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## Despotism and Translation in Iran

### The Case of Naseri House of Translation as the First State Translation Institution

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#### Abstract & Keywords

##### English:

The *Dar al-Tarjome Naseri* [Naseri House of Translation] was the first state translation institution established at the time of Naser al-Din Shah, the fourth king of Qajar in Iran. This institution was managed by Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad al-Saltane, the Shah's special translator and interpreter and later his minister of Press and Publishing. He was the second key figure after the Shah, whose decisions influenced the publishing of translations in Iran. Known for being a despotic ruler, Naser al-Din Shah would not allow the translation and publication of any material at the Dar al-Tarjome Naseri without his approval. This situation led to a translation movement outside the court and even outside Iran which pursued objectives that were different from and even opposed to those of the state translation institution. The aim of this study is twofold: to describe the role translation played in and outside the Naseri House of Translation, which resulted in two translation movements, and to show how translation led to Naser al-Din Shah's "new" form of despotism. To this end, the authors have examined the related sources including the books translated in and outside this institution and the translators' prefaces as well as Etemad al-Saltane's personal diary. The study intends to show that, not only did the Dar al-Tarjome Naseri feed Naser al-Din Shah's despotism, but it also acted as a reference for translators outside the Dar al-Tarjome to select and translate books which then paved the way for the Constitutional Revolution in 1905.

**Keywords:** history of translation, publishing, Iran, Dar al-Tarjome Naseri, Naseri House of Translation, Naser al-Din Shah, Qajar dynasty

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*My subjects and the people of this country should know nothing but that which concerns Iran and their own preoccupations and that, for example, if they hear the word Paris or Brussels, they should not know whether these are something to eat or to wear.* (Naser al-Din Shah, quoted in Amin al-Dowleh 1962: 123)

#### 1. Introduction

"Oriental despots" is a phrase used by the 19th century Europeans to describe the Qajar dynasty Kings in Iran (Abrahamian, 2008: 8). The reign of Naser al-Din Shah, the fourth King of Qajar is seen as a transition from the traditional reign to the modern state (Amanat, 1997: 7). The idea of "oriental despotism" is widely discussed in Western literature on Eastern governments and was of great interest to Western philosophers. The discussion is said to date back as far as Aristotle (384–322 BC), who proposed the "theoretical foundation" of 'despotism' in his book *Politics* (Minutir, 2012: 2-3). Aristotle makes a distinction between despotic monarchy and tyranny, stating that the latter, unlike the former, is exercised against people's will (Aristotle, 2007: 2018). Through the 16th to the 19th centuries, philosophers such as Machiavelli, Hume, Montesquieu and Hegel distinguished two principal kinds of government: the Eastern and the Western, the main difference being that the former enjoyed no limitation in exerting authority (Abrahamian, 1974: 3-4). Montesquieu particularly dealt with the concept of "oriental despotism" in his *Lettres Persanes* (1721) and later in *Des Sprit des Lois* (1748). The concept was also discussed in France stressing the similarities between Louis XIV (1638–1715)[1] and the oriental despots such as the Ottoman Sultans (Minutir, 2012: 15). It is noteworthy that these two books were not translated into Persian until 1945 in the Pahlavi era, the Qajar's successors.

Each thinker discussing "oriental despotism" gave different reasons for the phenomenon. While Montesquieu regarded "fear of the ruler" to be the prime reason, Hegel considered a lack of social "classes" to be the decisive factor (Abrahamian, 1974: 4). Accepting Hegel's view, Marx and Engels went further to insist on the "socio-economic" factors influencing the "cultural and institutional variations in history" around the world. They believed that the difference in socio-economic structure of East and West lied in the "absence of private property" in Asia (Abrahamian, 1974: 5). They provided two reasons for this, one being "large bureaucracy administering public works", (mostly emphasized by Engels) and the other being "fragmented society", which could not challenge the central government (mostly emphasized by Marx) (Abrahamian, 1974: 6).

Abrahamian maintains that Iranian monarchs at the time of Achaemenians, Sassanids and Safavids had a large bureaucracy. However, Abrahamian argues, that while the Qajar monarchy was a clear example of oriental despotism, it does not fit into Engels' theory. Abrahamian believes that the Qajar kings, especially at the time of Naser al-Din Shah, governed the country by taking advantage of the social fragmentation in Iran (Marx's theory) as the population were scattered in villages, towns and tribes, with little or no communication between them. Linguistic and religious diversity would also add to the distance between people. As a result, people of the same habit or rank would not find the opportunity to get together and shape a social class which could at last challenge the central state (Abrahamian, 1974: 31; See also Amanat, 1997: 43-52).

As an oriental despot, Naser al-Din Shah established a 'new' kind of monarchy incorporating certain elements from Western governments. It was in his era that, for the first time, Iranians visited Europe and Western books

were translated. Also, Naser al-Din Shah is generally considered the most literate Iranian king. His legacy, therefore, is a mixed one; while he established *Dar al-Tarjome Naseri* [Naseri House of Translation] (henceforth DTN), the first large state translation institution for translating Western books and magazines, he stunted its development as a fully-fledged translation institution which could cater to the intellectual needs of a rising nation.

Based on the archival sources related to the DTN, its founders and its translations, the purpose of this study is to consider how despotism and translation were intertwined during Naser al-Din Shah's reign. We hope to show that the DTN played a role both as a manifestation of a despotic government and at the same time one of the main factors fostering translation outside itself, which later contributed to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905. Although the authors have made every effort to access all available primary sources, this study suffers from the general lack of historical archives in Iran which makes all research on Iranian history very difficult (cf. Abrahamian, 1974). The only sources available were the diaries of Naser al Din Shah and some other courtiers. The most important of which was Etemad al-Saltane's *Ruzname-ye Khaterat* [Journal of Memories] in which he provides valuable information about the DTN. This diary is significant because it is written by a person who, from the time he was 25 years old, met the Shah almost every day of his life. Iraj Afshar,[2] asserts that this diary is one of the most important historical documents of the Naseri Era (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967, Introduction, p. 4). What makes the diary specially significant is that, as Etemad al-Saltane asserts, nobody except him and his wife knew he was writing a diary and that, in his own words, "I write whatever I do not dare to utter" (1967: 41). He may at times be prejudiced in his judgments but the information he provides about the Naseri era is first-hand and invaluable. As far as possible, we have cross-checked the information in the diary with other sources to avoid over-reliance on a single source. Besides, the state yearbooks, also prepared by Etemad al-Saltane by order of Naser al-Din Shah for the first time in Iran, were of great value to us since they provided a record of DTN members. Since this institution had not been studied in any detail before, the information available from other secondary sources was rather limited and in some cases clearly false.

Readers should be aware, therefore, that this study provides a rather partial reconstruction; but also that this is the only one possible with the sources currently available.

This paper will first provide an overview of the socio-cultural context of Iran at the time of Naser al-Din Shah. A brief account of Naser al-Din Shah's background will be followed by an introduction to the DTN, the translators that worked there and their translation activity. We will then look at the censorship policies which were in place and the way they reflected the Shah's increasing suspicious. The emergence of an opposing translation movement outside the DTN is then discussed: we try to show how the DTN and translation played a role in Naser al Din Shah's adopting a 'new' mode of despotism originating from the West and how his model of censorship was followed by the successive dynasties. The concluding section shows how despotism and translation are intertwined and how Naser al-Din Shah's policy towards translation set a trend in Iranian publishing.

## 2. Historical background

Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the ruling system in Iran was that of a kingship. Thirty five dynasties ruled Iran from its ancient origins up to the contemporary era. The Qajar dynasty, the focus of this study, was the penultimate, the 34th. This dynasty ruled Iran for 130 years (1796-1925), coming to power a few years after the French Revolution in the late 18th century. It was also contemporaneous with the industrial revolution in the 19th century as well as the World War I in the first two decades of the 20th century and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 (Azarang 2016: 217). There were Seven Qajar kings, and of these Naser al-Din Shah reigned the longest, 48 years (1848-1896).

The Qajar dynasty was established by Aqa Muhammad Khan Qajar in 1785, who brought unity and peace to Iran after five decades of upheaval. From the beginning of the dynasty up to the so-called Constitutional Revolution in 1905, Iran underwent a series of transformations as it gradually adapted to the changes taking place both within its borders and in the outside world. As Amanat (1997:7-8) puts it, the Constitutional Revolution was "an attempt to develop democratic institutions based on the rule of law, conscious nationalism, and secular reforms". Naser-al-Din Shah played a key role in this process because of his intellectual character and the socio-historical conditions of his long reign.

When Naser al-Din Shah ascended to the throne in 1848, almost 20 years had passed since Iran's defeat at the hands of Russia, a defeat which resulted in a significant loss of territory to Russia under the *Gulestan* and *Turkamanchai* Treaties, in 1813 and 1828 respectively. As Abrahamian (2008: 36-37) argues, this defeat led to Russia making advances in the north of Iran (Russia was interested in Enzeli Port and its road to Tehran) and the British Empire, Russia's rival, advancing from the south (Britain was interested in the Persian Gulf and its roads to Shiraz, Isfahan, Yazd and Kerman). Britain's presence in Iran also forced the Qajars to hand over Herat and to accept the Paris Treaty in 1857. The country was effectively divided between Britain and Russia and whenever these imperial powers were not satisfied with the advantages they were obtaining from Iran they would publish articles in newspapers and magazines criticizing Naser-al-Din Shah's government severely (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 118, 119, 183). This led to a gradual hostility towards foreign powers and explains Naser al-din Shah's "paranoid style of politics" (Abrahamian 2008: 37)[3]. Thus while Europe was making advances in science and technology, the Iranian economy was critically weak and the Iranian people were discontent with the "political and clerical repression" that had its roots in traditional values and practices (Amanat 1997:2).

At the start of Naser-al-Din Shah's reign, around the middle of the 19th century, the population of Iran barely reached six million, 80% of which lived in rural areas (Amanat 1997: 49). By the end of Naser al-Din Shah's reign, in the early 20th century, the population had doubled: 60% now lived in rural areas, 10-15% in urban areas and 25-30% were members of nomadic tribes. The literacy rate by the beginning of the 20th century was about 5%, most of whom were graduates of religious/Koranic centres and missionary establishments (Abrahamian 2008: 2).

The decrease in the rural population was partly due to the policy that Naser al-Din Shah adopted in order to limit the influence of Russia and Britain, which was later called "defensive modernization" (Abrahamian, 2008: 38). Although the policy was a failure overall because of the severe financial crisis that the country was trapped in at the time, it did enjoy some success, such as the establishment of modern schools the most important of which was *Dar al-Fonun* [House of Skills], the first modern college in Iran. The college was founded to train the sons of the nobility and it would give scholarships to the best students so that they could continue their education in Europe,

mainly in France and Belgium, but not in Russia and Britain. In the late 19th century, four other secondary schools and five other colleges affiliated to *Dar al-Fonun* plus two military schools, and two agriculture and foreign language schools were also established (Abrahamian 2008: 40). Amanat (1997: 7), describes the Qajar period as a transition from “tradition to modernity”; the Qajar kings, especially Naser al-Din Shah, were constantly confronting the dilemma of adhering to local traditions while also moving with the times and adapting to the modern trends of life and models of government that were arriving from the West.

### 3. Naser al-Din Shah's background and its relation to translation

Naser al-Din Shah, whose reign spanned almost the whole of the second half of the 19th century, ascended the throne at the age of 17 in 1848. What makes his reign different from those of other Qajar Kings, apart from its being the longest, is his unique personality. His childhood had a great impact on his personality as a future king. This period of his life is so significant that Abbas Amanat, an Iranian historian, has devoted a whole book to the way Naser al-Din Shah's character was shaped during his childhood. According to Amanat, Naser al-Din Shah had a bitter and lonely childhood, mainly due to the quarrelsome relationship between his mother, Mahd-e Olya, and his father, Mohammad Shah (1834-1848). They both had very different personalities, the mother being an extrovert and the father an introvert. However, the source of the conflict were the rumors that his mother was not faithful to her husband. The rumors were so intense that Naser al-Din was thought to be an illegitimate child. His father therefore felt little affection for him and instead paid much more attention to Naser al-Din's half-brother who was younger than him. This caused Naser al-Din to grow up in solitude and fear with no support and love from his father (Amanat 1997:23-42). He was, according to Amanat, an “insecure crown prince” who was “seldom admitted to his father's presence” (1997: 42). Thus his “troubled upbringing” and his “political insecurities”, caused him to be paranoid throughout his 48-year rule (1997: xvi). Despite the difficult period from his childhood to his becoming the legitimate crown prince, Naser al-Din Shah overcame the odds and became the King of Iran with the help of his mother and his father's premier Mirza Aqasi (1997: 47-55).

Naser al-Din Shah had a great enthusiasm for reading books and learning new languages; he was especially fond of the French language as well as history and geography. His love for reading was the legacy of Naser al-Din Shah's grandfather Abbas Mirza, who had a key role in initiating important reforms at this time (Amanat 1997: 27-28). Thus under the pro-literacy policies that Abbas Mirza had initiated, Naser al-Din Shah became a highly literate man, devoting most of his time to reading and writing. He had a library in his court which had 170 translated books in it by the time of his death (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 1185). Even during lunch he ordered foreign newspapers to be read to him. Some Iranian newspapers, including *Ettella'* [information] and *Iran*, were also established at this time. They were strictly monitored to ensure that they did not publish anything he disapproved of. Naser al-Din Shah was the first Iranian king to visit Europe; he made three trips there during his rule. He was a great writer both in terms of quality and quantity. Iraj Afshar (2000), a Qajar historian, maintains that he would write at least 200 lines a day and that all the writings of all the kings of Iran put together would be like a drop in the ocean compared to what Naser al-Din Shah had written.

Naser al-Din Shah was also interested in drawing portraits and landscapes and had a liking for topography. He enjoyed the theatre and would often watch Molière's plays in translation. He was also interested in music and photography, keeping an eye on the development of these two art forms at Dar al-Fonun. Collecting old coins was one of his hobbies. He had a small museum built in his court containing old works of art and coins (Afshar 2000: 9-12).

It should therefore come as no surprise that he established a centre for translation. All the translators already working at the Foreign Ministry, plus those interpreters in his service since he took the throne, were told to join this centre. The centre was called *Dar al-Tarjome Homayooni* [His Majesty's Translation House] which was mostly known after the Shah's name Naser, *Nasari Dar al-Tarjome*. The centre will be discussed at greater length below.

Therefore Naser-al-Din Shah's troubled childhood and “political insecurities” along with his love for reading made him obsessive with knowing what the Western governments thought of him and his rule. This resulted in his strict monitoring every single book translated at the DTN and even being sensitive about the translation method adopted by the translators, his desired method being word for word translation. As it will be discussed in the following sections, he went so far as to establish the first state censorship bureau which is still one of the major filters in Iran's publication industry.

### 4. The Nasari House of Translation

The DTN is the only state translation institution created in Iran, along with the Jondi Shahpoor centre of knowledge which was founded during the Sassanid era (244-651 AD). The active period of the DTN may be divided into three phases. The initial phase, which lasted 12 years, started with the appointment by the Shah in 1871 of Etemad al-Saltane as manager of the DTN (Ahmadi 1992: 16). The appointment was announced on 22 October 1871 in the official government newspaper, *Iran*. The announcement stated that the office would start by employing Iranians who had been educated abroad and foreigners who resided in Iran.

The second phase, which lasted 13 years, started with the Shah's order in 1882 to expand the DTN into “a comprehensive and organized translation centre”. The Shah dedicated a special place near Marmar Palace for the DTN; it was inaugurated on 22 October, 1883 by the Shah and his Grand Vizier, Amin-al-Dowleh. In another development, on 14 November, 1882, four bureaus were included in the newly founded Ministry of the Press and Publishing with Etemad al-Saltane as the minister (Etemad al-Saltane 1967:225). The four bureaus were the DTN, the Court Printing House, Bureau of Encyclopaedia, and Newspapers Bureau. By order of the Shah, the translators already working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were asked to work at the DTN (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 226). The translators were either selected by Etemad al-Saltane based on the quality of their work or recommended by the Shah. As the Minister of the Press and Publishing, Etemad al-Saltane appointed Mohammad Hossein Foroughi (later given the title Zaka al-Molk [the sun of the country]) as the head of the DTN. Zaka-al-Molk was a highly literate man and an excellent editor and translator from French and Arabic. The second phase ends with the death of both Naser al-Din Shah and Etemad al-Saltane in 1896.

The third phase in the history of the DTN is the 11-year period after the death of Naser al-Din Shah and Etemad al-Saltane in 1896 up to the Constitutional Revolution in 1905. In this period Muzaffar al-Din Shah, Naser al-Din Shah's son, ascended to the throne and Mohammad Baqer Khan (Etemad al-Saltane's nephew), whose mismanagement brought ruin to the DTN, was appointed the Minister of Publication and Translation. With the

victory of the Constitutional Revolution, the Ministry of Publication and Translation was disbanded (Mahboubi Ardakani 1989: 719). In this study we only focus on the first and second phases, in both of which the Shah and Etemad al-Saltaneh were the main translation agents.

#### 4.1 Translators and number of translated books

As a comprehensive state institution, the DTN employed translators, editors, and *Monshis*, people well-versed in Persian whose job was to control the final draft of the translation in terms of language fluency and accuracy before it was presented to the Shah. These people received wages and had two days off a week (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 291, 162; See also *Iran* newspaper No. 48, 22 October 1871). All in all, based on the Year Books (1873-1896) provided by Etemad al-Saltane (Qasemi, 2011) as well as his diary, plus the prefaces of translators to the books translated, there were 41 translators working at the DTN translating from different languages (French, Russian, Germany, English, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Indian).

There were also other translators in the court, such as princes, who translated either because of their interest in the job, or because they wanted to show their loyalty to the Shah; and there were translators outside the court, including the students and graduates of Dar al-Fonun, who normally translated textbooks, and the reformist intellectuals most of whom were against the monarchy and lived in exile. This study is limited to the salaried translators working in and around the court.

During these 25 years, according to the sources consulted,[4] overall 200 books and booklets were translated, along with 151 newspapers. Of the 200 books, 61 were on history (including biographies), 65 were travelogues (including both the trips to Iran and to other parts of the world), 11 were on geography, 20 were novels and short stories, and 43 were on different subjects such as science, politics, law and medicine (see table 1). The few number of books translated on politics (4) and law (1) mainly belonged to the second phase of DTN activity.

	newspapers	History books	travelogues	Geography books	Novels & short stories	Miscellaneous	Total
1871-1896	151	61	65	11	20	43	351

**Table 1: The number of books and newspapers translated at the DTN from 1871 to 1896**

It should be mentioned that these books were presented to the Shah, who was the first to read the book as illuminated manuscripts[5], handwritten in an elegant calligraphy. The announcements for the publication of the books were published in the *Iran* newspaper (cf. for example, Nos. 218 (16 May 1874), 312 (1 March 1877), 339 (6 December 1877). Moreover, some books, such as *Robinson Crusoe* (no. 133-216 (17 December 1872- 24 April 1874), *Captain Hatteras Travel to the North Pole*[6] [no. 1-132 (2 April 1871- 11 November 1872)], were first printed in instalments in newspapers.

#### 4.2 The process of selecting books for translation

The books for translation were selected by three different authorities. First, the Shah himself. In the *FANKHA* index (The Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts), which is compiled by Mostafa Derayati by the Iran National Library publications, there is an entry for Naser al-Din Shah, according to which 411 books were written or translated by order of or for the Shah (Derayati, 2011 Vol. 38: 745-56). An examination of the books translated at the DTN shows that at least 25 books were translated by the direct order of the Shah as stated in the prefaces. The second selecting authority was Etemad al-Saltane; he would either directly order books from France (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 540, 149), or buy them through Iran's ambassador or the foreign translators coming back from France (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 410, 332, 326, 309, 343). The third group were translators themselves; they would start translating a book if they found it to be worthy of translation. They normally stated this in the prefaces of their translations, justifying their selections by resorting to very general reasons such as "educational benefits". For instance, Mohammad Aref, a translator at the DTN, explained his purpose in choosing *Iraq Geography* for translation as follows: "[...] It can be said that the main task of translators is the translation of scientific, technical and political books and theses of which both the state and the nation will be beneficiary" (Aref, 1884: 1).

However, translators rarely chose books for translation, because each and every book had to be approved by the Shah or it would be banned even if the translation had already been printed and distributed to bookshops. An example is Etemad al-Saltane's translation of *The Biography of Mademoiselle de Montpensier* in seven volumes, two of which were devoted to the biography of Louis XIV. The book was banned by the Shah, even though 705 copies of the book had been sent to bookshops (Etemad al-Saltane 1967:1191). "I wonder", Etemad al-Saltane stated in a letter of complaint to the Shah on the ban of his book, "which part of this book was harmful to the government?" (1191).

### 5. The Censorship Bureau

As stated in the previous section, no book or booklet could be translated at the DTN unless approved by Naser al-Din Shah. An examination of the translators' prefaces shows that in the first phase of DTN activity, Naser al-Din Shah insisted that the translations be done in a *taht al-lafzi* [word-for-word] manner, so that the writer's meaning was not distorted. This fact is reported frequently in the translators' prefaces. Issa Garoosi, one of the translators at the DTN, goes so far as to use the phrase "word-for-word translation" in the title of one his translations: *Tarjomey-e That al-lafz-e Safarnameye Doctor Larte* [Word-for-Word Translation of Dr Larte's Travelogue] (1879). Mirza Rahim Khan, another translator at the DTN, in the margin of his preface to the translation of *Tarikh-e Selsele-ye Jalile-ye Qajarieh* [The History of Iran and the Grand Qajar Dynasty], writes as follows: (Rahim Khan, 1884: 2-3):

[The translator] does not deviate from the word-for-word translation method and does not try to use flowery language; he neither reduces anything from the author's words [...] nor adds to the text [...].

Etemad-al-Saltaneh, as often mentioned in his diary, would first present the books to be translated to the Shah and after his approval send them for translation (Etemad-al-Saltane, 1967: 309, 400, 835). While the Shah could

exert strict control over anything published at the DTN, he had no control over translations or articles published outside the court or even outside Iran. On one occasion, a book of satire, criticizing Naser al-din Shah, written by an Iranian in India, Sheikh Hashem Shirazi, was published and sent to Iran. When he read the book the Shah was furious and he ordered that all available copies be destroyed. This incident led Etemad al-Saltane to suggest that a censorship bureau should be established. The Shah “liked the suggestion very much and approved it”, appointing Etemad al-Saltane manager of the bureau (1967: 381). When the new censorship bureau was presented as a bill in the parliament, it faced objections from other ministers but, with the support from the Shah, it was finally approved in 1885, two years after the expansion of the DTN. In reply to the ministers who opposed the censor bill, Etemad al-Saltane said: “what I do is for the benefit of the nation and state” (1967: 384). Qasemi (2000: 6) argues that the justification for this statement was that, if Etemad al-Saltane had not proposed the censorship bureau, the Shah would have put a ban on the whole publishing industry. After the approval of the bill, no books, newspapers, printed announcements or any other printed material anything written was allowed to get published in any printing house all over Iran, unless it was approved and signed by the manager of “Censorship Bureau”. Etemad al-Saltane had a stamp made on which it was written “*Molaheze shod*” [approved] with an image of a lying lion and a sun<sup>[7]</sup> (Etemad al-Saltane, 1995:162).

## 6. Naser al-Din Shah's gradual increase of suspicion

As stated earlier, Naser al-Din Shah's “troubled upbringing” meant that he lived in fear and suspicion of everyone. This fear intensified with the political unrest during his rule (Amanat, 1997: xvi). Moreover, with the increase of translation in and outside Iran and the growing number of Iranians going abroad for education, Naser al-Din Shah developed an aversion to learning and knowledge and towards the West, despite the fact that he spent “60,000 Toman a year” [8] for the people to learn foreign sciences (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 597). His suspicion of people who acquired knowledge increased to the extent that he once confessed to Etemad al-Saltane that he preferred people to stay ignorant (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 597).

Mohammad Ali Foroughi, one of the translators at the DTN, whose father worked the longest at the DTN as translator, editor and manager, asserts that Naser al-din Shah became hostile towards educated people towards the end of his rule; he banned people from going abroad, for he believed this could open their eyes to the importance of law. Foroughi goes on to say that even uttering the word “law” could have consequences such as “imprisonment and exile” (Foroughi, 1960: 64). Amin al-Dowleh, Naser al-Din Shah's director of the Post and Telegraph Bureau, points to the same attitude of the Shah in his diary, *Mirza Ali Khan Amin al-Dowleh's Political Memories* (1962: 26): “[...] the Shah had more trust in illiterate people than those who knew how to read and write [...]” Elsewhere he mentions that the Shah often expressed the conviction that the people of Iran “should know of nothing but Iran and their own preoccupations, and for instance if they hear the word Paris or Brussels, they should not know whether these are something to eat or to wear” (223).

The Shah's obsession with possible threats to his throne also explains his interest in history books, in particular those that could reassure him about the survival of the monarchy. An example of his attitude is the note he left at the beginning of volume one of *The history of Bismarck in the war of 1870 and 1871*[9], translated into Persian by Baron de Norman in 1880. The note reads: “I read it all, but it is utter nonsense. It is neither a history nor a story nor even a newspaper account. The person who wrote this book must have been drunk. Finished.” He left a similar note on volume 2 of the book: “I read this second volume too. It is all nonsense.”

It is worth noting that this fear and suspicion grew at the peak of the DTN's activity, during the second phase. Consequently, the number of translations completed in the second phase dropped from a peak of 174 publications (translated books and newspapers) in the years 1882-88, to just 29 in the years 1889-96). In fact the number of books and newspapers translated at the DTN decreased remarkably after the establishment of the censorship bureau. Being unable to control the materials printed outside Iran or outside the court, Naser al-Din Shah decided to check every single international parcel before it was delivered in Iran or sent abroad, fearing that they might contain something harmful to his throne. This was five years after the establishment of the bureau of censor in 1891 (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 218, 225).

## 7. Translators in and outside the DTN

The Constitutional Revolution that took place in 1905-1911 during the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, Naser al-Din Shah's son, is said to have had its roots in Naser al-Din Shah's period, when the first generation of *Monavvar al-fekran* [enlightened thinkers], as they would call themselves, was formed as a result of the encounter between Iran and the West. This encounter happened when the first group of Iranian students, mostly sons of the nobility and the royal families, were sent to Europe to complete their education (Abrahamian 2008: 34-35; see also Adamiyat 1978:14-17). This group of young intellectuals was formed against the old conservative establishment who abided by the traditions and fought jealously to keep the status quo. (Amanat 1997: 360-365; Adamiyat, 1978: 13-17).

The intellectuals themselves can be divided into two groups: *compliant* and *dissident*, to use Chomsky's terms (Gryspolakis 2016). Compliant intellectuals, like Etemad al-Saltane or Amin al-Dowleh (Naser al-Din Shah's head of the post office) were those who worked within the government system and had an official position. Azarang (2016: 278) refers to the two groups of intellectuals as the “well-wishers of the government” and the “*Degar-Andish*”, literally “politically other”.

The two groups had two things in common: first, all except Amir Kabir were translators, either working within the court and/or the DTN or outside the court and/or Iran. The second was that both groups pursued a common goal: to introduce reforms in the political, economic and educational spheres which would result in the greater well-being and awareness of the people (Amanat 1997: 362-67; Abrahamian 2008: 34-35; Zahedi & Heidarpour 2008: 127).

The difference between the two groups was in the way in which they tried to reach their goal: the compliant group indirectly pursued their goal by influencing the mind of the Shah, through translations for example, and did not aim for fundamental changes, while the dissident group stated clearly that fundamental changes needed to be made.

Thus the compliant group did not directly oppose the Shah and did not express their reforming ideas explicitly. Instead, they tried to indirectly make the Shah aware of the consequences of the policies he adopted. Their survival depended on the survival of the government (See Sassani 1960: 181). In other words, even while

insisting on reforms, the compliant group never wanted to change the identity of the kingdom or overthrow the Shah. For example Naser al-Din Shah's first Premier and supposedly first compliant intellectual, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, without whose help and insight, Naser al-Din might not have been able to safely rise to the throne, and who was known for his reforming ideas, did not mean to reduce the "despotic power" inherent in the kingdom (Amanat, 1997: 131-132). He even once discouraged Naser al-Din Shah from ordering a translation of Malcolm's *A History of Persia*, because Malcom had predicted the fall of Qajar dynasty at the end of his second volume and Amir Kabir believed that reading such a book would be "fatally poisonous" to Iranians (Amanat, 1997: 130). Even so, Naser al-Din Shah did not hesitate to order his execution lest his plans for reform might restrain his power and authority (Amanat, 1997: 160).

It seems that the intimidation caused by Amir Kabir's execution, cowed the compliant intellectuals into following their policy of "influencing" the Shah rather than opposing him directly. For instance, Mirza Mohammad Hossein Foroughi, translator and manager at the DTN, confided to his son Mohammad Ali after Naser al-Din Shah's death, that by writing an article in his newspaper *Tarbiat* [Discipline] – the first non-governmental newspaper – he was trying to "imply that the country needed law" (Foroughi, 1960: 66). Mohammad Hossein Froughi was once the victim of the Shah's intimidation and was forced into hiding for a week; he was suspected of having written an article on a banned topic. But after a thorough inspection of all his works he was pardoned by the Shah (Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 856-62).

Etemad al-Saltane, was another compliant intellectual. He did not explicitly suggest any fundamental changes in the government because he was not immune from Naser al-Din Shah's wrath either; as mentioned before, his seven-volume translation of French history was banned even after distribution (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 1191). Etemad al-Saltane strove to keep a balance between what the Shah approved and what he thought was good for the country. Since the Shah showed an interest in history books and biographies of kings, Etemad al-Saltane went out of his way to appease the Shah by translating a great number of history books. In addition to the books that were actually translated and published, he read 36 books to the Shah in the course of 14 years from 1881 to 1894. Of these, 34 books were on history, and 2 on science. On four occasions in his diary, Etemad al-Saltane explicitly states that he chose the books with the intention of opening the Shah's eyes to the reality of the way he ruled (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 507, 773, 794, 411). On one occasion, in the entry dated 7 June, 1885, after four hours of reading *Fredrick's History* to the Shah, he writes: "I spend more than 400 Tomans a year on books that are full of pieces of advice and admonition [for the Shah] but, alas, he does seem not to care at all" (1967: 411). However, based on his diary, it seems there were some cases where Etemad al-Saltane succeeded in influencing the Shah. For example in the entry dated 26 July, 1886, he writes: "Today I read *A Graphic History of France* to the Shah. The parts on Louis XV's unrestrained revelry and invectives seemed to be a bit of admonition and a lesson to the Shah" (1967: 507). Four years later, in the entry dated 18 April, 1890, he writes: "I took the trouble to translate *Madam Du Barry* to admonish His majesty and make him understand what causes the fall of a monarchy; but, alas, it caused the opposite effect. The Shah approved of Louis XV's wrongful deeds" (794).

The dissident group of intellectuals, on the other hand, wrote essays or letters to the Shah criticizing the conditions in Iran and offering solutions. Typically, they would make a comparison between the situation of Iran and that of the neighbouring countries such as Ottoman Turkey that had implemented a great project of reforms called "Tanzimat" (Adamiyat 1978:26; See also Amin al-Dowleh 1962: 28; Sassani 1960: 181). They were mostly oppressed by Naser al-Din Shah, and had to live in exile, like Mirza Malkam Khan,<sup>[10]</sup> or were put into jail and tortured like Mustashar al-Dowleh. Other dissident intellectuals such as Mirza Abd al-Rahim Talebov, Mirza Habib Esfahani, Mirza Jaafar Qarachedaqi, Mirza Abd al-Hossein Aqa Khan Kermani and Zein al-Abedin Maraghei were all influential in mobilizing public opinion and the movement towards Constitutional Revolution (Azarang, 2015: 277-278; Azarang, 2016: 107-110). To give an idea of the way the dissident intellectuals acted, we will briefly look at two key figures: Malkam Khan and Mustashar al-Dowleh.

Malkam Khan was competent in English, French and Italian; formerly he was the Shah's translator and interpreter and a professor and translator at Dar al-Fonun. After establishing the Freemasonry Society, he was deported from Iran but was pardoned by the Shah a year later and was appointed Iran's consul in Egypt. Having lived in the Ottoman Empire for ten years, Malkam Khan became familiar with the reforms carried out there. Also, having lived in England for 16 years as minister plenipotentiary meant that he was acquainted with the parliamentary system and the ideas of political philosophers. He established a newspaper called *Qanun* [Law] which was also sent to Iran until it was banned by the order of Naser al-Din Shah (Azarang, 2015: 279). Malkam translated and wrote many books on politics including John Stewart Mill's *On Freedom*, *Ketabche-ye Politika-ye Dowlati* [A booklet on State Politics], which is a translation of extracts from different European books. He also wrote a book on reforms based on what he had learnt from the *Tanzimat* movement in the Ottoman Empire.

Among the dissident intellectuals who were punished by the Shah for their translation activities, Mirza Yousef Khan Mustashar al Dowleh paid the highest price. He both wrote and translated; he knew several languages; he worked for the Foreign Ministry and was sent to Paris on a diplomatic mission. In Paris, he came into contact with new ideas and the result was the translation of a book called *Yek Kalameh* [One Word], first published in 1870, and reprinted in 1887 and 1907. The book was a partial adaptation of the French Constitution mixed with a translation of some chapters of the Napoleonic code. He had also incorporated certain Islamic laws in anticipation of possible objections put forth by the clergy. *Yek Kalameh* contains an introduction, 21 chapters and two announcements. The writer tries to analyze the reasons of Iran's backwardness and to suggest ways of rejecting despotism and fighting against underdevelopment. He states that the secret for Iran's development lies in one word: law. According to Vatandoost (2005: 349), he is believed to have got the idea of a "separation of powers" from Montesquieu whose books were not allowed to be translated at the DTN. Some time after the publication of the book, Mustashar al-Dowleh was arrested and put into jail. It is said that he was beaten about the head with his own book until he lost his sight; and since he had lost all his positions he died in poverty (Azarang, 2015: 281; See also Vatandoost, 2005; Haqiqat, 2008). However, this book is said to have had a great impact on the formation of the Constitutional Revolution and was used as a political guide in the secret meetings of the Constitutionals. It was also used in the writing of the Constitution and later, in the Pahlavi era, it was a constant inspiration for the new judiciary system (Azarang, 2015: 281-282).

Since every step taken needed to be approved by the Shah, the reformists' biggest obstacle was the Shah himself. When a new plan of reform was proposed to the Shah, he first showed an interest but then he would change his mind under the influence of the conservatives, who either opposed the whole plan or accepted it with changes

that would render it ineffective in the long run (Sassani, 1960: 181). Adamiyat describes this initial phase of consensus and a later phase of drawback as “the struggling of the two opposing forces of reformists and conservatives” (1978: 13).

## 8. Discussion

Naser al-Din Shah's reign was unique in various respects. He was the last traditional king and the first Iranian king to have to deal with international affairs. He was the first Iranian king to visit Europe. He was the most literate king of Iran. He also established many of other *firsts*: the first state ministries, the first official censorship bureau as well as other bureaus, the first telegraph, the first railway, the first factories, and the first comprehensive state translation institute (DTN); all thanks to contact with the West (See Etemad al-Saltane 1995: 126-127). Thus his rule served as a bridge between traditional Persian rule and, to use Amanat's term, the “monarchical absolutism in the modern sense” (1997: xiii-xiv).

Naser al-Din Shah's despotism, in fact, found an additional impetus from outside, i.e. “Enlightened Absolutism”, also called “benevolent despotism”. It is, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,

a form of government in the 18th century in which absolute monarchs pursued legal, social, and educational reforms inspired by the **Enlightenment**. [...] They typically instituted administrative reform, religious toleration, and economic development but did not propose reforms that would undermine their **sovereignty** or disrupt the social order. (*Britannica Encyclopedia*)

The Enlightened Absolutists reached their aims by “implementing laws for the benefit of their people, funding education, and even encouraging production of arts and sciences. The idea was to benefit their subjects, but it was often done so according to the ruler's belief and the ruler's belief alone.” (Albert, 2016). Two key figures in the Enlightened Absolutism movement are Frederick the Great of Prussia and Catherine the Great of Russia. Frederick the Great was a true lover of French thought and philosophy, and did a great deal to modernize the Prussian state and improve the living conditions of his subjects. Catherine the Great of Russia also shared a deep belief in Enlightened Absolutism, but

[while] she was a patron of literature and a promoter of Russian culture she herself wrote, established literary reviews, encouraged the sciences, and founded schools, [...] it cannot be denied that she was also egotistical, pretentious, and extremely domineering, above all a woman of action, capable of being ruthless when her own interest or that of the state was at stake. (Kuiper 2010: 125)

What was the lesson of enlightened absolutism for a king ruling not in Europe but in Iran? A king who frequently read, or was read to (he had 170 translated books in his library), the biographies of Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great besides Peter the Great, Napoleon, Bismarck, and Charles XII, (See Etemad al-Saltane 1967: 411, 442, 1008). Naser al-Din Shah knew from his readings and travels abroad that he was ruling in an era that was quite different from that of his predecessors. As Amanat maintains, Naser al-Din Shah's reign was “the beginning of monarchical absolutism in modern sense” (1997: 2-3). The reasons Amanat gives for this claim is the Shah's “shrewd diplomacy” in “playing off rival European powers against each other” besides carrying out some “selective reforms”. To further increase his power, Amanat goes on to say, the Shah contained ministerial power by “shrewd weakening of traditional checks and balances” (1997: xiv).

While Iran and Europe were poles apart in terms of scientific, cultural, religious, economic and historical matters, (for example, the authority of a king with absolute power ordained by God was hardly challenged at the time in Iran [cf. Amanat 1997: xiii, xiv]), enlightened absolutism still had lessons for Naser al-Din Shah to learn. A biography of Naser al-Din Shah shows that he learned two important lessons from these two “great” rulers: how to project an image of benevolence by doing things in the interest of the people that could be done without jeopardizing the monarchical rule; and how to be ruthless in matters that involved the survival of the monarchical rule.

A study of the Shah's reforms in various economic, scientific, social, religious and cultural spheres during his long reign shows how he adapted the policies of his favourite Prussian emperor and Russian empress to the context of Iran.[11] He did not copy the European model of despotism but borrowed the elements he thought would be useful to keep his throne and mixed those elements with what the traditional Persian kingdom had left him; that is, a God-like authority over his subjects. According to Scott (2002: 7), a significant element in enlightened absolutism was the “the acceptance by the monarch of a social contract, imposing obligations in return for the obedience and support derived from the population at large”. This was not crucial to Naser al-din Shah, for he already had people's unconditional obedience as a legacy from oriental despotism without having to go under any contract.

This made his kingdom an amalgam of paradoxes. Doing and undoing the reforms had become a feature of his rule. Both the national and international contexts plus the efforts of both compliant and dissident intellectuals made him first give in to some reforms and later give up those same reforms. For instance, while a government faced with social unrest due to food shortages may be expected to carry out some reforms, Naser al-Din Shah avoided any reform capable of empowering people (Amanat, 1997: 503; 516-517). Nonetheless, pressure from the West seemed to work better than internal unrests, forcing the Shah to introduce “laws”, a reform which eventually failed.

In a context where merely uttering the word “law” had serious consequences, the king's order to introduce laws can seem paradoxical. However, under the pressure of Western governments (especially Britain and France) who had started “casting aspersions” on the Shah in their newspapers – something the Shah was very sensitive about – Naser al-Din Shah ordered his statesmen to write a set of laws in 1885, a year after he had established the bureau of censorship (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 118). This seemed to be a lesson he had learned from the enlightened absolutism, a gesture to show that he too cared for reform. But even Etemad al-Saltane regarded this as just a gesture for the Shah to enhance his reputation and to show off as a fruit of his trip to Europe (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 771). This order of the Shah evidently had no practical results since four years later in 1889, when he came back from his third trip to Europe, he decided once again to have a set of laws written. It is noteworthy that this time too, European newspapers (mostly German and Russian) had “cast aspersions” on the Shah's Premier Amin al-Sultan. At last, when a book of law was prepared by Amin al-Dowleh, it was never enforced, for the conservatives, including Amin al-Sultan himself, were not happy with the project. (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 769-773; see also Amanat, 1997:466, 480). The pressure from the conservatives was so intense that Abbas Mirza Molk

Ara, who was in charge of writing the new laws on the model of the laws of European countries, gave up the task, saying that he could not write a book of laws in a situation where every single line had to be deleted upon the request of one of the conservative courtiers (Malekzadeh, 1984: 94; See also Amin al-Dowleh, 1962: 143).

It was the king's habit to first welcome any reform and then oppose it once he realized it would threaten his throne. The DTN too faced a similar destiny. Two years after he ordered the institution to expand, Naser al-Din Shah realized the significance of translation and the threat it could pose to his throne. Before the establishment of the censorship bureau, the Shah himself filtered every translation, but now the bureau of censorship monitored all translated material. This resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of translations (see section 7 above). As the Shah became increasingly paranoid, he imposed stricter restrictions on the translated material. Naser al-Din Shah also became increasingly reluctant to cover the costs of the DTN. In reply to Etemad al-Saltane's request for funds for the DTN in 1885 (the same year the censorship bureau was established), the Shah replied that his (infrequent) tips to the translators would suffice: "Last year I gave some tips, why should I pay the costs as well?" (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 395). It seems that in the years that followed, Naser al-Din Shah continued to only give tips to the translators, for Etemad al-Saltane, eight years later mentions in his diary that each year he spends 1000 Tomans out of his own pocket to keep the DTN going (1967: 963).

In the cultural sphere, the establishment of the DTN may be regarded as a means of propaganda, an act that would help create the image of a learned Shah. In reality, there is no evidence to show that Naser al-Din Shah was interested in or motivated by enlightened ideas such as rationalism, reliance on science rather than religion, freedom, tolerance, progress, liberal governance, etc. This can be shown by the books that were *not* translated at the DTN and the ones translated *outside* the DTN: the ideas of revolutionary thinkers such as Voltaire, Descartes, Montesquieu, Spinoza that had swept through Europe at the time, were not translated during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah at the DTN (Delzendehrooy & Khazaeefar, 2017: 37-38). This was while Japan and Turkey had already brought western knowledge into their countries through a systematic translation project (See Saito 2015: 2; Berk 2006: 20; Tahir 2008: 68; Czygan 2008: 43).

An examination of the books translated outside the DTN shows that the concepts and topics that had no chance of being translated at the DTN, were translated either anonymously by DTN translators or by translators (dissident intellectuals) outside the DTN. Some examples are Etemad al-Saltane's translation of Sophie Ségur's *Mémoires d'un Âne*, which he adapted to the Iranian context to indirectly criticize the Shah's Premiere, Amin al-Sultan. The book was published anonymously in 1887 and was banned on the Shah's order when he found out that it was a criticism of his Premiere (Minavi, 2003: 46). This was the same year in which Naser al-Din Shah confided to Etemad al-Saltane that he preferred the Iranian people to stay ignorant (1967: 597). Etemad al-Saltane also wrote a story named *Khalse/Khabname* [Ecstasy/ Dream Letter] in which he recounts his dream in a state of wakefulness and sleep where he had criticized and judged eleven main characters of the Qajar. Malkam Khan also wrote/translated about 13 essays and books outside court discussing topics such as law, freedom, democracy, despotism and its effects on the emigration of intellectuals.[12] The same concepts were also translated and written about by Abd al-Rahim Talebov inspired by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Talebov's book *Ahmad*, published in three volumes in Istanbul in 1893, was influential on the movements that culminated in the Constitutional Revolution (Azarang, 2015: 281; see also Nabavi Razavi, 2012: 333).

### 8.1. The effects of Naser al-Din Shah's legacy on translation and publication

What Naser al-Din Shah did with regard to translation and publishing industry and the way the intellectuals reacted against his deeds had long-lasting effects on translation and publishing in Iran. The same pattern seems to have been repeated in the era of the successors to the Qajars. Reza Khan Pahlavi (who reigned 1894–1921), after ascending the throne, passed a law in 1921 called "Code for Monitoring Publications" and also "The Penal Code for Propagandists against Independence and Security of the State" in 1931, whereby he censored and monitored whatever he felt to be a threat to his throne. Along the same lines, Reza Shah required the "Intelligence Office" to monitor books which were published in Iran or sent to Iran from abroad (Rajabi, 2009: 41). Reza Shah's strict policies led to a low rate of translation. The few books that were translated in this era were popular literature that had a clear entertainment purpose. (Azarang, 2012: 152). At the time of Pahlavi II (who reigned 1941-1979), all printing houses were required to submit their manuscripts to "The Bureau of Composition" before publication. This was a department in the Ministry of Culture whose duty was to read any manuscript and issue a letter of approval for publication (Rajabi, 2009: 47; see also Karimi-Hakkak, 1985: 191-192). To exert a stricter control over the printed material, Mohammad Reza Shah, passed a bill in 1963 which required the "Domestic Security and Intelligence Service" (SAVAK) to censor books (Rajabi, 2009: 48). This new policy resulted in a dramatic decline of the publication rate with a long black list of banned books. SAVAK was particularly sensitive about Russian literature and anyone having, for example, Maxim Gorki's *Mother* would end up in jail. Moreover, the works of authors such as Jack London, Bertolt Brecht and, especially, Jean Paul Sartre were banned. Mohammad Reza Shah is quoted to have said: "Tell Mr Sartre to mind his own business [...]" (Delannoy, 1992: 139-140). However this did not hinder the secret distribution of such books.

## 9. Conclusion

From our description of the DTN, it follows that translation and despotism were strongly connected in Iran; the growth of one fostered or hindered the other. As we observed above, as Naser al-Din Shah became more and more despotic, fewer and fewer translations were authorized and published at the DTN, but the publication of translations outside the DTN increased. Naser al-Din Shah's government, being despotic in nature, was not expected to establish a comprehensive state translation institution; however, being familiar with the strategies used by certain European kings, he applied a new kind of despotism which borrowed some elements from oriental despotism such the God-like authority and some elements from the "enlightened absolutism", such as advocating art and literature

In the same way that the DTN and the Censorship Bureau at the time of Naser al-Din Shah paved the way for the translation of books containing enlightening ideas, and thus leading to the Constitutional Revolution, during the Pahlavi era the Intelligence Office as well as the Bureau of Composition and finally SAVAK inadvertently fostered the clandestine translation and publication of banned books leading to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Since the Islamic Revolution, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has been responsible "for restricting access to any media that violates Islamic ethics or promotes values alien to the Iranian Revolution". Any book to be translated and published must apply for approval from this ministry.



The relationship between translation and despotism is a complicated one. It should not be taken for granted that stricter controls on the part of a despotic government will necessarily have the desired effect. The DTN has provided a case in point. The despotic Naser al-Din Shah hindered translation but paradoxically fostered the clandestine publication of translated books thus contributing to the circumstances which brought about the Constitutional Revolution.

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## Notes

- [1] Both *Tarikh-e Louie 14* [The History of Louis XIV] and *Sharh-e Hal-e Louie 14* [The Biography of Louis XIV] were read by Naser al-Din Shah (Etemad al-Saltane, 1967: 824-867, 636).
- [2] Iranian historian, thanks to whose efforts Etemad al-Saltane's diary as well as many other historical documents have been published and studied in Iran.
- [3] Naser al-Din Shah's anger and hostility towards the West went so far as to wish them death. On October 4, 1891, as Etemad al-Saltane noted in his diary, the Shah and Etemad al-Saltane were sitting together talking. The Shah showed a picture he had drawn of a mountain to Etemad al-Saltane saying in jest: "I am going to build a high wall in this mountain; when the European heads come to visit this wall I make each pay a lot of money. But since the mountain is hard to climb, hopefully, they will all fall down and die. This way I will take both the money and lives of the most important of them". Etemad al-Saltane (1967: 886)
- [4] National Library official site; Library, Museum and Document Centre of Iran Parliament Library site; Persian manuscript Catalogue (Fankha) 42 volumes; Iran Manuscripts (Dena); The Catalogue of Farsi Manuscripts; *Catalogue of Persianized Printed Books* from the beginning up to 1992 by Naji Nasr-Abadi.
- [5] A manuscript in which the text is supplemented with such decoration as initials, borders (marginalia) and miniature illustrations. In the strictest definition, the term refers only to manuscripts decorated with gold or silver.
- [6] The original book is *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* by Jules Verne
- [7] This, along with a sword, was the emblem of Iran's flag at the time
- [8] 1 Toman was almost equal to 2\$ at that time.
- [9] The scanned version of this book is available at Iran National Library (<http://www.nlai.ir>)
- [10] After Naser al-Din Shah's death, Malkam Khan was removed from the Shah's blacklist and appointed Iran's ambassador to Italy.

[11] In the fourth section of *Al-Ma'ser va Al-'Asar*, Etemad al-Salatne describes the reforming acts of Naser al-Din Shah in his 40 year rule, such as establishing ministries, bureaus, telegraph, railways telephone and electricity, different factories, etc., which he considered to be the result of relations with foreign countries (Etemad al-Saltane 1989: 126-27). However some of these reforms, especially the establishment of different ministries and councils, were largely ineffective due the despotic nature of the government. One of these councils was Dar al-Showra-ye Kobra [The Grand House of Council] which consisted of six ministers whose task was to consult with each other the important issues of the government. They were supposed to act independently of the government but since whatever decisions they took, had to be approved by the Shah, they tended to only make decisions that they thought would be approved by the Shah (Mahboubi Ardakani 1989 712-13). This was a clear example of enlightened absolutism. Therefore the establishment of all these ministries and bureaus, including *Nasari House of Translation*, was justified as long as they caused limited reforms within the framework of the government helping its survival.

[12] Some of these books and essays are: *Freedom* (a translation of Mirabeau's ideas), *The Secret Booklet* (on law), *The Military Order and the Reform Parliament*, *A handbook of Law*, *The Benefits of Freedom* (Mill's translation), *A Call for Justice*.

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