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"NO EASY THING TO UNDERSTAND": A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

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Abstract

The historiography of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran centers on the root causes of social change in Iran. In this way, authors must generally accomplish two things in their histories of the Constitutional Revolution. One, they must describe Iranian society during the late Qajar period in order to describe what the Revolution changed. Two, they also explain why Iranian society changed. However, these are two different projects. The former is largely a social history project, while the latter is one largely addressed by sociology (in this case, primarily historical sociology). This paper will, broadly speaking, cover three sets of approaches: Whig history, historical sociology, and social history. All three of these approaches have different attitudes towards social change. Differences amongst the authors in terms of their portrayal of Iranian society represent both historiographical shifts and changes in Iranian society. This combination of theoretical and political assumptions has affected how we have understood the beliefs and organization of Iranian society before the Constitutional Revolution and why they changed during the Revolution. Rather than focusing on 1905, scholars should turn their attention on 1940's Iran as a way to understand Iranian society during the Constitutional Revolution.

Introduction

An Overview of the Scholarship on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution

The historiography of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran centers on the root causes of social change in Iran. This may seem basic, considering the topic under discussion is a revolution. What is less apparent is that this discussion of social change is also about the composition of Iranian society. In this way, authors must generally accomplish two things in their histories of the Constitutional Revolution. One, they must describe Iranian society during the late Qajar period in order to describe what the Revolution changed. Two, they also explain why Iranian society changed. This provides a starting point and a direction for historical change. However, these are two different projects. The former is largely a social history project, while the latter is one largely addressed by sociology (in this case, primarily historical sociology). This paper will, broadly speaking, cover three sets of approaches: Whig history, historical sociology, and social history. All three of these approaches have different attitudes towards social change. Further, all three have biases which led them to see Iranian society in different ways. Differences amongst the authors in terms of their portrayal of Iranian society represent both historiographical shifts and changes in Iranian society. These changes in academia affected theories of social change, while changes in the domestic politics of Iran changed our notion of Iranian society. This combination of theoretical and political assumptions has affected how we have understood the beliefs and organization of Iranian society before the Constitutional Revolution and why they changed during the Revolution. The goal of tracing these assumptions is to offer solutions to research

problems and identify new areas of research into the Constitutional Revolution specifically, but also into Iranian history generally.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution is an ideal entry point to study the historiographical challenges of modern Iranian history. The Constitutional Revolution is an important transition point for scholars. It marks the entry of the Iranian "masses" or "crowd" into the political sphere and the adoption of modern administrative and political organization by the Iranian state. While authors disagree about why this happened, they do agree that the event marked a significant moment of change in Iran. For this reason, the Constitutional Revolution is an almost obligatory topic of study for scholars of 20th century Iran. This means that the Constitutional Revolution offers a common point of comparison between the scholars of Iranian studies and the various theoretical approaches to Iranian history. Though the topic is important in both Persian and English language scholarship, my study will focus only on English language scholarship.

English language and Persian language scholars approached the history of the Constitutional Revolution differently, making direct comparisons between the two difficult. While scholars working and writing in Iran have contributed to the field, they have largely done so in the form of memoirs and other first person accounts. The works of Kasravi, Malekzadeh, and Nizam al-Islam Kermani, though foundational, occupy a precarious space between personal account and academic work.[1] They came out of a distinct Iranian academic tradition, which developed independently of British and American academia. These differences make placing English and Persian language

[1] See Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashruteh-i Iran* (Tehran, I961); Mehdi Malekzadeh, *Tarikh-i Inqilab-i Mashrutiyat-i Iran Vol. I* (Tehran, 1949); Nizam al-Islam Kermani, Tarikh-i Bidari-yi Iranian, Vol. I

works in the same historiography difficult. More often, English language historians use these works as primary sources, since these "histories" lapse into narratives written by participant-scholars. The focus of this project will be to examine the major works of the English language literature. The English language authors listed are a balance between the best most relevant to the field of Iranian Studies and to the history of the Constitutional Revolution. Because the Constitutional Revolution is one of the "foundational" events of 20th century Iranian history, there is significant overlap between the two. Further, many of the historiographical problems of the Constitutional Revolution are replicated throughout the literature. By limiting the study to the Constitutional Revolution, I have been able to delve deeply into the conversation between the authors.

Each chapter will discuss how scholars have looked at the Constitutional from the perspective of global history, religion, and ethnicity. Chapter one will look at how scholars have seen the Constitutional Revolution as a "global" event. Chapter two will look at the how scholars have characterized the role of the 'ulama and religion. Chapter three will look at how scholars characterized ethnicity. Generally, chapter one will function to give an overview of the different theories of social change and chapter two and three will examine the two primary ways that scholars have sought to explain the essence or mentality of Iranian society. Chapter two will especially focus on how the treatment of the 'ulama. Chapter three will focus on the three most commonly discussed ethnic groups: the Azeris, the Armenians, and the Bakhtiyari tribe. The first two chapters will be organized chronologically, while the third will be broken into section addressing each ethnic group in turn. The discussion will begin with Browne, followed

by historical sociology, and finally recent research. Each section will conclude with a variety of different research. Below is a brief overview of the major historical school and authors that will be addressed.

Whig History

Whig history was history written with the assumption that classical liberalism was the truest expression of human nature. In this way, Whig history is less a historical school than a political ideology supported with historical evidence. Whig history saw the past largely in reference to the present.[2] Further, it emphasized "the unities that underlie the differences" between peoples. These "unities" were an enlightenment conception of human nature and society. History was confined to those elites who understood the truths and moved history. This simplified the writing of history, largely removing the need for imagination by adopting anachronism.[3] Whig history assumed a particular view of society, or at least a modern society, and projected it into the history of the world. For that reason, the term is now used mainly as a pejorative, and is synonymous with elite and Eurocentric histories. However, the foundational text for the study of the Constitutional Revolution was a Whig history.

The foundational text of the English language literature, *The Persian Revolution* by E.G. Browne, was a Whig history, which was well suited to Browne's political motivations. In addition to his expertise in the Persian language and Persian literature, Browne was personally sympathetic to the Constitutionalist cause. He helped found and run the Persian Committee to lobby for the Constitutionalist cause in London. This put

[2] Herbert Butterfiled, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Norton, 1965), 11.
[3] Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (The New Press: New York, 1997), 210.

him in contact with Constitutionalists as well as Whig party member, who objected to Foreign Minister Grey's alliance with the Russian Empire at the cost of Persian independence (formalized in the 1907 Anglo-Russian Treaty). Further, one of Browne's former students was a foreign office official in the British Legation and served as a constant source of information for Browne. His Whig and political sympathies were complementary in that they both supported a view of the Constitutional Revolution as part of a progression towards liberal self-determination of all deserving nations. A Whig interpretation of the Constitutional Revolution was palatable to the British public and politicians. Perhaps more than any other single person, Browne was perfectly positioned to write an international history of the Constitutional Revolution.

Browne's framework was not suited to explain social change. While logically consistent and compelling, Browne took for granted that all societies would eventually adopt European style nationalism and liberalism. In so much as Whig history worked to "find the unities that underlie the differences and to see all lives as part of one web of life," it could not account for ethnic and religious differences. Whigs took an ethnically homogenous nation as the base unit of political organization. Without a nation, people were left outside of history and incapable of progress. While some in Iran were familiar with the works of John Stuart Mill, the overwhelming majority of Iranians were not, nor did the demands or aims of Iranians fit the liberal mold. While *The Persian Revolution* was an important part of the development of the English language scholarship, it has almost become a primary-source document. Like the Persian language memoir-histories mentioned previously, Browne's history was a victim of the activist perspective of its author. However, it was the starting point for the scholarship that followed it and

offered insight into the minds of many of the Constitutional Revolutions supporters, especially those in Europe. In its place, the next generation of scholars would focus less on elites and more on the motivations of societies or classes. However, a similar tension between social theory and social history remained in the historical sociology.

Historical Sociology

Historical sociology has attempted to explain social and political change by integrating sociological theories and concepts into history. Fundamentally, historical sociologists sought to explain social and political change in all societies by focusing on "what societies have in common in spite of their differences."[4] Marxian scholars emphasized "the role of classes" while non-Marxists (Weberians in the case of Iran) stressed "the importance of ideas, cultures, religions, and ideologies."[5] The challenge for scholars of Iran was balancing the elegance and analytical usefulness of these approaches with the particularities of Iranian society. Consequently, historical sociologists became interested in social and economic conditions in Iran before and during the Constitutional Revolution, and how those conditions fit into existing models of social change. Much like the Whigs who preceded them, historical sociologists attempted to fit the Constitutional Revolution into models adapted from European history.

Nikki Keddie and Said Amir Arjomand made the two biggest contributions to the study of the Constitutional Revolution from historical sociology. These authors

[4] Hobsbawm, *On History*, 78.
[5] Ervand Abrahamian, "The Cause of the Constitutional Revolution," *International Journey of Middle East Studies* 10, no. 3 (August, 1979): 382.

attempted to use sociological tools and concepts to explain political and social change in Iranian history. In their search for the root cause of political change, these authors looked to the 1979 Islamic Revolution for lessons. Consequently, they were concerned with the role of religion and religious institutions. During the 1960's and 1970's, when Keddie was writing some of her most important works like *The Origins of the Radical-ʿUlama Alliance*, Islamist and leftist political groups were increasingly challenging the Western-oriented Pahlavi dynasty. Shiʿism seemed to be largely concerned with limiting state power, with the ʿulama largely acting as the true representatives of the people. However, after the 1979 Revolution and the consolidation of power in the hands of clerics, these claims rang hallow. Authors like Arjomand would attribute such statements to authors who uncritically consumed revolutionary propaganda.[6] These two authors in particular engaged in a prolonged and detailed debate over the meaning of Shiʿi Islam and the beliefs of the ʿulama, but largely agreed that the beliefs of average Iranians were determined by Shi'a Islam as interpreted by the 'ulama.

Nikki Keddie adopted a marxian framework to explain political change in Iran. Keddie saw the Constitutional Revolution as the product of both socio-political factors and religious ideology.[7] Keddie's analysis focused on the behavior of two groups, the traditional urban merchants and the ʿulama. The traditional urban merchants, who increasingly suffered from the monopolies and tax-exemptions granted to foreign firms, were deeply opposed to the Qajar shahs. The ʿulama, largely dependent on the

[6] Said Amir Arjomand. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 23.
[7] Nikki Keddie, "Religion, Society, and Revolution in Modern Iran," in *Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change*, ed. Michael E. Bonine and Nikki Keddie (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 25.

patronage of merchants, acted to protect their patrons through protests against various concessions (The Reuters Concession of 1872, the Tobacco Protests of 1890, and finally the protests against a sugar concession in 1905 which led to the Constitutional Revolution). The ʿulama were able to mobilize support because they were held in universal esteem by the people of Iran and represented their interests against the Qajar shahs. For Keddie, the doctrine of the Imamate led to an innate hostility of the Shia ʿulama to any temporal authority. The ʿulama were inherently hostile to the Qajars and had a class interest in deposing them. This confluence of class interest and ideology was what resulted in the Constitutional Revolution.

Said Amir Arjomand challenged Keddie's characterization of Shia ideology and ʿulama behavior, while largely accepting her view of Qajar society as dominated by Shiʿism and the ʿulama. Arjomand adopted an explicitly Weberian framework and sought to understand political change inside of Iran by examining the interaction of material interest and ideology. While Keddie saw Shiʿism as inherently opposed to temporal authority, Arjomand made a forceful argument for change in Shia thought over time. By the time of the Qajar dynasty, the Usuli School was dominant and largely acted to legitimate Qajar authority and encourage quietism in "the masses." For Arjomand, the ʿulama were zealous protectors of their own interests, which they saw as synonymous with the state. He agreed with Keddie that western intrusion motivated their support for the Constitutional Revolution, but emphasized military failures and the curtailment of ʻulama authority over foreigners. The ʻulama held these interests themselves and not by proxy in the bazaar.

Keddie and Arjomand engaged in a long and lively debate over the nature of Shia Islam. This debate will be covered in depth in the second chapter, but suffice it to say it foregrounded three problems with the study of Iranian society. One, to what extent can we take at face value the statements of ʿulama, who were either patronized by the Qajars or fearful of retribution? Two, are the statements of the ʿulama synonymous with the beliefs of their followers? Three, what was the role of religion in Iran society? Social historians, influenced by this debate and by events going on in Iran, would attempt to answer these questions by studying in-depth the composition and beliefs of Iranian society.

A major downside of Arjomand's and Keddie's work was its inability to explain the behavior of Iran's many religious and ethnic minorities. Iran's tribes had their own Sheikh's and followed Sufi traditions. Iran's Christians (Assyrian and Armenian), Jews, and Zoroastrians were also left outside of the narrative. Historical sociologists, in part due to when they were writing and their emphasis on Shia Islam, largely ignored these groups. However, social historians would also address this gap in the literature.

Social History

Unlike historical sociologists and Whigs, social historians looked at history "from below." [8] In this way, the history of society or social change could not simply be the "backward projection of sociology."[9] English historians like E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm began to focus on the role of culture and the agency of workers themselves in making their own culture. This marked a move away from the study of

[8] Hobsbawm, *On History* ,201.
[9] Ibid., 77.

economic forces, towards a study of communal relations and culture. Three scholars in particular, Ervand Abrahamian (writing largely from the late 60's to the early 90's), Mangol Bayat (writing during the 1980's and 1990's), and Janet Afary (whose seminal work was published in 1996) made significant contributions to our understanding of Iranian society. Reflecting larger shifts in European academia, scholars of Iran became increasingly interested in studying the social conditions of Iran leading up to the Constitutional Revolution. Much as was the case in European historiography, this process began with economic history. Charles Issawi's *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914* was an important step in this process, as were a number of edited volumes by Nikki Keddie.[10] However, the 1979 Revolution would interrupt this process and have a complicating effect on the study of the Constitutional Revolution.

The 1979 Revolution happened just as scholars were seriously delving into the social history of Iran, delaying and distracting research. In 1983, *Iranian Studies* finally published an issue devoted to the economic and social history of Iran. The issue had been scheduled to come out earlier, but was "delayed by the disruptions caused by the Iranian Revolution and its consequences."[11] These consequences included the immediate need to address the Constitutional Revolution and the suspension of research by U.S. academics in Iran.

Ervand Abrahamian's *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, demonstrated the effect the Revolution had on the structure of Iranian history. Abrahamian's book was explicitly inspired by E.P. Thompson's foundational social history text, *The Making of*

[10] Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971).
[11] Naser Pakdaman, "Preface," *Iranian Studies* 16, no. 3-4 (Summer-Autumn, 1983): 125.

the English Working Class. It represented a major advancement in the field's understanding of the social basis of political power in Qajar society. However, as the title suggests, the book was now obliged to contextualize any study of Iranian society with reference to these two events. Abrahamian's work focused increasingly on contemporary Iranian society, especially the ideological and political effects of the 1979 Revolution.

Bayat and Afary would continue to build on Abrahamian's legacy and contribute to the history of the left in Iran. Methodologically, they were also similar to Abrahamian. They used a variety of memoirs, newspapers, and commentaries published in Iran to expand on the "history of the losers." Bayat and Afary wrote as conservative Islamist forces consolidated their control over Iranian society. In many ways, theirs was a revisionist history, largely contradicting dominant narratives of an Iranian society synonymous with Shiʿi Islam.

Social history, while compelling in its detail, was increasingly difficult to do for Iran. We can only acknowledge the particular groups or individuals in "the crowd" if they were documented. Further, the sources that document them only become sources "because someone has asked a question and then prospected desperately around for some way-any way-of answering it."[12] Thus, there is deliberateness to social history, in that scholars must ask or look for particular sources instead of being presented with them. The perspective of the average or common person must be reconstructed from archives that normally focus on political elites. Scholars have looked to domestic Iranian politics and historical sociology to provide a model of what Iranian society

[12] Hobsbawm, *On History*, 205.

should or has always looked like. In the case of Iranian politics, the 1979 revolution offered an irresistible point of comparison to the case of 1906, which emphasized the role of religion in Iran. Historical sociology offered a variety of concepts and theories to understand social and political change. By focusing on particular factors or actors, historical sociology also allowed for the experience of the Constitutional Revolution to be directly compared to other cases. But, as social history began to demonstrate the complexities and diversity of the Iranian society at in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, scholars increasingly wrote narrower monographs. As scholars became increasingly interested in minority or non-dominant perspectives, works on the Constitutional Revolution have become increasingly vertical, addressing one group or aspect of the Constitutional Revolution. Thus, despite decades of study, scholars of the Constitutional Revolution are still deeply divided about the structure of Iranian society on the verge of the Revolution and its relationship to social and political change.

Recent Research

Unlike the dramatic and stormy 1970's and 1980's, recent histories have been more modest, gradually setting the stage for perhaps a next phase in Iranian history. In particular, these authors have suggested a possible synthesis of social history and historical sociology. Mansour Bonakdarian's work looked at the connections between pro-Constitutional forces in the U.K. and Iran. However, Bonakdarian made no pretension that these like-minded individuals were representative of their societies. On a more basic level, he does not try to explain the behavior of foreign policy dissenters in Britain or Constitutional activists in Iran in reference to a specific theory or

understanding of the culture of their country of origin. Vanessa Martin's *Iran Between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* also makes important distinctions about the nature of Iranian society, pointing to the deep regional variations in Iranian society.[13] She also pointed out the current debates over the role of religion in Iranian society assume that concepts largely originating from Europe had resonance in larger Iranian society. While ultimately agreeing with past characterizations of Qajar Iran as a deeply religious society, she also pointed to regional and class variation in belief.

This brief survey of the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution pointed out three key themes: the question of global connections, the role of the ʿulama and Shiʿism, and the role of ethnic minorities. These three issues speak to fundamental issues of how scholarship defines Iran and classifies its history. Scholarship on the global dimension of the Constitutional Revolution has been dominated by historical sociology. This is understandable. Historical sociologists have a framework and set of concepts that allow aspects of the Constitutional Revolution to be compared to similar events and process across the world. However, these theories of social change largely focus on one aspect of the Constitutional Revolution and then use it as a point of comparison. The ʿulama and Shiʿism provide another explanation for the Constitutional Revolution, which reflects both social and sociology approaches. Further, ethnic minorities, though largely acknowledged as important part of Iranian society and the Constitutional Revolution, have remained only partially integrated into the scholarship. The key task for future scholars will be to increase our understanding of the causes of

[13] Vannessa Martin, *Iran Between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

social change in Iranian society.

Chapter One

The Constitutional Revolution as a Global Phenomenon: Whig History, Historical Sociology, and Transnational History

The scholarship relating to the "global" aspects of the Constitutional Revolution provides the clearest opportunity to examine varying views of social change in the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution. Whig, historical sociology, and transnational approaches all brought different understanding of the history of society or social change to their study of the Constitutional Revolution. Authors who made the revolution "global" focused on a particular aspect of the Revolution that bore similarities to events in other parts of the world. The Whig history of Brown emphasized the revolution as a "national" awakening similar to the Glorious Revolution in England or the French Revolution. Historical sociologists viewed the Revolution as part of Iran's transition into modernity. Marxian scholars emphasized economic changes in Iran as driving political and social changes, while Weberians such as Arjomand emphasized ideological changes. However, both agreed that the Constitutional Revolution was part of the universal or global pattern of social progression from traditional to modern society. The linguistic turn of the 1980's and 1990's criticized the determinism implicit in these models. Transnational scholars attempted to look at the exchange of ideas and texts in a global context and its political affect. In particular, they focused on an emerging global community of revolutionaries and intellectuals. This section, more than any other, will focus on the role of sociology or the history of society in the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution.

Theories of social change helped explain why the Constitutional Revolution happened when and how it did. The very title of "revolution" denotes that that what happened in 1905 was more than a riot brought on by speculation or urban discontent. Rather, the Constitutional Revolution marked a change in the structure of Iranian society. Each of the schools discussed above identified different actors and forces as the driving force behind social change in Iran. However, these schools had to assume a "*system* of behavior or thought- and one which can be, in some senses, inferred once we know the basic social assumptions, parameters, and tasks of the situation, but before we know very much about that situation."[1] This starting assumption is about human nature and is therefore global. This basic system of thought would serve as the basis for understanding all human behavior and for the progression of history. It allows for comparisons of human action across time, space, and culture. Without it, all history would be micro-history and based on the mentality or perspective of individuals. At best, history would be confined to a place, a time, and a culture. But even then, assumptions would have to be made about the shared mentality of all members of a community. Without assumptions about a shared human mentality, history would become a daunting exercise. The danger in such an approach is that is becomes a substitute for the study of Iranian society.

[1] Hobsbawm, *On Social* History, 210-211.

Browne and Whig History

Browne's *The Persian Revolution* reflected Browne's conflicting position as an "Orientalist in the service of the Orient" and a Whig historian.[2] His account of the Constitutional Revolution was overwhelmingly sympathetic and meant to counter depictions of the constitutionalists as disorganized brigands in the British Tory press. This debate in the British press largely mirrored debates in the British government over whether to support the constitutionalists or the Qajars and whether the British Empire was a moral exercise. However, in trying to make Iran deserving of the sympathy of the British public, he engaged in a kind of essentialism of a romantic and idealized "Persian" nation.[3] Iran became deserving of independence and equality in the international system in so much as it reflected these characteristics and was similar to or connected to European or Western culture. History was left with a detailed account of the Constitutional Revolution, but one that was ultimately a product of its time and the political intentions of the author.

Browne's narrative of the Constitutional Revolution focused on the event as a national one, but profoundly affected by its international context. The Constitutional Revolution was "global" in so much as it was part of a historical progression towards nation states and was affected by geostrategic rivalry between the Russian and British empires. Browne focused his analysis on the Iranian nation and its status as a great culture. He made events in Iran part of a global narrative of progress towards a nation

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[2] Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism, and Dissent* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, in association with the Iran Heritage Foundation, 2006), 94.

[3] Abbas Amanat, "Introduction," in *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*, by Edward Granville Browne (Washington: Mage, 2006), xix; Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*," 93.

state system. He contextualized this inside a global system of imperial geostrategic rivalry that has supported the tyranny inside of Iran.

Browne contextualized the Constitutional Revolution in a moral universe characterized by a global system of geopolitical rivalry and colonial expansion. Browne's history reflected his general hatred of imperialism and his work as the leading supporter of the Iranian Constitutionalist cause in Great Britain.[4] This comes through clearly in *The Persian Revolution*. Browne wrote of anticolonial movements in Egypt, China, and Iran as "the rising of the patient millions against the exploitation of an unscrupulous West."[5] He exhorted the "independent Muslim States" to combine "to withstand the constant aggression of the European Powers"[6] and "any Mohammedan potentate who encourages or acquiesces in, an extension of Western influence in his domains must be regarded by the promoters of this movement as an enemy to the cause" of restoring the former glory and power of Islam.[7] The "Persian nation" was denied its rightful place of political equality among nations because of the imperial ambitions of Russian and Great Britain and their resulting manipulation of the Qajar monarchy. For Browne, this moral claim to the equality of all "great nations" is meant to override the "realpolitik" or geostrategic considerations of projecting British imperial power through a dependent client state or acquiescing to Russian gains in northern Iran in the name of maintaining an alliance with Russia.[8]

The Constitutional Revolution was part of a progression to an international system of nation states. Browne wrote that Iran's current situation was like that of

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[4] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911,* 92.
[5] Edward Granville Browne, *The Persian revolution of 1905-1909* (Washington: Mage. 2006), 122-123.
[6] Ibid., 30.
[7] Browne, *The Persian revolution of 1905-1909*, 97.
[8] Amanat, "Introduction," X.

England under Charles II of France under Louis XVI, namely a vibrant nation held back by a despotic and incompetent government. Further, "to judge fairly the Persia of to-day, we must think of her as we think of England in the reign of Charles the First, or of France in the reign of Louis the Sixteenth, but an England without a Cromwell, a France without a Danton."[9] While ultimately deserving of a state, the Iranian nation suffered from a backward system of political organization. As his selection of Cromwellian England and Republican France suggested, the correct or modern model of governance was characterized by parliamentary democracies that centralized power and attempted to rationalize society.

Great Britain and Russia entered the narrative primarily as the promoters of despotism whose abuse "awaken[ed]" the Iranian nation. Browne saw the Qajars as incompetent and tools of British and Russian interests, exemplified by their willingness to enter into a series of disastrous concessions and loans. However, the protests over the Reuter and tobacco concessions were the first sign of the "awakening" of the Iranian people. These protests were the beginning of "the national awakening of which we are still watching the development" and demonstrated that "there was a limit to what Persians would endure, that they were not spiritless creatures which they had been supposed to be, and that henceforth they would have to be reckoned with."[10] The Constitutional Revolution was certainly affected by the imperial rivalry of Great Britain and Russia, but it was fundamentally about the Iranian nation imposing its sovereignty in reaction to domestic despotism.

[9] Browne, *The Persian revolution of 1905-1909*, 160.
[10] Ibid., 57.

Great Britain and Russia were also cultural examples of Iran to emulate as examples of modernity while pursuing policies that enabled the oppressive regime of the Qajars. This reflects a tension in *The Persian Revolution* between Browne's sympathy for the Constitutionalists and his inflexible and Eurocentric Whig framework. Browne's "great men" of the Constitutional Revolution, Jalal-ud Din Al-Afghani and Malkom Khan, spent considerable time in Europe. They were able to benefit from western education and exposure to western methods of governance. Despite being an avowed enemy of liberal reform, Russia also had an effect in encouraging reform. The Russian Revolution of 1905 had a "most astounding effect" in Iran. "Events in Russia have been watched with great attention, and a new spirit would seem to have come over the people. They are tired of their rulers, and, taking example of Russia, have come to think that it is possible to have another and better form of government."[11] So, while Browne characterized the Chinese revolution as having a nativist tendency "towards the ideal of China for the Chinese", Iran's awakening, "owing to its proximity to Russia, would appear to take the form of a movement towards democratic reform."[12] This distinction was important for Browne. The Constitutional Revolution was not simply a nativist or nationalistic reaction against foreign (i.e. Western) influence, like the Boxer Rebellion. Instead, the Constitutional Revolution was part of a movements, originating in France and England, towards liberal democracy. But while Browne is clear to see Iran as part of a global history centered on nations, and to even see these movements as influenced by one another, national awakenings primarily reflect the unique character of each nation.

[11] Ibid., 120.
[12] Browne, *The Persian revolution of 1905-1909*, 122.

Browne's analysis of the Constitutional Revolution ultimately centers on a culturally homogenous Iranian nation. Browne sees the Iranian nation as possessing a great culture deserving of its own nation state. Iran is one of the "exceptional races, such as the Greeks in Europe, [who] have contributed so much to the spiritual, intellectual, and artistic wealth of the human race that they have an exceptional claim on our sympathies, and that their submergence must be reckoned a calamity with no expediency can justify."[13] Further, Iran is still "inhabited by a people still wonderfully homogenous...and still arguably resembling their ancient forebearers" and that "no amount of material prosperity...can compensate the world, spiritually or intellectually, for the loss of Persia."[14] Iran is so unique, that its "development" along British or Russian colonial lines, would represent a loss to humanity. Browne's purpose here was two fold. One, he was trying to portray Iranians as a nation deserving its own state and capable of self-overning. Two, he was making a moral claim that the cultural importance of Iran was more important than any benefit, to Iran or Great Britain, that could come from colonial administration. The Iranian nation could emulate the West on its own, without having to be colonized and remade in the West's image.

Browne's narrative was more descriptive than theoretical and did not offer a clear explanation of the causes of the Constitutional Revolution. Despite his emphasis on the importance of the Iranian nation to the Constitutional Revolution, Browne never outlined a theory of nationalism. There was no detailed causal description of how ideas of national sovereignty manifest themselves into mass politics. The closest he came to this is an essentialized notion of Iranian culture that emphasized its similarity to Europe.

[13] Ibid., xii.
[14] Ibid., xiii.

In the later half of the twentieth century, historians tried to use historical sociology to answer these questions.

Historical Sociology

The move towards sociological explanations of historical events reflected broader shifts in historical sociology. In the case of Iran, marxian sociology was particularly influential. This vein of historical sociology emphasized the encounter between traditional Iranian society and capitalism. Unlike the Whig history of Browne, which relied on an essentialized and homogenous vision of the Iranian nation, marxian historical sociologists sought to break down society along class lines. In this way, nations were neither static nor homogeneous, but were affected by changes in the overall system of economic production, which sorted individuals into different classes based on their relationship to the means of productions. This innovation had the important effect of trying to develop an objective and theoretically defined system of evaluating history. However, these historians assumed that the actions of Iranian were explained by class interest.

For Nikki Keddie, Ervand Abrahamian, John Foran, and Janet Afary, the global dimension of the Constitutional Revolution was primarily economic and focused on the integration of Iran into a global system of capitalism. Though the careers of these four authors span the later half of the twentieth century, the works examined here were published in the early 80's and 90's. These authors wrote in the historical sociology tradition and examined Iranian history using marxian criticism. These authors agreed that the Constitutional Revolution was defined by a class conflict caused by the

industrialization of Iranian society and the adoption of a capitalist mode of production. This created social frictions by disrupting the traditional modes of production, alienating traditional artisans and *bazaaris* from their livelihood. These approaches focused on the development of an integrated national economy and the development of classes based on their relationship to the means of productions, while at the same time developing the transportation and communication infrastructure necessary for these grievances to be expressed on a national level. While Iran's encounter with capitalism and industrialization was the most important factor in social change, these authors also recognized local cultural and ideological influences on how class differences manifested themselves politically. These social scientific accounts were more "globalized" than their Whig predecessors in that they emphasized how Iran's society was affected by international processes. However, these histories still concentrated on a single, Iranian nation demarcated by its national borders.

The historical sociologists contextualized the Constitutional Revolution in a time of growing global economic integration driven by colonialism. The particular mechanics of this structure varied from Foran and Afary's use of Dependency Theory to Abrahamian and Keddie use of a "Marxian" or neo-Marxist framework. Keddie and Abrahamian emphasized Iran's position as an "exploited semi-colony of more than one power."[15] The Qajars were so dependent on income and protection from outside powers that, "Iranian rulers did not even undertake the elementary self-strengthening and bureaucratization that characterizes most Middle Eastern Governments."[16] Similarly, Abrahamian wrote that Western pressures "began as early as 1800, and took the form of

[15] Nikki R. Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution* (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1995), 5.
[16] Ibid., 65-66.

military pressure first from the Russians" but also from the British in the Anglo-Persian War of 1857.[17] The resulting treaties were unequal and granted extraterritorial privileges to British and Russian merchants that gave them an unfair advantage over the Iranian *bazaari* class. Foran and Afary agreed also emphasized Iran's "dependent development" that prevented Iran from industrializing in the same way as Britain and Russia. Iran was integrated into a global capitalist system in which it would always be a peripheral supplier of raw goods, which locked Iran into an unequal global position.[18] The concessions and loans were not the source of despotism, but were one of the ways Iran was opened to the global economy and its accompanying economic and social dislocations.

The role of Great Britain and Russia was primarily to open Iran to the global economy and to integrate it into the global capitalist economy. The historical sociologists saw the primary means of forcing open the Iranian economy as the various unequal treaties and concessions granted by the Qajars. Abrahamian wrote that the treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the treaty Turkomanchai (1828) "exempted [British and Russian] merchants not only from the high import duties but also from internal tariffs, local travel restrictions, and the jurisdiction of the shari'a law courts."[19] This increased competition from European traders forced Iranian merchants to seek "new sources of revenue and turned toward agricultural land." The resulting "foreign demand for raw materials, and the profitable market for opium and other cash crops transformed the country's economy." Eventually, "the great majority of smaller merchants lost both

[17] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 49.
[18] Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy & the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 19.
[19] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 51.

foreign and internal markets to Russian and British companies and became agents and employees working for European firms."[20] This narrative began where Browne left off and explained in detail the mechanisms by which the "nation" became politically active. However, for these authors the primary actor was not a single nation, but a traditional middle class composed of artisans and *bazaaris*.

The historical sociologists saw the Constitutional Revolution as primarily about a national class struggle involving the traditional middle class in cooperation with a variety of other classes. Keddie famously emphasized the alliance between disaffected *bazaaris* and the clerics they patronized in creating the basis for a political alliance capable of mobilizing the masses.[21] Abrahamian saw this alliance as actually two middle classes, a propertied middle class composed of the Ulama and Bazaar, and a "intelligentsia" that included individuals from different segments of society but who subscribed to western, positivist thought.[22] Foran, building on both Keddie and Abrahamian, categorized the revolutionary alliance as "a *mixed* alliance in terms of classes and their constituent modes of production" and consisted of "artisans, intelligentsia, and workers, and some merchants, ulama, and marginalized urban classes" but emphasized the leading role of artisans and intelligentsia.[23] Though Afary used Dependency Theory extensively to contextualize her narrative, she did not explain the internal political dynamics of the revolution purely in terms of class. She pointed to ideological divisions within classes and the importance of gender and ethnicity in explaining these difference. Further, she highlights the role of peasant revolts

[20] Ibid., 18-19.
[21] Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World*, 5.
[22] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 55.
[23] John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 178.

(especially in Gilan), challenging the traditional view of peasants as a reactionary or non-participatory class. Despite these differences, these authors do agree that the Constitutional Revolution was in large part a result of economic processes alienating traditional society from the state. To what extent this also alienated the clergy or modern intellectuals whose interests overlapped with the traditional middle class was unclear. Whatever its composition, the constitutional movement was focused primarily on replacing the Qajars and modernizing the Iranian state.

Despite the emphasis on class conflict, the primary goal of the Constitutional Revolution was national modernization. As Keddie wrote, "The revolutionaries in 1905-1911 disliked Russian and British encroachments, but their main wrath was directed against the Qajar dynasty and its inability to organize a strong and functioning state and nation."[24] Or, as Abrahamian put it "both the traditional middle class and the modern intelligentsia, despite their differences, were directing their attacks at the same target-the central government."[25] Foran also pointed out that although there was a strong anti-foreign element to the protests, the focus of the protests was still on the interests of "the popular social base" of the revolution. The demands of the Constitutional Revolution were focused on domestic politics even if it reflected global economic processes.[26] Further, these authors did not explain the political behavior of the Constitutionalist coalition in terms of marxist ideology, but by invoking a "revolutionary" Iranian or Islamic character.

The social scientists ultimately engaged in some sort of social history to explain how the revolution succeeded. As Keddie wrote, "there is almost surely something in

[24] Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World*, 111.
[25] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 57.
[26] Foran, *Fragile Resistance*, 189-191.

Islamic content that influences the form and ideology of movements in different parts of the Muslim world, even lacking direct contact"[27] and cites "Iran's cultural identity"[28] as an additional lens which determined how social friction manifested itself politically. Similarly, Abrahamian wrote, "it was these radical concepts of the modern middle class, together with anti-state Shia ideas of the traditional middle class, that helped bring about the eventual triumph of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911."[29] While Afary and Foran emphasized the international connections of the Constitutional Revolutions, they also wrote that "dependence *was* an economic process but one that had far-reaching political consequences, and was experienced and filtered through the value systems and cultural beliefs."[30] Similarly, Afary attempted to show that "culture, ideology, and politics are not merely reflections of the economic and technological base, though they are influenced by and, in turn, influence the social and economic structures."[31] Thus, while these authors saw the Constitutional Revolution as primarily a result of global economic changes, the ultimate form the pro-constitution coalition took was influenced by national or local culture.

Historical sociology highlighted important processes, but relied on a particular notion of Iranian society to interpret these processes. While Iranian society was clearly affected by economic changes brought on by the penetration of Western capitalism and industrialization, how these changes manifested in political organization depended on Iranian culture. As all these authors pointed out, the Constitutional coalition was a mixed one, incorporating both Western-inspired intellectuals and traditionally minded

[27] Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World,* 37.
[28] Ibid., 63.
[29] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 51.
[30] Foran, *Fragile Resistance*, 176.
[31] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution,* 12.

ʿulama and *bazaaris*. While intellectuals may have been familiar with Marx and other critically minded writings, to what extent did their traditionally minded colleagues share this understanding? Did the majority of Iranians understand events in Iran from the same materialist perspective? Was the Constitutional Revolution a product of revolutionary agitation, religious fervor, or some combination of the two? An important part of this puzzle was to understand the role of revolutionaries and intellectuals. Transnational intellectuals and revolutionaries seemed to provide an answer as to how ideas of revolution were transmitted and mediated from Europe to Iran.

Transnational History

Transnational history has attempted to reconcile seemingly contradictory linguistic or cultural approaches to history with the economic narratives of historical sociology. The 1970's and 1980's saw the rise of "cultural" or "linguistic" criticisms of the historical sociology approach to history. This criticism focused on "the social science preoccupation with large scale, anonymous structures and processes which neglected the life experiences of the ordinary person" as well as "the theory of modernization that assumed that the world would follow the pattern set by the West" and the historical sociology's commitment "to empirical, including quantitative, studies and the belief that these studies could offer objective knowledge."[32] In place of scientific certainty arose the belief "that the culture of the group, and even the will of the individual, are potentially at least as important causal agents of change as the

[32] Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 368.

impersonal forces of material output and demographic growth."[33] Economics was not ignored, but it was not treated with the same sense of determinism of inevitability that characterized historical sociology inquiry. Rather, its effects were considered culturally and linguistically contingent.

Charles Kurtzman, Nader Sohrabi, and Mansour Bonakdarian's work reflected the "cultural" or "linguistic" turn to varying extents. Their work, published between 2006 and 2011, did not deny the importance of economic processes, but did not consider it a sufficient master narrative. Instead, they focused on how culture and language influenced economics and vice versa. Using the writings of notable individuals and contemporary newspapers, these authors sought to examine how existing language and culture constrained how events were interpreted. This movement away from the homogenizing narrative of economics and the nation-state did not preclude these authors from addressing global themes. Quite the opposite, by blurring the physical borders of nations and highlighting the diversity inside of nations, recent scholarship was able to globalize the narrative of the Constitutional Revolution in a broader fashion than the social scientists.

Recent scholarship has focused on a global intellectual class and contextualized the Constitutional Revolution in terms of systems of transnational cultural exchange. Authors like Kurtzman, Sohrabi, and Bonakdarian were concerned with how transnational linkages between different groups facilitated the Constitutional Revolution. Social scientists had always acknowledged the role of intellectuals in Iran who promoted a strong, centralized government along European lines as the solution to

[33] Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present* 85 (November 1979), 19.

Iran's domestic and foreign problems. However, rather than focusing on homogeneity inside of national borders, these authors focused on how different cultures or groups transcended national borders. These histories are the most "global" in that they did not confine their analysis to the physical borders of a nation or assign certain immutable characteristic to a national culture. Kurtzman contended that the traditional emphasis of historical sociology on "the bourgeoisie, the working class, and the middle class" is misguided as "these characters played their roles inconsistently."[34] Rather, he pointed to "the emerging global class of modern intellectuals" inspired by the positivist ideology of Auguste Comte who espoused democracy as a "self-interested ideology for intellectuals of the early twentieth century."[35] Sohrabi built on this and saw that the "global diffusion of constitutionalism prompted similar demands" from frustrated, western educated intellectuals in both the Iranian and Ottoman revolutions.[36] Bonakdarian engaged in perhaps the most global of all the histories of the Constitutional Revolution, blurring the line between "East" and "West" and between Iran and Britain. Specifically, he described "protracted cross cultural encounters" were "production of knowledge and assumptions about the Other do not remain predetermined by prior, distinct cultural parameters and suppositions about Self and Other, even if that knowledge is ultimately filtered through the familiar cultural lense of the observer."[37] In this process of exchange between nations, it becomes clear that the perspective of the state did not represent the perspective of all groups in a nation.

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[34] Charles Kurzman, *Democracy Denied, 1905-1915 Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 11.
[35] Ibid., 12-13.
[36] Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 16.
[37] Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906*-1911, xxvi.

Great Britain and Russia, and the West generally, where evaluated not as monoliths, but as collection of different groups and individuals who had very different opinions and relationships to the Constitutional Revolution. Sohrabi highlighted the notion of "global time" and the singular availability of the French Revolutionary model.[38] Sohrabi linked the Constitutional Revolution to the democratic wave "that swept across Russia in 1905, Mexico in 1910, China in 1911" which "in turn were part of a much broader long-term wave of democratic movements in England, America, and France, a wave that continued with the 1848 revolutions in Europe."[39] Krutzman also linked Iran to the revolutionary wave of 1905-1911. He also pointed out that the British response was not monolithic. Diplomats in the British Legation permitted the *bast* on Legation grounds despite the protests of London. The official British decision to refuse "to allow Russian troops to advance on Tehran" was evidence of how "Great Power competition temporarily aided the pro democracy forces in Iran."[40] Bonakdarian elaborated on the ambiguity pointed out by Kurtzman and convincingly demonstrated how "foreign policy dissenters" in British government and society affected British foreign policy and gave important aid to the Constitutionalists. Further, he demonstrated the ambiguity not only in official British policy, but also in British society and the Orientalist scholarship. He saw a series of linkages between "British and other 'Western'/European progressive foreign-policy dissenters and/or anti-imperialists, on the one hand, and nationalists and reformers in the weaker independent countries and colonized territories, on the other hand, that more balanced and sympathetic future dialogues would emerge between different sides" and that this process is an ongoing

[38] Ibid., 4-5.
[39] Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism,* 3.
[40] Kurtzman, *Democracy Denied,* 229.

one.[41] Unlike Sohrabi and Kurtzman, Bonakdarian used his narrative to highlight a global relationship that transcends a particular time or place. These authors rely on texts to explain the ideology and mindset of individuals and groups.

The focus of these narratives was on how ideas of revolution and modernity are transmitted and ultimately adopted by constitutionalists. Kurtzman's portrayal featured the least amount of mediation and the most reliance on class interest to explain action. For Kurtzman, intellectuals are distinct from the middle classes, and espouse an ideology that advocates their enlightened rule of society.[42] He emphasized the role of Malkom Khan in bringing Comtean positivism to Iran and its popularity among western-educated elites out of class interest. Intellectuals had to adapt this ideology and therefore "preferred more often to emphasize the coincidence of their own interests and the interests of the nation as a whole."[43] Sohrabi and Bonakdarian were much more skeptical about the connection between class interest and ideology, but agreed with Kurtzman that constitutionalists were engaged in a similar game of using national language and symbols of legitimacy to promote their political program. Sohrabi pointed to the "paradigm of kingship" and localization of constitutionalism with "Islamization to garner legitimacy." This tussle between competing local conceptions of legitimacy "informed a good part of the dynamics of the confrontations with the monarchy or support for the Assembly, and it cannot be reduced to an appendage of the struggle of the legislative against the executive, a movement for radical democracy, or social democracy, or a fight over religion."[44] Bonakdarian places similar emphasis on

[41] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911,* 400.
[42] Kurtzman, *Democracy Denied*, 19.
[43] Ibid., 29.
[44] Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism,* 407.

ideology and language, but rather than emphasizing a local language or culture, he emphasizes an international process of exchange between like-minded individuals in the West/Europe and individuals in colonial nationalists movements.[45] Unlike Browne or historical sociology, the Constitutional Revolution in these narratives is contingent on delicate cultural interactions. These narratives ultimately rely on a particular definition of Iranian culture, accessed primarily through textual evidence, in order to explain the course of the Constitutional Revolution.

These later works see the Constitutional Revolution in a more global context, but one that still relies on social history. For transnational scholars, both the economic processes affecting Iran and the culture that interpreted those events was the product of global linkages and exchange. However, transnational scholar focused on the life-word of Western-inspired intellectuals. They assumed that these global revolutionaries were the key class behind the Constitutional Revolution. This built on the work of historical sociology, which while acknowledging the importance of culture, saw cultural differences or divisions inside of society as less important than class divisions or as a product of them. However, class divisions clearly did not determine ideology, even if economic interests still influenced ideology. These authors emphasized how actors became socialized politically affects their ability to even acknowledge the importance of class or when the revolution occurs affects what revolutionary types are available to emulate.

Bonakdarian's inquiry, like Sohrabi's and Kurtzman's, was fundamentally a comparative project. Other transnational or global linkages were mentioned (the influence of Caucasian revolutionaries or linkages to other nationalist struggles in

[45] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911*, 27 and 138.

colonial or semi-colonized regions), but they were only present in so much as they explain fundamentally national events. Bonakdarian's work did provide an example of what future scholarship of the Constitutional Revolution could be. His almost forensic approach to examining British involvement in the Constitutional Revolution revealed that British or Iranian interests or perceptions of the Constitutional Revolution were not only varied inside of these borders, but there was cooperation and exchange between groups in both countries. He used his own experiences with protests movement in the U.S to project this dialogue of like-minded individuals into the present. The next step is to examine the different groups that constituted the Iranian nation and then examine their connections with other groups throughout the world.

Conclusion:

These various schools of social theory substitute the perspective of a certain class for the perspective of all Iranians. The move is justified by reference to a notion of human nature. Browne assumed that Iranians desired an elected government that reflected the aspirations of the nation. Marxian social historians assumed that Iranian's advocated for their particular class interest, while Arjomand and Bayat emphasized ideology. The emerging school of transnational history sought to address the shortcomings of previous schools. Rather than impose a particular mindset, transnational history sought to ground global processes and events in local or even individual experiences. They emphasized networks that transmitted ideas through texts and interactions. However, Sohrabi, Kurtzman, and Bonakdarian came, in their own way, to make the evidence fit their model. In their rush to find a transnational means of exchange, they emphasized the role of intellectuals and revolutionaries. These groups

formed a series of transnational networks that transmitted ideas and information. They formed a society of their own. However, were these revolutionaries truly representative of Iranian society? Were they the essential agent of change in Iran? The answer to these questions can only be found in studying Iranian society.

Scholars have relied on two ways to access the mentality of Iranian society, religion and ethnicity. Both are tempting ways to analyze the "essence" of Iranian character. Religion presents a set of beliefs and accompanying rituals that provide insight into the mentality of society. Similarly, ethnicity presents scholars with a culture and identity that explains political behavior. As will be discussed in the following two chapters, the study of religion (especially Shiʿi Islam) and ethnicity (especially the Azeris, Armenians, and Bakhtiyari tribe) has provided invaluable insight into the causes of the Constitutional Revolution and Iranian society. However, ethnicity and religion are treated too often as proxies for social history, rather than as components of it.

Chapter Two

The role of the ʿUlama in the Constitutional Revolution: Between Sociology and Social History

The historiography of the ʿulama in the Constitutional Revolution reflects two sets of tensions, one between sociology and social history and the other between the past and the present. These two tensions are related. Scholars have used contemporaneous understandings of Shiʿi Islam, based largely on the political situation in Iran, to guide their research into the ʿulama. While varying theories of sociology have tried to explain the relationship of religion to social and political change, they ultimately rely on a particular historical understanding of the role played by religion and its institutions in a given culture. This begs the question, how do we study religion? Is religion defined by the pronouncement of religious scholars or is it transmitted to adherents through participatory rituals? How can we truly the belief system of Iranian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when literary culture was confined to elites? Past scholars have resolved this tension by reference to the present. By using the current status of Shiʿism in Iranian society as a starting point, scholars could then "properly" interpret sources. The situation is analogous to that of the Marxist historians in examining grassroots history who supposed that the history of labor organization, which represented workers "could replace the history of the common people themselves."[1] In this way, the historiography of the ʿulama is linked both to the Constitutional Revolution and the 1979 Revolution.

[1] Hobsbawm, *On History*, 203-204.

Scholars have used contemporary understandings of Iran to define the "research problem" which they set out to solve. Hamid Algar, Anne Lambton, and Nikkie Keddie wrote many of their most important works before 1979, when the language and symbols of Shiʿi Islam pervaded revolutionary propaganda and many Shiʿi clerics were involved in anti-government activity. In particular, the dramatic 1963 protests in Qom (the center of theological learning in Iran) against a Status of Forces Agreement highlighted tensions between the ʿulama and the pro-West, modernizing monarchy of Muhammad Reza Pahlavi. During the Pahlavi dynasty (1924-1979), Iran seemed to be defined by conflict between an unpopular, autocratic government imposing Western-inspired reforms and a popular opposition movement led by the ʿulama. However, the post-Revolutionary violence would challenge this narrative. Janet Afary, Mangol Bayat, Ervand Abrahamian, and Said Amir Arjomand largely wrote after 1979, when the revolution became associated with Islamism and the suppression of leftist and secular activists. Consequently, these authors no longer saw Shiʿism as otherworldly or synonymous with "justice." Rather, they emphasized ʿulama accommodation with the Qajars, opposition to democracy, and hostility to administrative reforms. In their place, they emphasized the role of intellectuals, leftists, and heterodox Shiʿi in mobilizing protests and pushing for Constitutional reform. Recent works by Vanessa Martin and Mateo Farzaneh on the ʿulama have been mixed and cautious, mirroring the unclear legacy of Shiʿism in Iranian society. These anachronistic interpretations of the ʻulama and Shi'ism then become the starting point or "research problem" for scholars to solve. However, the selection of a particular method represents yet another ambiguity for scholars.

The relationship of religion to social and political change has been a major theme in sociology. Historical sociologists, like Keddie and Arjomand, borrowed many of the concepts and theories of sociology to enrich their study of Iranian society. However, historical sociologists have had to deal with the temptation of "the wooden taking-over of unprocessed terminology and categories from one favored school of sociology, and imposing these upon existent historical knowledge."[2] Historical sociological approaches to the Constitutional Revolution, whether Marxian in the case of Keddie or Weberian in the case of Arjomand, were at risk of making historical knowledge fit their models, as opposed to using sociology to look at old problems in new ways. These theoretical models became deterministic, defining Iranian society rather than simply explaining social change in Iran. These approaches should be complementary, but because they are largely responsive to contemporary Iranian society, they are often contradictory.

Browne: Mullahs as a Political Class

Browne saw the ʿulama as politically important, but remained largely indifferent to the role of religion in Iranian society. Browne's treatment of the ʿulama was the simplest, due in large part to the inability of his historical framework to deal with either religion or social history. Whig history judged the past with reference to the present and "through this system of immediate reference to the present day, historical personages can easily and irresistibly be classed into the men who tried to hinder it so that a hard rule of thumb exists by which a historian can select and reject, and make his point of

[2] E.P. Thompson, "History From Below" *The Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1966, 280.

emphasis."[3] This dispensed with the issue balancing social history and sociology and favor of totally subordinating history to a master narrative. Browne's history was also a function of Browne's political sympathies and his contacts with the Constitutionalists. However, Browne's account of the ʿulama raised a number of questions about the basis of ʿulama political power in Iranian society.

The ʿulama were powerful because they had social prestige due to their role in daily life. For Browne , the clergy were "an essentially national class, sprung from the people, knowing the people, and, if suspicious of administrative innovations, yet more suspicious of foreign interference."[4] Browne emphasized the daily interactions of the ʿulama with the people and their reliance on them for financial support and legitimacy, leading to their hostility to the Qajars and foreign intrusions. It was these connections which made the 'ulama hostile to the Qajars and motivated them to ally themselves with Western-inspired reformers. The concessions to foreigner merchants, especially capitulations (the exemption of foreigners from Sharia courts) and the Qajars's nascent attempts at reform were threats to the authority of the ʿulama. Thus, the ʿulama's anti-foreign and anti-Qajar sentiment aligned well with the political program of "nationalists." This closeness to the people also endowed the 'ulama with tremendous political power.

The participation of the ʿulama was essential to the success of the Tobacco Protests and the Constitutional Revolution in Whig narratives. In the case of the protests against the Tobacco Concession, Shiʿi clerics were "the real masters of the situation."[5] Browne believed that "without the support of the Clergy the people could neither have

[3] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Norton, 1965), 11.
[4] Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 146-147.
[5] Ibid., 52.

broken down the Tobacco Monopoly nor have extorted from the Shah a Constitution."[6] The role of Islam and the clergy in these political uprising is primarily seen from the perspective of mobilization. While unequivocal in his recognition of the important role played by the clergy, Browne saw the relationship between the two groups as tenuous, due to the secularizing reforms favored by the nationalists.

The Revolution was inevitable. While Browne's narrative is logically consistent, it does beg some basic questions. Browne saw the tension between the reforms proposed by the Majlis and the interests of the ʿulama. He wrote, "[i]f the reforms which the people, with their [ʿulama] help, have fought for become a reality, nearly all their power will be gone."[7] The ʿulama opposed the equality of all Iranian males before the law because they "strongly opposed any surrender of the privileges at present enjoyed by Muslims." However, Browne saw the ʿulama as unable to resist the secularization because it was demanded by "the nation." Inasmuch as the "popular party" represented the will of the nation, the ʿulama could only keep their influence by "moving with the people, and that opposition to the popular feeling would seriously damage or even utterly destroy their power."[8] This tension was solved by reference to an assumed inevitable direction to human, and therefore Iranian, history. The triumph of the nation was inevitable and not something which the ʿulama could resist.

Browne's top down view of the Constitutional Revolution was a product of his methodology and available sources. Browne knew many of the key personalities on the Constitutionalist side, who wanted to show that Russian and British imperial control was not necessary to stabilize Iran, but that Iranian nationalists already had a

[6] Ibid., 147.
[7] Ibid., 123.
[8] Ibid., 147.

"modernizing orientation" and that "constitutionalism and nationalism were not alien imports forced upon the Iranian society by a small group of Europeanized intellectuals."[9] He also had a number of former students in the Foreign Service, including the legation in Tehran. These personal connections, in conjunction with his knowledge of Persian literature and coverage from the *Times*, provided him with the necessary sources for a Whig History, largely concerned with political machinations. Browne hinted that the sources of ʿulama prestige lay in their role as educators, judges, and popular advocates. But Browne's history left a number of questions unanswered. If the ʿulama were powerful, why then did they feel the need to ally themselves with "modernizers" who would only challenge their authority and interests? What did the ʿulama believe and what motivated them? Scholars in the 1960's, who saw a similar alliance of intellectuals and the ʿulama protesting against the Shah, looked for an answer by examining the ʿulama's role in popular spiritual life and their institutional interests.

The Revolutionary ʿUlama:

Nikki Keddie, Hamid Algar, and Anne Lambton saw the ʿulama and Shiʿi Islam as inherently hostile to any temporal power and therefore prone to revolution. These scholars, who started writing during the tumultuous early period of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, saw Iranian society as divided between a Western, modernizing state and a religiously led opposition movement, striving for "justice." With this in mind, Keddie, Lambton, and Algar saw the Constitutional Revolution primarily as a reaction of the ʿulama to the oppression and tyranny of the Qajars. For Keddie and Lambton, Qajar

[9] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Constitutional Revolution*, 149.

repression and accommodation of foreign interests damaged the material interests of the ʿulama. Algar largely dismissed material motivations and focused more on the Imamate doctrine of the ʿulama, which supposedly declared all temporal authority during the occultation of the 12th Imam illegitimate. While Keddie and Lambton also saw this ideology of hostility to worldly power as a key component of ʿulama action, they also emphasized the damage done to the ʿulama patron's by increasing penetration. However, Keddie, Lambton, and Algar all saw material or class interest alone as insufficient to explain ʿulama behavior. All three agreed that the doctrine of the Imamate was crucial to the Constitutional Revolution. Keddie, Lambton, and Algar also emphasized a lived Shiʿism connected to the life of Iranians through rituals. In particular, they emphasized guild and bazaar rituals surrounding Muharram. However, these authors also saw Shi'i Islam as largely unchanging and constant and used contemporary understanding of Shi'ism as proof that the 'ulama were inherently revolutionary.

These authors saw the ʿulama as an institution inherently hostile to and independent of the Qajar state. Keddie, Lambton, and Algar traced this, in part, to the Shiʿi conception of the Imamate and the pre-eminence of religion in political thought. For them, Shiʿi Islam always doctrinally contained an element of "potential opposition from the Shi'a ʿulama to the shah" based on the principles of "legitimate succession having been passed down through the house of Ali until the last, or hidden Imam, who will reappear to establish legitimate rule."[10] Lambton also emphasized the position of the ʿulama as "representative of the hidden imam" who guided and legitimized "the

[10] Nikki R. Keddie, *Iran: Religion, Politics, and Society: Collected Essays* (London: F. Cass, 1980), 40.

philosopher king, the shadow of God upon earth."[11] In the case of Algar, he emphasized and essential and timeless "essence" to Shiʿi religion, transmitted to its followers through participation in rituals. Resistance to tyranny was "the fundamental and most pervasive charecteristcs of Ithnāʿashari Shiʿa Islam, and this stance was not inspired exclusively by the defects of Qajar rule…Hence, all states are inalienably usurpory, even those of formal Shiʿa affiliation."[12] This hostility and independence was related not only to ideology, but also to the economic interests of the ʿulama through their close connection to the traditional bazaar.

All three authors emphasized the ʿulama as universally respected in Iranian society, especially by bazaar merchants, who supported them financially. Lambton wrote, "the ʿulama...were in constant touch with the people….it was to them therefore, and not to the government officials, that the people naturally looked for the fulfillment of their aspirations and, above all, for protection."[13] The ʿulama were "drawn into politics as the protectors of the poor and weak, on the one hand, and the legitimator of the ruling powers on the other."[14] Even though the Shiʿi hierocracy did not frequently intervene in politics, "the pious withdrawal from politics at the highest level of the hierocracy tremendously enhanced the effectiveness of their rare interventions in political crises."[15] The ʿulama were "the only ones who could voice popular grievances with relative impunity" and "were often appealed to voice the grievances" of the

[11] Ann K. S. Lambton, *Qājār Persia: Eleven Studies* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 284.
[12] Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the ʿUlama in Twentieth-Century Iran," *Sufis, Saints, and Scholars* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1972), 231.
[13] Lambton, *Qājār Persia*, 281.
[14] Ibid., 263.
[15] Ibid., 265.

people.[16] The group that most frequently depended on the services of the ʿulama was the traditional bazaar. This shared view of the ʿulama's role in Iranian society led to a similar view of social change.

The authors therefore argued that the revolution was a product of both Shi'i ideology and Qajar decline, mixing both socio-economic and behavioral explanations of social action. Unlike Browne, these authors believed that, except for a narrow class of intellectuals, Iranian society was not destined to emulate Western democracy. Shi'ism provided a language of protest and the ʿulama provided the leadership. Lambton wrote that while the coalitions of the Tobacco protests and the Constitutional Revolution included many sectors of society, "since the aim of such action was the restoration of just or righteous, i.e. *shar'i*, government, the natural leaders of the movement were the *ʿulama*.'"[17] Keddie puts this even more starkly and wrote even "radicals and modernizers" like Malkam Khan, Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, and Mirza Aga Khan Kermani "saw the religious nature of much of the mass reactions against foreign concessions" and that it was "religious feeling against infidels which could most effectively mobilize mass action against foreigners."[18] This left the European inspired modernizers and radicals with little choice but to seek an alliance with the ʿulama. Contrary to Browne's view, the European inspired "radicals" and modernizers were not representative of Iranian society. Attempts by modernizers to justify reforms with "religious terminology...were tactical rather than sincere" and "the insistence that modern law [could] be found in Islam [was] a self-protective device rather than a

[16] Nikkie Keddie, "The Origins of the Religious-Radical Alliance in Iran," *Past and Present* 34 (1966): 72.
[17] Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 300.
[18] Keddie, "The Origins of the Religious-Radical Alliance in Iran," 73-74.

religious conviction."[19] Lambton similarly wrote that even if some members of Iranian society "looked to the liberal west for the political ideas...such an ideology could only have been acceptable if interpreted in terms of Islam."[20] This common view of Iranian society, which in turn led to similar views of social change, was the product of a particular time.

Algar, Lambton, and Keddie used accounts of rituals and sermons from travelogues and memoirs to define Shiʿi Islam and the beliefs of the ʿulama. In particular, Jean Chardin's *Voyages de monsieur le chavalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieus de l'Orient* figures prominently in the bibliographies of Lambton and Keddie, even though Chardin wrote during the 17th century, during the Safavid dynasty. In *Religion and State in Iran*, Algar used a wider collection of ʿulama biographies as well as Persian language histories of the Constitutional Revolution.[21] While a consistent, anti-Qajar Shi'i tradition passed down to the people of Iran through popular rituals was a convenient an compelling explanation, especially in light of events in Iran, it was soon challenged not only by events in Iran, but also by detailed study of the writings of the ʿulama as well as investigation into the social bases of political power in Iran. These projects would be accomplished both through historical sociology and social history.

The ʿUlama as Allies of the State

Said Amir Arjomand's *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* represented a major break, both in methodology and the conclusions he drew, from Keddie and Algar.

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[19] Ibid., 74.
[20] Lambton, *Qajar Persia*, 299.
[21] Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: the Role of the 'Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), xi-xvi.

His work offered "a new perspective for the analysis of the role of religion in political action in pre-modern societies; and second, to offer a comprehensive examination of the establishment of Shi'ite Islam as the state religion of Iran."[22] Instead of turning to the public manifestation of religious life to understand the meaning of Shiʿism, he instead studied the writings of influential ʿulama. In contrast to Keddie and Algar, he concluded that the ʿulama largely accommodated and validated the temporal rule of the Qajars. Much like Keddie and Algar, he concluded that the Qajar failures to protect Iran from Western intrusions pushed the ʿulama into backing the Constitutional Revolution. Scholars did not universally accept Arjomand's account of the Shiʿi ʿulama. In particular, Nikki Keddie mounted a sustained criticism of Arjomand's work, particularly criticizing him for characterizing certain scholars as representative of the ʿulama as a whole and his reliance on the writings as opposed to accounts of religious life. But Arjomand's challenge to the Keddie-Algar-Lambton view of Shiʿism and the ʿulama was very significant in that it opened to the way for more research into the ʿulama, ultimately revealing deep divisions between the ʿulama and Iranian society.

Unlike Keddie and Algar, Arjomand cast the ʿulama's role in Iranian society as changing. Arjomand saw Shiʿism as a "*source of motivation* to social action" in that Shiʿism shaped "the believers' attitudes, and in that they differentially affect the believers' propensities to action in various spheres of life."[23] In this way, "religious norms" eventually manifested themselves in the principles of social and political organization.[24] Arjomand's goal was to investigate "how, amid their interplay with

[22] Willem Floor,"*The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*," review of *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, by Said Amir Arjomand, *Iranian Studies* 20, no. 1 (1987): 77.
[23] Arjomand. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 3.
[24] Ibid., 4.

men's pursuits of material interests and their struggle for power, the normative ideals of Shiʿism as embodied in its life-regulating belief system came to act as switchmen and to determine the tracks into which the political action was directed."[25] Whereas Keddie and Algar saw a consistent Shiʿi opposition to temporal power, Arjomand pointed to changing attitudes to temporal authority. Rather than harboring a consistent claim to rule in the absence of the 12th Imam, Arjomand pointed to accommodation and endorsement of Safavid and Qajar rule. In particular, he highlighted the anti-Constitutional cleric Shaykh Fayzullah Nuri as representative of the orthodox ʿulama. Unlike Keddie and Algar, Arjomand's Iran was submissive to the Qajar shahs.

Like Keddie and Algar, Arjomand emphasized the role of Shiʿi thought in political and social life. Arjomand wrote that there did not exist "a secular conception of society" in Iran and "the autonomy of the hierocracy facilitated its isolation from the state and made it completely immune from secular influences."[26] In the Qajar period, the hierocracy "was the depository of the authority of the Hidden Imam in the religious sphere" while the Qajar Shahs held political authority so long as he ruled within the norms of just kingly behavior established by the hierocracy.[27] Like Keddie and Algar, the failure of the Qajar shahs "to discharge his responsibility of protecting the nation's interests" was the emergency necessary for "the highest-ranking member of members of the hierocracy residing in the holy cities of Iraq" to assume a political role.[28] Arjomand disagreed about the nature of Shiʿi Islam, but not its overall importance inside of Iranian society.

[25] Ibid., 5.
[26] Ibid., 265-266.
[27] Ibid., 259.
[28] Ibid., 266.

Arjomand's line of inquiry into the political writings and thoughts of the ʿulama was also accompanied by an interest in anti-Constitutional clerics, especially Shaykh Fazullah Nuri. The challenge became more severe in his edited volume, *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʿism*, where Abdol Karim Lahidji's article "Constitutionalism and Clerical Authority" and Arjomand's "Ideological Revolution in Shiʿism" directly challenged the contention that the ʿulama were the leaders of the Constitutional Movement and emphasized the role of reactionary clerics like Shaykh Fazullah Nuri in mobilizing opposition to the Constitution. Arjomand put these sentiments in Wagnerian terms and stated that the ʿulama during the Qajar period became a "hierocracy" with "political power as the independent custodians of religion and of sacral law."[29] This characterization of the ʿulama did not go unchallenged by Keddie and Algar.

Keddie and Algar criticized Arjomand for his emphasis on certain ʿulama as representative and his emphasis on ideology and theology, as opposed to spiritual life. Keddie defended her and Algar's view of the ʿulama by "this may only show the discrepancy between what was spoken and what was published-a discrepancy often found under oppressive governments." So, given that Chardin mentioned comments by the ʿulama and that these sentiments were "reiterated in later centuries by men who never read Chardin" then these statements "should be given considerable weight."[30] Keddie wrote that:

> Whether or not the idea that the *mujtahids* partake in the charisma of the Imams had prior justification, and whether or not the idea that temporal governments lack legitimacy had a long history, many of the ulama and their lay

[29] Arjomand. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 265.
[30] Nikki Keddie, "Religion, Society, and Revolution in Modern Iran," in *Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change*, ed. Michael E. Bonine and Nikki Keddie (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 23.

> followers came to believe such things in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when temporal rulers were increasingly compared to the Umayyad killers of the martyred Imam Hosain.[31]

Here, Keddie linked her interpretation of the past explicitly to present events. The present filled in the gaps in our understanding of the Qajar past, but that was perhaps inevitable and useful. Keddie's argument was compelling in that there clearly was some continuity between the past and the present, and this continuity could be used to understand political culture during the Constitutional Revolution in Iran. Further, scholars pointed out that Arjomand's portrayal of a submissive Iranian populace was not supported by the religiously inspired Babi rebellion of 1848-1850. However, Arjomand left an indisputable mark on literature. In particular, his painstaking documentation of ʿulama writings demonstrated that, at least among some of the ʿulama, attitudes towards temporal authority had changed. A broad failing of both Keddie and Arjomand was their failure to account for the behavior and participation of religious minorities, specifically Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and non-orthodox Shi'a.

Afary, Bayat, and Abrahamian: The View After the Revolution

Janet Afary, Mangol Bayat, and Ervand Abrahamian saw the Shiʿi ʿulama as a reactionary political group acting out of class interest and ideological opposition to democracy. Rather than seeing Iranian society and political culture as synonymous with Shiʿi Islam, these authors saw Iranian society as incredibly diverse and reflective of varying ethnic and religious communities. Further, these authors were much more willing to highlight ideological and class differences among the ʿulama. These authors largely saw the Constitutional Revolution as a product of leftist and heterodox Shiʿi

[31] Ibid., 26.

agitation. This was largely a product of the changes in both academia and in Iran. The post-revolutionary violence highlighted persistent ethnic, class, and religious tensions inside of Iranian society. The rise of social history in academia made these conflicts of particular interest to scholars. These scholars, unlike Keddie and Algar, had seen the conclusion of the Islamic Revolution. The brutal suppression of liberal and leftist political activity during the 1980's and the consolidation of power in the hands of the ʿulama undermined characterizations of them as benevolent protectors of the people from tyranny. Abrahamian, Bayat, and Afary were positioned perfectly to focus on interpretations of the Constitutional Revolution as a secular event. They were writing in a unique moment of time when the ʿulama and Shiʿi Islam appeared hostile to both democracy and scholars also possessed the framework and sources to foreground liberal and leftist political activity.

By the 1980's, there had been a sustained attempt to study the social history of Qajar Iran. Reminiscent of European historiography, this process began with economic histories of Qajar Iran like Charles Issawi's *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*. This volume addressed key questions about the status of foreign trade in Iran and social class structure. The 1983 issue of Iranian studies was devoted to social history of the Qajar era, as was *Modern Iran: Dialectics of Continuity and Change* edited by Nikkie Keddie and Michael Bonine. Scholars became increasingly aware of regional variation and change in Iranian society. Shiʿism was increasingly seen as an important part of Iranian society, but not the only part. Authors increasingly acknowledged tribal, Jewish, Armenian participation in Iranian society. These studies of the economic and social

conditions of Qajar Iran were followed by Ervand Abrahamian's classic of Iranian social history, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions.*

Abrahamian's project was explicitly inspired by E.P. Thomson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, and therefore looked to the social bases of contemporary Iranian politics. His analysis focused on "the interaction between political organizations and social forces" which were categorized as either "ethnic groups" or "social forces."[32] The 'ulama were separated into both the upper and middle class, with their own sources of income, amounts of revenue, and influence. Consequently, upper class 'ulama who received official state positions and land grants sided with the Qajar state, while lower ranking 'ulama and religious students sided with the middle class merchants who were their patrons.[33]

Abrahamian saw Iranian society on the verge of the Constitutional Revolution as deeply divided along communal, ethnic, and religious lines. For Abrahamian, "[t]he predominance of communal ties retarded the formation of manifest, subjective, and sociopolitical classes."[34] Rather, Iran was divided among a Shi'i majority, a Sunni minority, as well as non-Muslims. These groups were further divided into different sects, ethnicities, and tribes, which lived in their own wards or regions.[35] Ultimately, Abrahamian explained with Constitutional Revolution with a marxian framework, which emphasized the role of communal ties among the Bazaar merchants, guilds, and the 'ulama as the cause of the revolution. However, his detailed description of the differences in Iranian society led to questions about how what, besides, material class

[32] Abrahamian, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, 5.
[33] Ervand Abrahamian, "The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran," 388.
[34] Abrahamian, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, 34.
[35] Abrahamian, "The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran," 389-390.

interest, inspired these minorities to action. Further, as the 1979 Revolution became the Islamic Revolution, scholars turned their attention to re-formulating their understanding of Shiʿi Islam.

Mangol Bayat's *Iran's First Revolution* was a near complete challenge to the Algar and Keddie depiction of Shiʿi Islam. One, she challenged the notion that the ʿulama were universally well regarded in Iranian society. Two, she firmly cast the Twelver ʿulama in the royalist camp. As the name of Bayat's book, her work was connected to the 1979 revolution. Unlike Abrahamian, Bayat was concerned with the role of religion in Iranian society, and was largely inspired by Bell's theories. In pursuit of this, Bayat systematically challenged many of the assumptions of the ʿulama's role in Iranian society. For Bayat, the orthodox ʿulama were largely in the camp of the Shah. Like Keddie, Bayat was concerned with the social role of the ʿulama. Unlike Keddie, Bayat saw the ʿulama as define by "their corruptibility, their susceptibility to court and foreign intrigues as well as to manipulation by individuals and groups...they were indistinguishable from the ruling class, which increasingly alienated the discontented masses."[36] Rather than being a self-contained and independent class acting to protect the tradition bazaar, the ʿulama acted out of "centuries-old politics of intrigue that characterizes an elite faction temporarily out of favor"[37] and individual members sought external financial resources in pursuance of competition with one another.[38] In this same vein, ʿulama cooperation with modernizers was born out of political competition with modernizers who were becoming popular in their own right. Bayat concluded that

[36] Mangol Bayat. *Iran's First Revolution Shiʿism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25.
[37] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, 24.
[38] Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution*, 31.

"mainstream Shiʿism and the top hierarchy of the religious institutions...were in fact the least important agents of constitutional change in society" and the most active and powerful supporters of the Constitution were inspired by "Shiʿi radicalism, Western liberalism, and Russian Social Democracy."[39] Contrary to the depiction of ʿulama's economic decline put forward by Keddie and Lambton, Afary noted that cash taxes and pressure from landlords created a situation where "peasants, wishing to safeguard their existence, have been compelled to make a present of their land allotments to mosques" and as a result "the ʿulama had regained extensive waqf lands and continued to gather handsome revenues from the villages."[40] Not only did some ʿulama benefit from the status quo and penetration of global economic forces, but they also were part of the same patrimonial patronage networks as other notables.

Bayat and Afary saw non-clerical political activists and heterodox Shiʿi clergy as much more important to the success of mass protests than the orthodox ʿulama . The ʿulama joined the modernists and radicals out of a desire to not be left behind. "Some orthodox clerics in this coalition were resentful of the popularity of modernist ideas among the intellectuals and envisioned a 'constitutional order' in which the rulings of the ʿulama would be codified and elevated above those of either the absolutists or modernist elements."[41] These Shiʿi radicals were distinct from "progressive ʿulama, in that they sought revolutionary change and not just reform. This focus on "heterodox" Shi'a included a total reversal in the role of the Bahai in the Constitutional Revolution.

Afary and Bayat emphasized the role of several prominent Bahai as an important

[39] Ibid., 10.
[40] Janet Afary. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy & the Origins of Feminism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 21.
[41] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, 23.

part of the Constitutional Revolution. Keddie and Lambton had acknowledge the existence of some Bahai among the supporters of the Constitution, but ultimately saw their contribution as marginal. Afary and Keddie used new sources, especially Malekzadeh's *Tarikh-e Inqlab*, to "out" a number of influential political activists. Afary and Bayat note that most Baha'is "remained neutral during the Constitutional Revolution itself," but "the earlier writings of the leaders of the movement were known and discussed by both Baha'i and non-Baha'i intellectuals, including some of the ʿulama."[42]

Like Abrahamian, and Keddie, these authors saw the ʿulama as a class largely working to protect its interests. The true danger to ʿulama interests comes not from foreign intrusion or Qajar despotism, but from the secular modernizers whose ideas of positivism and social democracy directly challenge the survival of ʿulama privilege. The Constitution thus "marked the triumph of secularist trends" and not just, Sharia inspired governance. The Constitution "ushered in institutional changes and underscored the shrinking of olama [sic] authority in society."[43] Thus, the main antagonists of the ʿulama were not the state but secular reformers. This interpretation of Iranian history is also an echo of the post-1979 political battle inside of Iran. Bayat and Afary focus on the opposition of Nuri and other conservative clerics to the Supplementary Laws as proof of this. This confrontation "became a vehicle through which the Shi'ite ʿulama safeguarded their institutional and ideological domination within the new political order."[44] The ʿulama, typified by Nuri, were described as hostile to secularization.

These scholars suffered from some of the same mistakes that characterized

[42] Ibid., 29.
[43] Ibid., 10.
[44] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, 89.

Algar and Keddie. One review took Bayat's revisionism to task by writing, "[w]hile successful in dispelling old myths about the Constitutional Revolution, Bayat may have helped create new ones."[45] While Abrahamian, Bayat, and Afary extensively used newspapers and publications from the period to justify their claims about Iranian society and political activity, they, like Keddie and Algar, were too eager to see their evidence as representative of Iran as a whole. They treated a group, which claimed to be representative of the masses, as such, without investigating their actual influence. Abrahamian, Bayat, and Afary very clearly situated the core of the revolution in the north of the country. However, this begs the question about how the rest of the country was involved in the revolution.

Martin and Farzaneh: New Sources

Vanessa Martin and Mateo Farzaneh represent the enduring challenge of studying the ʿulama. The Islamic Revolution eventually moderated. Reformists and moderates, including clerics like Ayatollah Rafsanjani and Hojat al-Islam Khatami, pushed for democratic reforms and individual rights, often using Islamic arguments. Thus, scholars began to reconsider Bayat and Afary's criticisms of the ʿulama. Further, scholars were interested in highlighting regional or non-Tabriz and non-Tehran perspectives of the Revolution. Two authors in particular addressed these gaps in the literature. Farzaneh's *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khorasani* was a study of the writings and political activity es of Ayatollah Khorasani, a high-ranking pro-constitutional cleric, who wrote from the

[45] Reza Afshari, "Review of *Iran's First Revolution*," review of *Iran's First* Revolution, by Mangol Bayat, *Iranian Studies* 26, No.1-2 (Winter-Spring, 1993): 169-173.

relative security of the holy city of Najaf, Iraq. Khorasani was often referenced but his opinions and writings were largely unstudied. Like Farzaneh, Vanessa Martin's *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* sought to reconcile the role of the ʿulama in the Constitutional Revolution. Martin organized her work in part geographically, moving her gaze beyond Tehran and Tabriz. Further, she looked at how reactionary or religious political organizations beyond the ʿulama and their associated institutions. Martin and Farzaneh both made important contributions in understanding the relationship between society and religion.

Both authors return to a view of the importance of the ʿulama and Islam to protest against the state, but allowed for regional and personal variation. Theirs was a more cautious endorsement of the "Qajar pact" (Martin's term) or the dual system of ʿulama-Qajar power where either side was required to endorse the legitimacy of and support the other. The Tobacco protests demonstrated that the ʿulama were "a force with the ability to rally the people while influencing an arbitrary and despotic government such as that of Nasir al-Din Shah."[46] Martin emphasized the cultural importance of Islam in the politics of protest. Martin wrote, "Iran was a profoundly Islamic society" where Islam "permeated social and family relations; the regulations of communities...and the varying theories of the legitimacy of government." Further, "popular grievances were often expressed through a religious channel, namely the ʿulama, who were looked upon as mediators between the people and the government."[47] This return to the importance of the ʿulama and Islam was continued in the author's'

[46] Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the clerical leadership of Khurasani*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 114.
[47] Vanessa Martin. *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism the Constitutional Revolution of 1906*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 15.

characterization of the relationship between European inspired modernizers and the ʿulama.

This view of the ʿulama again emphasized them as the most important part of Constitutional Revolution. Farzaneh returns to the example of Malkom Khan appropriating the language of Islam to justify his modernizing reforms. "The idea of using Islam to entice people to participate in popular protests was so strong that even non-religious modernists used it to advance their objectives."[48] Martin emphasized that these modernists were "very few" and limited to "the bureaucracy, as yet small circles of the intelligentsia, and a few of the ʿulama." These few modernizers "were careful not to make the full implications" of the reforms they advocated clear "both for fear of offending the ʿulama, and also to enable their involvement in the movement."[49] The only place where debates over secularism and religion were truly central to Constitutionalism was in Tabriz and "elsewhere, secularism hardly appeared."[50] Thus, the anti-ʿulama implications of secularism were not widely known, nor was there a popular movement against the ʿulama. This important nuance from previous narratives affected Martin and Farzaneh's characterization of secularism's relationship to the ʿulama.

This new wave of scholarship did not mention the Bahai or heterodox Shi'a. These authors highlighted Islamic arguments supporting secularizing reforms that have previously been seen as antithetical to ʿulama interests. Secularism, or the retreat of religion from government and politics, was defended as necessary to protect the independence of Muslim nations and preserve the position of the ʿulama in society.

[48] Farzaneh, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 113.
[49] Martin, *Iran*, 15.
[50] Ibid., 203.

Martin moves away from Nuri as representative of the ʿulama and emphasized that "the ʿulama of the provinces, or at least those who held political views, were strongly in favor of the Majlis, which they saw as an Islamic institution which would strengthen the country against foreign incursions, and secure the foundations of Islam" by protecting against arbitrary absolutist rule. In this same way, many 'ʿulama saw reforms in jurisprudence, taxation, and education as necessary to protect Iran from foreign invasion.[51] In the specific case of Khorasani, Farzaneh pointed out that Khurasani's endorsement of Majlis and its reform program demonstrated that Shi'ite thought and traditions allowed for "a great deal of room for interpreting concepts and ideas that might otherwise be used to keep Muslims from improving their lives."[52] These arguments provide compelling evidence that the relationship between secularization and religion is not a simple. The particular context of defensive development in Iran and aspects of Shiʿi doctrine created a situation where ʿulama defended and advocated reforms that required them to retreat from aspects of public life.

Conclusion:

Religion and the ʿulama play a number of roles in the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution. One, the writing of the ʿulama provided a way to study an ideology and a theology. Two, religion can be treated as a sociological phenomenon with an accompanying class. Three, they serve as a proxy to study the political and social attitudes of the "masses" as part of social history. In order to explain the role of the religion and the ʿulama in the Constitutional Revolution, no approach is sufficient in

[51] Ibid., 204.
[52] Farzaneh, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 235.

itself. For example, Arjomand carefully examined the ideology of Shi'a Islam, but also integrated it into a Weberian framework of social change. As was discussed in the introduction, a history of the Constitutional Revolution must engage in both social history and historical sociology.

The study of Shi'a Islam as ideology and theology is the least problematic. When religion is reduced to a series of key texts, then histories are presented with a definite set of research materials that can be evaluated using exegesis. Keddie and Arjomand agreed about what was *written* by certain authors. What was the cause of bitter disagreement was what writing were actually representative of the beliefs of the majority of the 'ulama. To this end, Arjomand and Keddie argued intensely over whether Saykh Fayzullah Nuri was a mainstream or marginal figure. Afary and Bayat took this argument one step further and questioned to what extent Shi'a Islam or the ʿulama were even respected or influential in Iranian society. What scholars disagree on is not theology. Scholars do not truly care about the theology of Shi'a Islam. They care about theology and ideology as a window into the mentality of Iranian society. It is a proxy for actually knowing the beliefs and thoughts of the people. In this way, ideology and theology are, for historians of the Constitutional Revolution, useful as part of social history.

Religion can also be viewed as a lived phenomenon experienced through group experiences and rituals. Instead of focusing on the writings of the ʿulama as a way to understand the beliefs of a society, scholars can also look to the rituals and symbols of Shi'a Islam as a way to understand the values and beliefs of Iranians. Knowledge of this lived experience is often difficult to obtain. The case of the Bahai and heterodox Shia

underlines this. The true feelings of some, if not many, may not be represented in texts or writing for fear of persecution. Bayat and Afary raised serious questions about the extent to which the formal pronouncements of religious leaders can be used to explain the mentality or beliefs of a religious community.

The historiography of the role of religion and the ʿulama demonstrates the connected relationship between social history and historical sociology. The insight of social history is needed to explain how the processes and concepts highlighted by historical sociology are perceived and play out in the case of the Constitutional Revolution. Religion is an important part of this, as it provides an insight into the beliefs and experiences of individuals. The writing and actions of the ʿulama play an important role in enriching our understanding of Iranian society. The writing of the ʿulama provide crucial written documents for historians. However, Shi'a Islam was not the only basis for the organization of Iranian society. Iran was and is composed of several different ethnic groups.

A major problem of relying on Shi'ism, especially as interpreted by the ʿulama, as synonymous with the beliefs of Iranians is that many Iranians had alternative or competing sources of identity. As chapter three will discuss, religious and ethnic minorities were both important actors in the Constitutional Revolution and were not led by the ʿulama. Iranian Armenians practiced Armenian orthodox Christianity, while the Bakhtiyari tribe practiced sufi Islam. Further, religion alone may not have defined the mentality or mind of an Iranian on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution. Theories of social change cannot help us abstract without some understanding of how Iranian

society's organization and mentality. Religion provides part of this answer, but ethnicity also clearly played a major role in Iranian society.

Chapter Three

At the Limits of Iranian History:[1] Social History and Ethnicity in the Constitutional Revolution

The literature of the Constitutional Revolution has increasingly recognized the role of minorities, but the perspective of minorities remains incompletely integrated into the history of the Constitutional Revolution. The participation of members of minority groups has always been acknowledged, but they were infrequently named as members of minority groups. Even when they were, the discussion was limited to the contribution of elite individuals, like Malkom Khan, Sardar Asʿad, or Yephraim Khan. As social-cultural historians paid more attention to minority groups, discussions of the Constitutional Revolution focused more on the participation of Azeris, Armenians, and the Bakhtiyari tribe as key supporters of the Constitutional Revolution. However, the specificity of the narratives often ran the risk of sectioning off minority perspectives into their own, self-contained monographs. While this approach has helped bring forward neglected aspects of the history of the Constitutional Revolution, historians should seek to examine a unique minority or non-dominant perspective to the Constitutional Revolution. Doing so will provide important insights on the limits of Iranian nationalism at a critical moment of political contestation.

Increased attention to the role of minorities in the Constitutional Revolution mirrored the historiographical progression of social history. Social history was initially concerned with the history of the "lower or poorer classes" and the "manners and

[1] This title is borrowed from Ranajit Guha's *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)

customs" of life.[2] However, this focus on "history from below" gradually led to interest in the perspective of other marginalized groups that were included in the lower classes, but were not totally defined by their class membership. But there was a tension between emphasizing the particularity or specialness of a particular group and also integrating that group into larger patterns of human behaviors. As Fustel de Coulagnes wrote, "History is not the accumulation of events of all kinds which occurred in the past. It is the science of human societies."[3] Much like in the case of the ʿulama, there was a tension regarding how to explain social and political change and its relationship to culture. In this way, even though these three ethnic minorities are unique, they occupied similar positions in Iranian society during the Constitutional Revolution and have similar historiographies. These minority groups, despite their differences, present a number of challenges to the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution. All three of these groups were considered key participants and supporters of the Constitutional cause. All three groups were and are still considered different from Persians, especially at the time of the Constitutional Revolution. Further, linguistic issues make archival research into these groups difficult and are also obstacles for scholars of Iran who try to integrate them in the history of the Constitutional Revolution. These common themes suggest a common minority perspective on the Constitutional Revolution.

Interest in minorities was a logical consequence of research into economic and social conditions in Iran. The work of Abrahamian in *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, the first attempt at an Iranian version of the E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, demonstrates how difficult it was to separate ethnicity from social

[2] Hobsbawm, *On History*, 71.
[3] Quoted in Ibid., 75.

history. In the course of his examination of the "social bases of Iranian politics," Abrahamian pointed to the "predominance of communal ties" which "retarded the formation of manifest, subjective, and sociopolitical classes" during the late Qajar and Constitutional periods. Following on his research, these communal ties then became the subject of social histories. This research was encouraged by the rise in ethnic conflict (especially Kurds and Arabs) during the 1979 Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijan. This return of nationalisms (plural) undermined modernization theory predictions that eventually these communal identities would be homogenized. Scholars, however, had lost access to archives inside of Iran. However, while Abrahamian had woven his description of identity into a larger narrative about social change in Iran, research after him would look at groups vertically and in isolation from one another.

The Azeris: The Salt of the Assembly

The history of Azeri participation in the Constitutional Revolution lacks a framework for understanding "Azeri" identity in Iran. Browne, Abrahamian, Keddie, Bayat, Afary, and Martin consistently singled out Azerbaijan as the home of the most "radical" activists and the most determined supporters of the Constitution. Authors attributed this to Azerbaijan's "proximity" to the Russian Revolution of 1905 in the form of trade and ethnic ties to the Caucasus. In particular, the literature singled out the large population of Iranians who migrated for work in Baku. However, the literature treated Azeri identity inconsistently. In the Caucasus, Azeris were a distinct ethnic group who occupied a marginalized position in Russian society and were consequently

sympathetic to social democracy movements. But the literature did not give Azeris in Iran the same treatment. This may have been due to differences between conditions in the Russian Caucasus and Azerbaijan. However, this was more assumed than discussed. For Browne, Keddie, Bayat, and Afary, Azerbaijan was defined not as the home of a Turkic people, but as the home of support for the Constitution. Thus, while the contributions of the province of Azerbaijan and the city of Tabriz were acknowledged, their relationship to ethnic politics and conflicts in the Caucasus was poorly defined. This problem, while present in all of the literature, was most manifest in Browne.

Browne highlighted the role of Azerbaijan and Tabriz in the Constitutional Revolution, but was cautious to emphasize that these places were a part of a homogenous Iranian nation. Browne considered the "deputies from Azarbayjan[sic]" as the most ardent defenders of constitutionalism, calling them the "salt of the Assembly."[4] The deputies of Azerbaijan were the core of the Assembly (Majlis) and the "Popular party", which was the party Browne considered the most pure expression of the Iranian "nation." Browne singled out the deputies of Tabriz "as being sincere patriots almost to a man" and "represented the more extreme or radical party, and seem to have been influenced by the ideas of the Russian reformers."[5] Though Browne saw the influence of European ideology as desirable, Browne was careful not to emphasize this connection. Similarly, even though Browne acknowledged the connection of political developments in Azerbaijan to political developments in the Caucasus, he was cautious in how he characterized these connections.

[4] Browne, *The Persian Revolution: 1905-1909*, 146.
[5] Ibid.

Browne likely deliberately played down ethnic differences to make the Iranian revolution more palatable to British political elites. As the debate between Foreign Minister Grey over the British support for the Qajar government and its alliance with Russia raged, Taqizadeh and Browne "consciously sought to project a moderate and accommodating image of themselves and to disclaim charges of extremism. Their British detractors, on the other hand, were equally determined to counter such disclaimers."[6] However, in his travelogue of Iran written in 1893, Browne wrote that he considered Iranian history as marked by antagonism between northern Turks and southern Persians. In *A Year Amongst the Persians*, he wrote, "The old antipathy is well marked even today, as anyone who has taken the trouble to find out knows what the southern peasant thinks of the northerners, and how northerners regard the cradle of Persia's ancient greatness."[7] As pointed out before, Browne's history was deeply influenced by a desire to make an Iranian nation worthy of sympathy and aid. He therefore needs to show that Russian and British imperial control was not necessary stabilize Iran, but that Iranian nationalists already had a "modernizing orientation" and that "constitutionalism and nationalism were not alien imports forced upon the Iranian society by a small group of Europeanized intellectuals."[8] Browne and Taqizadeh then had to show that these characteristics, present in Tabriz, were representative of Iran in general. Taqizadeh would also influence the work of Nikki Keddie.

Nikki Keddie's most enduring contribution to the study of the Azeri and Armenian contributions to the Constitutional Revolution came in the form of a translation of a speech by Hassan Taqizadeh published in the *Middle East Journal* as

[6] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Constitutional Revolution*, 130.
[7] E.G. Browne, *A Year Among the Persians* (London: A.C. Black, 1893), 99-100.
[8] Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Constitutional Revolution*, 149.

"The Background of the Constitutional Movement in Azerbaijan."[9] Hassan Taqizadeh was a prominent intellectual and political player in the Constitutional Revolution. He was generally associated with the Constitutionalists and would spent significant time in England as a guest of Browne and as Iranian ambassador. This particular speech was delivered in April 1959 in Tabriz at the University of Tabriz. Taqizadeh described "Azerbaijan and especially Tabriz [as] the centers of modern thought" in Iran and therefore played a prominent role in the "reform movement" and the Constitutional Revolution.[10] Taqizadeh referred to Iranian and Russian Azerbaijan, but the term "Caucasian Moslems" was used to refer to people who otherwise might have been labeled Azeri. Taqizadeh emphasized the Caucasus as the entry point for printing technology into Iran and that "reading and writing of the Persian language was just as common in Transcaucasia as in Tabriz." [11] He also cited the "rapid development of thought and political activity among the Moslems of the Caucasus" due to the military defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war, the granting of a Duma in Russia by the 1905 Constitution, and "fighting between Armenian and Moslems."[12] Keddie explicitly cited this article as the source for scholars looking to learn about the Caucasian contributions to the Constitutional Revolution.[13] Taqizadeh's thoughts had a tremendous impact on Keddie, just as they had on Browne.

Keddie also gave special attention to Azerbaijan, because it hosted the city of Tabriz and particular "great" men. This understanding of Azerbaijan was largely

[9] Nikki Keddie, "The Background of the Constitutional Movement in Azerbaijan," *Middle East Journal* 14, no. 4 (Autumn 1960): 456-465.
[10] Ibid., 456
[11] Ibid., 462
[12] Ibid., 459
[13] Nikki Keddie, *Iran: Religion, Politics, and Society* (London: F. Cass, 1980), 48n13.

borrowed from the thought of Hassan Taqizadeh. Like Browne, who also personally knew Taqizadeh, Keddie emphasized the role of Tabriz in the revolution. However, Keddie characterized Tabriz's participation in the context of "mass popular participation." She cited Abrahamian and characterized popular participation in the Constitutional Revolution as essentially limited to the urban classes.[14] Tabriz was important because it was an urban center, not because it had a unique cultural heritage and identity. As Tabriz was the largest and most industrialized urban center in Iran at the time, it naturally became the focus of attention for Abrahamian and Keddie. For Keddie, the resistance of the Tabriz against royalist forces during the civil war was also due to "a courageous man of the common people, Sattar Khan, [who] refused to surrender."[15] In this way, the important divisions in Iran were based not on language or ethnicity, but class and geography.

Abrahamian drew attention to leftist political activity in Russian and Iranian Azerbaijan as one of the causes of the Constitutional Revolution. Abrahamian highlighted the role of secret or clandestine political societies in the revolution. He highlighted "the Secret Center, the Social Democracy party, the Society of Humanity, the Revolutionary Committee, and the Secret Society" in particular as the key contributors to the Constitutional Revolution.[16] Of the five, the Secret Center and the Social Democratic party had strong links to Azerbaijan and the Caucasus. The Secret Center was founded in Tabriz and the Social Democratic Party of Iran was founded in Baku and had a strong relationship with the Social Democratic Party of Russia. The party's leader, Narim Narimanov, "later became the president of the Soviet Socialist

[14] Ibid., 76.
[15] Ibid., 75.
[16] Abrahamian, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, 76.

Republic of Azerbaijan."[17] Unlike the Society of Humanity, the Revolutionary Committee, and the Secret Society, both these organizations were influenced by the revolutionary socialism of Russian Marxism.[18] For Abrahamian, these parties showed their true importance during the Civil War of 1908-1909, when Tabriz became the lone holdout against newly emboldened Royalist forces.

Abrahamian emphasized Tabriz and Caucasian revolutionaries as the most dedicated supporters of Constitutionalism during the Civil War of 1908-1909. For Abrahamian, "the drama of the civil war took place mostly in Tabriz."[19] He emphasized the Secret Center and the Social Democrats in organizing the resistance and securing support from Caucasian revolutionaries.[20] Caucasian revolutionaries provided advanced military equipment (explosives, rifles, and ammunition) as well as highly motivated fighters. But this enthusiasm for the Constitutional causes begged an important question, why were these revolutionaries willing to fight and die in Iran? Why did they not focus their struggle on the Ottoman Empire or the Russian Caucasus?

Up to this point, the literature's treatment of the relationship of Azerbaijan and Azeris to the rest of Iran and to other Caucasian groups was ambiguous. While Tabriz was first in Abrahamian's mind, he also mentions resistance in Gilan, especially Rasht, and Mazandaran. He also discussed instances of popular sentiment advocating the separation Azerbaijan from the rest of Iran and the signing of some telegrams from Tabriz to the shah with "Mellat-i Azerbaijan" (the nation of Azerbaijan).[21] He also acknowledged tensions between Azeris and Persians before and during the

[17] Ibid., 77.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 97.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 91

Constitutional Revolution, but only discusses these divisions as one of many that the Shah manipulated during the Civil War. These ambiguities revolved around the questions of Iranian Azerbaijan's connection to nascent nationalist and separatist aspirations in Russian Azerbaijan and the Caucasus generally. Afary and Bayat expanded upon the extent to which Iranian political organizations and culture were connected to the Caucasus.

Afary and Bayat saw the defining characteristics of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus as their secularism and leftist politics. While they, like Browne, Keddie, and Abrahamian, emphasized Tabriz and the Caucuses as revolutionary centers, they defined society there in a radically different way. Both Afary and Bayat saw Azerbaijan as radical due to the ethnic and trade linkages between Azerbaijan and the Caucasus. Unlike Abrahamian, they contextualized Azeri political activity in Russia by emphasizing discrimination against Azeris, and their resultant labor organizing and nascent ethnic nationalist aspirations. They combined Keddie and Taqizadeh's emphasis on the satirical and anti-clerical print culture of the Caucasus with Abrahamain's emphasis on leftist political organizations to create a distinct vision of the political culture of Azerbaijan. The consequence of this was that "the rebellions were more prominent in the northern and more prosperous areas of Gilan and Azerbaijan, which as a result of extensive trade and ethnic ties were directly influenced by the flow of radical ideas from Transcaucasia."[22] However, Afary and Bayat emphasized different aspects of Azerbaijan's radicalism. Bayat emphasized the anti-clerical and secularist aspects of political culture in the Caucasus and in Iranian Azerbaijan. Afary placed more emphasis on peasant rebellions and other "grassroots" organizing. However, Bayat and Afary

[22] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 145.

largely ignored the question of Azeri ethnic nationalism, which was not seen as relevant to Bayat's investigation of religion or Afary socio-economic analysis.

Touraj Atabaki had a unique perspective on the role of Azeris in the Constitutional Revolution due to the unique aim of his work. In *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy is Twentieth-Century Iran*, Atabaki sees the Constitutional Revolution, specifically the role of Tabriz during the Lesser Despotism (1908-1909), as the "genesis of the autonomous movement" of Azerbaijan.[23] Instead of juxtaposing the Constitutional Revolution with the 1979 Revolution, Atabaki compares Azeri political organization during the Constitutional Revolution with the 1946 Azerbaijan Crisis. From this perspective, "Azeri" identity was still in its "genesis." Azeris spoke a Turkic language and had a very different experience during the Constitutional Revolution, but it was by no means accepted that Azeris constituted a distinct nation. Rather, the consolidation of Azeri identity occurred after the spread of pan-Turkish settlement and the establishment of the Azeri S.S.R. after World War One. Rather, sentiment in Azerbaijan was representative of the rest of Iran and favored "centralized government based on law and order."[24] In this way, Azeris fought alongside Iranians of varying ethnic and regional identities (i.e. Armenian, Gilani, and Bakhtiyari).[25] Atabaki's scholarship calls into question to what extent the categorization of Azeri's as a separate ethnicity or nation. Rather, this view may be anachronistic. However, Atabaki, like Bayat and Afary, emphasized Azerbaijan as a stronghold of constitutional sentiment and

[23] Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Twentieth-Century Iran* (London: British Academic Press, 1993).
[24] Ibid., 27.
[25] Ibid., 28.

does not discuss royalist elements in Azerbaijan, even though they controlled part of Tabriz during the siege.

Martin's *Iran Between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism* emphasized reactionary and anti-Constitutional elements in Azerbaijan. She still characterized Tabriz and Azerbaijan as the most "radical" centers of anti-clericalism and leftist politics. However, Martin contended that discussions of secularism were confined to elite circles in Tehran and Tabriz, and were not reflective of mass sentiments.[26] Further, she pointed out that popular conceptions of what was secular or religious frequently changed.[27] The Anjoman-i Islamiya's political activity against the Social Democrats and for the Crown was foregrounded, as were other "reactionary" activities in Azerbaijan. Although Tabriz was the home of the most radical activists, Martin saw this as but one brand of Constitutionalist sentiment that was not even universally accepted in Azerbaijan. She emphasized the linkages of reactionary anjomans to Tehran, while other authors emphasized connections between radical in Iran and the Caucasus. In this way, Martin attempted to give a more nuanced view of Azerbaijan that drew comparisons between it and other regions of Iran, instead of assuming its uniqueness. In some ways, this was a melding of the Keddie and Browne views of Iranian society. Martin acknowledged Azerbaijan's secularism, but was clear to point out its uniqueness.

There is an ambiguity in the literature about the role of Azeris in Iranian society. This is a question of social history, but also a question of understanding social change. Central to this ambiguity are unresolved questions about the nature of Azeri identity

[26] Martin, *Iran Between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*, 36-37.
[27] Ibid., 60.

during this period. An analysis remains difficult as the definition or even existence of a distinct "Azeri" identity was forming at the same time. Scholars run the risk of projecting identities that we are currently comfortable with onto a period in history when those identities and concepts did not exist or were not yet fully formed. Research on this aspect of the Constitutional Revolution would likely benefit from archival research in Baku and Moscow that explores the political and social environment in Baku, especially as related to migrant Iranian workers. There are linguistic and professional hurdles to this. Such research would require strong Russian, Azeri Turkish, and Persian language knowledge. Further, expanding the horizon of research into the Constitutional Revolution would not provide a framework for understanding identity during this period. However, by turning to the scholarship on Armenian participation in the Constitutional Revolution, scholars may find a solution.

The Armenians: "Walking Arsenals"

The history of the Armenian contribution to the Constitutional Revolution has gradually broadened from a history of elites to a social-cultural history of Armenian participation in the Constitutional Revolution. The literature was more comfortable using the term "Armenian" to refer to a distinct group with its own history than it was in the Azeri case. However, there was a reluctance to name individuals, particularly great individuals, as Armenian. As historians began to detail the events of the siege of Azerbaijan and the Civil War of 1908-1909, they emphasized the military contributions of Armenian revolutionaries. Eventually, these revolutionaries were associated not only with the Caucasus, but also with the Armenian Hchnak and Dashnak revolutionary

parties. Research into the Armenian contribution to the Constitutional Revolution has provided important insight into the political and social environment of northern Iran and the Caucasus. However, the emphasis on an "Armenian" history of the Constitutional Revolution has often come at the cost of Persian language sources and connections to events in Iran. The remedies to these problems are difficult due to issues of archival access and linguistic training.

Brown championed the contributions of individuals Armenians, but was careful to downplay the role of Armenian "revolutionaries." In particular, Brown championed Malkom Khan and Yephraim Khan. Both were examples of brave and enlightened Iranians who were "awakened" members of an Iranian nation. However, their status as Armenians was ambiguous. This ambiguity was a result of Browne's "Whig" framework for understanding history and his political objectives. Browne was very careful to emphasize the national character of the Constitutional Revolution and to deemphasize ethnic or Russian participation. Browne chastised the *Times* for exaggerating the role of "Caucasian and Armenian revolutionaries."[28] Further, Browne mentioned in a lengthy endnote addressed a disagreement between the *Iran-e No* and the *Times*. In its February 10, 1910 edition, the *Times* stated that the paper *Iran-e No* was "controlled by Armenians and Russians from the Caucasus."[29] He included the response of *Iran-e No* that, while affirming Armenian membership in the Iranian nation, denied that it had any Armenian members on its staff. Browne was at pains to show that the Constitutionalists were both representative of the "national will", while downplaying British fears of increasing Russian influence or possible radicalization.

[28] Browne, *The Persian Revolution,* 299.
[29] Ibid., 443.

This fear of foreign intervention in the Revolution was the basis for Browne's suspicion of the "Armenian cause."

Browne was also suspicious about how the "Armenian cause" might be used to justify support for the Royalist cause. Brown did mention moments of tension between the "Moslem" world and Armenians. Quoting *Habl-al Matn*, Brown saw "Armenian agitation and other internal troubles" in the Ottoman Empire as proof of "England's favorite policy" of inciting political unrest to keep its competitors off balance.[30] The issue of Azeri and Armenian enmity was important not only because it might elicit sympathy from British and Russian publics, but was also identified as a key aspect of the political and social atmosphere of the Caucasus.

Armenian participation in the Constitutional Revolution was difficult for Keddie to integrate into her work about Islam and the Constitutional Revolution. Keddie's translation of Taqizadeh says very little about Armenian participation, but does mention Armenian-Azeri violence. As discussed above, Taqizadeh highlighted violence between "Armenians and Moslems" as a cause of increased political agitation by "Caucasian Moslems."[31] The participation of Armenians in the Constitutional Revolution posed an important and difficult question for Keddie. Her thesis about the crucial role played by Twelver Shia 'ulama in mobilizing support for the Constitution does not explain Armenian participation. The Armenians did not fit. Abrahamian's more class minded history was better able to integrate Armenians.

Abrahamian wrote about Armenian contributions to the Constitutional Revolution primarily in the context of the civil war and the siege of Tabriz. Like

[30] Ibid., 175.
[31] Keddie, "The Background of the Constitutional Movement in Azerbaijan," 459-460.

previous authors, he mentioned Yeprem Khan and Malkom Khan.[32]However, they were identified more with modernization and reform efforts inside of Iran than they were with Armenia. Much as was the case with Abrahamian's treatment of Azeri activism, Armenian activism was primarily associated with leftist political organizations, specifically the Dashnak party and the Social Democrat Party. Abrahamian does not give a detailed account of their participation. He only mentioned the Dashnak party in terms of their alliance with the "radical" Democrat Party and their contribution to the siege of Tabriz in the form of much need military expertise and arms. Much like the Azeri case, Abrahamian's treatment of the Dashnaks and Armenians raised questions about the extent of Armenian and cooperation and how activists reconciled competing identities and political objectives. These questions would be taken up to a certain extent by Afary.

Afary emphasized the role of the Dashnak and Hnchak parties in promoting social democracy during the Constitutional Revolution. For Afary, "[t]he most important international support the resistance movement in Azerbaijan and Gilan received was from members of the RSDWP as well as Dashnak and Hnchak Armenians."[33] Further, Azeri-Armenian tensions did not spill over into the Constitutional Revolution and "an outstanding aspect of the resistance movement in Azerbaijan and Gilan was its international and non-denominational character."[34] It was the "revolutionary movement" that "lessened animosity among various ethnic groups" and placed these ethnicities under the same banner.[35] While the multi-ethnic solidarity

[32] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolution*, 65; 99.
[33] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution,* 237.
[34] Ibid., 239.
[35] Ibid.

of Azerbaijan was firmly established in Afary's account, she did not systematically explain why Iran saw multi-ethnic cooperation, while the Caucasus saw conflict. Further, Afary did not describe the relationship between the Dashnak and Hnchak parties. Finally, Afary did not deal with how Armenian political activists, like the Dashnaks and Hnchaks, who advocated separatism and autonomy for the Armenian community, reconciled their political aspirations with the centralization and Iranian nationalism often associated with the Constitutional Revolution. These questions would be taken up by the only work to date that exclusively focused on the role of Armenians in the Constitutional Revolution.

Houri Berberian's *Armenians and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911* attempted to answer these questions and, in the process, offered a framework for understanding minority political participation in the Constitutional Revolution. Berberian focused on three factors to explain the unique experience of an ethnic group that was both at the center and periphery of the Constitutional Revolution: the revolutionary and intellectual environment of the Caucasus, the desire of the political left to counter communal violence between Caucasian Armenians and Muslims by encouraging collaboration between the two groups in the constitutional movement, and the fluidity of identities that made participation possible.[36] Her solution was both elegant and meticulously backed by archival evidence in the Dashnak archives.

Berberian's work raised important historiographical questions about the Constitutional Revolution. While Berberian's analysis of Armenian sources is meticulous, it suffered from not engaging with Persian sources. As Mangol Bayat

[36] Houri Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911: "The Love For Freedom Has No Fatherland* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 5.

pointed out in her review of the book, "this exposé of the complex Armenian-Iranian relationship during the revolution suffers from the lack of a broader historical perspective. The reader is left without a proper understanding of the nature, scope, and context of the revolution."[37] She specifically faults Berberian for not corroborating Armenian sources with "their Persian counterparts." She also commented that the book would have benefited from more details about the relationship between Armenian political parties and their Russian counter parts. However, the possible solution to these flaws would require archival research that may not be possible.

Archival access and research languages are an impediment to further research on the Caucasian contribution to the Constitutional Revolution. Abrahamian in his review of *Armenians and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911* pointed out that archival access to Armenian materials in Turkey and Iran remains inconsistent and difficult.[38] Berberian's analysis could only be taken further with access to Hnchack archives, or to Ottoman and Iran archival documents relating to the period. Even if access were guaranteed, the number of research languages to do a history of the Constitutional Revolution would require Persian, Armenian, Russian, Georgian, and Turkish. Iago Gocheleishvili in his article "Introducing Georgian Sources for the Historiography of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911)" pointed out that there remain extensive archives in Georgian that speak to Armenian and Georgian participation in the Constitutional Revolution.[39] Even though these sources likely include important

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[37] Mangol Bayat, "Armenians and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911," review by Mangol Bayat, *Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 683-684.
[38] Ervand Abrahamian, "Armenians and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911," review by Ervand Abrahamian, *American Historical Review* 107, no. 5 (December 2002): 1674-1675.
[39] Iago Gocheleishvili, "Introducing Georgian Sources for the Historiography of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911)," *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations, and Transnational Connections* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2010), 45-68.

insights, only a researcher with the necessary language skills and institutional support would be able to use them.

The Bakhtiyari Tribe: The Protectors of the People

The Bakhtiyari tribe's contribution to the Constitutional Revolution is another example of a historiographical difficult perspective that is both central and peripheral to the story of the Constitutional Revolution. When the Bakhtiyari were included in narratives of the Constitutional Revolution, it was usually from the perspective of their military contribution to the retaking of Tehran in 1909. Further, Bakhtiyari motivations were usually ascribed to plunder or settling tribal grievances. However, recent research has examined the social-cultural effects of the economic integration of the Bakhtiyari. Research on the Bakhtiyari role, much less the role of other tribes, has been remarkably limited. As is the case with other pastoral groups, the Bakhtiyaris left few archival records of their history. Further, even fewer of these records are of their own making. Thus, Bakhtiyari historiography is different from the Azeri and Armenian cases, in that the obstacles to further research are a lack of documents rather than issues of accessibility.

The Bakhtiyari primarily entered Browne's narrative as symbols of a brave Iranian nation. Browne again chastised the *Times* for depicting the Bakhtiyaris as "completely indifferent to the Constitution, and as actuated solely by tribal ambitions, innate love of fighting, and hatred of a dynasty at whose hands they had suffered

much."[40] Much like the Armenians, the Bakhtiyaris were discussed almost entirely from a military perspective.

Keddie and Abrahamian remained largely silent on the role of the Bakhtiyari. Both authors emphasized the participation of urban populations in the Constitutional Revolution. Keddie also acknowledged that because tribes were primarily Sunni and received religious guidance from their sheikhs, they fell outside of reach of the ʿulama and presented a problem for her particular take on Iranian history. Abrahamian, like Browne, emphasized the leadership of Sardar Asʿad and the military contribution of the Bakhtiyari tribe to the re-conquest of Isfahan and Tehran by the Constitutional forces.[41]

Garthwaite's *Khans and Shahs* highlighted the role of the Bakhtiyari elite politics in determining the tribes' participation in the Constitutional Revolution. Garthwaite meticulously wove together anthropological accounts and primary source documents and depicted a tribe with a divided leadership structure that was only capable of coordinating under unique conditions. For Garthwaite, the Bakhtiyari were primarily motivated by the lure of spoils. Garthwaite traces the start of Bakhtiyari activism to the Civil War, when constitutionalists in Isfahan, in response to the appointment of "the oppressive Iqbal al-Daulah as governor of Isfahan," requested Bakhtiyari assistance and "promised to support the Bakhtiyari and to pay Bakhtiyari expenses in Isfahan."[42] The Bakhtiyari were drawn deeper into the conflict by the promise of wealth and power. While Garthwaite cited Sardar Asʿad's trip from Europe and the Lynch and Oil Syndicate as possible contributors to Bakhtiyari unity and

[40] Browne, *The Persian* Revolution, 299.
[41] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 99-100.
[42] Gene R. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe of Iran* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009), 116.

enthusiasm for the Constitutional cause, the various sects of the Bakhtiyari tribe truly united "in anticipation of the wealth and power that might be gained if they were to help establish a constitutional government."[43] Garthwaite sees the Secret Agreement of 1909, which divided any future wealth and power equally between the two main factions of the Bakhtiyari, as key to ensuring sustained Bakhtiyari participation. It also revealed "the true motivation behind Bakhtiyari unity and their pragmatic approach to the revolution."[44] Garthwaite emphasized internal divisions inside the Bakhtiyari tribe, between the Bakhtiyaris and the rest of the Constitutional Coalition, and between the Bakhtiyaris and other tribes. The weakness of the Bakhtiyaris lay "within themselves and their own political instability."[45]

Afary also emphasized material gains as the primary motivation for Bakhtiyari participation in the Constitutional Revolution. Afary emphasized Bakhtiyari enmity against the Qajar tribe.[46] Further, Afary emphasized Sardar Asʿad's leadership and personal sympathy for to the Constitutional Movement in securing Bakhtiyari support. After the re-conquest of Tehran by Constitutionalist, Afary quotes Schuster in criticizing the Bakhtiyari's for their "mercenary attitude" and "noncommittal attitude."[47] By the time of the Second Majles, the Bakhtiyaris increasingly found themselves at odds with the centralizing efforts of the Constitutional government and other tribes, jealous of the Bakhtiyari position in Tehran.[48] Thus, Afary seemed to view tribal participation in a movement that sought ultimately to curtail tribal freedoms as a

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 117
[45] Ibid., 115.
[46] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 248.
[47] Ibid., 323.
[48] Ibid., 6-7.

contradiction that could only be explained by the desire for the spoils of war and, in the case of Sardar Asʿad, sympathy for the constitutional cause. In this way, the only possible motivation for Bakhtiyari participation would be financial gain and the settling of old rivalries with other tribes.

In *Tribes and Empires: On the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran*, Arash Khazeni explained the support of the Bakhtiyari tribe for the Constitutional Revolution by looking at social-cultural changes inside the Bakhtiyari tribe and in Iran before and during the Constitutional Revolution. Rather than seeing the Constitutional Government as the start of efforts to curtail the power of the tribes, Khazeni saw the 19th century as marked by efforts to open Bakhtiyari lands and subjugate the tribes. Khazeni wrote that, "the Constitutional Revolution occurred as the tribes in Iran were becoming increasingly subject to state expansion and centralization."[49] Bakhtiyari support for the Constitutional cause caused a "significant shift" in representations of the tribes of Iran, especially the Bakhtiyari. The tribes of Iran "no longer appeared as subjects of empire but as people of the homeland."[50] Similarly, Khazeni pointed out that the participation of the Bakhtiyari in the Constitutional Revolution, made possible by the opening of Bakhtiyari lands through British and Qajar imperial projects, brought on serious social changes inside the Bakhtiyari. The moment represented a "duality between autonomy and assimilation." Bakhtiyari khans and ordinary members of the tribe "embraced the homeland- *vatan* – even though they did not entirely relinquish their traditional tribal motives or leave their tribal conscience behind."[51] In this way, the Bakhtiyari were very

[49] Arash Khazeni, Tribes and Empires on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 162.
[50] Ibid., 170.
[51] Ibid., 191.

much like their Azeri and Armenian counterparts, balancing multiple identities at the same time.

Further research into tribal contributions to the Constitutional Revolution would be complicated by a lack of documents. Due to Sardar Asʿad's efforts, a Bakhtiyari account of the Constitutional Revolution was recorded. Further, there are extensive records about the Bakhtiyari in the British National Archives and the British Petroleum Archives. Other tribes, like the Shahsavan or Qashqai, did not have the same level of commercial and diplomatic contact with imperial powers. Even if few new documents remain, there are still new ways to look at Bakhtiyari history.

Conclusion:

Despite the vastly different backgrounds of Azeris, Armenians, and Bakhtiaris, their historiography reveals certain commonalities. The participation of these groups in the Constitutional Revolution was seen as both central, but the unique perspective of these groups remained incompletely acknowledged. Further, recent literature emphasized the fluid and ambiguous nature of minority identities during this period. The perspective of these groups will remain difficult to integrate into the larger body of Iranian history due to the number of research languages needed and ongoing problems with archival access.

An example of how this could be achieved is *Shattered Dreams of Revolution* by Bedross Der Matossian. Instead of looking at minority contributions to the Turkish Constitutional Revolution of 1908 piece-meal or in isolation, Matossian looks at how the emerging Jewish, Armenian, and Arab public spheres interacted with one another

and with the dominant Turkish public sphere. Much like the Iranian case, he examined how the Revolution and enactment of a constitution raised expectations and how these feelings were internalized and negotiated by different groups.[52] The differing expectations and perspective of dominant and non-dominant groups led to the rise of ethnic tension and disappointment in the new democratic order.

Matossian faced similar historiographic problems to those faced by scholars of Iran. The account of minority perspectives is not comprehensive. For linguistic reasons, Matossian was unable to include the perspectives of Greeks, Albanians, Kurds, Bulgarians, Assyrians, and Macedonians.[53] Further, the archival records of Assyrians and Kurds are now held by several countries. Instead of looking for new sources to create ever longer and more detailed monographs, new research could engage in "a comparative, inter- and intra-communal, cross-cultural analysis and initiate further dialogue among scholars in studies in a variety of disciplines."[54]

This approach can help answer fundamental historical questions. How did elite ideas about the nation come to be embraced by the non-elite masses? How did subjects become citizens? In the case of Iran and the Ottoman Empire, this process occurred in the midst of multiple nationalisms that were in competition and in conversation with one another. Exposure to these new identities was distributed unevenly. Not all Armenians participated in the siege of Tabriz. Only a portion of Armenian society was actively involved in Revolutionary activity. Similarly, not all Iranian Azeris traveled to Baku or even had contact with someone who travelled to Baku. By stepping back and

[52] Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 5.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

examining the inter- and intra-communal differences in how the promise and legacy of the Constitution was perceived, we can better triangulate the Constitutional Revolution.

Conclusion

1941 as the Encore of 1906

Our understanding of the Constitutional Revolution has been dependent on how scholars imagined or constructed a system of thought or behavior for political and social action. By examining how the Iranian nation is parsed or divided up to fit into global narratives of change, we saw that the social history of Iran is an important aspect of our understanding of Iran, even when trying to assume a macro-view of social change. Social change is explained in a global context by focusing on social phenomenon that are common to all nations, but only one part of the Constitutional Revolution. In the case of the ʿulama, we examined how various authors used the ʿulama to explain social change through religion and culture. In the case of ethnic minorities, we examined how the experience of marginalized groups, though crucial to understanding Iranian society and the Constitutional Revolution, have not been integrated into our understanding of social change in Iran. What were common to all three accounts were controversies over the social history of Iran, born out of research difficulties both specific to Iran and in general to social history. In some cases, reference to present history has filled in gaps. In others, reference to sociological theories of study has allowed historians to maximize the available sources

We still do not understand the root cause of social change in Iran, in part because there are basic disagreements about the composition and values of Iranian society. Global narratives have struggled to balance an understanding of the peculiarities of Iranian society into generalized or global explanations of social change.

This was largely possible by focusing on those classes or groups, which could be compared or were similar to groups in Europe or in other countries. However, these groups, though influential, may not have been in fact the agents of change inside of Iran. In the case of ethnic minorities, we see the need not just for social history but also for historical sociology. These groups have, to a certain extent, been accorded, in the word of E.P. Thompson, the "condescension of posterity." While they certainly have agency inside of their own narratives, they are largely set off from the rest of Iranian history.

Existing efforts to explore Qajar society, while helpful, are not sufficient. *Iranian Studies* devoted four issues in 2001 to Qajar society, especially Qajar art and print culture.[1] While these articles provided important insight into the beliefs and views of elite Iranians, these works have limited applications in explaining the Constitutional Revolution. As discussed before, studies of the Constitutional Revolution require a marriage of both social history and historical sociology. This work into Qajar society helps illuminate elite society, but it does little to help scholars understand the actions of "the masses." Rather, this research is an instance of the unfortunate tendency in history to "uncover what has hitherto been unknown, and to enjoy what we find." Rather, "what we really want to know is why such beliefs were held, how they fitted in with the rest of the value-system of those communities…and why they changed or didn't change."[2] Scholars need to combine imagination and information to try and reconstruct "a coherent, preferably a consistent, *system* of behavior or thought- and one which can be, in some senses, inferred once we know the basic social assumptions, parameters and

[1] *Iranian Studies* 34, no. 1-4 (Spring-Winter, 2001)
[2] Hobsbawm, *On History*, 214-215.

tasks of the situation, but before we know very much about that situation."[3] It is this system, grounded in a conception of Iranian society, which scholars have tried to create.

Historians of Iran have chased that "system of behavior or thought" for the fifty years. Browne had the convenient crutch of Whig history to resolve the issue. Keddie, Algar, and Lambton used Shiʿi Islam to provide this basic system of belief and thought. Afary, Bayat, and Abrahamian largely relied on socio-economic conceptions of social change, and used class conflict and material interest to explain action. However, this fell short of the goals of social historians like E.P. Thompson who tried to replace a "prototypical working class" with a concrete working class, "which emerged within a specific historical context."[4] After the cultural turn of the 1980's and 1990's, the project of social history was no longer in vogue.

The history of the Constitutional Revolution has become allegory. Even under the best of circumstances, the grassroots historian "finds only what he is looking for, not what is already waiting for him."[5] This is doubly true in the case of the Constitutional Revolution, which unlike the French or Russian Revolutions, was not documented by an effective bureaucracy or a domestic print culture. As a result of this inevitable research problem, historians apply different theoretical understanding of human nature, emphasizing particular sources as "essential" or "representative, and use contemporary understandings as a starting point for discussions of Iranian society in order to construct the mentality of Iranian society.

We can improve our understanding of Iranian society by looking at Iran after the Constitutional Revolution. Two of the most significant accomplishments of the Reza

[3] Ibid., 210-211.
[4] Iggers, *Historiography*, 101.
[5] Hobsbawm, *On History*, 205.

Shah period were the establishment of a modern, national bureaucracy and a national education system. Consequently, records of Iranian society, both from above and from bellow, increased. The Iranian government developed the capacity to govern and document its population. The expansion of education had a profound effect on literary culture in Iran. The expansion of literacy provided an audience, while government promotion of printing for textbooks expanded the internal publishing capacity of Iran. When the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941 deposed Reza Shah, Iran was equipped to debate and document the Constitutional Revolution. There exists a host of government documents, parliamentary debates, memoirs, and histories that addressed Iranian society in the immediate aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution.

Many of the key Persian language accounts, now relied on as primary sources of the Constitutional Revolution (i.e. Kasravi and Malekzadeh) were written or edited during this period. After the fall of Reza Shah in 1941, the Majles was restored to power and quickly restored individual freedoms. Newspapers and political parties sprang up overnight. These formerly suppressed voices felt an immediate need to address the Constitutional Revolution, which they had been unable to do during the chaos of World War I and the subsequent repression of Reza Shah.

In many ways, the "revolution" of 1941 is a better point of comparison to 1906 than the Revolution of 1979. While Iranian society had changed significantly since 1906, there were still points of correspondence between the Iran of 1941 and the Iran of 1906. The Constitution of 1906 was still in place. Reza Shah had, for a variety of reasons, never repealed the Constitution, even if he subverted its intent. Food security, especially price inflation and hoarding by merchants, was a major issue in Iranian

society during the early 1940's. The tribes remained a major political and military force capable of challenging authority. Iran's ethnic and religious minorities remained incompletely integrated into Iranian society. In a particular point of symmetry, an autonomous government backed by "Caucasian revolutionaries" formed in Azerbaijan in both 1908 and 1946. Studying Iran during the 1940's offers a way to "touch" the Constitutional Revolution. Iran was characterized by similar social phenomenon and a had a similar social composition. This second constitutional period also resulted in the return of autocracy and consolidation of popular support around a "strongman" capable of holding Iran together. If the Tobacco Protests of 1890 were a dress rehearsal for the Constitutional Revolution, then the turmoil of the 1940's was its encore.

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