, brokerage, and customs could lead to the prohibition of the goods, putting the Jewish trader into trouble (*ibid*: 135 and 138). Furthermore, misdemeanor of customs' officers was an issue, always a subject of Jews' complaint (*ibid*: 261).

One of the difficulties of the Jews were the frequent reports, concerning robbery from their houses and merchandises, yet it should be said that local governors, brokerage, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other agents of the central government always took measures to solve these problems (*ibid*: 96). Usually in these cases the police department entered; however, imprisonment of suspected people had responsibility for the office, itself, as well as the government, because it was feared that due to inappropriate location of the detention camp or diseases, the person would die before proving his charges (*ibid*: 67). If the robbery was attempted from a tomb or synagogue and the interrogation sessions lasted in vain, the suspects were transferred to Tehran by the agents and the interrogation sessions took place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*ibid*: 69 and 78; Box 22, Case 4/1. 1323: 65/1). In case for any reason, the agents paid no attention to the complaints, the plaintiff took his complaint to Tehran or to an adjacent county, for instance from Kurdistan to Kermanshah (DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 265; Case 22, Case 4/1, 1323: 72 and 73).

Sometimes if the robbery was committed by the village chief or one of the locals, the ulama and other locals were willing to give testimony in order to prove the Jew's claim. In such cases, the agents could take action sooner to retrieve the personal possessions (*ibid*: 91), or even the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs could directly write a letter to the person with loss, promising him that they would pursue the issue until reaching a result (ibid: 93; DDHD, Box 16, Case 16, 1319: 33).

As a result, the government always tried to prevent bad accidents, yet was not always successful in so doing. Sometimes, if a dispute occurred between the Jews and the Muslims, leading to the death of some of the latter, the government was even willing to pay their blood price so that the dispute would end sooner (DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 22), as complaints of the ulama and Jewish chieftains to governmental officials as well as their respective embassies (ibid: 4) could give foreign states an excuse to interfere in domestic affairs of the country in order to support these people (ibid: 11). In these cases, the government tried to solve the occurred issue in the beginning, since if the situation got complicated, the masses interfered, and the possibility of their entry into Jewish neighborhood arose, the government could no longer capture and persecute the trouble makers or the main agents of instigation and riot as instantly it would be accused by the clergy and masses of supporting the Jews and, consequently with the interference of European countries' ambassadors, of Westernization and defying Islam. Additionally, sometimes if an important issue occurred for a Jew, governmental officials found it wise to inform the Shah, too (NLAIRI, retrieval no. 4266–4296: 3).

The government was one of the inducers of people's feelings against Jews. In Ramadan 1318 AH/ December 1900, when the possessions of some Jews were plundered, they turned to Pearl Cannon in Shah's Citadel. In this riot, Moaven al-Dola, the Minister of Trade, and Mokhtar al-Saltanah, head of *Nazmīya* (police), were involved. Afterwards, Moein al-Dola the chief of Tehran's Jews was dismissed and Mesbah al-Molk Mostoufi took on the job (Sepehr 1386: 541–548). Finally, the government captured the main culprit of the riot, i.e. Sheikh Ibrahim, banishing him to Kalat (ibid: 551–553). Moreover, one should consider that for his European travels, the Shah needed money and retrieved it from European states. He knew that neglecting the Jews' issue was not much pleasant to these governments.

As a matter of fact, Jewish and European researchers have always tried to demonstrate the relationship between the Jews and the Muslims as obvious enmity; however, meanwhile some reports show that these two groups had a peaceful relationship with each other, especially in the beginning of the Constitution when much of the unrest was against the Jews, in Kermanshah, Muslim citizens tired a lot to save the lives of their Jewish neighbors and protect them from violent actions. Captain Hall Haworth, the British consul, was really amazed by Muslims' sympathy in sending food and clothing to the Jews. He said that many of the Jews owe their lives to the Muslims who in some case practically stood armed in front of their friends so that they managed to take them to their houses (Kasravi 1383: 277).

Constitutionalists promised the Jews that after the establishment of the Constitution, they would take their civil rights into consideration (Rāvandi 1382: 9/544–49). Article 2 of this association's regulation accepted the presence of the followers of four religions, including the Jews, provided that they were of Iranian origin (Kermani, 1384: 1/208–10). Seyyed Jamalleddin Vaez during the revolution, went to the Jewish neighborhood in Tehran one Saturday and made a historical speech in Hadesh Synagogue, saying that: "As a result of this revolution, the Jews will enjoy the merits of freedom, too..." (Levi 1339: 830). Even beyond this, the Jews whenever in Isfahan a gathering was held for the martyrs of Azerbaijan, they attended while keeping Torahs aloft from a child of seven to an elder of seventy (Kasravi 1383: 388). They also held an extensive feast for the first anniversary of the establishment of the parliament (Dolat Abadi 1371: 2/135).

2. Occupations and professions

In general, there are three views, concerning the occupations of Iranian Jews, in which the acceptance of one and rejection of another causes this topic not to be appropriately understood. Some researchers explicitly attribute every job, unsuitable for Muslims, to the Jews, not mentioning jobs like trade and medicine at which they were expert. Some only point at trade and medicine, giving the notion that the Jews of this period had a well-to-do status in social and economic terms. The third group are people like Curzon who give contradictory reports. It seems that evaluating various ideas in this case is very helpful to reach better results.

In this period, many of Iranian Jews were involved in trade, brokerage, wine-selling, and medicine (DDHD, Box 24, Case 20, 1317: 31; Curzon 1380: 1/440); however, they rarely got a high position in business. The Jews managed to make wine from the grapes of Khalar Region, Shiraz, with their specific methods, which had a World fame (Fasaee 1382: 2/1292). Yet, if any wine was sold secretly to Muslims and clearly to non-Muslims, they were persecuted by the government, providing the excuse for an assault on their neighborhood (Dolat Abadi 1371: 3/236). Moreover, if this action happened in Ramadan, it would have worse consequences (DDHD, Box 28, Case 5, 1321: 1). Local governors, who used any excuse to fine Muslim and non-Muslim locals, applied this issue against the Jewish minority with the excuse of Muslims' drinking alcohol in secret in their houses (DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 202 and 222).

Some of the Jews in Shiraz played music, sang, and danced (Benjamin 2009: 19) and were so professional at this job that sometimes their absence from the parties of elders and merchants caused disorder. For instance, in late 1318 AH/1900, the Jewish Molla Agha was invited by Baha Al-Sultan, the

general of Zarand Regiment. While attending this party, he declined to go to Entezam al-Sultan's party, which caused disorder in the city (Netzer 1996: 2/221–22; DDHD, Box 22, Case 1/4, 1323: 26). The Jews were so talented in music that in Tehran, four groups of the 12 music groups of the court were Jewish (Aubin 1362: 248).

The Jews also played an important role in carpet trade, exporting it to Europe (d'Allemagne 1335: 985), also trading in regions such as Mazandaran (DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 181). Another occupation of the Jews was in goldsmith and currency exchange, in fact if they managed to get that (Dolat Abadi 1371: 3/236; DDHD, Box 26, Case 5, 1324: 143 and 192). In Kurdistan, too, some Jews were keepers of coffee-houses (Kamandi 1393: 172). In Yazd, along with the Zoroastrians, they controlled all agricultural and commercial affairs of the city (Curzon 1347: 118; Benjamin 2009: 19). In Barforush district of Babol, one of the important commercial centers of Iran and Russia with major products such as rice, cotton, and sugarcane, most commercial affairs were in Jews' hands (Curzon 1347: 201). In fact, they did not cultivate and only played the role of a dealer (DDHD, Box 24, Case 19, 1317: 4). Furthermore, drapery, tailoring, and peddling were among other Jewish jobs (ibid: 4 and 8; Case 20, 5).

The Jews had miscellaneous jobs in the society. Based on the area ad city they resided, they took up different jobs, thus a general opinion about their jobs cannot be reliable. For instance, wealthy Jews in Isfahan, like most cities outside Iran, had specialized in the trade of jewelry, metals, and antique objects. On the other hand, the poor in this city did service jobs for a living (d'Allemagne 1335: 949–50). Based on the report by the English-based Jewish Chronicle paper, this job was considered an average job for the Jews (Benjamin 2009: 19). As a result, in cities like Hamedan (ibid: 20), Urmia, Kermanshah, Arak, and Kashan, in which stimulating factors were fewer, the Jews were more accepted, working in trade. Yet in cities such as Isfahan and Shiraz, intense biases prevented them from entering the market, hence they worked more in lower jobs (Aubin 1362: 309).

3. Demographic changes

The Jewish society in Iran does not give any statistics of their population. Existing statistics even about their population in a small city such as Kashan, which was one of their chief centers, could not tell the truth. Usually, the sources give contradictory data on this. That is why, it seems that based on contradictory historical data with emphasis on social conditions of Jews' residence, it can provide an appropriate context to find the reason behind all these contradictions.

During early 19th century, it seems that about 30,000 Jews lived in Iran. Until the end of this century of the 9-million population of Iran, 50,000 were Jewish (Sarshar 1348: 137). Jakob Polak writes: “As a Jewish Rabbi assured me, the total number of all Jewish households in Iran was limited to 2000...” (Polak 1361: 26). Nonetheless, Jewish Chronicle in a report on Iranian Jews in 1290 AH/ 1873 stated that their number was 40,000 (Benjamin 2009: 18–19), the most of whom resided in big cities such as Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Hamedan, Yazd, and Urmia (ibid: 77). In fact, they had settled in North and in Barforush Area. Their population in 1277 AH/ 1860 was about 50 households who had prayer house and library (Ez al-Doleh and Malkonov 1363: 157). In the winter of 1284 AH/ 1868, by efforts of Abdolghaffar Najm al-Doleh, the heads of Dar al-Khilafa had been counted and the number of Jewish families, residing in Tehran, was estimated to be 160 households (Rāvandi 1382: 5/361). In 1289 AH/ 1872, the central Alliance committee stated the Jewish population to be 40,000 (Nateq 1375: 128).

City	Tehran	Shiraz	Hamedan	Isfahan	Kashan	Urmia	Kermanshah
Population	3000	3000	3000	2400	1500	1200	600

Based on the consensus of 1301 AH/ 1884, there were 222 Jewish families, including 930 men and 1040 women (Fasaee 1382: 2/1134).

Curzon writes about Jewish population in Iran: “Years ago (1303 AH/ 1885), the number of Iranian Jews has been estimated to be 19,000; however, in my idea they were more in number. A list has been submitted to me, which I think is exaggerated. Chief centers of Jews’ residence are Tehran (with 4000), Hamedan (with 2000), Isfahan (with 3700), Shiraz (with 3000), Urmia, Mashhad, Kashan, Saveh, Kermanshah, and Bushehr” (Curzon 1380: 1/647). What is more, in Yazd, 2000 Jews resided (ibid: 293). In 1308 AH/1891 AD, the population of Hamedan’s Jews were estimated to be about 300 households (Eyn al-Saltanah 1374: 1/376).

During Mozaffar al-Din Shah, Iran’s population has been estimated to be 11 to 15 million, of which 100,000 were Jewish (Malek al-Movarrekhin 1368: 51–52). Eugene Aubin, who had been chosen as French ambassador in Iran contemporaneous with the events of Constitution Revolution, after posing some topics about Iranian Jews said: In Iran, a sum of 5100 Jews lives in Tehran, 5300 in Hamedan, and 5000 in Shiraz (Aubin 1362: 309), and they are 50,000 in total (Aubin 1362: 197). Although Benjamin of Tuleda in 12th century, states that the Jewish population in Isfahan were 15,000, Henry-Rene d’Allemagne in his travel book about 1325 AH/ 1907, believes that they were 5000 in number (d’Allemagne 1335: 949).

4. Relations with the government

During Early Qajar, when relationships of European countries were not widespread, the Jews did not have an appropriate situation in social, cultural, and economic terms. There were some decrees, issued by the government, on their limitation (Nateq 1375: 128). Some sources report that the governors of different regions imposed some limitation for the Jews' religious activities (Netzer 2007a: 292). Embassies of powerful European countries in Iran, put Iran under pressure to acknowledge the rights of minorities, especially the Jews (Benjamin 2009: 305).

5. Disease and famine

Without any doubt, the famines during Qajar Dynasty as well as the lethal diseases that followed them were one of the important factors behind the changes in Jews' population during that era. For example, the great famine of 1288 AH/ 1871 spread all over Iran. In fact, hard situation exposed Jews' lives to contagious diseases. On the other hand, sometimes Jews' religious beliefs confined the government to prevent the diseases. For example, during 1321–1322 AH/ 1903–1904, when cholera broke out in Kermanshah, the Jews were unwilling to bury their dead on Saturday, whereas this led to larger outbreak of this disease (Ettehadieh *et al.* 1392: 30). Although at the outbreak of a disease for the government Muslim did not differ from Jew and on such occasions, physicians went to Jewish neighborhoods to cure them (ibid: 100), the outbreak of diseases as well as the pressure from famine made Iranian Jews to ask for help from those of Europe in 1289 AH/ 1872 (Levi 1339: 702–705). Habib Levi Asher, a Jewish resident of Kashan, wrote in his memoirs about the famine of 1288 AH/ 1871 that in Passover, the Jews could not even afford buying bread, at which time Joseph Mayer Montefiore, a member of the wealthy Rothschild Family, sent 5000 Tomans to the Jews of Kashan (Benjamin 2009: 240–241). In fact, these events paved the way for the influence and interference of Jewish Alliance Union in Iran and Naser al-Din Shah's travel to Europe and getting the permission to establish a school for Iranian Jews by Alliance Union was an unprecedented success for them, even though they did not manage to do it in this period.

During the final years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign, i.e. around 1311 AH/ 1893, with the outbreak of cholera in Mashhad, the Jews closed their shops for 28 days and even prayer in synagogues was suspended. To run away from the disease as well as its consequent death, they went to Isfahan and Damavand. Even Jewish physicians left their neighborhoods. Based on some sources, during this time, 225 Jews died from cholera (ibid: 251).

6. Immigration

In Qajar Era, immigration was always a method of Jews' confrontation with internal pressures. The immigrations were initially internal; however, in the last quarter of 19th century, the Jews began immigrating abroad. With the establishment of Qajar Government and selection of Tehran as the capital city, some of the Jews of Kashan immigrated to Tehran many times (Levi 1339: 525, 946, and 1017). Settlement in the capital was effective both because of using economic advantages and enjoying some sort of relative security in the country's center; since in Qajar Dynasty, with the exception of Naser al-Din Shah's period, there was less influence and dominance over other regions (Heidari and Fallahian Vadqani 1389: 124).

During Qajar Era, other immigrations took place from Kashan to Arak, Qazvin, and Gilan. Eugene Aubin reported about the settlement of some Jews of Kashain in Qom and Arak (Aubin 1362: 278). It seems that in early 20th century, some Jews of Shiraz and Arak had immigrated to Kashan, too (Levi 1339: 833). Furthermore, in 1293 Ad/ 1976 AD, eleven Jewish families resided in Qazvin who had immigrated there from Kashan and Hamedan (Netzer 2007b: 46).

From a historical point of view, immigration abroad led to the formation of new societies and centers for the immigrants. The information that the sources provide us in many ways show that the immigration trend of the Jews in this period is a continuation of this minority's immigration trend in previous periods. It seems that the first dispersed groups of Iranian Jews started to immigrate to Jerusalem during the last quarter of 19th century, to stay there (Benjamin 2009: 306–307). Tendency to leave Iran can always be seen in the letters of Jews from various areas and cities of Iran, written to Jewish organizations of Europe and Israelite heads of the union in Paris. The destination of such immigrations was mostly the adjacent borders of Iran like Afghanistan, Turkestan, Bokhara, etc in north east and Baghdad and Basra in the west. For example in 1296 AH/ 1879, more than 60 Jewish families immigrated from Savojbolagh to Ottoman lands as a result of tax pressure (DDHD, Box 16, Case 8, 1296: 1). Moreover, the cities of Safed from the suburbs of Galilee, Jerusalem in Palestine, and Mumbai and Kolkata in India, which was controlled by England, were the other residence areas of the Jews, immigrating from Iran, in this period (Benjamin 2009: 311–313).

Conclusion

Between 1264 and 1324 AH/ 1847–1906, the Jews evolved their social and educational system, with the assistance of Jewish international institutions as well as the embassies of powerful European governments in Iran. Naser al-Din

Shah in his travel to Europe faced widespread activities of the World Alliance Union in publications, concerning the disorganized situation of the Jews and in his meeting with the manager of World Alliance Union, he issued a decree about changing social, cultural, and educational conditions of the Jews. Afterwards, with the establishment of Alliance schools and the formation of Alliance Committee, a close connection was created between Iranian Jews and international associations, and the Jews' situation evolved with the help of the embassies of powerful European states as well as their own widespread educational activities. In this period as social conditions changed, the Jews saw important evolutions in their social system. Thanks to its curriculum, teaching of French language, and new style training, education in Alliance schools, was of high account, compared to other educational centers. Exploiting the internal situation as well as the supports from their international institutions and organizations along with the powerful European countries, Iranian Jews managed to amend and improve their own social situation, compared to previous era.

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