LIVING ON THE MARGINS: IRANIANS IN LATE OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

LIVING ON THE MARGINS: IRANIANS IN LATE OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

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This thesis analyses the emergence of the Iranian community in Ottoman Istanbul as a distinct group, once the city became a vibrant commercial centre for Iranian economic migrants in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the variables defining Iranian identity in Istanbul, this thesis argues that Iranians' self-perception was main determining factor in shaping Iranian identity in Istanbul, beyond Ottoman and/or Qajar political decisions and Shiite - Sunni sectarian divisions. This thesis further asserts that Iranian identity in Istanbul was shaped not only by Iranian self-perception, but also by Iranians' economic marginalization as a result of domestic and international economic transformation and their deliberate embrace of social marginalization to claim their belonging to the city as a distinct community. Thus, it is claimed that the Iranian community in Istanbul was a peculiarly Istanbulized community rather than a diasporic group.

Keywords: Iranians in Istanbul, Urban Identity, Iranian Self-Perception, Social Marginalisation.

ÖZ

ÇEPERLERDE YAŞAMAK: GEÇ OSMANLI İSTANBUL'UNDA İRANLILAR

ÖZÜTÜRK, Mevlüt Safa
Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Bölümü
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Bu tez, on dokuzuncu yüzyıl Osmanlı İstanbul'unun İranlı ekonomik göçmenler için canlı bir ticaret merkezi haline gelmesiyle birlikte, şehirde sayıları artan İranlı nüfusunun müstakil bir grup olarak ortaya çıkışını analiz etmektedir. İstanbul'daki İranlı kimliğini tanımlayan değişkenlere odaklanan tez, bu kimliğin şekillenmesinde Osmanlı ve/veya Kaçar siyasi kararlarının ve Şii - Sünni mezhepsel farklılıklarının ötesinde, İstanbul'daki İranlıların benlik algısının ana belirleyici faktör olduğunu savunmaktadır. Bu tez ayrıca, İranlı benlik algısına ilaveten, yerel ve uluslararası ölçekteki ekonomik dönüşümlerin sonucunda İstanbul'daki İranlıların iktisadi olarak marjinalleştiklerini, müstakil bir grup olarak şehre aidiyetlerini vurgulamak için sosyal marjinalleşmeyi de kasıtlı olarak benimsediklerini ve tüm bu süreçlerin sonucunda İstanbul'daki İranlıların kimliğinin şekillendiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu nedenle, İstanbul'daki İranlıların bir diaspora grubundan ziyade alışılmadık bir biçimde İstanbullulaşmış bir topluluk olduğu öne sürülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İstanbul'daki İranlılar, Kent Kimliği, İranlı Benlik Algısı, Sosyal Marjinalleşme.

To my inspirational mentor,

Professor Ebru Boyar

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Nice revnaklı şehirler görülür dünyada,

Lâkin efsûnlu güzellikleri sensin yaratan.

Yaşamıştır derim, en hoş ve uzun rü'yâda

Sende çok yıl yaşayan, sende ölen, sende yatan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the fiftieth issue of *Akhtar*, a newspaper published in Persian language by Iranians in Istanbul between 1876 and 1896, Istanbul was described as "the center where the children of our homeland gather for trade and business is this great capital." by Mohammad Taher Tabrizi who was the director and editor of the newspaper.[1] This description indicated a long-term presence of Iranian migrants from Qajar Iran in Istanbul and the presence of a Persian-language print media where they could identify themselves as a distinct community living in Istanbul. This Iranian community, whose presence in Istanbul became increasingly evident from the 1840s onwards, had unique characteristics in many respects. Firstly, Iranians in Istanbul's loyalty to their homeland, i.e. Qajar Empire, should be characterised as a flexible cultural belonging rather than a mere manifestation of a strong sense of nationalism. This flexibility allowed them to establish strong ties with Istanbul, where they had migrated economically motivated, and to perceive themselves as belonging to the city. In line with this claim of belonging to the city, Iranians in Istanbul were sensitive about preserving one of their distinctive features, Persian language, and teaching it to the younger generations even though most of their population could speak Turkish in Istanbul, which they perceived as a cosmopolitan venue. Similar to their sensitivity on language, they preserved their religious values and even occasionally manifested their rituals and ceremonies in the public space of the city. While emphasising their strong ties with the city, Iranians in Istanbul simultaneously manifested their distinctive features in a prominent way, and thus defined themselves as a group that resisted assimilation, in other words, Ottomanization. As a result of these characteristics, Iranians in Istanbul revealed neither as a congregation or an Ottoman *millet* like the

[1] "داخلیه / Dakheliyeh", *Akhtar*, 25 Zilhicce 1296 (10 December 1879), p. 3.

Armenians or Greeks in the traditional sense, nor as a national community or diaspora in the modern sense. For these reasons, the uniqueness of Iranians in Istanbul is worth to explore both to understand an important chapter of the urban history of Ottoman Istanbul and to discover the identity formation in this process.

Despite their visible presence in Istanbul, Iranians did not constitute a 'diaspora' in a modern sense that Safran comprehensively characterises.[2] Although they were dispersed from a specific centre, i.e. the Qajar Empire, as the definition of diaspora suggests, a very strong national belonging had not yet historically emerged for them to form a common memory, dreams and myths of the homeland. Instead, they were positioned within a fluid imperial identity, which made it possible to migrate easily from one empire to another and to create a distinct community in the new destination. Another defining characteristic of diaspora, the belief that diaspora members would not be fully accepted by the host society, was not valid in the case of Iranians in Istanbul. Instead, Iranians consciously distinguished themselves from the host society to define their own self-identity and instrumentalised social marginality to emphasise their belonging to Istanbul. Finally, the idealization of homeland and the thought of return when favourable conditions arise, as an essential element of the definition of diaspora, was not very evident for Iranians in Istanbul. Even when their motives for coming to Istanbul, which were to live prosperously and to make money, were undermined, they continued to survive in Istanbul by negotiating their position and diversifying their economic activities through alternative ways. Therefore, in contrast to the previous centuries, in the nineteenth century Iranians established deeper ties with Istanbul and became a peculiarly Istanbulised community rather than a 'diasporic' group.

Another quality that makes the Iranians in Istanbul unique is the period in which the community emerged. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of accelerated economic and administrative transformation in both the Ottoman and Qajar Empires. Although the two empires did not come under direct colonial control during this period, they did experience European economic penetration and political influence. The bankruptcy of the Ottoman Empire in 1881 was followed by the

[2] Safran, William, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", *A Journal of Transnational Studies,* 1 (1991), pp. 83 - 99.

creation of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (*Düyûn-ı Umûmiye İdaresi)* an organisation representing the interests of European bondholders, and economic concessions in favour of European merchants. On the other hand, the Qajar Empire's integration into international trade was largely the result of the commercial agreements and the granting of concessions to Russia and the British. In addition, the emergence of nation states in Europe and their modern nation state practices pushed the empires to undertake administrative transformations. With the increase in relations and interactions on a global scale, empires had to define their populations not as subjects in a fluid imperial identity but as clearly defined nationals as a result of the influence of nation state practices. It was inevitable that Iranians in Istanbul, an economically motivated migrant group, would not be unaffected by this transformation.

This thesis, therefore, examines how Istanbul became a commercial and business center for Iranian economic migrants in the nineteenth century and how and when Iranians started to perceive themselves as a distinct 'Iranian' community belonging to Istanbul. This thesis further investigates to what extent this self-perception shaped Iranian identity beyond the Ottoman or/and Qajar political decisions and Shiite-Sunni sectarian divisions. It also explores the variables other than self-perception that defined Iranian identity in Istanbul.

1.1. Iranians in Late Ottoman Istanbul

It is remarkable that Iranians, the main subject of this thesis, were visible enough to constitute a separate social group in Istanbul in the nineteenth century. However, their relations with Istanbul went back to before the nineteenth century. From the early sixteenth century onwards, *Acem* merchants who composed of predominantly Armenians and Azeris, were the main actors in the silk trade between Iran and the Ottoman Empire.[3] with the decline of the silk trade, *Acem* merchants began to trade in cotton through caravan transportation from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.[4] Although these merchants were engaged in commercial activities in Istanbul, they were not settled enough to have their own community in Istanbul and to define

[3] Zarinebaf Shahr, Fariba, "The Iranian (Azeri) Merchant Community in the Ottoman Empire and the Constitutional Revolution", in *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul,* Thiery Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds.) (Paris, Tehran and Istanbul: Institut français de recherches en Iran and l'Institut français d'Études Anatoliennes, 1993), pp. 204 – 206.

[4] Zarinebaf Shahr, "The Iranian (Azeri) Merchant Community in the Ottoman Empire and the Constitutional Revolution", pp. 204 – 206.

themselves as a distinct community as seen above, and thus they were differentiated from the Iranian community which emerged in Istanbul in the nineteenth century. Their presence in Istanbul was actually related to the economic dynamics of the first half of the nineteenth century. Qajar Iran's integration into international trade with commercial treaties signed with European states created new opportunities for many Iranian entrepreneurs and merchants. The Treaty of Gulistan of 1813, signed between Qajar Iran and Russia, stipulated only a five percent customs duty on imports and exports, facilitated the entry of imported Russian goods into the Iranian market.[5] Similarly, the Treaty of Commerce in 1841 signed between Great Britain and Qajar Iran levied customs duties on imports and exports for the British commercial goods at the same level as that imposed on Russia.[6] In this way, British commercial goods started to flow into the Iranian market as well. In addition, with the Treaty of Commerce in 1841, the British Consular Agents began to be established in various cities of Qajar Iran such as Tabriz, Bushehr, Tehran, Shiraz and Esfahan.[7] The lowering of customs duties and the British involvement in Iranian commercial life through the establishment of consular agents led to the creation of a group of Iranian intermediary merchants. The main task of these intermediary merchants was the distribution of British goods by using their commercial network within Qajar Iran. However, the wholesale trade in these goods was carried out by British commercial agents in Istanbul, and as steamship transport became a low-cost and efficient option on the Black Sea in the 1840s, the merchandise was generally carried to Trabzon first and then to Tabriz via the road of Erzurum. Moreover, the same route was also used for exports. Iranian merchants engaged in transit trade ensured the exportation of Iranian products such as textiles, tobacco and carpets flowing to Tabriz from the local markets of Iran. These local goods were either exported to Istanbul or to Europe through the merchants operating there. Therefore, a community of Iranian merchants, eager to make money by benefiting from the Iranian transit trade, began to emerge in Istanbul. There were three main reasons for the influx of Iranian merchants to Istanbul due to this commercial activity. Firstly, they had the commercial network to distribute

[5] Charles, Issawi, "Iranian Trade, 1800 - 1914", *Iranian Studies*, 16/3-4 (1983), p. 232.
[6] Hertslet, Sir Edward, *Treaties &c. Concluded Between Great Britain and Persia, and Between Persia and Other Foreign Powers* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1891), p. 10.
[7] Hertslet, *Treaties &c. Concluded Between Great Britain and Persia, and Between Persia and Other Foreign Powers,* p. 10.

British commercial goods taken from Istanbul to internal Iranian markets. Secondly, as an important re-export centre, Tabriz attracted many valuable commodities produced in Iran, which merchants could buy and re-sell in Istanbul. Thirdly, the First Treaty of Erzurum, signed in 1823, subjected them to a four percent customs duty in both exports and imports on an equal basis with Ottoman merchants.[8] In other words, Iranian merchants became the most convenient group to transport goods from Istanbul to Iran and vice versa.

Since these trade relations were shaped between Tabriz and Istanbul, the composition of this Iranian community was formed by those who could most easily adapt to commercial life in Istanbul. The *Charge d'Affaires* of the Iranian Embassy in Istanbul between 1919 and 1921, Khan Malik Sasani noted in his memoirs that 80 percent of the Iranian merchants residing in Istanbul in the late nineteenth century were Azeris from the cities of Tabriz, Khuy, Salmas and Shabistar. They were followed by Esfahanis, Tehranis, Qazvinis, Khorasanians and Kashanis.[9]

There were a couple of reasons why Azeris dominantly resided in Istanbul. Firstly, Tabriz, as the beginning point of the trade route, enabled many Azeri merchants to play an active role in this trade. The merchants themselves or their representatives were in constant contact with Istanbul.[10] Since Tabriz was also an important market within the Qajar State, Azeris of Tabriz were seen as skilful traders.[11] Henry Jones, the British Consul General in Tabriz, made the following observation about the commercial skills of the Azeris of Tabriz in his annual report to the British Foreign Office: "The shifty and tricky character which the native trader bears seems more

[8] Soofizadeh, Abdolvahid, "I. ve II. Erzurum Antlaşmalarının Siyasi Açıdan Değerlendirilmesi", *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 32/54 (2013), p. 186: "kezâlik Devlet-i İraniye tüccârının rüsûmât-ı gümrükleri husûsunda teb'a-i saltanat-ı seniyeden olan ehl-i İslâm tüccârına teveccühle mu'âmele olunur ise ol vechle mu'âmele oluna ve ticaret mallarından bir def'a yüzde dört gurûş gümrükleri aldıkdan sonra yerlerine 'îtâ olunan edâ tezkeresine muhâlif âher mahalde dahi yedd-i âhere devr olunmadıkca tekrâr gümrük taleb olunmaya".

[9] Sasani, Khan Malik, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول/Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul* [The Memoirs of the Istanbul Embassy] (Tahran: Entesharat Babak, 1975), p. 94.

[10] Haji Mohamad Ali Pirzadeh Naeni, "ورود به اسلامبول / Vorud ve Eslambul [Arrival to Istanbul]" in *از سفرنامه حاجی پیرزاده جلد دوم : اصفهان لندن تا / Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh Jeld-e Dovvom: Az Lenden ta Esfehan* [Travelogue of Haji Pirzadeh Volume 2: From London to Isfahan], Hafez Farman-Farmaian (eds.) (Tahran: Entesharat Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1963), p. 88.

[11] As if to emphasise the commercial skills of the Iranians, Francis Marion Crawford, an American writer who visited Istanbul in the 1890s, wrote in his travel account that: "There is a well-known expression in the Orient: It is said that it would take ten Jews to deceive an Armenian and ten Armenians to deceive an Iranian", see: Crawford, Francis Marion, *1890'larda İstanbul*, Şeniz Türkömer (trans.) (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), p. 12.

characteristic of the Turk of this province (Azerbaijan) than of the real Persian."[12] Secondly, Azeris were an essential actor in this commercial route because of their communication skills. The fact that Azeris were fluent in both Turkish and Persian made them highly successful intermediaries for commercial activities. In 1890, the British Consul-General in Tabriz, C. E. Stewart, wrote the following about the linguistic skills of the Azeris in his report to the British Foreign Office:

> The Azarbaijan dialect differs considerably from that spoken by the Turks in Constantinople, as it does also from the Turki spoken in Bokhara and further eastward; but persons speaking the Azarbaijan dialect have this advantage that, as their dialect is an intermediate one between the different dialects of Turkish, they can make themselves understood either in Constantinople or Bokhara, which is a great advantage to them as traders and as carriers of goods.[13]

The intensive presence of Azeri merchants in Istanbul and their involvement in the commercial life of the city can be explained by these reasons.

The Iranian population flowing into Istanbul did not only consist of merchants engaged in wholesale trade. Considering the families of the merchants, their employees, people working in the service sector such as tea sellers, tailors, tobacconists, coffee sellers within the Iranian network and the Iranians who were conducting petty-jobs such as porters, peddlers and cart drivers, a large Iranian population began to form in Istanbul. However, there is no accurate data on the population of Iranians in Istanbul before the First World War. According to Karpat, the main reason for this was that, Ottoman official population registers did not distinguish the Muslim population according to ethnic or linguistic distinctions unlike the non-Muslim population.[14] The same was valid for the population of foreigners. Therefore, the Iranian population was also considered and counted in the censuses under the category of Muslim population.

In order to determine the number of Iranians in the late nineteenth century, it is necessary to utilise the testimonies of the period. Sasani noted in his memoirs that the

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[12] Sakamoto, Tsutomu, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's" in *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul,* Thiery Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds.) (Paris, Tehran and Istanbul: Institut français de recherches en Iran and l'Institut français d'Études Anatoliennes, 1993), p. 225.
[13] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 225.
[14] Karpat, Kemal Haşim, *Ottoman Population 1830 – 1914 Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 55.

Iranian Embassy issued approximately 4,000 family certificates every year, which means that at least 16,000 Iranians were living in Istanbul.[15] However, this number excludes Iranians who became Ottoman nationals.[16] Similar to Sasani, in 1885, a Qajar bureaucrat Mirza Mohammad Hossein Farahani, who visited Istanbul on his way to the pilgrimage to Mecca, noted in his travelogue *Safarnameh-e Mirza Mohammad Hossein Farahani* (The Travelogue of Mirza Mohammad Hossein Farahani) that there were 16,000 Iranians living in Istanbul, a thousand of whom were merchants and the rest were shopkeepers.[17] These were merely the authors' observations and had no official certainty. However, a census table in *Ecnebiler Kalemi* (the Department of Foreigners) of *Dahiliye Nezareti* (the Ministry of Interior) provides a detailed breakdown of the foreign population of Istanbul by nationality in 1917.[18] According to this table, the number of Iranian nationals living in Istanbul in 1917 was 3,736, of whom 3,441 were male and 295 were female. Of this population, 3,390 were Muslims and 346 were non-Muslims (probably Iranian Armenians). The distribution of this population according to their occupations is as follows: 1234 were engaged in trade, 74 worked in agriculture, 879 were craftsmen, 309 were freelancers (*serbest meslek*) and 940 were engaged in various other professions.[19] Even if this figure is the result of an official census, it does not accurately reflect the exact population, as it was conducted during the First World War, when economic operations was disrupted and Istanbul's lure for Iranians was over, and it did not include the number of Iranians who had become Ottoman nationals. The demographic data of Iranians can also be observed after the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

In 1927, a more detailed census was carried out. Although the 1927 Census does not provide specific information on foreign population in Istanbul, it gives an idea about the population of Iranian nationals throughout the country and about those who were born in Iran but no longer have Iranian nationality. According to this census, Iranian nationals ranked third among foreign nationals in Turkey, after Greek and

[15] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul,* p. 94.
[16] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul,* p. 94.
[17] Asadi, Yasemin, *İranlı Yolcuların Gözünden Osmanlı İstanbul'u 1802 – 1905* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023), p. 112.
[18] Devlet Arşivleri, Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul [hereafter BOA], DH. EUM. ECB. 17 39, 11 Ramazan 1336 (20 June 1918).
[19] BOA, DH. EUM. ECB. 17 39, 11 Ramazan 1336 (20 June 1918).

Italian nationals.[20] In 1927, the number of Iranian nationals in Turkey was 8,840 (5,621 men and 2,859 women), constituting 9.78 percent of the total foreign population in Turkey at that time.[21] Given the information that the foreign population was mostly found in provincial centres of Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara, it seems likely that Iranians in Istanbul constituted the majority of the population of Iranian nationals in Turkey, as there was no significant Iranian population in other cities. In 1927, the number of people born in Iran in the population of Turkey was 10,196, of whom 7,117 were male and 3,079 were female.[22] This number included both foreign nationals and Turkish citizens so it is possible that Iranians who became Turkish citizens were included in this number. The census data on individuals whose mother tongue was other than Turkish, it seems that 1,687 people, comprising 1,114 males and 573 females, had "*Acemce*" (Persian) as their mother tongue.[23] This figure probably refers to Persian-speaking ethnic groups other than Azeris, who speak Turkish and constituted the majority of the Iranian population in Turkey.

1.2. Discussion of the Secondary Literature on the Iranians in Late Ottoman Istanbul

Academic studies attempt to define the Iranians in Istanbul during the late Ottoman era, mostly centred around three main patterns. The first pattern attributes a predominantly political character to the Iranians of Istanbul, emphasising the Iranian intellectuals among the Iranians in Istanbul and strongly underlining their political opposition to the Qajar Empire. For example, Tanya Elal Lawrence, in her masters thesis analysing *Akhtar*, a Persian-language newspaper published in Istanbul between 1876 and 1896, underlines three different immigrant groups among the Iranians in Istanbul besides the merchants and students: "Those who had been exiled by the Iranian government, those who escaped voluntarily fearing persecution, and those who were seeking a less hostile environment for their political and literary activities."[24] She

[20] *28 Teşrinievvel 1927 Umumî Nüfus Tahriri Fasikül III: Usuller Kanun ve Talimatnameler Neticelerin Tahlili* (Ankara: Başvekâlet Müdevvenat Matbaası, 1929), p. 35.
[21] *28 Teşrinievvel 1927 Umumî Nüfus Tahriri Fasikül III: Usuller Kanun ve Talimatnameler Neticelerin Tahlili*, p. 35.
[22] *28 Teşrinievvel 1927 Umumî Nüfus Tahriri Fasikül III: Usuller Kanun ve Talimatnameler Neticelerin Tahlili*, p. 36.
[23] *28 Teşrinievvel 1927 Umumî Nüfus Tahriri Fasikül III: Usuller Kanun ve Talimatnameler Neticelerin Tahlili*, p. 31.
[24] Lawrence, Tanya Elal, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876 – 1896)", Unpublished Masters Thesis, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, İstanbul, 2012,

notes that these groups gathered "in the district called Valide Hanı" and that this place "became a transit point not only for cargo but for information and ideas".[25] Although the existence of opposition groups within the Iranian community in Istanbul cannot be denied, such analyses centred on *Akhtar* are far from providing a comprehensive description of the Iranian community in Istanbul. Even those Iranians who migrated for political reasons were drawn to Istanbul by the idea that Istanbul could provide them with the necessary economic resources. These resources could either have provided from the Iranian network in Istanbul or from the Ottoman government itself as in the case of *Akhtar* which will be analysed in Chapter Three. For this reason, considering the formation of a political opposition in Istanbul independent of the economic prosperity that the city provided to Iranians and subordinating the fact that Iranians in Istanbul were economic migrants would lead to a less comprehensive analysis.

Moreover, this character of political opposition was sometimes extended to all Iranians in Istanbul. This narrative usually highlights the publication of the Persian translation of *Kânun-ı Esâsî* (the Constitution of the Ottoman Empire) in *Akhtar* on the 7th of February 1877 and even considers the Iranians of Istanbul as the transmitter of the concept of constitutionalism into Qajar Iran. For example, Anja Pistor Hatam, in an article on *Akhtar*, completely ignores the socio-political aspect of the newspaper in the manifestation of Iranian identity in Istanbul, describing it as "under the influence of Persian political refugees in Istanbul" and identifying it as a transmitter of Ottoman political ideas to Qajar Iran.[26] It is undeniable that there were dissident intellectuals within the Iranian community in Istanbul and that they closely monitored political developments in the Ottoman Empire. However, the Iranians in Istanbul were too complex to be defined solely by the characteristics of this political group. A significant

p. 10. This thesis was later published as a book, see: Lawrence, Tanya Elal, *Akhtar: A Persian Language Newspaper Published in Istanbul and the Iranian Community of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Nineteenth Century* (İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2015).

[25] Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876 – 1896)", p. 10.

[26] Pistor Hatam, Anja, "Akhtar as a Transmitter of Political Ideas", in *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul,* Thiery Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds.) (Paris, Tehran and Istanbul: Institut français de recherches en Iran and l'Institut français d'Études Anatoliennes, 1993), p. 142. For another publication emphasizing Akhtar's political role and focusing on Iranian reformists such as Amir Kabir Mirza Taghi Khan and Mirza Malkam Khan who lived in Istanbul for a while, see: Zarinebaf Shahr, Fariba, "From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 28/1 (2008), pp. 154 – 169.

number of them were economic migrants, and the main factors shaping them were the economic changes in the international economic conjuncture and the domestic politics of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, when defining the Iranians in Istanbul, it is necessary to take into account legal arrangements as well as economic changes and the social transformation that took place along with these two, and to evaluate them through these three variables.

The second group centres around the pattern that their religious identity constitutes the cement of the Iranian community in Istanbul. Those who support this view argue that the fact that Iranians in Istanbul were mostly from the Shiite sect had shaped their social relations with Ottoman society. Abdülkadir Yeler claims in his article that "Iranian merchants were also religious people belonging to the Shiite sect. Sectarian cleavages between Shiism and Sunnism were influential in drawing the boundaries of social relations between Iranians and the dominantly Sunni Muslim Ottoman society" and referring to the determinism of sectarian divisions in social relations.[27] Similarly, Erika Glassen argues that the celebration of Muharram commemorations in the heart of the Sunni Caliphate is not only about religious tolerance but also "an indication of the strength and self-confidence of the Iranian community".[28] This claim overlooks the social marginalization of the Iranians of Istanbul and reduces their efforts to construct a political identity to the Sunni - Shiite religious cleavage. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, the religious affiliation of the Iranians was a distinctive feature of their identity but it is argued that the legal arrangements and economic transformation pushed the Iranians in Istanbul to the margins of the city and caused the reaction of the Iranian community to embrace marginality, which prevented their integration into Ottoman society to a certain extent.

[27] Yeler, Abdülkadir, "Iranian Merchants as a Religious Community in Late Ottoman Istanbul", *The Journal of Economy, Culture and Society,* 67 (2023), p. 131. For other studies that reduce the reasons for the legal sanctions imposed on Iranians by Ottoman authorities to the Sunni - Shiite sectarian distinction, see: Serbestoğlu, İbrahim, "Öteki Perspektifiyle Osmanlı Kadınının İranlılarla Evlenme Yasağı", *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi,* 5/20 (2012), pp. 213 – 220, and Yıldız, Güllü, "Reisüzzâkirîn'in Sefernâmesi ve İstanbul'daki Şiîlerin Dinî Hayatı" *Şarkiyat Mecmuası,* 38 (2021), pp. 111 – 124.

[28] Glassen, Erika, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul at the end of the XIXth and the beginning of the XXth Century", in *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul,* Thiery Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds.) (Paris, Tehran and Istanbul: Institut français de recherches en Iran and l'Institut français d'Études Anatoliennes, 1993), p. 203.

In addition to views centered around religious and political affiliation, there is a third pattern in the literature that refers to the political-economic structure of Iranian society. Fariba Zarinebah Shahr argues that Iranians in Istanbul took a political stance against the Qajar authorities to protect their economic interests. According to her, foreign merchants of Russian nationality were harming the economic interests of Iranian merchants, but the Qajar government continued to grant commercial privileges to foreign merchants.[29] For this reason, she claims that the Iranians in Istanbul demanded "the restoration of the constitution and the end of absolutism", but states that their primary concern was not political but economic interests. This view, however, ignores the economic transformation within the Ottoman Empire to which the Iranians of Istanbul were subjected and focuses only on the commercial interests of this community from the perspective of international trade. She also neglects to include the relations between Iranians and the Ottoman authorities[30] and the importance of their self-perception as a marginal social group in defining the Iranians in Istanbul.[31]

For all these reasons, a study aiming to describe the Iranians of Istanbul needs to include primary sources that contain a variety of different perspectives analysing the legal, economic, social, political and religious aspects of the community.

1.3. Discussion of the Primary Sources

This thesis makes use of variety of primary sources both archival and published. The extensive archival research was conducted in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. The documents which were acquired include a variety of correspondence between institutions, regulations, reports regarding security, spy reports, texts of agreements

[29] Zarinebaf Shahr, "The Iranian (Azeri) Merchant Community in the Ottoman Empire and the Constitutional Revolution", p. 212. For another study analysing Iranians in Istanbul as an economically and politically motivated 'diaspora', see: Kiren, Akın, "Diaspora Özellikleri Bağlamında İstanbul'da İranlılar (1870'lerden Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarına)", *İran Çalışmaları Dergisi,* 5/1 (2021), pp. 55 – 80.
[30] For an article focusing on the pressure experienced by Iranian Ali Meşhedi who was trying to change his nationality from Qajar to Ottoman and suggesting the need to investigate the reasons for the Iranian population migration to Istanbul, see: Afacan, Serhan, "İranîlikten Osmanîliğe: Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devrinde Bir Vatandaşlık Değiştirme Sergüzeşti", in *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Han ve Dönemi*, Fahrettin Gün and Halil İbrahim Erbay (eds.) (İstanbul: TBMM Milli Saraylar, 2017) pp. 667 – 672.
[31] Although they do not include the self-perception of the Iranian community in Istanbul, there are academic works on the Iranian spaces in the city, see: McCarthy, Justin, et al., Baykan, Ayşegül, et al., *Tarihi Belleğimiz İçinde Büyük Valide Han* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2014); Dığıroğlu, Filiz, "İstanbul – Tebriz Ticaret Hattında Validehan (XIX – XX. Yüzyıl)" *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 31 (2014), pp. 69 – 112; Kurşun, Zekeriya, "Üsküdar'da İranlılar ve İran Mezarlığı", *Üsküdar Sempozyumu IV Bildiriler*, 2 vols. (İstanbul: Üsküdar Belediyesi, 2007), vol I, pp. 195 - 212.

and laws, edicts and records of inquiries. In order to complement these Ottoman archival material, ethnographic sources in Ottoman and Modern Turkish, such as the works of Reşat Ekrem Koçu, chronicles, memoirs, travel accounts and newspapers of the period, including *Son Posta* and *İkdam*, were also used. In addition, the *Annuaire Oriental*, which provided detailed information on the commercial life of Istanbul from 1868 to 1940 and was typographed and lithographed in Istanbul and printed in Paris, was utilised.

Although the Iranian archives containing documents related to Iranians in Istanbul are not accessible and the documents of the Iranian Embassy, as mentioned by Sasani in his memoirs, were poorly archived and some documents were stolen or lost when the Iranian Embassy was moved to Ankara,[32] there are still some Persian-language sources. Despite their limited number, the extent of these sources can provide a lot of information about the Iranians in Istanbul. Although translated into Turkish,[33] the original text of Khan Malik Sasani's *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul* (The Memoirs of the Istanbul Embassy) in Persian was used to observe the content and analyse the concepts directly. In addition, memoirs involving Iranians in Istanbul such as Mozaffar al-Din Shah's *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi* (Blessed Royal Travelogue),[34] dervish and traveller Haji Mohamad Ali Pirzadeh Naeni's *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh* (The Travelogue of Haji Pirzadeh),[35] and Qajar bureaucrat Haj Mirza Ali Khan's *Safarnameh-e Amin al-Dowleh* (The Travelogue of Amin al-Dowleh), which have not been fully translated into Turkish, were made use of.[36] Since I could not obtain a Persian copy, I was only able to use Mirza Mohammad Hossein Farahani's *Safarnameh-e Mirza Mohammad Hossein Farahani* (The Travelogue of Mirza

[32] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول, Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, pp. 87 – 88.

[33] Sasani, Han Melik, *Payitahtın Son Yıllarında Bir Sefir,* Hakkı Uygur (trans.) (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2006).

[34] Mozaffar al-Din Shah, *سفرنامهٔ مبارکهٔ شاهنشاهی / Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar* [Blessed Royal Travelogue: Mozaffar al-din Shah Qajar], Aidin Farangi and Abbasgholi Sadeghi (eds.) (Tehran: Kalagh Publishing House, 2018). This travelogue was also partially translated into Turkish in an unpublished masters thesis, see: Eser, Semaha, "İranlı Seyyahların Eserlerinde İstanbul ve Han Melik-i Sâsânî'nin 'İstanbul Sefareti Hatıraları' Adlı Eseri", Unpublished Masters Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, İstanbul, 2005, pp. 22 - 37.

[35] Although there are some omissions from the original text, the parts related to Istanbul of this travelogue have been recently translated into Turkish, see: Asadi, *İranlı Yolcuların Gözünden Osmanlı İstanbul'u 1802 – 1905*, pp. 137 – 151.

[36] Haj Mirza Ali Khan Amin al-Dowleh, *سفرنامهٔ امین الدوله / Safarnameh-e Amin al-Dowleh* [The Travelogue of Amin al-Dowleh] (Tehran: Entesherat-e Toos, 2011).

Mohammad Hossein Farahani), thanks to its partial translation into Turkish.[37] In addition to these memoirs, several issues of *Akhtar*, published by Mohammad Taher Tabrizi in Istanbul, were included in the research. In this way, all these Persian written accounts complement and bring further discussion to the materials already acquired from the Ottoman side.

For providing further insights, non-Ottoman and non-Iranian sources are also important and these were included in the research. This thesis made use of published British consular reports to understand the economic importance of Tabriz. In addition, the accounts of Western observers such as Joseph von Hammer, Francis Marion Crawford, Edward Granville Browne and Eugene Jacques Chesnel were also included in the analysis. These accounts were used to confirm, elaborate and support the Ottoman and Persian sources.

To further strengthen the research, the photographs of Iranians taken in Istanbul from the 1870s onwards by photographers such as Berggren, as well as views of places associated with Iranians, were also used. In addition to photographs, sketches made by artists during the period and published in various books were included in the narrative. Photographs taken by the author of this thesis were also positioned where appropriate in order to show the current state of these spaces. These visual materials were used to visualize and strengthen the narrative that emerged in accounts and archival documents.

As for the structure of thesis, this thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1, “Introduction”, discusses the economic roots of Iranian migration to Istanbul and provides information on the number and composition of the estimated Iranian population in late Ottoman Istanbul. Chapter 2, “Making Iranians”, discusses the nationality imposition and double-state pressure affected Iranians in Istanbul as the changes in Ottoman legislation on nationality and as well as the Iranian Embassy’s efforts to preserve Iranians’ loyalty to the Qajar Empire. Chapter 3, "Making a Living" shows that due to the change in the transit trade route between Europe and Qajar Iran, as well as the transformation of Ottoman economic policies, Iranians in Istanbul were marginalized and took advantage of this marginalization to create alternative ways of

[37] Very recently, the parts related to Istanbul in this book have been translated into Turkish, see: Asadi, Yasemin, *İranlı Yolcuların Gözünden Osmanlı İstanbul’u 1802 – 1905*, pp. 97 – 115.

making money. Chapter 4, “Making a Society”, explores how, despite the fact that Iranians were pushed to the margins by legal and economic changes, they embraced social marginalisation and created a political identity by displaying their distinctiveness in Istanbul. Chapter 5, “Conclusion” concludes the thesis and argues that beginning with legal regulations, but mainly determined by economic factors and social conditions, an Iranian self-perception emerged, which created the core component of the identity of Iranians in Istanbul.

CHAPTER 2

MAKING IRANIANS

2.1. Introduction

The Ottoman Empire's imperial character was flexible and inclusive for foreigners. The Ottoman imperial identity was less concerned with the national origins or state affiliations of its subjects.[38] Therefore, Iranians living in Istanbul were able to live under this overarching imperial identity without underlining their loyalty to the Qajar or Ottoman empires in any way. However, similar to many other ideas in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman imperial identity experienced alterations throughout the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire acquired some of the instruments used by nation-states, such as the concept of citizenship, even though it was not transformed into one of the nation-states emerging in the West. The practical challenges encountered in maintaining interactions with the Western nation-states were one of the underlying causes of this need for change. It was difficult to determine who could be considered Ottoman and who could not, because Ottoman citizenship was not clearly defined. A significant turning point in the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and its nationals was marked by the proclamation of the Imperial Edict of Gülhane in 1839, commonly known as *Tanzimat Fermanı*. This decree emphasizes the state's acknowledgement of the rights of subjects by including the provisions guaranteeing the protection of life and property for individuals residing within the Ottoman Empire and making sure that no one would be treated unjustly. In other words, it can be argued that the state granted its subjects rights even before the existence of a constitution and it shifted from a subject-oriented approach to a citizen-oriented approach. For these

[38] For the sense of nationality of Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire before the nineteenth century, see: Karpat, Kemal Haşim, "The Ethnicity Problem in a Multi-Ethnic Anational Islamic State: Continuity and Recasting of Ethnic Identity in the Ottoman State" in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History*, Reinhard Schulze (eds.) (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 715.

two reasons, the concept of Ottoman citizenship emerged prematurely, leading to the exclusion of foreigners who once lived within the inclusive structure of Ottoman imperial identity from the newly formed Ottoman nationals.[39] Therefore, Iranians in Istanbul were directly affected by this change as they were one of the concerned groups due to practical difficulties experienced in the Ottoman state structure after *Tanzimat Fermanı*. In addition to practical difficulties, Iranians were subjected to a new classification based on their loyalty to either the Ottoman Empire or the Qajar State. It can be argued that Iranians were presented with two options: either they would find their place within the clearly defined boundaries of the 'Ottoman nationality' through legal regulations, or they would accept their affiliation to the Qajar State and remain within the category of foreign nationals, which was the by-product of nation-state type citizenship.

2.2. From *Acem* to *Teb'a-i İraniye*

From the beginning of the nineteenth century to its third quarter, there was a great effort to determine nationalities in the Ottoman Empire and to distinguish between Ottoman nationals and foreigners. This effort led to the formation of "Ottoman nationality" *(tâbi'yet-i osmaniyye*) based on loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, regardless of ethnicity and religion. The emergence of Ottoman nationality can be explained for many different reasons. Firstly, the determination of the nationality of the merchants trading within the Ottoman Empire can be considered as a motivation because during the period when the *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi* (the Ottoman Nationality Law) was introduced, many Ottoman merchants had changed their nationality to benefit from the capitulations granted to foreign states.[40] Ottoman merchants, who were unable to compete with Western traders benefiting from capitulations in Ottoman markets, abandoned their Ottoman nationality and adopted nationalities of Western states in order to take advantage of the financial and commercial privileges granted to them. [41] Moreover, Serbestoğlu claims that foreign embassies' employment of Ottoman nationals as translators and deputy consuls may

[39] Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era", p. 644.
[40] Çetin, Mehmet, "Osmanlı Devleti ile İran Arasında Tabiiyet İhtilafı: Tefrik-i Tebaa Uygulaması", *İran Çalışmaları Dergisi,* 5 (2021), p. 4.
[41] Çetin, "Osmanlı Devleti ile İran Arasında Tabiiyet İhtilafı: Tefrik-i Tebaa Uygulaması", p. 4.

have forced the Ottoman authorities to make legal arrangements.[42] This employment protected them from Ottoman legal interventions, so Ottoman statesmen probably wanted to prevent this.[43] Secondly, the increase in the number of foreigners who acquired Ottoman property through their Ottoman spouses and relatives caused concern among Ottoman bureaucrats.[44] Thirdly, those who changed their nationality in order to avoid military conscription might also be seen as an important reason for the Ottoman authorities.[45] By regulating the definition of the Ottoman nationality, it was imposed that if people who acquired another nationality did not renounce their Ottoman nationality, they had to do military service or pay the "military exemption tax" (*bedel-i askeriyye*).[46] Finally, increasing migration due to territorial losses and demographic turmoil in border regions might have led to the necessity of distinguishing foreign nationalities.[47] In the nineteenth century, one of the foreign communities most affected by the efforts to determine the Ottoman nationality and non-Ottoman nationals was the Iranians living in the Ottoman Empire. Starting from the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Iranian nationality, which was more porous and fluid at first, began to be more definable in the Ottoman legal texts.

One of the earliest examples of the Ottoman tendency to distinguish foreign nationals was the replacement of the name "Acem" with "İranlu", i.e. Iranian. Ottomans defined their eastern neighbours as *Acem* until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[48] However, the traditional use of the term *Acem*, which did not refer to a specific ethnic or religious origin such as Persian, Azeri, Kurdish, Baloch or

[42] In the *Konsolosluk Nizâmnâmesi* (the Consular Regulations) published in 1863, it was emphasized that Ottoman nationals working in consulates were required to serve in the military or pay the military exemption fee (*bedel-i askeriyye*). The same regulation also stated that Ottoman nationals working in foreign consulates did not renounce Ottoman nationality by working in consulates. For more detailed information on the objections of the Ottoman Empire regarding the consulate personnel's change of nationality, see: Serbestoğlu, İbrahim, "Zorunlu Bir Modernleşme Örneği Olarak Osmanlı Tabiiyet Kanunu", *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi,* 29 (2011), pp. 197–198.

[43] Çetin, "Osmanlı Devleti ile İran Arasında Tabiiyet İhtilafı: Tefrik-i Tebaa Uygulaması", p. 4.

[44] BOA, A.} MKT. 113. 33, 27 Zilkade 1264 (25 October 1848).

[45] BOA, HR. MKT. 668. 58, 26 Cumâde'l-âhire 1320 (4 October 1869).

[46] Serbestoğlu, "Zorunlu Bir Modernleşme Örneği Olarak Osmanlı Tabiiyet Kanunu", p. 199.

[47] Çetin, "Osmanlı Devleti ile İran Arasında Tabiiyet İhtilafı: Tefrik-i Tebaa Uygulaması", p. 5.

[48] The use of "Acem" as a term can be found in the Article 19 of the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718: "Acem tüccarı devlet-i çasariyeden nehr-i Tuna ile hudud-ı İslamiyyeye gelürler ise mutad üzere yüzde beş hisabı (…) Acem tüccarının nemçe memalikine mürur ve uburlarında kurb-ü emn cihetile enseb olan Belgrad üzerinden âmed…". For more information, see: Aktepe, Mehmet Münir, *1720 – 1724 Osmanlı – İran Münâsebetleri ve Silahşör Kemâni Mustafa Ağa'nın Revan Fetihnâmesi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1970), p. 4.

Armenian or a state such as Qajar, Zand, Safavid, was replaced by *İranlu*. *İranlu* was more specific than *Acem* and denoted a more distinct community with defined boundaries. The first step on the road of using *İranlu* to identify the Iranians living in the Ottoman Empire was The First Treaty of Erzurum (I. Erzurum Antlaşması) in 1823 in which the use of *Acem* was abandoned and affiliation to the Iranian state was underlined. In other words, Ottoman officials tried to define Iranians through their belonging to the Iranian state since *Acem* represented a vague definition, as shown in the second article of the treaty:

> **Article II** – The people of Iran who come and go to the Kaaba the Blessed, Medina the Radiant and the other Islamic lands (...) then about the pilgrims and merchants of the Iranian state, this old practice (...) about the customs duties for the merchants of the Iranian state... [49]

Although the term "Iranian" has not been used yet, more specific definitions such as "pilgrims and merchants of the Iranian state" (*devlet-i İran hüccac ve tüccarı*) and "people of Iran" (*ahali-i İran*) have begun to appear in the legal texts.[50] In the The Second Treaty of Erzurum (II. Erzurum Antlaşması) of 1847, being a subject of the Iranian state was emphasized more clearly. In this treaty, it was confirmed that the "Iranian visitors" (*züvvar-ı İraniye*) could visit the Shiite holy sites in Ottoman lands in accordance with the former agreements and all kinds of disrespect and cruelty towards the "Iranian subjects" (*teba'a-i İraniye*) would be prevented.[51] This marks a new step to describe people coming from Iran by the name of the state they were subject to. However, the major change which is the formation and definition of Ottoman nationality would take place 20 years later.

2.3. The Legal Imposition of Ottoman Nationality

The main development that actually determined the boundaries of the Iranians' nationality in Istanbul, which irrevocably removed the fluidity of the Ottoman imperial identity, was the Ottoman Empire's complete change of the concept of nationality. This profound change took place with *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi* introduced

[49] Soofizadeh, "I. ve II. Erzurum Antlaşmalarının Siyasi Açıdan Değerlendirilmesi", pp. 186 - 187: "Madde-i sâniye - ahâli-i İrandan k'abe-i mükerreme ve medine-i münevvere ve sâir bilâd-ı islamiyeye gelib gidenler (…) b'ad devlet-i İran hüccac ve tüccarı hakkında bu şart-ı kadîmin (…) devlet-i İraniye tüccarının rüsûmat-ı gümrükleri hususunda…"
[50] Soofizadeh, "I. ve II. Erzurum Antlaşmalarının Siyasi Açıdan Değerlendirilmesi", pp. 186 – 187.
[51] Soofizadeh, "I. ve II. Erzurum Antlaşmalarının Siyasi Açıdan Değerlendirilmesi", pp. 188 – 190.

in 1869.[52] This law explicitly stated that in order to be considered an Ottoman citizen, it was necessary for at least one parent to be of Ottoman nationality.[53] Furthermore, even if both parents were foreigners, a person born in the Ottoman territory could acquire Ottoman nationality within three years of reaching adulthood.[54] A foreigner of legal age could also acquire Ottoman nationality after residing in Ottoman territory for five years.[55] Additionally, the law allowed for the exceptional granting of citizenship by the Ottoman state to foreigners if it was considered necessary.[56] The law also included provisions regarding the procedures for changing to another nationality and the obligation for individuals belonging to another nationality to prove their allegiance to the Ottoman authorities.[57] With this legislation, Iranians living in Ottoman lands were legally considered as foreigners, unless they accepted the Ottoman nationality as their primary nationality. Being Iranian in Ottoman lands became more complicated according to the Article IX of the law, as foreigners had to prove that they belonged to a foreign nation.[58] The relevant article stated that anyone residing in the "protected territory of the sultan" (*memalik-i mahruse-i padişahide*) would be considered a national of the Ottoman Empire and treated accordingly, but if he or she was a national of a foreign state, he or she had to prove this "procedurally".[59] In 1870, in connection with Article IX, the Commissions for the Distinction of Nationality (*Tefrik-i Tabi'yet Komisyonları*) were established a year after the *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi*, and they were tasked with investigating the claims of these people of being from another nationality.[60] The codification of the law of Ottoman nationality and its strict

[52] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[53] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[54] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[55] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[56] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[57] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Beşinci madde - Teb'a-ı saltanat-ı seniyyeden mezunen tâbi'yet -i ecnebiyyeye giren eşhas tebdil-i tâbi'yet itdikleri tarihden itibaren ecnebi sıfatında tutulub haklarında olvechle muamele olunur fakat devlet-i aliyyeden mezun olmaksızın tâbi'yet -i ecnebiyyeye girer ise işbu tâbi'yet -i cedidesi ke'en-lem-yekun ve kendisi kemakan teba'a-ı devlet- aliyyeden add olunub kaffe-i hususatda teba-ı devlet-i aliyye hakkında olunan muamelenin aynı icra kılınacaktır her halde teba-ı devlet-i aliyyeden bir şahsın terk-i tâbi'yet itmesi hatt-ı lika-i irade-i seniyye üzerine virülecek bir senede ma'lik olacaktır."
[58] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[59] BOA, Y. EE. 41. 133, 14 Şevval 1285 (28 January 1869).
[60] BOA, ŞD. 2391. 31, 16 Zilkade 1286 (17 February 1870). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Tokuzıncı madde – Memalik-i mahruse-i padişahide ikamet iden her bir şahıs teba-ı devlet-i aliyyeden madud olub hakkında devlet-i aliyye tabi'i muamelesi icra olunur eğer kendüsi teba-ı ecnebiyeden ise tâbi'yetini usulen isbat itmesi lazım gelir."

definition inevitably affected the life of the Iranians in the Ottoman Empire, and in the following period, it affected Iranians' relations with the Ottoman authorities.

A few months after the introduction of *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi*, a nationality dispute case in Sidon shows the changing relations between the Ottoman state and the Iranians living in the country. This case further demonstrated the Ottoman approach to foreign nationality claims, and it revealed the unbending persistence of Ottoman authorities about the application of previous legal reforms related to *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi*. On October 1869, an official letter dispatched from the Iranian Embassy (*İran Sefareti*) in Istanbul to the Ottoman the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nezareti*) reported that the Iranian deputy consul, Hacı Ali Asiran's nephew and cousin were forcibly conscripted by the "conscription officer" (*kur'a memuru*) in Sidon.[61] Hacı Ali Asiran claimed that his nephew and cousin were Iranian nationals, but this claim was not accepted by the Ottoman "local administration" (*hükümet-i mahalliye*) in Sidon, and the consul reported this incident to the Iranian Embassy in Istanbul. In the correspondence with the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Iranian Embassy stated that these people were undisputedly Iranians and belonged to the Asiran family from Shiraz, and emphasized that the Ottoman officers did not have "right and authority" (*hak ve salahiyet*) to recruit Iranians living in the Ottoman Empire.[62] In addition, it was stated that if the conscription officer was suspicious about the nationality of these people, he should have corresponded with the Iranian authorities.[63] In the following parts of the correspondence, it was strictly emphasized the fact that Iranians resided in the Ottoman Empire for a long time, bought real estate from Ottomans and were born in Ottoman lands but this did not mean that they changed their nationality.[64] In other words, the Iranian Embassy rejected the imposition of Ottoman nationality on Iranians as a natural result of *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi.* In addition, in accordance with the Article IX of the law, which stipulates that persons who are nationals of a foreign state must prove it, the Embassy attached to the correspondence the former records (*mazbata*) of the local council of Sidon concerning the sale of the properties of the Iranian Asiran family to Ottoman nationals. The reason for this was that the relevant records, in accordance

[61] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).
[62] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).
[63] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).
[64] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).

with the practice that foreign nationals could not acquire property in the Ottoman Empire, included such statements as "records regarding the sale of the properties of the deceased Haji Hossein Asiran and his son Haji Ali, who were serving as vice consul in Sidon and were truly Iranians, to Ottoman national suitors".[65] While these records strengthened Haji Ali Asiran's claims of being Iranian, they also showed that the Iranian Embassy acted within the framework of *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi* even while opposing the imposition of nationality.

The response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to this request was very decisive. In the "supreme edict" (*ferman-ı sami*) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Governorate of Syria, it was requested to investigate whether the people who were claimed to have been drafted into the army truly belonged to the Asiran family.[66] In addition, it was requested to investigate whether the Asiran family was truly Iranian-originated.[67] It was also requested to investigate whether the *mazbata* sent by the Iranian Embassy was recorded in the archives of the Sidon Council.[68] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also asked a report to be submitted on the reasons why these people were conscripted into the Ottoman army.[69] The insistence of the Ottoman authorities to investigate the claims of the Iranian Embassy indicated a change of approach. After the introduction of *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi,* the claims of Iranian nationality were taken much more seriously than before, specifically in relation to issues such as conscription, marriage and real estate acquisition. Even the official claim of the embassy was not accepted and it was investigated seriously. If a nationality dispute in the Ottoman periphery was taken so seriously, the Iranians in Istanbul, who were living in the country's capital, must have been affected much more profoundly by the Ottoman legal arrangements.

In Istanbul, the Ministy of Foreign Affairs's effort to distinguish nationalities had gained momentum in the following years. In the official letter sent from the Iranian Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1874, it was indicated that the ministry

[65] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Hacı Hüseyin Asiran ile oğlu Hacı Ali, mahal-i mezkurda şehbender vekaleti memuriyetinde bulunarak sahihan İranlu olduklarını havi mukaddeman bazı zabt olunan emlaklarının teb'a-i Osmaniyyeden taliplerine füruht olunması hususuna dair yazılan mazbata".
[66] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).
[67] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).
[68] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).
[69] BOA, HR.MKT. 665. 58, 8 Receb 1286 (14 October 1869).

had requested the names of the officials to be appointed from the embassy to the *Tefrik-i Tabi'yet Komisyonları* to investigate the nationality claims of Iranians.[70] In the same correspondence, a "register" (*defter*) containing the names of Iranians living in the Ottoman Empire had been requested by the ministry and it was stated that if the register was not sent by the Iranian Embassy, the Iranians living in the Ottoman Empire and people who claim to be Iranians would not be officially considered Iranian.[71] The most important point in this correspondence is that with the official emergence of the concept of Ottoman nationality, the authority of recognition of the Iranian nationals living in Ottoman lands passed into the hands of the Ottoman state authorities. In other words, such a mechanism for recognition did not exist previously so individuals' declarations were primarily relied upon, but with the new legal regulations, the Ottoman authorities started to investigate nationality claims and, if proven, recognized them. Also, this correspondence specifically referred to Greeks who claimed to be Iranian and emphasized the invalidity of nationality changes without the permission of the Ottoman authorities.

In 1873, the imposition of Ottoman nationality on Iranians living in the Ottoman lands advanced one step further with a "supreme order" (*emirname-i sami*) sent to the provinces by the Grand Vizier. With this order published in the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* on 3 April 1873, it was stated that Iranians living in Ottoman lands would be treated the same as the Ottomans in the cases such as "the cases related to murder, personal law and petty offences and other matters".[72] With the publication of this order, all Iranians living in the Ottoman Empire were subject to Ottoman laws in a significant part of judicial matters. Thus, a comprehensive transformation began in the lives of Iranians, who had strong ties to the Iranian national identity and had not considered themselves Ottoman nationals. The most important area in which this transformation took place was social issues.

An important legal regulation that determined the social relations of the Iranians with the Ottomans and located them in a *sui generis* position as foreigners was the "prohibition of marriage" (*izdivaç memnu'iyeti*). According to the *Düstur* (The Ottoman Code of Public Laws), with a regulation published on 7 October 1874, it was

[70] BOA, HR.İD. 137. 4, 25 Cumade'l-ula 1291 (10 July 1874).
[71] BOA, HR.İD. 137. 4, 25 Cumade'l-ula 1291 (10 July 1874).
[72] *Takvim-i Vekayi,* 4 Receb 1290 (3 April 1874): The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "cinayate müteallik davalar ile hukuk-ı şahsiyye ve adiyyede vesair".

decided to maintain the prohibition of marriage between the Ottomans and Iranians, which had been going on for a long time.[73] Although it is claimed in the regulation that this practice was continued as before, a document written 14 years earlier and sent from the Ministry Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Public Security (*Zabtiyye Nezareti*) reveals that there was not such a clear-cut distinction of nationality and that the prohibition of marriage was not strictly enforced for the Iranians in Istanbul. In the aforementioned document, it was requested that Esat Ağa, one of the translators of the Iranian Embassy, residing in Istanbul for over 30 years, not to be prevented from remarrying after his wife's death.[74] By the 1870s, however, the attitude of the Ottoman authorities towards marriage between Iranians and Ottomans was decidedly negative. The regulation issued to prevent matrimonial unions between Ottoman and Iranian nationals was recorded in both the *Düstur* and the *İran Nişan Defteri* (the Iran Registry Book). According to this regulation, when an Ottoman woman married an Iranian man, the woman and the child born out of this marriage would be considered Ottoman citizens. The male child recognized as an Ottoman citizen was obligated to serve in the Ottoman army or pay the military exemption fee.[75]

> **Regulation on the Continuation of the Prohibition of Marriage Between Subjects of the Supreme State [the Ottoman Empire] and Subjects of Iran**
> **Article I** - The marriage between subjects of the Supreme State and subjects of Iran is strictly prohibited, as it has been in the past.
> **Article 2** - Those who are of marriageable age and do not comply with the prohibition will be held responsible.
> **Article 3** - If a woman from the subjects of the Supreme State marries a man from the subjects of Iran in violation of the prohibition, the woman and the child born out of this marriage will be recognized as subjects of the Supreme State. The child born out of this marriage is obligated to pay state taxes, fulfill military service, or pay military exemption fees.
> On 24 September 1290 / 25 Şaban 1291 / Council of State[76]

[73] Karakoç, Sarkis, *Külliyat-ı Kavanin,* 2 vols., (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006), vol. I, p. 552.
[74] BOA, HR.MKT. 327. 38, 4 Şaban 1276 (26 February 1860).
[75] Karakoç, *Külliyat-ı Kavanin,* p. 552. In addition, *Düvel-i Ecnebiyye Defterleri* (the Registers of Foreign States), which are placed in the BOA, cover the records of the Ottoman Empire's protocols, decrees and other diplomatic correspondences with foreign countries. Within the *İran Nişan Defteri* (the Iran Registry Book) contained in this collection, there is a recorded decree dated 6 October 1874, concerning the prohibition of marriage between Ottoman subjects and Iranian subjects, see: BOA, A.{DVNSDVE.D. 43. 11, 25 Şaban 1291 (06 October 1874).
[76] BOA, A.{DVNSDVE.D. 43. 11, 25 Şaban 1291 (6 October 1874). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Teb'a-ı Devlet-i Aliyye ile Teb'a-ı İraniyenin İzdivacı Haklarında Olan Memnu'iyyetin Muhafazasına Dair Nizamnamedir.

The Ottoman authorities must have believed that by imposing such legal regulations, they could prevent abuses in marriages with Iranians. By implementing this regulation, the Ottoman government aimed to prevent their human resources from falling under the protection of foreign states. By still recognizing Ottoman women who married Iranian nationals as Ottoman nationals, they prevented the transfer of Ottoman properties to Iranian spouses. Also, the obligation of military service for children born out of these marriages aimed to maintain the Ottoman Empire's military source capacity. Additionally, subjecting both Ottoman women and children born out of these marriages to pay taxes to the Ottoman Empire can be seen as a result of the Ottoman government's efforts to preserve its nationals as a financial resource.

2.4. The Qajar Response

The Ottomans were not the only authorities who were uncomfortable with the marriage of Ottoman women to Iranian men and thought that this situation was corruptive for the nation. The Iranian *Charge d'Affaires*, Khan Malik Sasani, who was the representative of the Qajar government in Istanbul between 1919 and 1921, while being opposed to the Ottoman nationality imposition, duplicated the Ottoman authorities in many common points such as nationality changes and marriage. In his memoirs entitled *Yadbudha-ye Sefaret-e Estanbul* (The Memoirs of the Istanbul Embassy), which was first published in 1966, made the following statements about Iranians who married Ottoman women:

> Iranians who married Ottoman women are generally not happy with their fortune. Religious conflicts and long-standing grudges dug such an endless pit between them that they became strangers to each other, so many of them divorced after a while or regretted their marriages altogether. But some of them, out of weakness or the desire to have children, fell into the trap one by one. They lost their identity and became Ottomanized or got lost on the way. Children born to Ottoman mothers and Iranian fathers are recognized as Ottoman subjects according to the regulation (Marriage Prohibition Law) established by

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Birinci Madde – Teb'a-ı devlet-i aliyye ile teb'a-ı İraniyenin izdivacı kemafi's-sabık kat'iyyen memnu'dur.
İkinci madde – Akd-i nikaha mezun olanlar hilaf-ı memnuiyyet hal ve harekette bulunurlarsa mesul tutulacaklardır.
Üçüncü madde – Hilaf-ı memnu'iyyet olarak teb'a-ı devlet-i aliyyeden bir kadın teb'a-ı İraniyeden birine varmış ise gerek kadın ve gerek evladı her halde teb'aı devlet-i aliyyeden ma'adud olub kur'aya ve bedelat-ı askeriyeye ve sair her nev' tekalif-i miriye dâhil olacaklardır.
Fi 24 Eylül 1290 / 25 Şaban 1291
Şura-yı Devlet."

> the Istanbul government in 1286. Children who have grown up at the feet of Ottoman mothers and have never seen Iran have little sense of Iranianness. In the second generation, these people will definitely become Ottoman.[77]

According to Sasani, Iranian men who married Ottoman women became "Ottomanized".[78] Therefore, Iranians lost their culture when they got married to Ottomans, and the children born out of these marriages did not have an Iranian character.[79] He even claimed that the second generation born from such marriages grew up completely Ottoman. For this reason, Sasani argued that it would be better for Iranians not to get married to Ottoman women.[80] The process that led an Iranian statesman to this attitude should be analysed particularly. It is clear that Sasani's main concern was to prevent 'cultural corruption and Ottomanization' among Iranians, living in the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Sasani's emphasis on "Iranianness" must have been motivated by the political developments in the Qajar Empire that coincided with the period between 1919 and 1921, when he was serving in Istanbul. The most important political event of the period was the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement which aimed at stabilising Iran's political economy through British intervention and indirectly pursued British regional and local interests.[81] It was largely the creation of British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and unpopular Iranian Prime Minister Vusuq al-Dowleh. In general, the agreement contained provisions for the "development" of the country, such as the provision of a British loan to Qajar Iran, the creation of employment facilities, and the reorganisation of the Iranian army and state administration.[82] Such a high level of British involvement was resented by the intellectuals, politicians and artists of Qajar Iran. Iranian political writer and poet Mirzadeh 'Ishqi (1893 – 1924) even accused the Vusuq al-Dowleh of selling the

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[77] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 95: The original text in Persian: اما ایرانیانی که زن عثمانی کرفته‌اند عموماً از طالع خودشان نأراضی‌اند اختلافات دینی و کینه‌های‌دیر پنه چنان کودال بی‌پایانی‌میان " انها حفر کرده که همیشه نسبت بیکدیگر بیگانه‌اند لپذا اکثرشان پس‌از چندی زنها را طلاق داده وبکلی‌از کرده پشیمان شده‌اند اما بعّی که سست‌عنصر بوده با برای علاقه که بفرزندان داشته دربند افتاده‌ان کم کم باشخصیت خودرا از دست داده عثمانی‌مآب شده ویا در راءکم کردنند؛ امابچه‌هائی که ازمادر عثمانی وپدر ایرانی بوجودآمده‌اند بموجب مقررات (قانون منع ازدواج) که دولت استانبول در سال ۱۲۸۶ وضع کرده عثمانیان آنان را تبعه عثمانی می شناسند . این بچه ها هر کدا عثمانی که در دامن مادر عثمانی بزرگه شده وایران را هم ندیده‌اند چندان بوی ایرانیت ازشان نمی‌آید ویقینا درنسل دوم ازبیخ عنما نو خواهند"

[78] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 95.

[79] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 95.

[80] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 95.

[81] Katouzian, Homa, "Nationalist Trends in Iran, 1921-1926", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10/4, (1979), pp. 536 - 537.

[82] Katouzian, "Nationalist Trends in Iran, 1921-1926", pp. 536 - 537.

country to Britain, and sarcastically asked him one of his poems that "Was Iran not your father's property?":

> The Anglo-Saxon wolves are sitting on it,
> A delegation is spreading the news for them,
> The shah is gone, the country is gone, the crown is gone and the throne is gone,
> Gardener, don't bother, this tree has been pulled up by the roots,
> Vusuq al-Dowleh's guests are bloodthirsty,
> Oh, God! He is entertaining guests with our blood!
> Oh Vusuq al-Dowleh! Was Iran not your father's property?
> The price of this property was not your childhood.[83]

The patriotic reaction rising in this atmosphere might have influenced Sasani, a statesman raised in Iran, and created a reaction against the Ottomanization of Iranians. The reactions to prevent Ottomanization were not limited to Sasani's tenure. It is clear that the Iranian Embassy always tried to preserve the Iranian population's unity in Istanbul. Such efforts to prevent the change to Ottoman nationality were sometimes appear among the documents preserved in the Ottoman archives as well. The first example of the Iranian Embassy's sanctions against Iranians who changed their nationality to Ottoman was only a few weeks after *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi* came into force. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nezareti*) wrote a memorandum (*müzekkere*) to the Iranian Embassy stating that the tobacco shop of Ebulfettah Ağa, a tobacco seller who had changed his nationality from Iranian to Ottoman, had been closed and sealed due to a debt lawsuit filed by the Embassy.[84] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that an officer be sent from the Iranian Embassy to break the seal of the shop since Ebulfettah Ağa denied that he was a debtor and it would not be legal to close his shop if he was not.[85] In addition, The Ministry of

[83] Mirzadeh, Ishqi "به نام عشق وطن / Be Nam-e Eshqi Vatan" [In the Name of Patriotism], *Ganjoor*, available at: https://ganjoor.net/eshghi/divan/no/sh2 [accessed on 1 December 2023]:
"گرگ‌های آنگلوساکسون، بر آن بنشسته‌اند
هیئتی هم بهرشان، خوان‌گسترانی می‌کند
رفت شاه و رفت ملک و رفت تاج و رفت تخت
باغبان زحمت مکش، کز ریشه کندند، این درخت
میهمانان وثوق الدوله، خونخوارند سخت
ای خدا با خون ما، این میهمانی می‌کند
ای وثوق الدوله! ایران، ملک بابایت نبود؟
اجرت المثل متاع، بچگی‌هایت نبود"
[84] BOA, HR. MKT.671 91, 11 Ramazan 1286 (15 December 1869).
[85] BOA, HR. MKT.671 91, 11 Ramazan 1286 (15 December 1869).

Foreign Affairs stated that even if Ebulfettah Ağa was a debtor, the closure of his shop would financially harm his creditors, therefore his shop should be reopened.[86] This document reveals that the Iranian Embassy had a negative attitude from the very beginning in cases of nationality change. The Ottoman authorities, on the other hand, tried to intervene in order to ensure the continuation of legitimate commercial activity in the capital and to protect the economic rights of the Iranians who changed nationality, or they functioned as an authority to seek assistance from, as in the cases of Ali Meşhedi and Abdülvehhab, which will be examined below.

As the years passed and *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi* continued to be enforced, the number of nationality changes between Iranians and the Ottomans must have increased. To prevent the 'cultural corruption and Ottomanization' of the Iranians in Istanbul, the Iranian Embassy began to impose harsher sanctions on changes of nationality and these sanctions began to appear in judicial records. A document submitted to the Yıldız Palace from the Ministry of Justice *(Adliye ve Mezahib Nezareti)* in 1896 there was the interrogation of Ali Meşhedi, who set himself on fire at the *Mabeyn* Gate of the Yıldız Palace in order to show Abdülhamid II the troubles he had suffered during the change of nationality.[87] Ali Meşhedi was a haberdashery seller from Tabriz and had been trading in Istanbul for 20 years. His tragic struggle with the Iranian Embassy shows how the imposition of nationality affected the lives of Iranian residents in Istanbul. Ali Meşhedi, described the process of change of his nationality in his statement taken by Şekib Ahmet who was the deputy public prosecutor (*müdde-i umumi muavini*) of the Inferior Court of Beyoğlu (*Beyoğlu Bidayet Mahkemesi*) in 1896.[88] According to his statement, Ali Meşhedi was subjected to a claim that he owed a total of 94 *lira*s to two Iranians named Meşhedi Ali bin Hacı Mirza and Rıza when he requested to become an Ottoman national in the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[89] Ali Meşhedi, further claimed that his shop was also sealed by the Iranian Embassy due to his alleged debts, and the consul had beaten him up when he went to the Embassy to solve this issue. Unable to find a solution, Ali Meşhedi took a radical action and he had set himself on fire with kerosene at the *Mabeyn* Gate of the Yıldız Palace due to "insult and harassment he suffered had

[86] BOA, HR. MKT.671 91, 11 Ramazan 1286 (15 December 1869).
[87] BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).
[88] BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).
[89] BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).

reached the extreme" (*duçar olduğum mudayaka derece-i nihayeye varmağla*) and to show his incapableness to the sultan.[90] His attempt to set himself on fire resulted in the officers intervening with water, and Meşhedi Ali was sent to the Beyoğlu and Galata Sixth Arrondissement Hospital (*Altıncı Daire-i Belediye Hastahanesi*) for burns on his body. In the hospital, he was interrogated by Şekib Ahmed who was the deputy public prosecutor.[91]

The case of Abdülvehhab, which took place a few years after Ali Meşhedi's suicide attempt, was one of the most aggressive examples of the Iranian Embassy's intervention against Iranians in the city. According to the records of the Council of State Department of Internal Affairs (*Şura-yı Devlet Mülkiye Dairesi*) Abdülvehhab and his brother Mohammed who ran a tobacco shop and coffee house in Galata, renounced their Iranian nationality and acquired Ottoman nationality.[92] After the change of nationality in 1901, the Iranian Embassy claimed that Abdülvehhab and his brother Mohammed were in debt to some Iranians.[93] In return for their debts, the Embassy had Abdülvehhab's tobacco shop and coffee house in Galata raided by the Embassy kavasses.[94] Claiming that his belongings in the shops, worth 800 gold coins in total, were given to his debtors and the rest was looted and distributed, Abdülvehhab submitted a petition (*arz u hal*) to the Council of State for the solution of the injustice he experienced.[95]

The efforts to prevent the change of nationality of Iranians in Istanbul, which gradually increased in intensity and intervention capacity starting from the year the *Tâbi'yet-i Osmaniye Kanunnâmesi* was implemented, seems to have continued as a chronic problem for many years. The Iranian Embassy's harsh sanctions against the change of nationality can be interpreted as a policy to make the Iranian population in Istanbul feel the authority of the Qajar Empire, their country of origin, and to ensure that they maintain their loyalty to their homeland and not lose their Iranianness. Moreover, by visibly displaying such sanctions, the Iranian authorities in Istanbul may have wanted to discourage Iranians who were planning to change their nationality. On

[90] BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).
[91] BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).
[92] BOA, BEO. 1860 .139440, 11 Safer 1320 (19 May 1902).
[93] BOA, BEO. 1860 .139440, 11 Safer 1320 (19 May 1902).
[94] BOA, BEO. 1860 .139440, 11 Safer 1320 (19 May 1902).
[95] BOA, BEO. 1860 .139440, 11 Safer 1320 (19 May 1902).

the other hand, it proves that the Iranians in Istanbul could not be considered entirely within the Qajar nationality and that there were many among them who changed their nationality to Ottoman. The fact that nationality loyalties displayed themselves on a shifting ground suggests that the Iranians in Istanbul had variable attitudes towards the nationalities that were imposed on them and that nationality loyalty was not a priority for them. This is because at a time when it was not at all easy to live in Istanbul as an Iranian, Iranians considered nationality only as an instrument for survival and did not attribute very deep meanings to it.

For the Iranians in Istanbul, adopting Ottoman nationality was an option to ensure a less troublesome survival. One of the main purposes of Ottoman legal regulations was actually to make this option preferable. While Ottomanization removed the restrictions, it also meant a break with the official Iranian nationality. However, this separation did not always occur so smoothly, it could sometimes end in tragedies, as in the case of Ali Meşhedi. However, one should not think that suicide was the only option for Iranians living in the city at that time. Iranians had learned to make the most of this ambivalence. Iranians viewed the nationalities imposed on them by both states with a much more pragmatist eye. This led them to build new mechanisms to survive and operate in Istanbul. Even if they directly accepted the nationality imposed on them, they did not leave the Iranian network and continued their daily life practices as were before. Nationality, on the other hand, remained secondary because the main criterion determining nationality preferences was not a sense of belonging, but economic concerns and desire to maintain their livelihoods. For this reason, the livelihoods and means of earning money of Iranians who were fundamentally economic migrants could sometimes become targets when they clashed with the state authorities.

2.5. Survival Between Double State Pressure

The pressure and coercion that the Iranians in Istanbul faced from the official representatives of their homeland, the Qajar State, was a direct duplication of the nation-state practices that had begun to be applied in the Ottoman Empire. The Qajar authorities aimed to preserve their subjects' Iranian identity by trying to prevent the Ottomanization of them. In cases where they failed to do so, their first sanction was to stop the economic activities of individuals or to claim that they owed debts to other

Iranians.[96] This practice can be easily seen in the cases of Abdülvehhab and his brother Mehmet, who changed their nationality, and Ali Meşhedi, who was in the process of changing his nationality. As detailed above, Abdülvehhab's tobacco shop and coffeehouse in Galata were raided by the embassy kavasses, and Ali Meşhedi's shop was sealed by the Iranian Embassy due to their alleged debts.[97]

The answer to the question of why Iranians continued to live in Istanbul during the late Ottoman period has been debated many times. It has been claimed that many of the Iranians in the city, especially the intellectuals, were political exiles,[98] or even that they lived in Istanbul because they were able to form a community around the Shiite sect that bound them together.[99] However, as shown in Chapter Two, at a time when the nationality dispute between the Ottomans and the Qajars was at its height, the main reason why Iranians continued to live in Istanbul was the economic prospects the city offered. Their primary concern was to continue economic activities and to take part in the existing Iranian network. One needs to focus on Qajar-European trade activities to see what kind of economic opportunities Istanbul offered to Iranians.

[96] BOA, BEO. 1860 .139440, 11 Safer 1320 (19 May 1902), and BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).
[97] BOA, BEO. 1860 .139440, 11 Safer 1320 (19 May 1902), and BOA, Y.PRK.AZN. 16 36, 07 Rebiü'l-ahir 1314 (15 Septemler 1896).
[98] For analyses highlighting political exiles within Iranians in Istanbul, see: Pistor Hatam, "Akhtar as a Transmitter of Political Ideas", p. 142, and Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876 – 1896)", p. 10
[99] Yeler, "Iranian Merchants as a Religious Community in Late Ottoman Istanbul", p. 131.

CHAPTER 3

MAKING A LIVING

3.1. Introduction

Iranians in Istanbul, as detailed in Chapter One, were economically motivated migrants because they believed that Istanbul created a commercial sphere for Iranian merchants with a commercial network in Qajar Iran and this would provide them a prosperous life. This commercial sphere provided them wealth to a certain extent since Istanbul located in the middle of the trade route between Europe and Qajar Iran. This was because the introduction of steam transport on the Black Sea from the 1840s onwards, the commercial route Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul became a very prominent route for Qajar Iran's trade with Europe. Due to favourable transport costs, commercial goods from Europe to Iran first started to flow to Istanbul, where they were sent to Tabriz through intermediaries. However, when Europe - Qajar Iran trade route shifted to alternative routes in the Persian Gulf, Iranians who had come to the city in search of a prosperous life either left the city in the 1880s, or they chose to stay but became poorer. In addition to the shift in the route of transit trade, new commercial institutions created by the imposition of European capital entering the Ottoman Empire as a result of the transformations in the international economy were also supported by the Qajar State, which had a negative impact on Iranian commercial activities in Istanbul. In this economic situation, those who remained in Istanbul tried to maintain their economic stability by creating alternative fields of work for themselves. These alternative business areas also pushed them economically on the margins. In this chapter, this economic transformation will be analysed under three sub-headings. The first section will focus on the prosperous times of Iranians in Istanbul. The second will discuss the decline of trade between Europe and Qajar Iran on the Istanbul route. The third will explore the alternative ways of making money that Iranians in Istanbul were pushed into as a result of economic transformation.

3.2. Iranians as Intermediaries in an Indispensable Commercial Market

In 1836, the first steamer for commercial transportation was seen on the waters of Trabzon.[100] The need for a shorter commercial route between Europe and Qajar Iran and the emergence of steamship navigation, which reduced the cost of transport, were the main architects of the increased use of the Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul commercial route.[101] The high duties imposed by the Russian government on Iranian trade goods carried from Tabriz through Transcaucasian route via Georgia and the insecurity of the southern trade route to Baghdad were other factors that promoted the steam navigated Black Sea route.[102] Despite reductions in Russian customs duties, the Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul route seems to have remained popular until the 1880s. In a report written by British Consul General Henry Jones to the British Foreign Office in 1872, it was stated that although the Poti - Tbilisi railway was completed and Iranian commercial goods could be transported much cheaper than the Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul route, Iranian merchants did not prefer this route.[103] Jones claimed that this was due to "the neglect and incompetence of the Russian transit agents entail a delay and loss to the Persian importers" so Iranians preferred to pay one percent customs duty for the transit commercial goods passing through the Ottoman Empire.[104] In addition to these considerations, it can be argued that the existing Iranian commercial network established on this route encouraged merchants to use the Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul route.

For the reasons mentioned above, the most of the trade between Qajar Iran and Europe was concentrated in two important cities: Istanbul and Tabriz. The road was started from Tabriz where was considered as a re-export centre. The goods were collected from producers in different parts of Iran concentrated in the hands of trading firms in Tabriz. Later, the goods loaded on caravans travelled to Trabzon via the way of Erzurum. The goods loaded on steamers in Trabzon were transported to the ports of

[100] Issawi, Charles, *The Economic History of Iran 1800 – 1914* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 113.
[101] Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800 – 1914,* p. 92.
[102] Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800 – 1914,* p. 92.
[103] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", in *Reports from Her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce, &C., of their Consular Districts* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1873), p. 969.
[104] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", p. 969.

Istanbul.[105] On the other hand, the trade from Europe to Qajar Iran were handled by European merchants' establishments and agencies in Istanbul and their subsidiaries in Tabriz. Alongside European traders, Iranian Azeri and Iranian Armenian merchants who worked with Europeans as subsidiaries or carried on their own trade business also had commercial agencies in Istanbul. Since European merchants did not have direct business relations with local Iranian merchants, the distribution of commercial goods within the country was provided by these Iranian subsidiary agents.[106] Charles Issawi, an economist and historian, categorizes the commercial firms which were prominent in the European - Qajar State trade and were based in Istanbul as follows:

> **European firms**: T. Ralli & Co., G. Stefanovich, Ionides & Co., E. Manuelovich & Radocanachi, Ralli & Mavroyanni, E. Novico, N. Negroponti, P. Mavrocordato, Ienidunia Bros.
> **Iranian companies**: Haji Ali Akbar, Haji Sayyid Hossein, Haji Mahmoud Nour.[107]

In addition to these, there were many Iranian merchants in Istanbul who came and went and traded on their own or on behalf of Iranian commercial companies they were affiliated with.[108] Through Iranian and European merchants and their representatives in Istanbul, the prominence of the Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul commercial route increased remarkably.[109] In his article analysing the carpet trade between Istanbul and the Qajar State in the 19th century, Sakamoto states that: "Istanbul was indispensable for Iran during the Qajar Dynasty as an international intermediate market between Europe and Iran."[110] The employment and the money-making opportunities created by this trade must have served as a pull factor for the Iranian migration. It is important to keep in mind that such a large volume of trade created vacancies and the ties of fellow countrymen and the growing network between Istanbul and Tabriz probably brought Iranians to Istanbul. Therefore, from the 1840s

[105] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", pp. 224 - 225.
[106] Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800 – 1914*, p. 100.
[107] Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800 – 1914*, p. 100.
[108] Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran 1800 – 1914*, p. 100.
[109] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", in *Reports from Her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce, &C., of their Consular Districts* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1873), p. 969.
[110] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 214.

onwards, the Iranian population in Istanbul gradually became visible.[111] A significant number of them would have been involved in international trade, which was already became a prosperous line of business for Iranians.

Along with their population, the role Iranians of Istanbul in the trade route was also growing because there was a growing interest in Iranian commercial goods in Europe. The Vienna Exhibition of 1873 further increased this interest in Iranian merchandise in the continent. Unlike the mass-produced products that emerged after the Industrial Revolution, Europeans' interest in exotic and handmade products was reciprocated in fabrics and carpets produced in Iran. In his report to the British Foreign Office on commercial activities in Tabriz, the British Consul-General Henry Jones stated that the demand for commercial goods produced in the region has increased: "This trade is, however, gradually attaining importance, the demand for Persian fabrics, in the shape of carpets, shawls etc. is increasing rapidly, notwithstanding the rise in the price of wool, caused by the mortality among the flocks during the late famine."[112] About this increasing demand, Sakamoto noted that the commercial and artistic value of Iranian carpets displayed in the exhibition was appreciated by Europeans. [113] Thus, the Austrian government and transport companies provided assistance and tax reductions to Iranian exhibitors for their commercial transports in order to meet the growing demand for Iranian carpets, which subsequently became popular among Europeans.[114] Similarly, British Consul-General Jones claimed in his report that the Tehran government had ordered the governors of the provinces to give every assistance to those who wished to send their goods to Vienna and to abolish the export tax on goods destined for the exhibition.[115] All these developments made Istanbul, located on the main commercial route from the Qajar State to Europe, an even more popular destination for Iranian merchants. For many Iranians, the city had become the center of money-making and prosperity.

In order to comprehend the increasing importance of the destination in 1870s, it is necessary to examine the volume of trade on the route in detail. In 1872, reports

[111] See: "Chapter 1. Introduction", pp. 7 - 8, in this thesis.
[112] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", p. 968.
[113] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 217.
[114] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 217.
[115] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", p. 969.

sent to the British Foreign Office from the consular districts (Tabriz was one of them) provided three years of data on Tabriz's imports and exports (Table 3. 1. And Table 3. 2.). The report of General-Consul Henry Jones lists some of the trade goods sent from Tabriz to the Ottoman territories[116] or transferred through the Ottoman Empire.

Table 3. 1. Approximate value in sterling of goods exported to foreign countries during the years 1870, 1871, 1872.[117]

Articles	**1870***	**1871***	**1872***	**Remarks**
Cotton	£ 40,000	£ 29,968	£ 5,000	To Russia.
Cotton cloths, printed	…	…	£ 30,000	Chiefly British manufactures re-exported to Russia.
Dried fruits	£ 80,000	£ 13,668	£ 45,000	To Turkey and Russia.
Drugs and dyes	£ 3,100	£ 20,384	£ 17,300	To Turkey and Russia.
Furs, lamb and sheepskins	£ 20,000	£ 7,504	£ 90,000	To Germany, Austria, Russia and Turkey.
Leather and hides	£ 1,356	£ 5,552	£ 2,500	To Russia and Turkey.
Silk	£ 116,000	£ 119,440	£ 140,000	To Western Europe.
Silk frison	…	…	£ 2,000	To England.
Sugar and confection	£ 4,832	…	…	To Russia (chiefly contraband).
Textile fabrics	£ 45,160	£ 62,928	…	
Carpets**			£ 28,000	To Austria, Russia and England.
Coloured cottons**			£ 65,000	To Austria, Russia and Turkey.
Shawls**			£ 50,000	To Austria, Russia and Turkey.
Silks**			£ 14,000	To Austria, Russia and Turkey.
Tobacco	£ 66,120	£ 31,466	£ 110,000	To Turkey and Russia.
Wax	£ 2,864	£ 1,200	£ 1,200	To Turkey and Russia.
Wooden wares, planks	£ 13,200	£ 28,680	…	To Russia.
Wool	…	…	£ 4,000	A few samples sent to England as an experiment.
Various	£ 30,000	£ 30,000	£ 30,000	Chiefly cattle and horses sold by the wandering tribes on the frontiers of Russia.
TOTAL:	**£ 432,632**	**£ 340,790**	**£ 634,000**	

* The years include the period until 21 March (Iranian New Year) of the following year.
** Textile fabrics were divided into four separate articles as carpets, coloured cottons, shawls and silks in 1872.

[116] In the British Foreign Office's *Reports on Her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce, &C., of their Consular Districts* the Ottoman Empire was generally referred to as "Turkey".
[117] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", p. 971.

When the export data provided by Jones for the years 1870, 1871 and 1872 were analysed, it can be seen that the trade volume of goods sold directly to the Ottoman Empire and transferred to European states through the Ottoman territory dropped by about £100,000 from 1870 to 1871. However, the total volume increased from £340,790 in 1871 to £634,000 in 1872, almost doubling the total value of goods in sterling. In 1872, the value of dried fruits exported to the Ottoman Empire more than trebled and the value of furs, lamb and sheepskin increased by 12 times compared to the previous year. As an indication of the diversification of exported textile fabrics, in 1872 textile fabrics were divided into four different categories (as carpets, coloured cottons, shawls and silks), and these were exported to the Ottoman Empire in greater amounts than in the previous year. This division of textile products and the increase in the volume of trade probably reflected the high demand in Iranian textiles in Europe. Moreover, as it can be seen in the table (Table 3. 1.), from 1871 to 1872, tobacco exports to the Ottoman Empire more than tripled and became one of the leading export commodities. Iranian tobacco which largely consisted of tonbaku used in the water pipes, was exported to the Ottoman Empire, Syria, Egypt and Hijaz and was popularly consumed in Istanbul.[118] As we will see later in the chapter, tobacco merchants constituted an important part of the Iranian merchants in Istanbul before the establishment of the Tonbaku Monopoly in 1891. Therefore, Istanbul as a commercial centre, played an important role in the distribution of Iranian tonbaku to other provinces, and therefore many tobacco merchants were operating in the city before 1891.[119]

Although the data on imports from the Ottoman Empire to Tabriz (Table 3.2.) did not show any significant figures other than tobacco, spice and coffee, this did not reduce the importance of Istanbul for Iranian merchants. Sakamoto argues that the imports of cotton fabrics to Tabriz, which totalled £1,000,000 in 1872, were first brought Istanbul from Manchester.[120] The wholesale trade in this cotton was carried out by certain Greek and Armenian trading establishments in Istanbul, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and then these goods were re-exported to Iran by Armenian and Azeri subsidiary merchants who travelled between Tabriz and Istanbul.

[118] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 214.
[119] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 214.
[120] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 217.

This was because, as explained in Chapter One, the redistribution of these goods within Iran could only be achieved by local merchants who had business links there.[121]

Table 3. 2. Approximate value in sterling of foreign goods imported during the years 1870, 1871, 1872.[122]

Articles	**1870***	**1871***	**1872***	**Remarks**
Candles, steraine	£ 4,800	£ 1,200	£ 700	From Russia and Austria.
Cottons coloured**	£ 864,000	£ 611,280	£ 800,000	From England and Switzerland.
Cottons, plain**			£ 200,000	
Coffee	£ 1,960	£ 1,800	…	From Turkey and India, via Baghdad.
Copper and brass	£ 2,541	£ 2,000	…	From Russia.
Cloth, woollen	£ 23,000	£ 43,600	£ 36,000	From Germany and Austria.
Drugs and dyes	£ 5,936	£ 4, 669	£ 5,000	From Turkey.
Glass	£ 11,800	£ 10,670	£ 3,600	From Germany, Austria and Russia.
Gold lace and embroidery	£ 3,800	£ 1,000	…	From Austria and Russia.
Hardware	£ 7,080	£ 10,912	£ 30,000	From Russia.
Iron in rods and bars	£ 4,000	£ 4,102	…	From Russia.
Lead	£ 3,840	…	…	From Russia.
Leather	£ 4,672	£ 3,000	…	From Turkey and Russia.
Paper	£ 2,800	£ 800	…	From Russia and France.
Porcelain and pottery	£ 7,200	£ 4,884	£ 5,200	From France and England.
Silk goods	£ 40,000	£ 6,000	£ 33,000	From France.
Spices	…	…	£ 2,800	From India and Turkey, via Baghdad.
Sugar	£ 56,600	£ 81,640	£ 80,000	From Marseilles.
Sulphur	…	…	£ 1,700	From Russia.
Tea	£ 20,688	£ 22,032	£ 64,000	From Holland and England.
Tobacco	…	…	£ 2,700	From Turkey.
Wines and spirits	…	…	£ 1,000	From France.
Various	£ 25,000	£ 20,000	£ 1,400	
TOTAL:	**£ 1,094,717**	**£ 789,559**	**£ 1,267,100*** **	

* The years include the period until 21 March (Iranian New Year) of the following year.
** Textile fabrics were divided into two separate articles as coloured cottons and plain cottons in 1872.
*** One-third of which represents the value of goods imported by European, the rest by native Iranian traders.

[121] Sakamoto, "Istanbul and the Carpet Trade of Iran since the 1870's", p. 217.
[122] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", p. 970.

Moreover, in Consul General Jones' trade report for the year 1872, it was stated that European merchants were responsible for only one-third of the volume of the merchandise, while the remaining part was the business of native Iranian traders.[123] Therefore, this data shows that Istanbul played a very crucial role in Qajar Iran's international trade in the early 1870s.

In the 1840s, 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, when these trade relations were at their peak, Iranians probably experienced their most prosperous period in Istanbul. Contrary to what is often claimed,[124] the factors that brought Iranians to the Ottoman capital were not mainly political, but they rather purely motivated by the desire to make money in this prosperous environment. As a natural consequence of this lucrative atmosphere, between 1840s – 1870s, Istanbul attracted as many Iranian merchants as possible, and with the arrival of their families, relatives, acquaintances, agents and employees, an economic migrant community was formed.

In 1851, a survey commissioned by *Hariciye Nezareti* (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to be submitted to the sultan, Abdülmecid, shows the number of chambers and shops leased by Iranians engaged in trade and shopkeeping in Istanbul and the locations of their commercial venues.[125] It is detected that there were 243 chambers and shops in the various parts of Istanbul were leased to Iranians in 1851. The number and locations of the chambers belonging to Iranians in the commercial khans were listed as follows (Table 3. 3.). These tobacco shops were located mostly in *Suriçi* with 85 shops, followed by 11 shops in Üsküdar and 4 shops in Beşiktaş.[126] In addition to the number of leased shops and chambers in the klans, a picture of a large trade-related community emerges when we consider Iranians who were employed or associated in these commercial areas and other Iranians who did not rich enough to lease a shop but engaged in petty trade.

[123] "Tabreez: Report by Consul-General Jones on the state of trade in the province of Azerbijan during the year 1872", p. 970.
[124] Lawrence, Tanya Elal, "An Age of Trans-Imperial Vernacularisms: The Iranian Dissident Community of the Late Ottoman Empire", Unpublished PhD Thesis, Yale University, New Haven, 2018, pp. 1 – 6.
[125] BOA, İ. HR. 74 3603, 11 Rebiü'l-evvel 1267 (14 January 1851). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Dersaadet ve Üsküdar ve Beşiktaş'ta esnaflık ve ticaret ile bulunan teb'a-i İraniye'nin bir kıta defteri zabtiyye müşiri devletü paşa hazretleri tarafından tanzim ve ita kılınmış olmağla manzur-ı ali buyurulmak üzere takdim olunacağı beyanıyla tezkire-i senaveri terkim kılındı efendim".
[126] BOA, İ. HR. 74 3603, 11 Rebiü'l-evvel 1267 (14 January 1851).

Table 3. 3. The number of khan chambers leased by Iranians in Istanbul in 1851.[127]

Name of Khans	Number of Chambers Leased by Iranian Nationals
Hacı Nazif Ağa Hanı	22
Büyük Yıldız Han	20
Bekçibaşı Han	5
Vezir Hanı	4
Cafer Ağa Hanı	28
Sümbüllü Han	4
Büyük Valide Han	59
	Total : 143

In addition to this document, there was another document that showed the solidarity of Iranians in matters related to their community. The petition included the signatures of 74 Iranian merchants and it was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1853 for the construction of a ghusl room[128] (*gusülhane)* in Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery.[129] They stated that it was difficult for them to perform *ghusl* according to the Shiite rituals in the valley where the cemetery was located, especially on winter days, and emphasised the necessity of building a structure for this ritual to be carried out properly. The increasing need for such services also indicates that the number of Iranians in the city was rising at that time.

The Iranian demand for service facilities for their community meant more than just the need for a ritual space. The petitioners were not the officials of the Iranian Embassy, but the Iranians themselves in Istanbul. As it can be seen in the petition the majority of them were merchants, not intellectuals, students or exiled politicians. As the main representatives of the community, these merchants exercised political power by emphasizing their distinct identity in Istanbul and demanded service from the Ottoman authorities. In other words, they were able to transform their economic power into a social demand or perhaps a claim.

[127] BOA, İ. HR. 74 3603, 11 Rebiü'l-evvel 1267 (14 January 1851). For an article on the number of merchants at the Büyük Valide Han, see: Dığıroğlu, "İstanbul – Tebriz Ticaret Hattında Validehan (XIX – XX. Yüzyıl)", pp. 69 – 112.

[128] In Islamic tradition, *ghusl* of *mayyit* [washing of the deceased] refers to the ritual washing of the deceased's body before burial. It is a mandatory obligation for Muslims to perform *ghusl* of *mayyit* on the deceased as a sign of respect and to prepare them for burial. Iranians must therefore have requested the construction of a room in the cemetery site to perform this religious ritual.

[129] BOA, İ. HR. 104 5103, 3 Rebiü'l-evvel 1270 (4 December 1853).

Their claims in Istanbul were not limited to service facilitation demands. They also used other means to present themselves as part of life in Istanbul. Although these merchants were generally considered as migrants who attracted by the commercial potential of Istanbul, they gradually became natural members of the city. They were able to continue their commercial activities and earned money. They kept their ties with the Iranian network in both Qajar Empire and Istanbul and took part in the vibrant commercial life provided by the Tabriz - Trabzon - Istanbul route. Over time, they wanted to demonstrate that they were able to maintain their distinctive appearance in Istanbul as a sign of their political power, just as they fearlessly demanded the needs of their community from the Ottoman authorities. Besides, they probably wanted to display the economic power that they had acquired in the city as migrants so had their photographs taken in the studio of the Swedish photographer Guillaume Berggren opened in 1870 on the Grand Rue de Péra (today's İstiklal Caddesi).[130] The following two photographs were accessed from the Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection, which is available at the Online Archive of California and contains more than 4,500 photographs taken in various parts of the Middle East and North Africa (Figure 3.1. and Figure 3.2.).

They might have wanted to prove that they were dressed like the wealthy people of their homeland with their dark-coloured open robes worn over the long beige caftans and the sashes tied around their waists. The famous astrakhan *kalpak*s or *papakh*s, which they wore on their heads without any exception, were a very precious item of clothing for. It was made from the wool of fifteen-day-old Bukhara sheep whose wool was not hardened yet, and became a symbol of the Iranians in Istanbul at that time. Their Qajar-type beards and moustaches were also a distinguishing feature of Iranians among the people of Istanbul. The commercial goods, which had been specially included in the photographs and which were the key to the Iranians' success in making money were displayed in the most glamorous way. The embroidered silk shawls, carpets and rugs carried on their shoulders and the daggers held in their hands were all

[130] The Swedish photographer Guillaume Berggren (1835 - 1920), who studied photography in Berlin, arrived in Istanbul in 1866 and opened his photography studio in Galata in 1870. Until 1900, he documented Istanbul, its streets and its people in various compositions. For more information, see: "Bir Fotoğrafçı Biyografisi Guillaume Berggren", *Pera Müzesi*, 12 March 2012, available at: https://www.peramuzesi.org.tr/blog/bir-fotografci-biyografisi-guillaume-berggren/1404 [accessed on 1 December 2023].

symbols of the prosperity of the Iranians. They might have been sending this sign of success back home as an effective proof.



Figure 3. 1. A photograph of an Iranian merchant with carpet and shawl on his arm, taken between 1870 and 1900, derived from the Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection.



Figure 3. 2. A photograph of two Iranian carpet merchants with a sword in hand and carpets on the shoulders, taken between 1870 and 1900, derived from the Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection.[131]

[131] "[Rug Merchants]; [Studio Portrait of Iranian]; Marchand persan, Neg. no. 14; Marchands persans du Caucase, Neg. no. 2895" in the Online Archive of California, Accession No: 96.R.14 C33.2, https://rosettaapp.getty.edu/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2908575 [accessed on 1 December 2023].

As Istanbul became one of the main cities of international trade between Europe and Qajar Iran, Iranians who came to the city in the hope of a prosperous life benefited from this commercial dynamism nearly 40 years. During this period, their numbers increased in Istanbul and wealthy groups began to form among them. However, they could not escape the impact of the economic transformation of the Ottoman Empire and the change in international trade routes.

3.3. Decline of International Transit Trade

From the mid-1880s onwards, the lucrative commercial life in Istanbul for Iranians underwent some changes. There were international and domestic reasons for these changes. Firstly, the shift in the international trade routes should be analysed. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 after a decade of construction, the wholesale trade of goods from Europe to Iran began to be carried out through this new route without Iranian intermediaries in Istanbul.[132] In his article on Iranian transit trade, Çetin argues that this change in trade was caused by factors such as the opening of the Suez Canal and the greater profitability of this new route for traders.[133] The commercial goods began to shift to the port of Bushehr in the Persian Gulf or to the Baghdad - Kermanshah trade route on the southern borders of the Ottoman Empire. Manchester fabrics, one of the most valuable and lucrative products of the transit trade in Istanbul in the 1870s, began to be shipped to Bushehr via the Persian Gulf in order to benefit from cheaper freight rates.[134] In this matter, Çetin claims that the transport cost on the Bushehr route was almost half the cost of the Istanbul - Trabzon - Tabriz route.[135] All these changes in commercial routes reduced the importance of Tabriz as a commercial center and consequently its transit trade via Istanbul. As a reflection of this situation in 1885, the British consul in Tabriz, in his report titled "Memorandum on Azarbaijan", made the following statements about Iran's commercial interactions: "The Persian Gulf is now the great connecting link with England (...) whereas ten years ago, the average value of the commerce between Europe and Persia by the Trebizond

[132] Çetin, Mehmet, "The Development of the Transit Trade of Iran in the Triangle of Russia, Ottoman Empire and Iran in the Second Half of the 19th Century", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 36/1 (2021), p. 10.
[133] Çetin, "The Development of the Transit Trade of Iran", p.10.
[134] Çetin, "The Development of the Transit Trade of Iran", p.10.
[135] Çetin, "The Development of the Transit Trade of Iran", p.10.

- Erzeroum route represented annually £2,400,000, the most recent statistics show that in 1883 - 1884 the same trade amounted only £1,018,081 (...) whilst in 1884 - 1885 the total value was £1,092,617..." [136] The average value of the commerce on the Tabriz - Trabzon route had decreased by more than 50 percent since the Persian Gulf became the primary route.

This transformation must have caused a noticeable decline in the incomes of the merchants already residing in Istanbul. The decline in merchants' incomes gradually affected Iranian labourers working in ancillary services such as porters and cart drivers. The reduction in the supply of commercial commodities must have also affected many Iranian craftsmen, shopkeepers and artisans in the city, reducing their commercial activities and impoverishing them. Even if they were not the primary subjects of transit trade, an important group that would have been affected by the decline in the incomes of Iranian merchants were the manufacturers who supplied luxury goods to wealthy merchants. Given the ossified commercial network of Iranian merchants, this group of manufacturers contained a considerable number of Iranian employees. Therefore, the decline in value of commerce in transit trade affected all Iranians in the city in one way or another.

The dramatic decline in the use of the Tabriz – Trabzon – Istanbul route in the Iranian transit trade even attracted the attention of travellers to Istanbul. Haji Pirzadeh who was an Iranian traveller and dervish visited Istanbul in 1887, noted in his travelogue that "The merchants who once lived in Istanbul have gone to Egypt, just like the Iranian merchants in Bombay. Not a single one of them remained in Istanbul. All those engaged in trade in Istanbul are the proxies, peddlers or regents of the merchants in Tabriz and Tehran. Most of them do not have their own capital."[137] As Pirzadeh claimed, the reason behind the Iranian merchants' orientation towards Egypt might be that, as mentioned above, Manchester cottons were being transferred to Iran via the England - Suez - Bushehr route. These merchants could have moved to the rapidly rising new commercial centre, just as they had been allured by the commercial opportunities in Istanbul a few decades earlier. The rising commercial appeal of the Suez and its periphery, and the need for Iranian merchants to intermediate the

[136] Issawi, Charles, "The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a Route*", International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1 (1970), p. 24.
[137] Pirzadeh, سفرنامه حاجی پیرزاده/ *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh*, p. 88.

distribution of commodities into Qajar Iran along this new line, drawn not only the wealthy merchants of Istanbul but also those from Bombay. However, Istanbul now seemed to be left to the representatives, peddlers and middlemen of merchants from Tabriz and Tehran.

Like the number of wealthy merchants in Istanbul, the earnings of Iranian merchants from trade also reduced. Haji Pirzadeh stated that during a lunch in the dining room of the Iranian Embassy in 1887, Haji Mir Mohammad Agha, who was one of the prominent merchants in Büyük Valide Han, told him that his trade value from Istanbul to Tabriz had dropped from 70,000 Ottoman liras to 40,000 Ottoman liras per year.[138] Haji Mir Mohammad Agha listed the goods sent from Istanbul to Tabriz as follows: baize, lining, silk, cotton fabric and shalwar cloth.[139] As shown in the case of Haji Mir Mohammed Agha who made a living by selling processed textiles to the Iranian market, but his income from this business had decreased over the years. Moreover, as he said to Pirzadeh that it took almost 20 months for the wages for the goods sold to reach Istanbul from Iran.[140] Probably, the reason for this situation was the inability to compete with the processed textiles flowing into the Iranian market via Bushehr in the south, offered to the market at a more favourable price due to lower transport costs. With increasing competition and declining incomes, it was inevitable that the Iranian community diversified their business activities and that the number of merchants making money from international trade declined.

The 9th issue of the *Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları* (*Annuaire Oriental*) which is a commercial guide providing extensive information on commercial activities, merchants, trade areas and sectors in late Ottoman Istanbul, published two years after Haji Pirzadeh's visit to Istanbul, covering the period 1889-1890, emphasised the decline in the number of Iranian merchants at the Büyük Valide Han compared to the number of 59 merchants in 1851.[141] In the section allocated for Büyük Valide Han in

[138] Pirzadeh, سفرنامه حاجی پیرزاده / *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh*, p. 88.
[139] Pirzadeh, سفرنامه حاجی پیرزاده / *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh*, p. 88.
[140] Pirzadeh, سفرنامه حاجی پیرزاده / *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh*, p. 88.
[141] The first issue of the *Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları* (widely known as *Annuaire Oriental*) with the name of "Indicateur Constantinopolitain", was published in Turkish and French by Raphaël Cesar Cervati and N. C. Sargologo in 1868. *Annuaire Oriental* contains detailed information on Ottoman families, the state officials, places of worship of holy religions, embassies and consulates, the Ottoman telegraph and postal organisation, railways, bankers, merchants, tradesmen and artisans of Istanbul. For more information, see: Koçunyan, Aylin, "Ticaretten Toplumsal Hafızaya Uzanan Bir Kaynak: Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları, 1868-1945", *Salt Online*, 20 October 2022, available at: https://saltonline.org/tr/2484/ticaretten-toplumsal-hafizaya-uzanan-bir-kaynak-sark-ticaret-yilliklari-

the *Annuaire Oriental*, there are records of 49 different chambers. The names indicate that the majority of these chambers belonged to Iranians, but there are also records of shops with Greek and Turkish merchants.[142] The names of 46 different merchants were included in the records, and their distribution according to their professions is as follows. (Table 3. 4.)

Given that all of the merchants and tradesmen included in this data were not Iranians, a significant decline can be seen in the number of merchants compared to the 1850s. Merchants engaged in wholesale trade were cut in half and their place was taken by shopkeepers such as tea sellers, coffee sellers, printers and tailors.

Table 3. 4. The professions of merchants in Büyük Valide Han according to the 9th issue of the *Annuaire Oriental* covering 1889 – 1890.[143]

Sectors	**Number of Tradesmen**
Merchant(s) (probably referred to wholesale merchants)	29
Manifacturer(s)	2
Carpet merchant(s)	2
Textile merchant(s)	2
Tailor(s)	2
Banker	1
Journalist (*Akhtar*'s manager)	1
Courtier	1
Wine seller	1
Jeweller	1
Coffee seller	1
Tea seller	1
Commissionaire	1
Money exchanger and concierge	1
Total:	**46**

The reason for the increase in the number of shopkeepers can be explained by the fact shopkeeping was not a business line directly related to transit trade and would not be affected by major commercial transformations in transit trade. As Pirzadeh argues, there must have been Iranians engaged in many different petty jobs which were not included in this data. These petty jobs included water sellers, tobacco sellers, cart

1868-1945 [accessed on 1 December 2023], and Cervati, Raphaël Cesar, *Annuaire Oriental du commerce l'industrie de l'administration et de la magistrature* (Constantinople: Cervati Frères & C., 1306 (1889 / 1890)), pp. 548 – 549.

[142] Cervati, *Annuaire Oriental*, pp. 548 – 549.

[143] Cervati, *Annuaire Oriental*, pp. 548 – 549.

drivers and peddlers and they were more visible in city life. These data show that Iranians were dispersed into service sectors such as shopkeeping and with the shift in transit trade routes they began to operate in various professions which were more integrated with Istanbul. In this way, they were able to sustain their lives. The most importantly, this situation demonstrated that Iranians preferred to stay in Istanbul rather than returning to their home country or migrating to cities that offered them more prosperous life. In order to survive in this "great capital", they chose to become more 'Istanbulised' in their business activities and in their living. However, it should be noted that it not only the international factors transformed Iranians' commercial activities. The Ottoman government's legal arrangements in the commercial areas in which Iranians were actively involved also directly affected Iranians. The tobacco selling business, mostly dominated by Iranians, was one of the most important businesses affected by these Ottoman legal arrangements.

In February 1875, a *tezkire* sent from the Office of the Grand Vizier (*Sadaret*) to the *Rüsumat Emaneti* which was responsible for the management of customs, stated that the import of tobacco was banned.[144] However, the document stated that "just like snuff and cigarettes, which are allowed to be imported from other foreign countries with a tax of 75 percent, Iranian tonbaku will be allowed to be imported with the same tax rate".[145] Tonbaku refers to a kind of tobacco used in water pipes, different from cigarette tobacco, and was produced mainly in Iran. According to Kılıç, this decision seems to have been aimed at strengthening local tobacco production by completely withdrawing the goods of Iranian tobacco producers from the Ottoman market, while imposing high tariff on tonbaku imports in order to increase the state's revenues from this specific product.[146]

By the 1890s, Iranian tobacco sellers faced a much more serious problem than the high tariffs on tonbaku. On 1 December 1891, a contract was signed between the

[144] BOA, A.}MKT. MHM. 478 2, 14 Muharrem 1292 (20 February 1875).
[145] BOA, A.}MKT. MHM. 478 2, 14 Muharrem 1292 (20 February 1875). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "memalik-i ecnebiyye-i saireden yüzde yetmiş beş rüsum itasıyla idhaline müsaade olunan enfiye ve sigara gibi İran tömbekisinin dahi mezkurü'l-mikdar resm ifa olunduğu halde idhaline mesağ gösterilmesi".
[146] Kılıç, Mehmet, "The Importation of Ottoman Tonbaku From Iran and Its Socio-Cultural Implications: 1891 - 1914", Unpublished Masters Thesis, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, İstanbul, 2008, p. 37.

Société du Tombac,[147] a French consortium, and the Ottoman government to convey the rights to import and sell foreign tonbaku to the company for 25 years.[148] With this legal arrangement, only individuals licensed by the Tonbaku Monopoly would be allowed to import and sell tonbaku in the Ottoman Empire. As part of the agreement, the Ottoman Empire would help the monopoly to prevent the smuggling of tonbaku. In addition, the company had signed an convention with Naser al-Din Shah as well to lease the rights to export tonbaku from Iran to the Ottoman Empire for 25 years.[149] This situation completely deprived the income sources of Iranian tobacco sellers who had been trading and importing tonbaku in the Ottoman Empire before that.

In 1892, according to Sasani, 400 Iranian tobacco traders in Istanbul reacted extremely and sharply to this situation.[150] The economic decisions of both the Ottoman and Qajar governments deprived tobacco sellers of their livelihoods and prevented them from carrying on their business legally. Iranians affected by this situation began to gather in Büyük Valide Han to protest against the implementation of the monopoly. In a detailed report sent from the Ministry of Public Security (*Zabtiyye Nezareti)* to Yıldız Palace, it was stated that in March 1892, Iranian tobacco sellers gathered at the masjid in Büyük Valide Han and discussed until midnight.[151] In the report it was noted that Iranians realised that "the emergence of a [tonbaku] monopoly in Istanbul, which had not been allowed to be established in Iran a year earlier, would be very harmful for them".[152] Although they had applied to the Iranian Embassy for their complaints, "they were refused" (*cevab-ı redd aldıklarından*) so they planned to send threatening telegrams to the Iran, stating that "if their problems were not solved, they would change their nationality to Russian or Ottoman".[153] The Minister of Public Security *(Zabtiyye Nazırı)* also asserted that Iranians also prepared and signed an *ihtarnâme* i.e. a written warning, to be presented to the Iranian Embassy. According to the report, the

[147] The Tonbaku Monopoly was distinct from the Tobacco Monopoly (*Memalik-i Şahane Duhanlar Müşterekü'l-Menfaa Reji Şirketi*), commonly known as the "Régie", established in 1883, and mainly concerned the importation and exportation of tonbaku.
[148] Kılıç, "The Importation of Ottoman Tonbaku From Iran", p. 52.
[149] Kılıç, "The Importation of Ottoman Tonbaku From Iran", p. 53.
[150] Sasani, *یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 267.
[151] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892).
[152] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "İran'da ihdasa müsaade olunmayan reji usulünün Dersaadet'te mevki'-i icraya vaz'ında pek çok mütezarrir olacaklarından".
[153] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "işlerine bir netice virilmeyecek olur ise terk-i tâbi'yet ile Rusya ve devlet-i aliyye tâbi'yetine dehalet ideceklerine dair".

crowd at the khan did not diminish because Iranians "from Beyoğlu and Üsküdar were hosted by their fellow countrymen living in the khan" and the day after they participated in the protest.[154] Although it is not known exactly how long the Iranian protests against the monopoly lasted, the Ministry of Public Security intervened in the crowd with reinforcements requested from the Office of the Commander in Chief (*Bab-ı Seraskerî*).[155] The Iranian tobacco sellers asserted their stance against the monopoly. However, they gradually realised that they could not legally struggle against the Tonbaku Monopoly, which was supported and endorsed by the Qajar and Ottoman empires. Therefore, they started to create alternative ways to reach their commercial products without the authorisation of the Tonbaku Monopoly.

When their existing sources of income were interrupted by new legal arrangements, or when they faced an economic bottleneck due to shift in the transit trade route, Iranians could become more daring to maintain their struggle for survival in the city. In order to make money, they tended to engage in lines of business that the Ottomans normally did not prefer or could not do, and redefined their own economic sphere. This reorientation of the city's economic structure and the Iranians' choice to stay in the city pushed them once again to the margins.

3.4. Alternative Ways of Making Money

As seen above, the economic transformations of the 1880s and 1890s had a profound impact on the economic activities of Iranians. With the withdrawal of transit trade from Istanbul, wealthy merchants also left the city. Those who remained in Istanbul became either impoverished or benefit less from the income generated by international trade. Inevitably, they turned to alternative businesses. As seen in the example of Büyük Valide Han, the proportion of Iranians working in the service sector increased and shopkeeping rose as a preferred option. As a supportive fact, Iranians whose cases were analysed in the second chapter were all shopkeepers: Ali Meşhedi had a haberdashery shop, Abdülvehhab ran a coffee shop and Ebulfettah Ağa was a tobacco seller. In addition to shopkeepers, the difficult economic conditions also created alternative businesses. Rather than taking risks in the competitive environment of mainstream commercial activities, Iranians have turned to businesses that they can

[154] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Beyoğlu ve Üsküdar cihetinde bulunanlardan dahi han derununda bulunan hemşehrileri nezdinde misafir kalmış oldukları".
[155] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892).

run with their own networks and existing resources. The first of these was the printing industry, which started operating in the 1870s at Büyük Valide Han.

When one thinks of a printing house in Büyük Valide Han, the first one that comes to mind was the printing house that published *Akhtar* newspaper. *Akhtar*, which published its first issue in Istanbul on 13 January 1876, was founded by the Iranian ambassador of the period, Mu'in al-Mulk.[156] He thought that a Persian-language newspaper published in Istanbul would have a medium of influence on the Iranians in the city.[157] He put Mohammad Taher Tabrizi, who had a printing house in Büyük Valide Han, in charge of this work.[158] 1,000 Ottoman liras from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Qajar Empire provided the funding for *Akhtar*'s printing house.[159] This money, which was sufficient for the publication of only 60 issues, would later be renewed with the funds provided by Abdülhamid II.[160] Apart from the political aspects of *Akhtar* and its role in the presentation of Persian language in a foreign country, which will be discussed in the next chapter, its economic dimension should not be ignored. Mohammad Taher Tabrizi, who developed his printing press in the Büyük Valide Han with grants from the Qajar and Ottoman empires, must have seen the potential for book printing to become a lucrative business. According to Yıldız, there were records of 117 different books in Ottoman, Persian and Arabic printed at the *Akhtar* printing house in the Bibliography of Ottoman Printed Works.[161] Apart from the *Akhtar* newspaper, Mohammad Taher Tabrizi also printed these books in his printing press and probably earned a certain amount of income by selling them in his bookshop in Hakkaklar Çarşısı.[162] By the end of the 1880s, however, book publishing was subject to stricter regulations and it became more difficult to make profit.

With the *Matbaalar Nizâmnâmesi* (Regulation on Printing Houses), which came into force in January 1888, book printing was subject to strict regulations. Each

[156] Pistor Hatam, "Akhtar as a Transmitter of Political Ideas", p. 141.
[157] Pistor Hatam, "Akhtar as a Transmitter of Political Ideas", p. 142.
[158] Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876 – 1896)", p. 35.
[159] Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876 – 1896)", p. 35.
[160] Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876 – 1896)", p. 36.
[161] Yıldız, Güllü, "İstanbul'da Bir Acem Matbaası: Kitapçı Tahir ve Ahter", *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 50, (2017), pp. 208 - 216.
[162] Yıldız, "İstanbul'da Bir Acem Matbaası: Kitapçı Tahir ve Ahter", p. 117.

printed book required a licence from the Ministry of Education.[163] If the book was religious, the approval and licence of the head of the relevant religious community was also required.[164] Printers who reproduced unlawful writings and other printed products would be penalised, and those who printed texts that provoked or incited the public to mischief would be punished.[165] As a side effect of the tightly regulated book printing, Iranian printers, who had previously been known for unauthorised book reproduction and printing, gave more space for their illegal activities. Iranian printers were able to take many risks that Ottoman printers could not take, out of a desire for financial gain and a consciousness of already being pushed to the economic margins. Thus, printing became even more visible as a profitable alternative business for courageous and perhaps daring Iranian printers. Mohammad Taher Tabrizi had also turned to this profitable illegal business. In 1892, a letter sent by the *İdare-i Matbuat*, which was responsible for the inspection of printing presses and operated under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to the Ministry of Public Security stated that a person named Tahir was "publishing books, booklets and other documents in violation of the law and order" in the printing house of the *Akhtar* newspaper in Büyük Valide Han.[166] It is noteworthy that although Mohammad Taher Tabrizi received a regular allowance from the sultan for his newspaper, he violated the law of his government. Perhaps this was due to the lure of fast and abundant profits from unlicensed book publishing.

Unlicesed book printing made money for the printers, but did not bring any profit to the authors of the books. In *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Reşat Ekrem Koçu writes that before the *II. Meşrutiyet* (Constitutional Monarchy of 1908), the printing houses run by a few Iranians in Büyük Valide Han printed imitations of popular works and immediately put them on the market, and they made money on the shoulders of authors whose faces they had never even seen without paying a single *kuruş* of royalties.[167] Koçu claims that due to the illegal actions of these printing houses, most of the books printed in that period had a note on the cover indicating "Unsealed copies are

[163] Birinci, Ali, "Osmanlı Devletinde Matbuat ve Neşriyat Yasakları Tarihine Medhal", *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 4/7 (2008), p. 298.
[164] Birinci, "Osmanlı Devletinde Matbuat ve Neşriyat Yasakları Tarihine Medhal", p. 298.
[165] Birinci, "Osmanlı Devletinde Matbuat ve Neşriyat Yasakları Tarihine Medhal", p. 298.
[166] BOA, MF. 17 93, 29 Zilhicce 1309 (25 July 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "mugayir-i nizam kitap ve resail ve evrak-ı saire tab' etmekte olduğu".
[167] Koçu, Reşat Ekrem, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 6 vols. (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kolektif Şirketi, 1963), vol. VI, pp. 3308 - 3309.

imitations." However, the printers in Büyük Valide Han even imitated this note and put a seal-like motif on the forgeries they printed and wrote "Unsealed copies are imitations." underneath.[168] Considering the growing interest in western-style literature in Istanbul at the time, there seems to have been a demand in the market for books that failed to pass censorship or for books that could not be authorised for publication. Since the printing houses possessed printing equipment and raw materials such as paper, they rapidly advanced in this business and expanded their scope of trade.

Although unlicensed book printing accelerated after the *Matbaalar Nizamnamesi*, presumably due to increased demands, we know that Iranians were active in unlicensed book printing even before that. It can be argued that Iranians started to engage in this illegal business in the years when the volume of transit trade started to decline. These actions of the Iranian printers were also reported to the Ministry of Education (*Maarif Nezareti*), which was in charge of issuing licences for book publishing. In 1883, as we understand from a petition to the Correspondence Office of the Ministry of Education (*Maarif Nezareti Mektubî Kalemi*), the unlicensed publishing activities of Iranian printing houses had reached a level that disturbed the famous writer of the period, Namık Kemal.[169] In the relevant petition, Namık Kemal complains that his request for a license for the second volume of *Cezmi* which is the first example of the historical novel genre in literature, was not accepted by the Ministry of Education. However, he claims that another important work of his, *Zavallı Çocuk*, was reproduced by Iranians with lithography and sold in every bookstore, but no one from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Public Security intervened in these illegal actions. Namık Kemal continues as follows: "This situation does nothing but cause fatigue to those who want to write and zeal to those who want to publish books surreptitiously."[170] Namik Kemal's assessment of unlicensed book publishing was reasonable. As it became more difficult to obtain the necessary licences for book publishing, the Iranian book publishers' customers increse.

The situation was such that Iranian printers extended their activities to holy books for which no licence had yet been obtained from the Office of the Sheikh al-

[168] Koçu, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", p. 3309.
[169] BOA, MF. MKT. 81 67, 19 Receb 1300 (26 May 1883).
[170] BOA, MF. MKT. 81 67, 19 Receb 1300 (26 May 1883). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Bu halde yazı yazmak isteyenlere fütur gizli kitap basmak isteyenlere gayret vermekten başka bir netice hasıl itmeyeceği".

Islam (*Bab-ı Meşihat*). According to Koçu's claim Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, the famous historian and statesman of the period, mentioned in his article in *Osmanlı Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası* (The Journal of the Committee of Ottoman History) about printing and sale of the Holy Qur'an in Iranian printing houses around late 1880s: "For many years, *Bab-ı Ali* had been demanding the printing of Qur'an chaplets. A favourable answer could not be received from *Bab-ı Meşihat*. However, Iranians secretly printed the Holy Qur'an in Valide Han and surrounding neighbourhoods and sold them publicly. Sometimes the pages of the Qur'an verses on leftover scrap papers from these printing houses were seen in grocery shops."[171] The fact that even Ahmet Cevdet Paşa saw unauthorised Qur'an pages in grocery stores gives an idea of the visibility of this illegal activity.

Despite the growing scale of illegal book printing, the Ottoman authorities seemed unable to take any effective measures for a long time. Iranians have been active in this sector for many years. In 1892, the government decided to take some precautions. These included classifying printing presses as those authorized to print newspapers or books and drawing up a list of them. In a *tezkire* from the Ministry of Public Security (*Zabtiyye Nezareti*) written to the Administration of Printing Houses in the Ministry of Interior (*Nezaret-i Dâhiliye İdare-i Matbuat*), it was requested the names of the printing houses authorized to print books because some newspaper printing houses were "printing books, pamphlets and various documents against the order".[172] According to the document, this list was compiled at the Administration of Printing Houses in the Ministry of Interior and sent to the Ministry of Public Security.[173] In the following years, other documents in the archives of the Ministry of Education (*Maarif Nezareti*) give us an idea that the government took more drastic measures.

An internal correspondence betweeb the Inspection and Examination Board (*Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene*) to the Correspondence Office (*Mektûbi Kalemi*) of the Ministry of Education in 1899 shows that the issue was not limited to the classification of printing houses according to their authorization to print publications.[174] As it is

[171] Koçu, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", p. 3308.
[172] BOA, ZB. 17 93, 29 Zilhicce 1309 (25 July 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "mugayir-i nizam kitab ve resail ve evrak-ı saire tab' itmekte olduğundan".
[173] BOA, MF. 17 93, 29 Zilhicce 1309 (25 July 1892).
[174] BOA, MF. MKT. 434 21, 25 Şaban 1316 (08 January 1899).

understood from this document, the inspectors of the Ministry of Education started to confiscate unlicensed books. An inspector of the ministry Hilmi Efendi confiscated four copies of İbnü'r-Reşad Ali Ferruh's *Huşeng*, four copies of Ahmet Mithat Efendi's *Letaifü'l-Rivayat*, two copies of Namık Kemal's *Zavallı Çocuk* and one copy of *Hande* from the bookstalls of the Iranian booksellers Şerif Ağa and Hasan Ağa in Yeni Camii on the basis that they were banned by the government.[175] In the relevant document, the Correspondence Office was informed that these confiscated books should be sent to the Ministry of Public Security.[176] One year after the confiscation of the books, the most severe measure against Iranian booksellers was taken. Agha Mir Kerim, a bookseller in Vezir Han, wrote a petition to the Iranian Embassy, stating that the officials of the Administration of Printing Houses had sealed his shop a month ago and requested that his shop be reopened.[177] The *tezkire* from the Iranian Embassy to the Ministry of Foreing Affairs states that this request should be acted upon in accordance with the "rules and regulations" (*usul ve nizam*).[178]

All these documents show that from the 1880s onwards, Iranian printers and booksellers took a leading position in illegal publishing business. It cannot be denied that their motivation for doing so was the desire to earn money and to sustain their lives in the city they lived in. Not only did the Iranians of Istanbul find alternative business fields for themselves, but they also continued their activities in this field steadily despite being subjected to state pressure for a long time. Iranians were attracted to this business largely because they had experience in journalism and book publishing. As seen in the case of Mohammad Taher Tabrizi, they gained an important place in the field of printing with the state support they received. Therefore, they became so successful in this alternative business field that even the names of Iranian printers became equated with unlicensed printing and they started to become the subject of official sanctions. However, there were also Ottomans who appreciated the determined activities of these business men living on the margins. In his memoirs *Muharrir, Şair ve Edip* (Writer, Poet and Literator) dated 1924, Ahmet Rasim, a journalist famous for his unique writing style, refers to Iranian printers as censor-breakers:

[175] BOA, MF. MKT. 434 21, 25 Şaban 1316 (08 January 1899).
[176] BOA, MF. MKT. 434 21, 25 Şaban 1316 (08 January 1899).
[177] BOA, MF. MKT. 518 13, 25 Rebiü'l-evvel 1318 (23 July 1900).
[178] BOA, MF. MKT. 518 13, 25 Rebiü'l-evvel 1318 (23 July 1900).

> On the other hand, the most active enforcers of the freedom of the press in our country were Iranian booksellers. In the printing house in Valide Han, they used to print books that were deemed harmful and ought to be regarded as harmful by the government. It was somehow impossible to close down this printing house. I think the services of Iranian imitators in this regard were very important.[179]

Although the Iranians did not carry out their illegal book printing and selling activities for the sake of freedom of the press, it can be argued that their money-making motives enabled Ottoman intellectuals to access literary works and be intellectually nourished.

Another alternative business area created by the Iranian network was probably targeted exclusively at Iranian customers. The unlicensed tavern, which opened in one of the chambers of the Büyük Valide Han, was probably motivated by economic reasons. The fact that most of the licensed taverns were located in Galata and Beyoğlu and that such establishments were not allowed in Muslim neighbourhoods, especially near mosques, created an alternative source of income for those who could take the risk. This tavern, which we understood to appeal to Iranian customers, however, was brought to the attention of the authorities by other Iranians in the same khan. According to a draft prepared in 1895 to be sent from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Office of the Sheikh al-Islam, it was stated that one of the rooms on the upper floor of Büyük Valide Han was used as a tavern and some Iranians in the khan had petitioned the Office of the Sheikh al-Islam for its closure.[180] Reminding of its proximity to the mosque in the centre of the khan and the Çakmakçılar Mosque, which was built by Mustafa III, the tavern was closed down by the *Zabtiyye Nezareti*.[181] Another document encountered six years later shows that despite the intervention, the Iranians did not withdraw from this lucrative illegal business. In the letter sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Public Security, it was stated that "the room that had been closed was reopened due to the fact that that it was a tavern with regular customers" and it was discussed that the situation should be reported to the

[179] Ahmed Rasim, *Matbuat Hatıralarından: Muharrir, Şair, Edib* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kütüphane ve Matbaası, 1924), p. 101.
[180] BOA, DH. MKT. 2416 88, 17 Rebiü'l-ahir 1313 (25 September 1895).
[181] BOA, DH. MKT. 2416 88, 17 Rebiü'l-ahir 1313 (25 September 1895).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to take the necessary action.[182] The persistent reopening of the unlicensed tavern despite the interventions, also summarised the relationship with the authorities of the new business lines created by Iranians on the margins.

Finally, the legal trade activities of the Iranians were undermined by the previously mentioned Tonbaku Monopoly, which was established as a result of the legal arrangements made by the Qajar and Ottoman Empires in the field of economy. The Tonbaku Monopoly did not allow them to import and sell, so Iranian tobacco sellers started a solution to maintain their livelihoods by purchasing smuggled tonbaku and sell it to their customers. Unlike the Monopoly, they had commercial relations with the local tobacco producers and traders in Iran. It was possible that this network gave them access to smuggled tonbaku easily. Nevertheless, they had to be encouraged to do so by influential Iranian figures.

The Shiite clergy provided the necessary motivation to legitimise the trade in smuggled tonbaku among sellers. The reason behind that the Shiite clergy collected religious taxes from the vast areas of agricultural lands including the tobacco production areas in Iran, so monopolising the tonbaku trade and bypassing the many intermediaries within Iran and Ottoman Empire affected their income as well.[183] Therefore, just as they had revolted against the Tobacco Concession in Iran in 1890, they also opposed the Ottoman Tonbaku Monopoly. The reactions started in Shiite-majority areas where tonbaku was widely consumed and close to the production areas. In 1892, in a dispatch sent directly to the Yıldız Palace by the Sixth Army Inspectorate (*Altıncı Ordu Müfettişliği*) in Baghdad, it was written that Mirza Sayyid Hasan Shirazi, the chief mujtahid "who was trusted by all the Shiites in Iran and Iraq" (*İran ve Irak'ta bu zat kaffe-i Şiiyyenin imam-ı vakt olmak üzere itikad itmekde oldukları*). Moreover, it was claimed that "just as he [Mirza Sayyid Hasan Shirazi] had revoked against the Tonbaku Regie that the British company had obtained from the Qajar government last year in Iran" and "issued a fatwa against the establishment of this Regie", now, he was also against the company that had obtained the similar concession in the Iraqi Province

[182] BOA, DH. MKT. 2556 97, 17 Teşrin-i evvel 1317 (30 November 1901). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "kapattırılmış ise de mezkur oda gedikli meyhane olduğu vechle açdırılmış".
[183] Moazami, Behrooz, "The Institutionalization of the Shi'i Ulama", in *State, Religion, and Revolution in Iran, 1796 to the Present*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 67 – 68.

of the Ottoman Empire.[184] The correspondence further continued that Mirza Seyyed Hasan Shirazi prohibited anyone from Shiite sect and Jafariyya branch from buying and selling tonbaku supplied by the mentioned company in Iraqi Province.[185] Moreover, it was rumoured among the Shiites that "he severely forbade and banned with a special fatwa that no one, male or female, allowed to smoke tonbaku".[186] It was inevitable that such a fatwa, coming from the highest ranks of the Shiite clergy, had an impact on the both seller and consumers in Istanbul. Tobacco sellers probably started to sell smuggled tobacco instead of the monopoly products, and Shiite consumers had to prefer smuggled tonbaku over the monopoly goods, as required under the fatwa.

Due to the hundreds of smuggling cases in the courts, the Ottoman government issued a new Tonbaku Regulation in 1894 and sent it to the provinces.[187] These regulations must have failed to prevent smuggling. In 1891, before the Tonbaku Monopoly, the annual consumption of tonbaku in the Ottoman Empire was more than 4,000 tons, whereas in 1893, after the introduction of the Monopoly, this figure had fallen to around 1,800 tons per year.[188] Bearing in mind that tonbaku is an addictive product, it can be argued that the reason for this decline in official figures is that consumers turned to smuggled tonbaku. Iranian tobacco sellers were probably again involved in the distribution of smuggled tonbaku in Istanbul, as this was their source of income. This collective behaviour resulted in the victory of the Iranian merchants over the Tonbaku Monopoly. In 1895, the Tonbaku Monopoly declared its bankruptcy due to declining revenues. The owners of the *Société du Tombac* transferred the monopoly to the Ottoman Bank for credit duties.[189]

Unlike the monopoly, Iranians refused to dissolve and maintained their status quo by not abandoning their existing fellow countrymen networks or not leaving these business lines in which they had already gained a significant foothold, even though

[184] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 86 54, 10 Rebiü'l-ahir 1310 (1 November 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "geçen sene İran'da İngiliz kumpanyasının İran devletinden aldığı tombekü rejisini bir fetva ile bozduğu gibi".
[185] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 86 54, 10 Rebiü'l-ahir 1310 (1 November 1892).
[186] BOA, Y. PRK. ASK. 86 54, 10 Rebiü'l-ahir 1310 (1 November 1892). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "rical ve nisadan kimsenin içmemesine bu kerre bir fetva-yı mahsusi ile şedidan men ve yasağ eylemiş".
[187] Kılıç, "The Importation of Ottoman Tonbaku From Iran", p. 59.
[188] Kılıç, "The Importation of Ottoman Tonbaku From Iran", p. 69.
[189] Kılıç, "The Importation of Ottoman Tonbaku From Iran", p. 79.

their *raison d'etre* in Istanbul was taken away from them due to the economic transformation in international trade and the semi-colonial economic regulations imposed on the Ottoman Empire. Instead, they focused on how to sustain their existence and they were able to operate in alternative business fields thanks to their Iranian network and being on the margins. Once they had the necessary resources and customer base, the Iranians did not hesitate to utilise the Iranian network to move into alternative areas of trade. They recognised the lucrative advantages of book printing, built a reputation in this market and took risks that Ottoman printers could not take. In response to the need for an alternative service, they opened a tavern in the Büyük Valide Han and operated it for years despite restrictions. When the Ottoman authorities cut off their source of income and established a monopoly over their business, they refused to give up their livelihood, continued their economic activities illegally and succeeded in dissolving the monopoly. For these reasons, the position of Iranians on the economic margins was not only the result of economic processes but also their own choice.

3.5. Conclusion

With the decline of the economic prosperity Istanbul provided for Iranians until the 1880s, they transformed economically. They turned mainly to shopkeeping and petty jobs, as well as alternative areas of profit, where they could use their existing networks or cater to the Iranian customers in Istanbul. Although these alternative areas of making money sometimes led them to maintain a conflicted relationship with the official authorities, they continued to do so. While not always successful, as in the case of tobacco sellers, Iranians have continued to exist on the margins of Istanbul's economic life with their legal and illegal livelihoods.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING A SOCIETY

4.1. Introduction

As seen in the previous chapters, Iranians in Istanbul increasingly were challenged by the decline in importance of international trade on the Tabriz – Trabzon - Istanbul route and the changing economic policies of the Ottoman Empire so they tried to create alternative ways of making money in Istanbul. This took some of the Iranians away from the economic activities focused on international trade and brought them an economic sphere closer to the city life, further localised them. However, this degree of localisation did not mean that Iranians were fully integrated into the city. While legal and economic changes were pushing them into an in-between position to live and earn money, Iranians chose to be socially marginalised and present their distinctiveness. This self-marginalisation, however, did not lead to withdrawal from the public sphere or ghettoization, on the contrary, they used their distinctiveness as means of claiming their presence in Istanbul. They began to display many of their distinctive characteristics visibly. They resisted abandoning these distinctive characteristics and did not hesitate to display and glorify them visibly when they found an audience. Due to these efforts, Büyük Valide Han served as a centre where Iranians could exhibit their distinctiveness and acquired the functions of Iranian socio-economic and political space within Istanbul. Moreover, the annual Muharram commemorations, a religious ceremony organized by the Iranians with great pageantry, were also functionalised to display the strong bond between Iranians and Istanbul to a wide audience by using the Iranian venues in the different parts of the city. Other distinctive characteristics of Iranians, such as their language, their loyalty to their Shah, their taste of music and entertainment, and their clothing and physical appearance were also used as symbols of their identity.

4.2. "It is not a Khan, it is a Country"[190]: Büyük Valide Han and the Iranians of Istanbul

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Büyük Valide Han has been the first place identified with Iranians in the spatial memory of Istanbul.[191] This khan distinguished itself with its central role among all Iranian venues in the city. Its centrality was not affected by economic changes, whether the number of Iranians in the city decreased or increased, or whether they turned to alternative ways of making money. In order to understand the reasons for such a deep-rooted and enduring relationship between the Büyük Valide Han and Iranians, it is necessary to look at the history of the building, its characteristics and the opportunities it offered for Iranians at the period.

Büyük Valide Han is a grand 210-chambers commercial building which was built during the reign of Murat IV (1623 – 1640) by the order of Mahpeyker Kösem Valide Sultan as a revenue-generating part of the Çinili Mosque Vakıf in Üsküdar.[192] *Vakıf*s were endowments whose revenues were used for charity and community service.[193] The size of the *vakıf*s varies, but they can also be large, as in the case of the Çinili Mosque Vakıf. In Ayvansarâyî Hüseyin Efendi's work *Hadîkatü'l-Cevâmi*,[194] which gives detailed information on the history of mosques in Istanbul until 1787, it was noted that Çinili Mosque was built in 1050 AH (1640/1641 AD) and its complex included a school, a fountain, a madrasah for the teaching hadith (*darü'l-hadis*), a public bath, a fountain and a prayer chamber for the sultan.[195] Ayvansarâyî also mentioned that Büyük Valide Han was a part of the Çinili Mosque Vakıf: "The large city khan called Valide Han in Istanbul is a part of the *vakıf* of this mosque, and the abovementioned sultan [Mahpeyker Kösem Sultan] built the masjid in the khan as a

[190] Koçu, Reşat Ekrem, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", p. 3309.
[191] For a detailed study on the relationship of Büyük Valide Han with Istanbul, see: Baykan, Boynudelik, Sevingen and Uluoğlu, *Tarihi Belleğimiz İçinde Büyük Valide Han*, pp. 19 – 35.
[192] Ayvansarâyî Hüseyin Efendi, *Hadikatü'l-Cevami' [The Garden of the Mosques]*, 2 vols., (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1281 (1864 / 1865)), vol II, p. 185.
[193] Boyar, Ebru and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 129.
[194] Ayvansarâyî Hüseyin Efendi's book *Hadîkatü'l-Cevâmi* was completed in 1779. This work containing information about the mosques, masjids and those who built them, as well as people who were buried in the gardens of the mosques in Istanbul.
[195] Ayvansarâyî Hüseyin Efendi, *Hadikatü'l-Cevami*, p. 185.

charitable donation."[196] The income from the commercial buildings like Büyük Valide Han was used for the upkeep and running of service facilities of the mosque complex such as hospitals, madrasahs, public baths and soup kitchens.[197] *Vakıf*s could also provide income for other aspects of social welfare such as the distribution of water and food, clothing, schooling, providing oil for lamps, and reciting the Qur'an for the souls of the dead.[198] Büyük Valide Han, which was a large commercial building for its time, constituted one of the main sources of income for the Mahpeyker Kösem Valide Sultan's *vakıf*, also known as Çinili Cedid Valide Sultan Vakfı,[199] established in the seventeenth century to sustain Ottoman social welfare.

Even at the time of its construction, Büyük Valide Han was an eye-catching and massive structure. In Reşat Ekrem Koçu's *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, it is noted that Evliya Çelebi, the famous traveller and writer of the period, named the building as *Kösem Vâlide Sultan Hânı* and described it: "This place previously contained the palace of Cerrah Mehmed Paşa. When it ruined in time, Kösem Vâlide had a very large and solid khan built with two floors and three hundred cells. There is no larger khan in Istanbul than the Mahmud Paşa Hanı and this one. On one side there is a four-cornered *cihannümâ*[200] tower with its head rising to the sky. It has stables for a thousand horses, mules and camels. It has a mosque in the center."[201] This grand khan attracted the attention of not only Evliya Çelebi but also Na'ima Mustafa Efendi, who was the famous historian of the period after Kösem Sultan's murder, and in his work *Tarih-i Na'ima* the khan is described as follows: "It is an enormous khan called Vâlide Hanı, where she had built in Mercan Bazaar. Twenty chests of florin gold were found (after her murder) in that khan. They took it to state treasury."[202] Since two prominent

[196] Ayvansarâyî Hüseyin Efendi, *Hadikatü'l-Cevami,* p. 186. The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "İstanbul'da vaki' Valide Hanı dinmekle şehir han-ı kebir bu cami'n vakfından olub ve han derununda olan mescid dahi sultan-ı müşarü'l-ileyhanın eser-i hayrıdır."
[197] Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul,* p. 129.
[198] Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul,* p. 129.
[199] A news article on the evacuation of the inhabitants of the khan published in *Son Posta* in November 1937 stated that the khan was registered under the *vakfiye* of Çinili Cedid Valide Sultan, see: "It was decided to evacuate the Valide Khan with 600 inhabitants", *Son Posta*, 29 November 1937, p. 10.
[200] This word has no exact equivalent in English and it means a high building constructed in order to see the whole scenery.
[201] Koçu, Reşat Ekrem, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", p. 3307.
[202] Na'ima Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 6 vols., Mehmet İpşirli (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), vol. V, p. 1329: "Mercan çarşusunda bina eylediği han ki Vâlide Hanı dedikleri mu'azzam handır. Ol handa yirmi sandık filorisi bulundu. Anı dahi mîriye aldılar."

writers of the period emphasize the greatness of the khan, its place in the commercial life of Istanbul must have been significant even in the century it was built.

Although the commercial importance of Büyük Valide Han continued for centuries, what distinguishes it from other commercial buildings was its strong relation with Iranian community in late Ottoman Istanbul. The exact date of the first appearance of Iranian merchants at the Büyük Valide Han cannot be dated with certainty. Nevertheless, it is necessary to explain how it was possible for a *vakıf* building became so densely populated with Iranian merchants from the second quarter of the nineteenth century onwards. The number of Iranian merchants in this khan increased to such an extent that Büyük Valide Han was characterized by Iranians in the urban memory can be explained by the "icâreteyn", a leasing method specific to the Ottoman *vakıf* system. As of the seventeenth century, *icâreteyn* was introduced to provide the cash needed for the maintenance and repair of *vakıf* buildings in an urgent manner.[203] When the times that *vakıf*s lacked the capital to repair or reconstruct a ruined or burned property, they could use the large amount of usage fee taken advance under the name of "muaccel" rent obtained through the *icâreteyn* method for this purpose.[204] The income received during the lease was not limited to "muaccel" rent and continued to bring in annual or monthly income under the name of "müeccel" rent.[205] Since the property reverted back to the *vakıf* in the case of the death of the tenant without children, this method was preferred by *vakıf*s' trustees because it allowed them to collect the same large amount of usage fee, also knows as, "muaccel" rent over and over again.[206]

This type of lease contract had also various advantages for the tenant. With the permission of the trustee of the *vakıf*, the tenant could lease the immovable property on condition of life, even pass it on to his descendants, and transfer the right of utilise to someone else for a certain price.[207] For this reason, the fact that an Iranian merchant acquired a leased chamber in Büyük Valide Han via the *icâreteyn* method meant that the chamber could be both transferred to the descendants of the merchant and

[203] Pantık, Ramazan, "Osmanlı'da İcâreteyn Uygulaması Hakkında Yeni Değerlendirmeler", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 48 (2017), p. 79.
[204] Pantık "Osmanlı'da İcâreteyn Uygulaması Hakkında Yeni Değerlendirmeler", p. 76.
[205] Pantık "Osmanlı'da İcâreteyn Uygulaması Hakkında Yeni Değerlendirmeler", p. 76.
[206] Pantık "Osmanlı'da İcâreteyn Uygulaması Hakkında Yeni Değerlendirmeler", p. 76.
[207] Yıldız, Kenan, "Osmanlı'da İcâreteynin Başlangıç Tarihi Meselesi: İlk Uygulamalara Dair Tespitler", *Cihannüma Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi,* 5/2 (2019), p. 27.

transferred to another suitable Iranian candidate to utilise the chamber. As an example of the application of the *icâreteyn* method at Büyük Valide Han in 1775, a *vakıf* record showed that a chamber in Valide Han, affiliated to abovementioned Cedid Valide Sultan Vakfı, was transferred back to the same *vakıf* due to the death of its tenant, Rukiye Hanım, who had no children. As far as we understood from the record, after Rukiye Hanım's death the mentioned chamber was leased to Niyaz Kadınefendi, one of the wives of Abdülhamid I, with an approved "muaccel" rent.[208] This document shows that the chambers in Büyük Valide Han were rented out to individuals on the basis of *icâreteyn* method before 1775 and one of the characteristic features of the *icâreteyn*, the return of the immovable property to the *vakıf* in the case of the death of the tenant without children, was also applied. For these reasons, it can be argued that *icâreteyn* method had been practised in Büyük Valide Han for a long time and that the concentration of Iranians in this khan may have been achieved in this specific leasing method, which provides the tenant with broad authorization over the property.

Even if it is clarified that the number of Iranian merchants in the khan increased over time through the leasing method, it should be explained why the Iranians chose Büyük Valide Han as their headquarters and not another commercial building. Actually, one of the main reasons why Iranians were so intensely concentrated in Büyük Valide Han would be its location. Büyük Valide Han was located in the Mercan neighbourhood in Eminönü, also known as the "district of khans" in Istanbul. This neighbourhood is located between Çemberlitaş, Beyazıt and Eminönü and it is close to both the commercial docks in Golden Horn and the Grand Bazaar, a major commercial area. Çakmakçılar Yokuşu, on which Büyük Valide Han is located, there were many khans operating in various commercial areas. Prior to the infrastructural works and demolitions that took place in the historical districts of Istanbul in the 1950s, the location of Büyük Valide Han among them can be clearly observed on the maps drawn by the topographer Jacques Pervitich in 1941. These maps were commissioned by Central Office of Turkish Insurers (Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-yi Merkeziyesi).[209]

[208] BOA, TS. MA.e. 20 3, 19 Zilhicce 1188 (20 February 1775).

[209] These maps can be accessed online from Salt Research, which generously offers its extensive archives to researchers. "Sigorta Planı. Eminönü. Mercan Ağa. No: 61", https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/99250 [accessed on 17 November 2023] and "Sigorta Planı. Eminönü. Mercan Ağa. No: 67", https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/93764 [accessed on 17 November 2023]

Caferiye Han, Kuşakçı Han and Evliya Han were located on Mercan Caddesi (Mercan Street), which stretched from the Golden Horn to Büyük Valide Han. Muradiyan Han and Buncukcu Han were also located at the beginning of Çakmakçılar Yokuşu, where Büyük Valide Han was situated. There was Zümbüllü Han on the south of Büyük Valide Han and Yeni Han could be seen across the road. At the end of Çakmakçılar Yokuşu there were Mustafa Paşa Han, Sabri Safa Han and Kürkçü Han. Thus, Büyük Valide Han may have appeared to the Iranians as a suitable establishment for trade as the largest inn in the middle of many other large and small commercial buildings. (Figure 4.1. and Figure 4.2.)

Another reason for the Iranians' preference for Büyük Valide Han must have been its physical proximity to the commercial venues such as Vezir Han, Cafer Ağa Han, Mercan Bekçibaşı Han, Büyük Yıldız Han and Hacı Nazif Ağa Han, where Iranian merchants mainly operated.[210] They might have wanted to concentrate an available location close to them because of their business relations or ties to their fellow countrymen. The maintenance of relations between Iranian merchants and their network with Tabriz was also reflected in the travelogues of the period. A traveller-dervish named Haji Mohammad Ali Pirzade Naeni, who visited Istanbul in 1887, wrote a travelogue titled *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzade*. He noted that in those years Iranians were engaged in trade in their chambers located in Büyük Valide Han and the most notable Iranian merchants were among them. He continued that: "One of the senior merchants and reasonable people in Valide Han was Haji Mir Jafar Agha, a merchant from Tabriz." Pirzadeh stated that Haji Mir Jafar Agha or one of his four sons was always present in Büyük Valide Han at all times of the year, while the others travelled back and forth to Tabriz for commercial purposes.[211] His observation indicates that for a notable Iranian merchant, Büyük Valide Han was such an important commercial area that a representative had to be left there always. Iranian merchants who thought like Haji Mir Jafar Agha and realised the commercial significance of Büyük Valide Han gradually concentrated there. 1885 and 1915, the data obtained from the *Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları* show that the Iranian merchants constituted 70-80 percent of the total number of merchants operating in this khan.[212]

[210] See: "Chapter 3. Making a Living", p. 39, in this thesis.
[211] Pirzadeh, سفرنامه حاجی پیرزاده / *Safarnameh-e Haji Pirzadeh*, p. 87.
[212] Cervati, *Annuaire Oriental*, pp. 548 – 549.

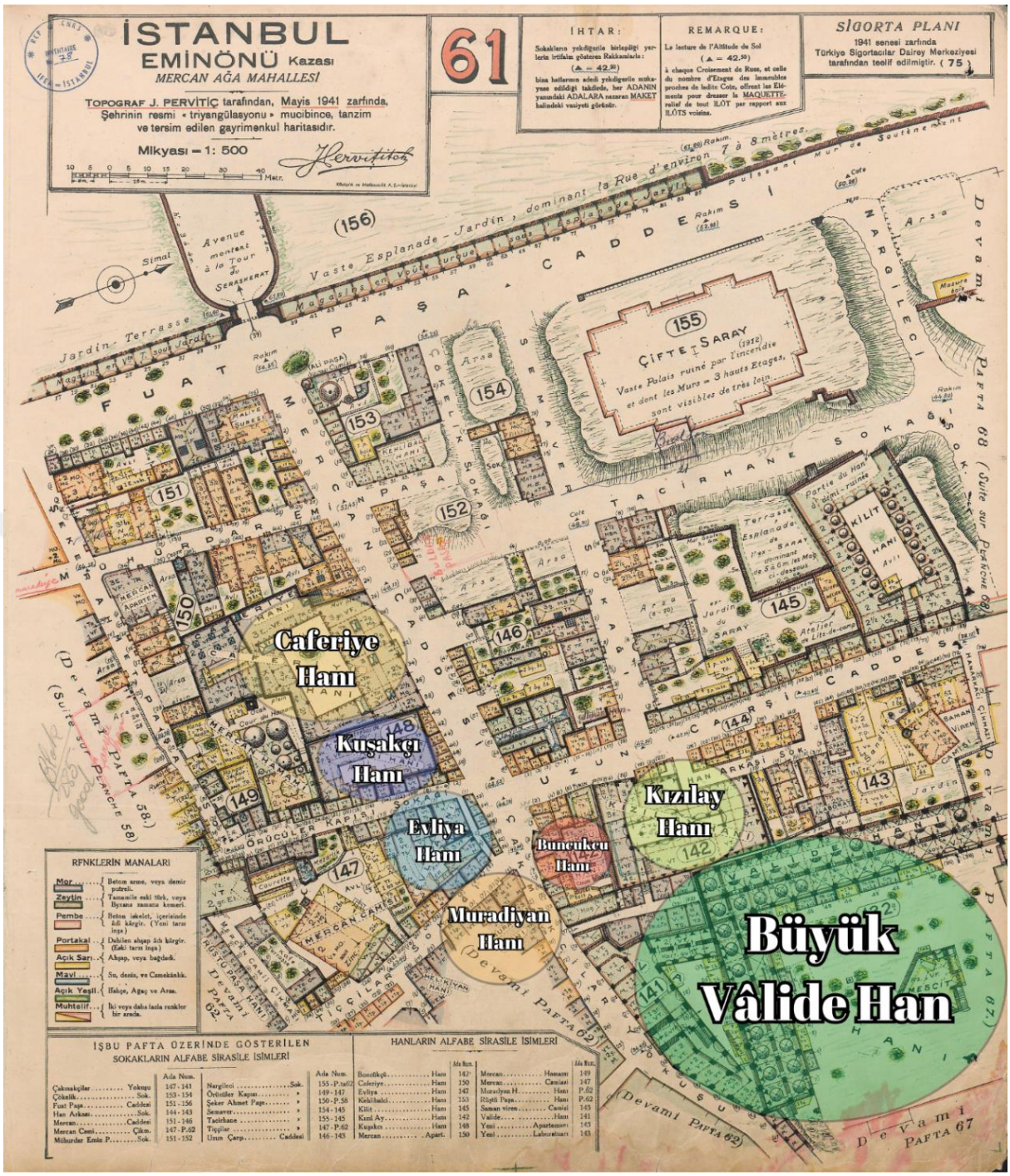


Figure 4.1. Map commissioned in 1941 by the Central Office of Turkish Insurers (Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-yi Merkeziyesi) to topographer Jacques Pervitich. Sheet 61 covering Mercan Ağa Neighbourhood and Çakmakçılar Yokuşu, where Büyük Valide Han is located (bottom right).[213] It can be seen on the map that it is the largest khan in the region and is neighbouring many different commercial buildings. Büyük Valide Han is reached through Çakmakçılar Yokuşu and the first entrance opens into the triangular shaped first courtyard. The first courtyard gives access to the second courtyard with a masjid in the centre.

[213] "Sigorta Planı. Eminönü. Mercan Ağa. No: 61".

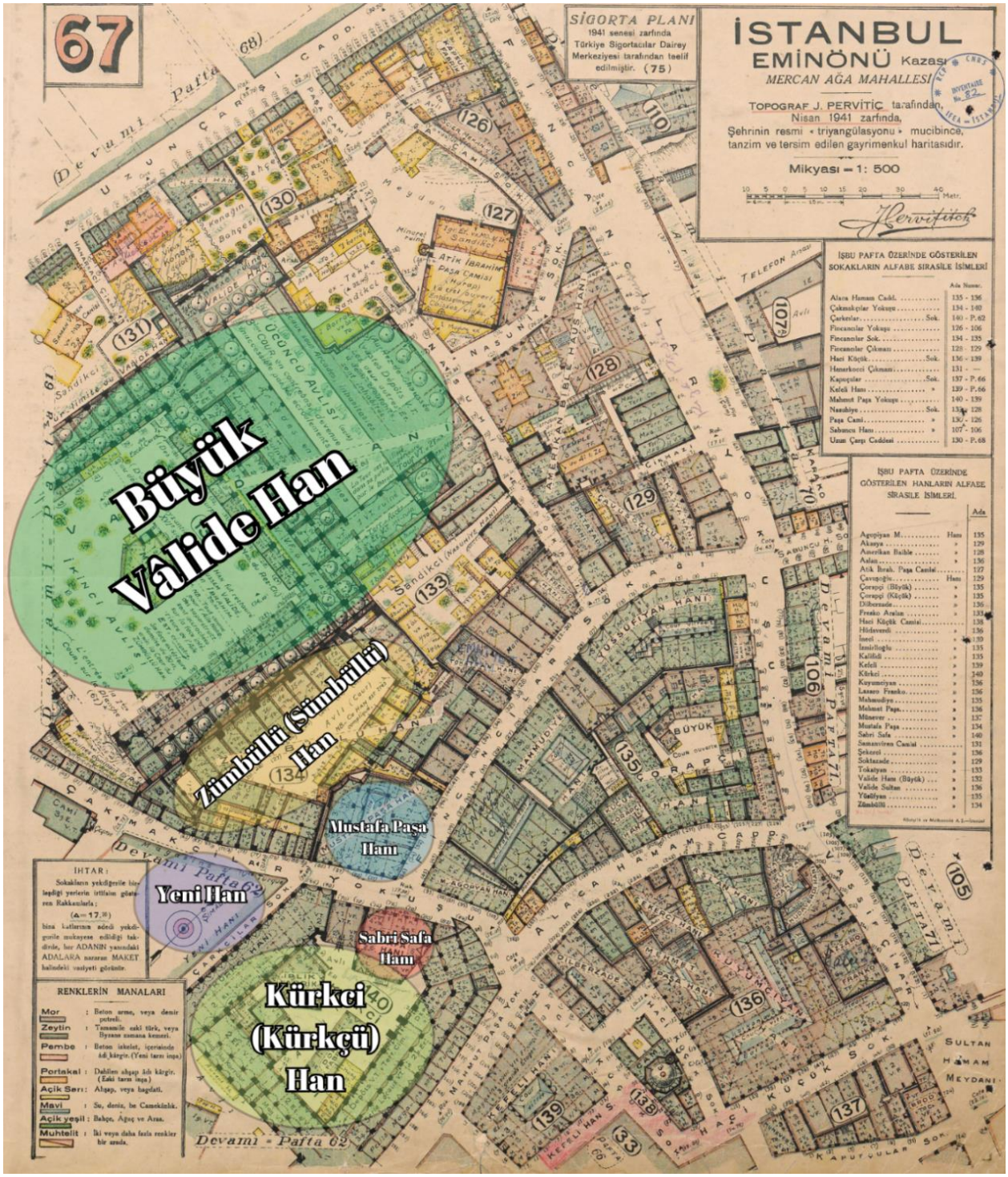


Figure 4.2. Map commissioned in 1941 by the Central Office of Turkish Insurers (Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-yi Merkeziyesi) to topographer Jacques Pervitich. Sheet 67 covering Mercan Ağa Neighbourhood and Çakmakçılar Yokuşu, where Büyük Valide Han is located (above left). Important khans on Çakmakçılar Yokuşu were highlighted.[214]

[214] "Sigorta Planı. Eminönü. Mercan Ağa. No: 67".

Considering the unrecorded peddlers, labourers and those who used the rooms in Büyük Valide Han for accommodation, it can be argued that the Iranian character of the khan gradually expanded.

As it discussed in the Chapter Three, the changes in international trade route and Iranians' shift towards petty trade never affected the importance and centrality of Büyük Valide Han for Iranians. This was due to the fact that Büyük Valide Han was more than just a commercial centre. For some Iranians, it also meant a home in a foreign territory, a public space where they could express their political views, a religious venue for worship or commemoration and a place of socialization.

For those Iranians who had been separated from their homeland and families, the problem of safe accommodation in Istanbul was solved by the bachelor rooms of Büyük Valide Han. From the very beginning, Iranians who stepped into the city flowed there due to the suitability of this place for them. Young Iranians living there could keep close contact with their fellow countrymen, speak their own language and socialize in the Iranian network. Over time, the bond between individuals and the space strengthened to such an extent that Büyük Valide Han began to signify a common home, a workplace and a space for the Iranian community. As an example of this relationship between Iranians and Büyük Valide Han, Akay Hâlid Han Tebrizî was mentioned in a narrative dated 1926 in Reşat Ekrem Koçu's *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi.*[215] Koçu claims that Akay Hâlid Han Tebrizî spent the last 36 years of his life in this khan. As one of the long-term residents of Büyük Valide Han, he described the meaning of the khan for the Iranians of Istanbul in an exaggerated style: "It is not a khan, it is a country. 15,000 Iranians live there. It is a house with 500 doors. Those who marry a woman and take a wife in their arms leave the khan. They begin to live in the neighbourhoods of Istanbul. All the people residing in this khan are bachelors who are not interested in beauty."[216] The married Iranian men mentioned by Akay Hâlid Han Tebrizî did not actually live very far from this familiar area of Istanbul. When the locations of the places encountered in the findings of this research were marked on a map, it could be seen that the majority of the places were located within *Suriçi*, where

[215] Koçu, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", p. 3309.
[216] Koçu, "Büyük Vâlide Hanı", p. 3309: "Bura Han değildir, memlekettir, on ben bin İrânî oturur, beşyüz bâb hânedir, bir zen ile akdi nikâh eyleyüb âguşe şevher alan handan çıkar, İstanbul mahallâtında sâkin olur, bu handa oturanları hemmisi nigâra iltifat eylemez bekârandır."

Büyük Valide Han is also located (Figure 4.3.). This proved that Iranians did not leave their networks and that they maintained their bonds with the existing Iranian community even if they changed nationality or married to a 'foreigner'. As we saw in the Chapter Two[217], marriages with Ottoman women were also common among Iranians.



Figure 4.3. It is a map of the locations related to Iranians encountered in primary and secondary sources during the research of this dissertation.

The appearance of Büyük Valide Han as a living space may be seen in photographs taken in the beginning of twentieth century. In the book *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels* (The Architecture of Constantinople), written by art historian and architect Cornelius Gurlitt and published in Berlin in 1912, there are two photographs showing the accommodation function of Büyük Valide Han.[218] The details seen in

[217] See: "Chapter 2. Making Iranians", pp. 22 - 23, in this thesis.
[218] Gurlitt, Cornelius, *İstanbul'un Mimari Sanatı - Architecture of Constantinople - Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, Rezan Kızıltan (trans.) (Ankara: Enformasyon ve Dökümantasyon Hizmetleri Vakfı, 1999), p. 84.

these photographs such as flowers placed in window sills and laundry hanging on the walls show that the khan was used as a living space (Figure 4.4. and Figure 4.3.). In addition, as it can be seen, there were wooden rooms added on the outside of the porticoes in the upper gallery (Figure 4.4.). Gurlitt noted in 1912 for these architectural plugins: "Today, many wooden shacks have been built on the second floor of the old building, which are about six metres high. These somewhat obscure the general outline of the structure, but still looks picturesque."[219] These extra-structural elements must have been used to increase the accommodation capacity of the khan. Although they are not made of wood, it was observed that similar extra-structural elements exist today, not for accommodation purposes, but to increase the capacity of the stores (Figure 4.6.A).

It was not only the accommodation capacity that brought Iranians together at Büyük Valide Han. It became the main venue for the protest movements against the *Société du Tombac*, which was discussed in the previous chapter for monopolizing the tonbaku trade and led to Iranian tonbaku merchants to smuggle. The tobacco sellers, whose livelihoods were severely disrupted with the establishment of the Tonbaku Monopoly, closed their shops in 1892 and began to organize protests in Büyük Valide Han.[220]



[219] Gurlitt, *İstanbul'un Mimari Sanatı - Architecture of Constantinople - Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, p. 51.
[220] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892).

Figure 4.4. The residents of the third courtyard of Büyük Valide Han. Irene Tower from the Byzantine period, located at the corner of the courtyard, can be seen behind the porticoes.[221]



Figure 4.5. A photograph, presumably of the large second courtyard of the Büyük Valide Han.[222]



4.6.A



4.6.B

[221] Gurlitt, *İstanbul'un Mimari Sanatı - Architecture of Constantinople - Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, p. 84.
[222] Gurlitt, *İstanbul'un Mimari Sanatı - Architecture of Constantinople - Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, p. 84.

Figure 4.6. The current condition of the inner porticoes in the second courtyard of the Büyük Valide Han (left). The entrance door and window of one of the chambers in the upper gallery (right).[223] Many extensions have been made to Büyük Valide Han which are incompatible with the historical nature of the structure and it is in a very different appearance from its original form.

Büyük Valide Han prepared a ground for the Iranians to continue their protests and the scale of the protests grew over time, leading to the Ottoman intervention. In a letter sent from the Ministry of Public Security to the Yıldız Palace, the minister stated that the Iranian Embassy had been notified that these protestors would be forcibly dispersed because: "being gathered is forbidden unless an official licence is obtained from the supreme government" (*hükümet-i seniyyeden resmen ruhsat istihsali olmadıkça akd-i cemaat katiyyen memnu olub*).[224] The Iranian tobacco sellers chose Büyük Valide Han for a space for their protests because this place heavily identified with Iranians in Istanbul. In fact, Büyük Valide Han served as the spatial component of marginalization of Iranians. While maintaining its centrality in the lives of Iranians, it was transformed along with its inhabitants, and turned into a political space. The khan's acquisition of a political nature seems to have been accepted by the Ottoman authorities as well. A few weeks after the protests, in the spring of 1892, another letter sent by the Ministry of Public Security to the Yıldız Palace illustrates that the Iranian protesters in the khan disturbed the Ottoman higher authorities as well. Therefore, they were put the khan under the direct monitoring of the Ministry of Public Security. In the letter, the Minister of Public Security stated that Mirza Haji Mohammad Ali, a cleric from Iran who had arrived in Istanbul for the upcoming Muharram commemorations, had been specifically instructed by the officials not to utter a word about the Tonbaku Monopoly in the pulpit.[225] Not limited just warning, two distinguished officials of the ministry were also assigned to monitor the acts of the cleric. Despite these precautions, officials reported that Mirza Haji Mohammad Ali made statements against the monopoly during his sermon.[226] Therefore, the Minister of Public Security demanded from the Iranian Embassy to hand over the cleric and those responsible for this incident, arguing that not reacting to such acts would lead to

[223] Photographed by the author of the thesis in March 2022.
[224] BOA, Y. PRK. ZB. 9 96, 28 Şaban 1309 (28 March 1892).
[225] BOA, Y. MTV. 62 32, 11 Şevval 1309 (9 May 1892).
[226] BOA, Y. MTV. 62 32, 11 Şevval 1309 (9 May 1892).

more effective and profound protests in the future.[227] Although the Iranian Embassy tried to moderate these demands, the magnitude of the echoes of the political activities that took place in Büyük Valide Han provides strong evidence of the acquisition a political nature of this space.

The characterisation of Büyük Valide Han with the Iranians as a space for their political activities further disturbed the Ottoman authorities, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century. This period was a period of tension between the two states due to the appearance of Armenian rebels on the Ottoman-Qajar borders. After the Armenian rebellion of Van in 1896, the Ottomans closely monitored the Qajar State's relations with Armenians. This was because Armenian groups became a direct security threat. Until the Russian invasion of 1910, the control of the Qajar government in West Iran was very limited.[228] This provided an area where Armenian rebels and Kurdish tribes could act autonomously. From the 1900s onwards, weapons brought from Russia to the region were distributed to Armenian villages and so the peasants were armed.[229] In addition to the armed Armenian groups that posed a direct threat to the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire, Mozaffar al-Din Shah's patronage of Armenian revolutionaries also tensed the relations between the two states. In a *jurnal* (a spy report), submitted to the Yıldız Palace a couple of months before the Shah's visit to Istanbul in 1900, it was reported that the "the Temporary Armenian Education Commission / *Muvakkat Maarif Komisyonu*", which was established in Tehran with the permission of the Shah, sent letters to the school headmasters and Armenian associations in Azerbaijan, Iran and India to "participate in the general assembly to be held in Tehran on the 9th of March or send a representative to make decisions on the issues".[230] According to this *jurnal*, it was decided at this meeting to establish a permanent commission for the educational affairs of the Armenians, to establish a superior school, and to teach Russian language in the Armenian schools since the Russian Armenians were the ones who established the general programme.[231]

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[227] BOA, Y. MTV. 62 32, 11 Şevval 1309 (9 May 1892).
[228] McCarthy, Justin, et al., *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), p. 54.
[229] McCarthy, et al., *The Armenian Rebellion at Van*, p. 55.
[230] BOA, Y. PRK. AZJ. 40 35, 29 Zilhicce 1317 (30 April 1900). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Mart tokuzunda orada akd u içtima idecek olan meclis-i umumiyeye iştirak itmek ve bu babda karar virmek üzere birer murahhas göndermeye davet olunmuştur".
[231] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 224 25, 18 Rebiü'l-evvel 1324 (10 May 1906).

At a time when the Ottoman Empire's relations with Armenians were under stress, the permission given by the Shah to form a Armenian educational commission and a comprehensive meeting in Tehran certainly disturbed the Ottoman authorities.

There was another incident that further strained the relations in 1906; a telegram sent from *Hakkâri Mutasarrıflığı* (the Governorate of Hakkari) to the Interior Ministry on 10 May 1906 stated that "the Iranian government gave weapons to the people of some Armenian villages and the reason for this was not understood".[232] It is evident that the weaponization of the territories monitored by the Ottoman officials between the borders had the potential to be perceived as a threat by the Ottoman authorities. These activities in Qajar Iran had immediate repercussions in Istanbul and perhaps led to a reaction against the Iranians in Istanbul due to their growing impact in Büyük Valide Han. In May 1906, a draft *tezkire* prepared by the Minister of Public Security to be sent to the Municipality of Istanbul (*İstanbul Şehremaneti*) revealed this reaction. In this draft, it was noted that "Stephan from Divriği, who is the chamberlain of Valide Han, was considered suspicious by *Zabtiyye Nezareti*" (*Valide Hanı'nın ota başılığında bulunan Divriğili İstefanın zaptiyece şübheli takımından olduğu*), and also it was stated that "the presence of an Armenian as the chamberlain of such an important khan was not considered entirely harmless" (*mühim bulunan mezkur handa ota başılıkda Ermeni bulunması da mahzurdan salim görülemediğinden*).[233] Then, it was deemed appropriate by the minister to remove the aforementioned Stephan of Divriği and "the appointment of a trustworthy chamberlain from Muslim subjects" (*teba'a-yı müslimeden şayan-ı emniyet bir ota başı tayini*).[234] Thus, the Ottoman authorities reasserted their authority over the Büyük Valide Han, which gradually becoming an Iranian space, by preventing an Armenian chamberlain from being in charge. They also convey a message through the Iranians in Istanbul to the Qajar Empire that they did not want to see any relationship between Iranians and Armenians, which had become a problematic issue in the Qajar – Ottoman relations.

Due to the continuous increase in the proportion of Iranian merchants in the khan, the fact that it was the first contact point for newcomers to the city and a nexus

[232] BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 224 25, 18 Rebiü'l-evvel 1324 (10 May 1906). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "İran hükümeti tarafından ahali ve bazı karye Ermenilerine esliha tevdi idildiği ve ne sebebe mebni olduğı anlaşılamadığı".
[233] BOA, ZB. 378 48, 23 Rebiü'l-evvel 1324 (17 May 1906).
[234] BOA, ZB. 378 48, 23 Rebiü'l-evvel 1324 (17 May 1906).

for the Iranian network, Büyük Valide Han turned into an important social space. The fact that Iranians converted it into a place of protest against Ottoman economic policies, the Ottoman authorities' caution against possible protests there, and the micro-scale reflection of Qajar - Ottoman political relations on Büyük Valide Han added it a political character too. Therefore, Büyük Valide Han was transformed into a public space where economy, society and politics were intertwined. However, it should not be assumed that the only space created by the Iranians in Istanbul for their communal activities was Büyük Valide Han.

4.3. The Iranian Public Spaces in Late Ottoman Istanbul

There were places other than Büyük Valide Han that were identified with Iranians in Istanbul. Iranians designed these areas as their own social spaces. All of them served the community for different reasons and appealed to many different segments of it. Iranians used to visit the Iranian Embassy to change their nationality, to get a family certificate and for other official affairs. They sent their children to the Iranian School, which was opened with the support of the Iranian ambassador, to receive an appropriate education. When they were sick or injured, they went to the Iranian Hospital and if they died, they were buried in the Iranian Cemetery in Seyit Ahmet Deresi. In brief, they established institutions in Istanbul for all segments of their community. This part of the thesis will first explain how these venues emerged historically and then will show how they were vigorously instrumentalized by Iranians during annual Muharram commemorations in order to manifest their presence in Istanbul.

We have often seen in the previous chapters that the highest stratum of Iranian society in Istanbul was composed of officials of the Qajar State, even though they sometimes became an element of pressure on the Iranian community. The main place in Istanbul where those officials resided and worked was the *Sefarethane* (the Iranian Embassy building). For the Iranians in Istanbul, *Sefarethane* was the most visible symbol of the authority of the Qajar State (Figure 4.7.). Sasani claims that before this building was built in the late 1860s by the famous Levantine architect Giorgio Domenico Stampa, Iranian ambassadors used to rent houses in Istanbul and conduct official business there.[235] In 1866, the Iranian Embassy was built in a central point of

[235] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 8.

Istanbul, on Bab-ı Ali Caddesi (Bab-ı Ali Street), with the land purchased for 7358 *toman*s. It is claimed that the former owner of the land who sold such a central place in Istanbul to foreigners was sent into exile.[236] When, in 1900, the land of this spectacular embassy building, which is still in use today as the Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was wanted to be expanded during Mozaffer al-Din Shah visit to Istanbul, this time, a different approach was taken to prevent the Iranians from purchasing the land. Sultan Abdülhamid II gifted the neighbouring parcel of land to the Iranian Embassy and the Shah presented the Sultan with a pearl rosary and a precious dagger as a token of his gratitude.[237] In this way, the Iranians did not expand their place in the center of Istanbul by their own efforts, but the Sultan bestowed upon them a piece of land. As a result, the land of the Iranian Embassy, which was uniquely located in the very heart of *Suriçi*, almost doubled in size. The Iranian Embassy did not locate in Pera, where many foreign embassies were concentrated. It is possible that Iranians, because of their Muslim identity, did not want to reside in Pera, a place associated with the embassies of non-Muslim states. Instead they located the embassy close to the district of khans, where commercial activities were concentrated. This might indicate that Iranians, as economic migrants, adopted the city's most vibrant commercial districts as their living space so the representatives of their state were also located close to them.

[236] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 8.
[237] BOA, BEO. 3982 298596, 5 Muharrem 1330 (26 December 1911).



Figure 4.7. A photograph in *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul* (Memories of the Embassy in Istanbul), probably from the 1910s, titled "View of the Embassy Palace from Bab-ı Ali Street".[238] This magnificent building, which attracts the attention of the residents of the city and is located on Bab-ı Ali Caddesi (Bab-ı Ali Street), a central point of Istanbul, is often referred to as *Sefaret Sarayı* (Embassy Palace).

Another building in the very heart of Istanbul, in Sultanahmet, was obtained by the Iranians in 1884. Iranian merchants bought a house right next to Hagia Sophia for 10,000 gold liras the money which they collected among the community, then they sold this house in 1887 and bought a vacant hospital building located in the southern part of Sultanahmet Meydanı (The Sultanahmet Square).[239] A hospital was not established in this building until Mozaffar al-Din Shah's visit to Istanbul in 1900, but it was used as the Iranian School. According to Sasani's memoirs, when the Shah expressed that he would allocate a monthly allowance of 500 *toman*s for a hospital to be established in Istanbul, the Iranians managed to set up a four-bed hospital in this building.[240]3

[238] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 10.
[239] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 105.
[240] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 105.



Figure 4.8. A photograph taken in 1900 showing the entrance facade of the Iranian Embassy on Bab-ı Ali Street. [241]

Sasani also stated that until the First World War, the hospital was run in an organised and clean manner by Austrian nuns, but during his years of service there were only two Greek doctors on duty.[242]

Previous function of the hospital building, the Iranian School, was probably considered by Iranians to be as crucial as the hospital was. Mirza Mohsen Khan Moein al-Mulk, who served as the Iranian ambassador to Istanbul between 1874 and 1891, added this new Iranian public space to the city. *Debistan-ı İraniyan* (The Iranian School), which opened in 1884 with 30 students in two rented rooms in Yıldız Han, moved to a house in Kadırga neighbourhood a year later.[243] After a few years, it moved to the empty hospital building bought by Iranian merchants, and by 1900 it seems to have had more than 100 students and eight different levels of classes.[244]

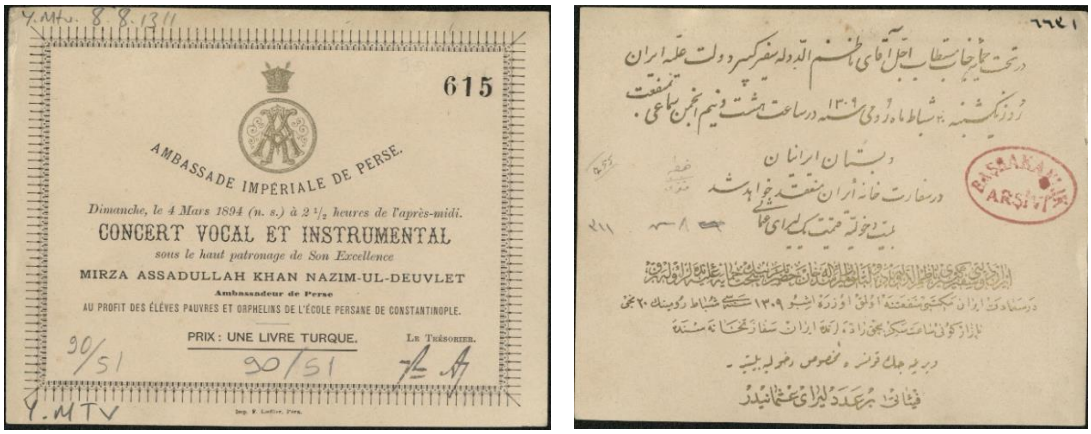
The school was directed by Haji Rezakouli Khorasani who was a merchant with an interest in education. The subjects taught to Iranian children were quite diversed: Arabic, Persian, French, History, Geography, Geometry, Algebra and

[241] Abdülhamid Collection (Album No: 90508) in Kilerci, Başak, "Reading Ottoman-Qajar Relations Through Photography: Mozaffar al-Din Shah's Istanbul Visit (1900)", Unpublished Master's Thesis, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, İstanbul, 2013, p. 144.
[242] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 105.
[243] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 102.
[244] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, pp. 102 - 103.

Muqabala.[245] The teaching of Persian literature to children by Mirza Habib Esfahani, a reputed Iranian intellectual, and Ahmet Feyzi Efendi, the Persian teacher of the *Mekteb-i Sultani*, the most prestigious educational institution in the Ottoman Empire, demonstrated the importance that Iranian parents attributed to the command of Persian as a key element of their culture. They also emphasized their determination to keep Persian alive in Istanbul by establishing a collective educational institution. Persian had a cultural significance as a distinctive feature of Iranians in Istanbul and a pragmatic importance as a common communication medium among many different ethnicities of Iran.

A special effort was made to spread Persian to all segments of the Iranian community, regardless of whether they were rich or poor. A concert ticket found in the Ottoman Archives demonstrates the efforts of the Iranian community to sustain their community school and make it accessible to every Iranian children in the city (Figure 4.9.).[246] This ticket, in French on the front and in Ottoman and Persian on the back, was an invitation to a musical concert to be held at the Iranian Embassy on 4 March 1894 at half past eight.[247] Organized under the auspices of Nazimü'l-Devle who was "the Ambassador of the Supreme Iranian State and The Purest of His Time", the concert ticket costed one Ottoman lira. On the front of the ticket, it was written in French that the concert was organized "for the benefit of the poor and orphans of the Persian School in Constantinople".[248] Considering that the Iranians invited the ambassadors of foreign states, Ottoman citizens and prosperous members of the Iranian community to this event, it can be argued that was more than just a fundraising purpose. It was also an event where the Iranian community in Istanbul claimed their presence in the city despite not being officially recognized in state censuses or had to prove their Iranian origins to the Ottoman authorities in order to be considered as Iranian nationals. In other words, even though they were pushed to the margins politically and economically, they were trying to show their presence in the city through the events they organized and the institutions they created.

[245] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 103.
[246] BOA, Y. MTV. 90 51, 8 Şaban 1311 (14 February 1894).
[247] BOA, Y. MTV. 90 51, 8 Şaban 1311 (14 February 1894).
[248] BOA, Y. MTV. 90 51, 8 Şaban 1311 (14 February 1894): "Au profit des élèves pauvres et orphelins de l'école Persane de Costantinople."



4.9.A. **4.9.B.**

Figure 4.9. Front (left) and back (right) side of the ticket for the concert organised for the benefit of poor and orphaned children at the Iranian School in Istanbul in 1894.[249]

For the dead of the community, however, they chose a less central location. Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery was used as a burial place by Iranians and other Shiites in Istanbul for many years. It was located on the other side of the Bosphorus in Üsküdar and situated beside the Karacaahmet Cemetery, where Sunni Muslims were buried. The first evidence of the burial of Iranian burials in Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery was found in a petition written at the end of 1853: "Seyyid Ahmed Deresi in Üsküdar was used as a burial place for those who passed away among the Iranian nation and merchants in Istanbul."[250] This petition signed by 74 Iranian merchants and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[251] The Iranians stated that they had great difficulty in performing their funeral rituals and therefore requested the construction of a ghusl room at the edge of the cemetery.[252] This request was submitted to the Sultan, and in return, "construction of a small, shed-like ghusl room, on condition that the property rights belonged to the Ottoman state" was set up.[253] This small structure must have changed its form over time into an Iranian masjid (Figure 4.10.) An Ottoman inscription (Figure 4.10.D) that the author of thesis noticed during a visit to the mosque

[249] BOA, Y. MTV. 90 51, 8 Şaban 1311 (14 February 1894): The translation of the Ottoman Turkish part of the invitation into English: "This is an admission ticket for the concert to be given at the Iranian Embassy on the 20th of February 1309 Sunday at 8:30 p.m. for the benefit of the Iranian School in Istanbul under the Supreme Patronage of His Excellency Nazim'ül-Devle Mirza Asadullah Han, the Ambassador of the Supreme State of Iran. The price is one Ottoman lira."
[250] BOA, İ. HR. 104 5103, 3 Rebiü'l-evvel 1270 (4 December 1853). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "Dârü'l-hilâfetü'l-aliyyede bulunan İran tüccâr ve teba'sından irtihâl-i dar-ı bekâ idenler Üsküdar'da vaki' Seyyid Ahmed Deresi nam mahal medfungâh ittihaz olunmuş".
[251] BOA, İ. HR. 104 5103, 3 Rebiü'l-evvel 1270 (4 December 1853).
[252] BOA, İ. HR. 104 5103, 3 Rebiü'l-evvel 1270 (4 December 1853).
[253] BOA, İ. HR. 104 5103, 3 Rebiü'l-evvel 1270 (4 December 1853).

in Seyit Ahmet Deresi provides some clues about the process of converting the ghusl room into a masjid. The Ottoman inscription is as follows: “The second ghusl room was built by Meşhedi Abbas Ali bin Ha(c)ı Ahmed Hoyi in 1338.” (*Bâni-i sâni-i gasilhâne Meşhedi Abbas Ali bin Ha(c)ı Ahmed Hoyi sene 1338.*) This shows that the ghusl room was rebuilt by an Iranian benefactor in 1919/1920s, seventy years after its first construction. It may have been enlarged in its second construction to create a larger prayer space. At the end, apart from the masjid in the courtyard of Büyük Valide Han, another Iranian religious building in Istanbul has emerged.

Iranians in Istanbul created these social spaces one by one in line with the needs of their communities. However, all three of these buildings were never officially recognized by the Ottoman Empire. The Iranian presence in Istanbul was ignored as the title deeds for these spaces were not granted by the Ottoman Empire. This can be seen in a correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior in 1914 about the Iranian venues in the city. On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the undersecretary wrote to the Ministry of Interior: “Since it has been recently requested by the [Iranian] Embassy that the records of the Iranian hospital and school in *Dersaadet* and the Iranian graveyard in Üsküdar be corrected and that deeds and certificates be issued for the aforementioned hospital, school and graveyard on a free of charge basis.” [254]



4.10.A



4.10.B

[254] BOA, DH. İD. 123 20, 15 Cumâde'l-ûlâ 1332 (11 April 1914). The transcription of the Turkish text: “Dersaadet'teki İran Hastahanesi ve mektebi ile Üsküdar'da ka'in İran kabristanı kayıtlarının tashihiyle mezkur hastahane ve mekteb ve kabristan içün müceddeden ve meccanen tapu ve senedat itası ahiren ba-takrir canib-i sefaretden iltimas olunmasına mebni”.





4.10.C **4.10.D**

Figure 4.10. The entrance gate (above left) and side facade (above right) of the later-built *İranlılar Cami* (Iranians Mosque) in Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery. Gravestones dating to the 1880s and 1890s (lower left) can be seen at the burial site. The inscription (lower right) on the mosque wall.[255]

However, these requests were not met and it was decided to investigate whether the relevant institutions were exempt from taxation.[256] Despite the Iranian requests, these licenses and title deeds were not provided. For this reason, the Iranians in Istanbul started to react to being ignored officially by becoming more visible in the city. They started to organize their annual Muharram commemorations, which have religious and social significance, with much more pomp and pageantry in front of Ottomans and foreigners so they underlined their presence in the city. In these commemorations, they included Iranian venues whose deeds they could not get, and emphasized their presence in Istanbul with insistence.

4.4. For the Living and the Dead: The Muharram Commemorations and Identity Politics

The annual Muharram commemorations (*'Azādārī-e Moharram* in Persian), also known as Ashura ceremonies, were the biggest socio-political and religious occasion for Iranians to highlight their visibility in Istanbul. This was because the marches, processions and gatherings that took place during Muharram commemorations were of interest to all Iranian participants, foreign guests and, of course, Ottoman spectators in the city. All of the above-mentioned Iranian venues were utilised in these commemorations, which were publicly organised every year in Istanbul from the 1860s onwards. The Iranian venues were chosen to include all members of the Iranian

[255] Photographed by the author of the thesis in March 2022.
[256] BOA, DH. İD. 123 20, 15 Cumâde'l-ûlâ 1332 (11 April 1914).

community in the commemorations and to be displayed to the audience as tangible evidence of their presence in the city.

Iranians were responsible for the organization of these religious commemorations because almost all of them were Shiite Muslims. The Ashura commemorations, which were held annually on the night of the 10th of Muharram in the Hijri calendar, has an important religious meaning for the Twelver Shiites in particular. According to the beliefs of this sect, the martyrdom of Hossein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, in Karbala on the 10th of Muharram 61 AH (10 October 680 AD) at the order of Yazid ibn Mu'awiya who was the second Umayyad caliph, is an event that Shiite Muslims commemorate with bloody rituals, marches and lamentations.[257] Late Ottoman Istanbul's main stage for the Ashura commemorations were Büyük Valide Han. The masjid in the middle of the khan and the large courtyard with double row-galleries, provided a suitable setting for the event.[258]

In the nineteenth century, these commemorations were brought to Istanbul by Iranian migrants. At the beginning of the century, however, there was no evidence of commemoration by Iranians in the city. In *Constantinopolis und der Bosporus, Örtlich Und Geschichtlich Beschrieben* published in 1822, German historian Joseph von Hammer Purgstall mentioned about the Iranian community in the city and noted that "they were not allowed to raise their heads anywhere as Shiites, that is, heretics…" and continued: "They were hated even more than Jews by the Orthodox Muslims because, according to a Turkish folk tale, the Persians will give the Jews their donkeys on the Day of Judgement and the Jews will ride them all the way to hell."[259] Although the justification of his claim is exaggerated and sounds a little bit orientalist, the book

[257] Masouidi-Nejad, Reza, "Ashura", *Oxford Bibliographies*, 23 November 2021, available at: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0287.xml, [accessed on 1 December 2023].

[258] Gurlitt, *İstanbul'un Mimari Sanatı - Architecture of Constantinople - Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, p. 51.

[259] Purgstall, Joseph von Hammer, *Constantinopolis und der Bosporus, Örtlich Und Geschichtlich Beschrieben*, vol. 2 (Osnabrück: Neudruck Biblio Verlag, 1967), p. 390: "Derselben sind in Constantinopel so wenige, dass ihr Daseyn in dem unermesslichen Yölkergewoge verschwindet, und dass die Charakterbezeichnung derselben nach den wenigen, hier angesiedelten Individuen, eine schwierige und missliche Aufgabe bleibt. Es sind meistens nur Kaufleute und Derwische, beyde auf Gewinn., jene durch Handel, diese durch Betteln erpicht. Als Schiis, d. i. Ketzer, dürfen, sie nirgends ihr Haupt erheben und sind als solche vom fanatischen Sunni d. i. Rechtgläubigen noch mehr gehasst., als die Juden, denn nach einer türkischen Yolkssage werden die Perser am jüngsten Tage die Lastesel abgeben , auf denen die Juden zur Hölle reiten werden. Aus so schlechtem Gesichtspuncte betrachtet, können sich dieselben wohl des Rufes von Lug und Trug, in welchem dieselben stehen, nicht los und ledig machen."

must have reflected (to some extent) the atmosphere of the period. The archival documents found during this research similarly showed that Iranians in Istanbul were not able to publicly perform the Muharram ceremonies until the 1860s. Erika Glassen argues in her article that it was during the tenure of ambassador Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar (1859-1872), that the Muharram ceremonies such as the "rauza khvânî", which includes the telling of the story of Hossein, began to be performed publicly.[260] Over time, the other ceremonies such as "sîna-zanân", the procession of breast-beaters and "zincîr-zanân" flagellation processesions were introduced.[261] However, the most striking and bloody ritual, the "ghâmâ-zadan", that many foreigners were eager to see and involved Iranians dressed in shrouds with blades stabbing their heads for religious reasons, was not performed in Istanbul until the 1870s.[262]

Perhaps with a little caution, French traveller Eugene Jacques Chesnel, can be used to visualize Muharram commemorations at Büyük Valide Han in the late 1880s. We do not have much information about Chesnel. His travelogue, (*Le mal d'Orient. Moueurs turques*) was published in French in 1887 and it was immediately translated into English a year later with a title of *The Evil of the East, or Truth About Turkey*.[263] Chesnel, adopted an exaggerated orientalist approach towards Ottomans and maybe because of that reason, he used the pseudonym "Kesnin Bey" in this book unlike his other published books. However, his descriptions did not contradict the other testimonies about the period. Chesnel described the courtyard of Büyük Valide Han, which he resembled a "medieval fortress", as completely draped in black, decorated with religious calligraphic banners,[264] carpets[265] and illuminated in the evening by countless lamps, crystal candelabras and coloured glasses hung on the walls. "The thousand lamps" were surrounded by Venetian and Bohemian mirrors to reflect the glitter of their light, said Chesnel.[266] He observed that portraits of the Shah of Iran and the symbol of the Lion and the Sun (*Shir o Khorshid*), the emblem of Iranians since the twelfth century, were displayed everywhere. It seemed that Iranians in Istanbul

[260] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies (ʻAzâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 114.
[261] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies (ʻAzâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 114.
[262] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies (ʻAzâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 114.
[263] Kesnin Bey [Eugene-Jacques Chesnel], *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1888), pp. 144 - 151.
[264] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies (ʻAzâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 121
[265] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies (ʻAzâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 121.
[266] Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey,* p. 147.

were able to use the Qajar heritage as a symbol of their culture and a sign of their loyalty to their monarch.[267] The fact that the Iranian Embassy's kavasses heralding the arrival of guests from foreign embassies might indicate the scope of the audience to which they presented their distinctive features. As hosts, the Iranians treated their guests with great courtesy, offering them tea with lemon slices in "little crystal glasses" and for the men, cigarettes and *narghile*s.[268] Chesnel estimated that the number of spectators reached at least 20,000 including the Ottoman officers who separated the spectators from the performers, the staff of the Iranian Embassy, the members of the clergy, and the black-veiled Ottoman and Iranian women who watched the performances on the second floor.[269] Given the high number of participants, it is important to keep in mind that every single action in this event was carefully designed and had to make sense for spectators. Considering the target audience, the Iranian Embassy and prominent merchants of the Iranian community organised this highly propagandistic and specially designed commemorative event, which emphasised Iranians' distinctiveness among Istanbulites and their presence in Istanbul.

In these ceremonies, the authority of the Qajar Empire was represented by the Qajar ambassador in Istanbul. Glassen noted that one corner of the courtyard was decorated with carpets and chairs and prepared for the Iranian ambassador and his special guests. She also noted that it has become a tradition for the ambassador to pardon the crimes of some prisoners of Iranian nationality at the end of the processions.[270]

During the Muharram commemorations, Iranian women were only spectators, but their children were directly involved in these commemorations, and in this way the Iranian community was also showcasing the young generations who were the guarantee of their future in Istanbul. According to Glassen, the students of the Iranian School formed a procession carrying bowls of water. This procession was symbolically carrying water to the Prophet's grandson Hossein's family who had been left thirsty in the desert. By doing so, Iranian children not only participated in this

[267] Both Chesnel and Glassen drew attention to the photograph of the Shah of Iran and the Sun-Lion symbol, see: Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 119, and Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey*, p. 147.
[268] Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey,* p. 147.
[269] Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey,* p. 147.
[270] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 119, and Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey*, p. 150.

socio-religious event that was unique to Shiite Iranians, but also confirmed their Iranianness, which was monitored by their parents and the Qajar authorities. Considering that the Iranian Embassy organised the Muharram commemorations, this parade of pupils showed to the spectators the vital role of the Iranian School in the preservation and maintenance of Iranian identity of the younger generations.



Figure 4.11. The Moharrem commemorations in Istanbul, a sketch by L. von Kirchfeld which was drawn on wood by Langhammer.[271]

In fact, the children who took part in the Muharram commemorations were not only pupils of the Iranian School. In a dispatch sent from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Yıldız Palace in September 1887, it was stated that about 100 Iranian school children from the Akarçeşme Sıbyan Mektebi (Akarçeşme Infants' School) were marching with torches in their hands, reciting lamentations.[272] Guided by the kavasses of the Iranian Embassy, this group of pupils had arrived to Yıldız Han and "with the daggers and scimitars in their hands at night as in previous year" and headed to Büyük Valide Han, passing through the other Iranian related venues such as Vezir

[271] "Das Moharremfest der perser in Konstantinopel. Rad einer Skizze von L. von Kirchfeld auf Holz gezeichnet von Langhammer" in *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul,* Thiery Zarcone and Farina Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds.) (Paris, Tehran and Istanbul: Institut français de recherches en Iran and l'Institut français d'Études Anatoliennes, 1993), between 186 - 187.
[272] BOA, İ. DH. 1049 82396, 9 Muharrem 1305 (27 September 1887).

Han and Nasuh Ağa Han.[273] The Iranian Embassy's insistence on including the younger generation of Iranians in the ceremonies once again emphasizes the propagandist aspect of the ceremony. In this way, the young Iranian generations were being presented to the spectators. The daggers and scimitars in the hands of children signalled another part of the Muharram processions.

The highlight of the Muharram ceremonies and the most memorable sight for those who witnessed it was the "qâmâ-zadan" procession. The participants of this procession were also known as "*Nezir*s". Dressed in their shrouds, the *Nezir*s would hit their shaved heads with the scimitar in their hands, drawing blood. The blood flowing from their heads stained their white shrouds and a horrific sight was formed. Each *Nezir* had a companion to prevent him from killing himself. Beginning their performance at Büyük Valide Han, the *Nezir*s continued to parade to other khans in the neighbourhood with blood pouring from their heads. Chesnel claimed that they had kept hitting their heads with scimitars for three hours.[274] This bloody ritual probably ended in another important Iranian institution, the Iranian Hospital. People who had injured themselves continuously for hours must have received emergency treatment there. We do not find any record of the deaths in these ceremonies but almost every account of Büyük Valide Han includes the bloody processions of the Muharram ceremonies.

Although it is claimed that the *Nezir*s performed for religious reasons to fulfil a sacrifice devoted to God, the performative aspect of this act was probably more important than the religious aspects. Glassen argues that the *Nezir*s usually came from lower classes such as donkey-drivers and tobacco sellers, and that some wealthy Iranians paid them to take part in these processions.[275] She even asserts that at the end of the parades, as an example of the commercialisation of Muharram commemorations, the bloody shirts of the *Nezir*s were bought by the wealthy Iranians as consecrated shrouds.[276] The encouragement of the *Nezir*s to injure themselves cannot be explained solely by religious motives. They were encouraged to do so

[273] BOA, İ. DH. 1049 82396, 9 Muharrem 1305 (27 September 1887). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "gicesine ellerine kama ve kılıç ile sene-i sabıka misüllü"
[274] Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey,* p. 151.
[275] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 119, and Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey,* p. 123.
[276] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 119, and Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey,* p. 125.

economically by wealthy members of the community and politically by the Iranian Embassy. They carried out these acts in public places and mobilised and roamed the khans in the central neighbourhoods of Istanbul. By doing that, they showed their presence as a crowded, strong and devoted community to spectators and were indelibly remembered by witnesses due to their horrific appearance.

This kind of manifestation of Iranian presence in Istanbul seems to worry the Ottoman authorities, as the measures were taken to prevent the processions from spreading outside Büyük Valide Han.[277] In a dispatch sent from the Ministry of Interior to the Yıldız Palace in 1887, it was stated that "it is permissible for Iranian nationals to mourn at their khans for the beginning of the month of Muharram in accordance with their sect."[278] However, it was underlined that these bloody processions were dangerous for public safety: "their noise and commotion in the streets at night and specifically on the tenth night [of Muharram], the fact that they wandered from khan to khan with swords and daggers in their hands, covered in blood, frightened the people and this might cause clashes in the streets".[279] Moreover, Ottoman officials was taken it one level further and noted that "this situation was apparent and even in the country of Iran, they do not go this far".[280] At the end of the document, the Ottoman officials requested the permission to take the necessary measures. The fact that the Ottoman authorities were so concerned about the Iranian parades shows once again how remarkable they were.

The Muharram commemorations were not limited to the evening parades between the khans. The next day, Iranians gathered in the Pier of Sirkeci, then crossed the Bosphorus and travelled to the Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery in Üsküdar. (Figure 4.12.) Journalist and writer Ahmet Ragıp Akyavaş (1890 - 1969) in his *Asitane: Evvel Zaman İçinde İstanbul* (Asitane: Istanbul Once Upon a Time) describes the commemoration ceremonies in Üsküdar in detail:

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[277] BOA, İ. DH. 1049 82396, 9 Muharrem 1305 (27 September 1887).

[278] BOA, İ. DH. 1049 82396, 9 Muharrem 1305 (27 September 1887). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "teba'a-ı İraniyenin hulûl–ı muharremü'l-haramda bulundukları hanlarda mukteza-yı mezhebi üzere matem itmerine bir şey denilemez ise de".

[279] BOA, İ. DH. 1049 82396, 9 Muharrem 1305 (27 September 1887). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "giceleri zokaklarda gürültü ve şamata itmeleri ve hususiyle onuncu gece ellerinde kılınç ve kama bulunduğu ve kan içinde oldukları halde handan hana tolaşmaları inzar-ı halka karşu çirkin bir şey olub zokaklarda bazı arbedeler zuhurına dahi sebebiyet virmesi muhtemel olduğuna"

[280] BOA, İ. DH. 1049 82396, 9 Muharrem 1305 (27 September 1887). The transcription of the Ottoman Turkish text: "bu hal bais olub memalik-i iraniyede bile bu derece ilerüsüne gidilmediği"

> The saddest of these ceremonies was held at Seyyid Ahmed Deresi. An enormous crowd gathered at this location, which is right next to Karacaahmet Cemetery in Üsküdar. The area was covered with carpets, shawls and black flags with claw. Those who wanted to do charity and good deeds used to set up cauldrons, the poor would be fed, samavars boiled and sermons were given by Shiite clergymen. Lamentations were recited and the stories of Karbala were recalled. They make people enthusiastic and exuberant.[281]

As it is understood from Akyavaş's, Chesnel's and Glassen's accounts, a parade similar to the one held in the previous night at Büyük Valide Han and on the streets of *Suriçi* was repeated in Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery in a more modest manner.[282]

Despite the modesty of their pomp and drama, these gatherings in Üsküdar also forced the Ottoman authorities to take measures. In a security report sent from the Ministry of Public Security to the Yıldız Palace in 1890, the Minister of Public Security stated that "more than 2000 Iranians" (*iki bini mütecaviz İraniler*) crossed to Üsküdar to mourn and perform their ceremonies, and that many people gathered to watch them.[283] "Soldiers, gendarmes and police officers" (*asakir-i şahane ve jandarma ve polis memurlarına*) were assigned to maintain order in such a crowded environment and the Iranians returned after finishing their ceremonies without any problems.[284]

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[281] Akyavaş, Ahmet Ragıp, *Asitane: Evvel Zaman İçinde İstanbul* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2004), p. 81: "Bu ayinlerin en hazini Seyyid Ahmed Deresinde yapılırdı. Üsküdar'da Karacaahmet Mezarlığı'nın hemen bitişiğinde olan bu mevkide muazaam bir kalabalık toplanır, etraf halılar, şallar, pençeli siyah bayraklar ile donatılırdı… Hayrat ve hasenat erbabı tarafından kazanlar kurulur, fakir fukara doyurulur, semaverler kaynatılır, ahondlar tarafından vaazlar verilir, mersiyeler okunarak Kerbala menkıbeleri yad edilir, halk coştukça coşturulurdu."

[282] Akyavaş, *Asitane: Evvel Zaman İçinde İstanbul*, p. 81; Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey*, p. 151, and Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 125.

[283] BOA, Y. PRK ZB. 5 108, 10 Muharrem 1308 (26 August 1890).

[284] BOA, Y. PRK ZB. 5 108, 10 Muharrem 1308 (26 August 1890).



Figure 4.12. Estimated route used by Iranians in *Suriçi* and Üsküdar during the Muharram commemorations. This route was 11.5 kilometres long and started from Büyük Valide Han and included Sümbüllü Han, Vezir Han, Büyük Yeni Han, Sirkeci Pier, Üsküdar Pier, Seyit Ahmet Deresi Cemetery and the Masjid of Iranians.

As explained so far, by using the Muharram ceremonies, the Iranians had largely achieved the level of visibility they were aiming for and emphasized that Istanbul had enough Iranian character to perform Shiite religious ceremonies in a grandiose

manner. In other words, they emphasized that Iranians, like other nationalities, were the rightful inhabitants of the city, even though their existence was officially ignored in censuses and land registries. This was a reaction to the economic and legal restrictions they underwent, which deprived them from mainstream businesses and equal conditions with other Istanbulites. Although the Iranian Embassy contributed to the organization of Muharram ceremonies for religio-political reasons, these ceremonies were largely organized by the community itself. The decision to use Büyük Valide Han, where Iranians have the highest social, commercial and political visibility in the city, as the stage for these ceremonies must have been a deliberate projection. By gathering thousands of spectators in this Little Iran in the heart of Istanbul and presenting them their greatest religious commemoration, Iranians strongly emphasized that despite all the impositions, they perceived themselves as a unified and dignified community. By demonstrating that they belonged to both Istanbul and Iranian society at the same time, they illustrated that they were the only ones who could define their identity in a rather politically motivated way.

They all together, created a new variable beyond the legal and economic determinants: the political identity of Iranians in Istanbul. This “chosen” or “sui generis” political identity, however, had many layers that could not be constructed only by the imposition of states.

4.5. Claiming Istanbul by Glorifying Marginality

As shown so far, the Iranians in Istanbul have created socio-economic spaces with political and religious dimensions in the city where they arrived as economic migrants. These spaces avoided their withdrawal from the public sphere, preserved the integrity of the Iranian community and prevented assimilation. As a natural consequence, these spaces became the main venues for the display of their self-defined political identity. However, Iranians did not only manifest their political identity through spaces, they also manifested it by glorifying their unique characteristics. Four different cases encountered during the research demonstrate the visibility of Iranian political identity by glorifying different symbols of Iranians in Istanbul.

The Shah of Iran was one of the symbols used by Iranians to emphasise their distinctiveness. The centrality of the Shah's place in the self-perception of Iranians was reflected in the display of Shah's photographs in Büyük Valide Han during the Muharram commemorations and in the presentation of the symbols of his dynasty, the

Sun and the Lion.[285] Therefore, Mozaffar al-Din Shah's visit to Istanbul in 1900 can be considered as an opportunity for Iranians in the city to pay their respects to the ruler of their country of origin. The visit of the Shah of Iran to Istanbul was notified to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Ottoman Embassy in Tehran at the beginning of 1900. In the issue number 2247 of *İkdam*, a prominent Istanbul daily newspaper, published on 30 September 1900, a photograph of the Shah was published on the occasion of his visit and the title of this article was "The Most Distinguished Guest: His Majesty the Sovereign [of Iran]" (*Misafir-i Hassü'l-Hass Hazret-i Şehriyari*) written in big fonts on the front page (Figure 4.13.).[286] In this news article, in a rather eloquent manner, the high qualities of Istanbul were praised and the Shah and the Sultan were described as "the most respected" (*hükümdâr-ı mufahham*) monarchs of the continents of Asia and Europe:

> The great city of *Konstantiniyye*, the residence of the great caliphate of Islam and the capital of the supreme Ottoman sultanate, has been granted a high honour, which is the envy of other cities and towns, with the meeting of the two most respected monarchs of Europe and Asia on this day, holding hands and establishing a sincere friendship.[287]

The newspaper's presentation of the Shah's visit to its readers as a meeting of two equally respected monarchs must have given the Iranians the motivation to glorify the Shah, who was an essential symbol of their political identity. This glorification did not only mean glorifying the Shah. Indirectly, it must have been aimed to glorify the subjects of the Shah, who was considered equally respected with the Sultan. By doing this visibly, as in the Muharram commemorations, they dignified Iranianness and showing Istanbulites that they were distinct and respected community despite living on the margins.

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[285] Glassen, "Muharram-Ceremonies ('Azâdârî) in Istanbul", p. 119, and Kesnin Bey, *The Evil of the East or Truth About Turkey*, p. 147.

[286] "Misafir-i Hassü'l-Hass Hazret-i Şehriyari" *İkdam*, 5 Cumâde'l-âhire 1318 (30 September 1900), p. 1.

[287] "Misafir-i Hassü'l-Hass Hazret-i Şehriyari" *İkdam*, 5 Cumâde'l-âhire 1318 (30 September 1900), p. 1. The transcription of Ottoman Turkish text: "Makar-ı hilafet-i kübra-yı İslamiye, payitaht-ı saltanat-ı seniyye-i Osmaniye olan belde-i muazzama Konstantiniyye mültekasında bulundığı Avrupa ve Asya'nın iki hükümdar-ı mufahhamına, dest bedest ve dad ve muhaleset oldukları halde bu gün mevid-ı têlaki olmak gibi bir şeref-i uzma ile gıpta-bahş-ı bilad ve emsar oluyor."


اقدام

مسافر خاص الخاص حضرت شهریاری

شاه ایران

شهنشاه مظفرالدین شاه حضرتلری

Figure 4.13. The first page of *İkdam*, dated 30 September 1900. Mozaffar al-Din Shah's photograph located in the center. Above the photograph, "The Most Distinguished Guest: His Majesty the Sovereign", and below it "The Shah of Iran. His Majesty the Honorable Mozaffar al-Din Shah" are written.[288]

The most descriptive source for the Iranians' demonstration of their devotion to the Shah is the travelogue titled *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar* [Blessed Royal Travelogue: Mozaffar al-din Shah Qajar], which includes the details of his trip to Europe in 1900.[289] According to the travelogue, the Shah entered the Ottoman territory by train on his return from Europe. In line with the details in the travelogue, according to a dispatch written from the Yıldız Palace to the Iranian Embassy and containing the details of the Shah's arrival, it was planned that he would get off the train in the *Baruthane Kulesi* (Baruthane Tower around Bakırköy

288 "Misafir-i Hassü'l-Hass Hazret-i Şehriyari" *İkdam*, 5 Cumâde'l-âhire 1318 (30 September 1900), p. 1.

289 Mozaffar al-Din Shah, سفرنامهٔ مبارکهٔ شاهنشاهی / *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar*, pp. 347 – 348: The original text in Persian: خلاصه به قدر ده کشتی بزرگ و سی - چهل قایق که در اسلامبول توقف دارند، سوار شده، به استقبال آمده بودند و در کشتی ها ی "بزرگ و کوچک هم، ایرانیان تبعه ی خودمان" خود چند دسته موزیگانچی نشانده، کشتی بزرگ سواری ما را محصره نموده و متصل فریاد می کردند: "پادشاه ایران و شاهنشاه وطن ما سلامت باشد!" و خوش آمد و تهنیت ورود می گفتند و بعضی به زبان ترکی می گفتند: "پادشهیم چوْق یاشا!" و فریاد سلام و صلوات اظحار شعف و مسرت فراوان می نمودند و اطراف کشتی ما دایره وار حرکت می کردند؛ ما هم در جواب آنها دست و می کردیم و واقعاً از ین نوع پادشاهپرستی آنها مشعوف بودیم" "دستمال تکان داده، اظهار التفات وه مهربیانی

district) and travel by ferry named *İzzeddin* (Figure 4.14. and Figure 4.15.) from the pier there to Ortaköy, the nearest pier to the Yıldız Palace.[290]



Figure 4.14. Mozaffar al-Din Shah and his entourage on board the *İzzeddin*. Mozaffar al-Din Shah seated in the seat in the center and Tevfik Paşa, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, who welcomed the Shah, standing on the left.[291]

When the Shah boarded the ferry and started to move through the Bosphorus, the Iranians living in Istanbul came to welcome the Shah in ten ships and about 30 or 40 boats, large and small, as he mentioned in his memoirs (Figure 4.16.).[292] "They surrounded our ship..." noted the Shah, and they began to wail continuously in Persian: "May the Padishah of Iran and the Shahanshah of our homeland be in peace!".[293]Among the Iranians celebrating the Shah's arrival there were probably people who could not speak Persian, but remained in the Iranian network, perhaps converted to Ottoman nationality. This situation also caught the Shah's attention: "Some of them were shouting in Turkish, 'Long live the Padishah!'"[294] The Shah noted

[290] BOA, Y. PRK TŞF. 6 8, 10 Safer 1318 (9 June 1890).
[291] "Şah Hazretlerinin İzzeddin Vapur-ı Hümayununda Alınan Grub", in *İran Şahı Muzaffereddin'in 1318/1900 İstanbul'u Ziyaretine Ait Fotoğraf Albümü*, İstanbul University Rare Collection, http://nek.istanbul.edu.tr:4444/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90508---0005.jpg [accessed on 17 November 2023].
[292] Mozaffar al-Din Shah, سفرنامهٔ مبارکهٔ شاهنشاهی / *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah*, p. 347.
[293] Mozaffar al-Din Shah, سفرنامهٔ مبارکهٔ شاهنشاهی / *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah*, p. 347: "پادشاه ایران و شاهنشاه وطن ما سلامت باشد!"
[294] Mozaffar al-Din Shah, سفرنامهٔ مبارکهٔ شاهنشاهی / *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah*, p. 348: "پادشهیم چوق یاشا!"

that he responded to these "displays of happiness and joy with *salavat*s[295] and greetings" by waving his hand and handkerchief as a compliment, then he continued: "We were really pleased to see such adoration[296] from them."[297] Although the Shah noted that he was impressed, this was not a simple show of loyalty.



Figure 4.15. Mozaffar al-Din Shah, sitting alone on the deck of *İzzeddin*. He is holding a ceremonial sword. He wore the Iranian *papakh* on his head which had an aigrette with the one of the world's largest jewels, the *Darya-ye Noor* (the Sea of Light).[298]

[295] Salavat, meaning "peace be upon him", a phrase often used after the name of a prophet of Islam.
[296] The word used in the original text is پادشاهپرستی / pâdshahparasti, meaning something similar to worship to the sultan.
[297] Mozaffar al-Din Shah, سفرنامهٔ مبارکهٔ شاهنشاهی / *Safarnameh-e Mobarekeh-e Shahenshahi: Mozaffar al-Din Shah*, p. 347.
[298] "Şah-ı İran Şehametlu Muzaffereddin Şah Hazretlerinin İzzeddin Vapur-ı Hümayununda Alınan Tasvir-i Şehametpenahileri", in *İran Şahı Muzaffereddin'in 1318/1900 İstanbul'u Ziyaretine Ait Fotoğraf Albümü*, No: 90508, İstanbul University Rare Collection, http://nek.istanbul.edu.tr:4444/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90509---0002.jpg [accessed on 17 November 2023].



Figure 4.16. Iranians came to welcome the Shah with their ships and boats.[299]

It should not be imagined that this display of deep affection by the Iranians was motivated by their satisfaction with the Shah's rule. As emphasized in Chapter Three, the main reason why these Iranians migrated to Istanbul was that Qajar Iran could not offer them a prosperous life. However, when the Shah came to their new home, the Iranians showed their respect for him by shouting, chanting and using the musicians they took on board their ships. This was because the meaning they attributed to the Shah was different from those in Iran. For Iranians in Istanbul the Shah did not mean a corrupted or an unjust ruler, but a cultural element associated with their community. For this reason, it was particularly remarkable for them that the popular Ottoman newspaper *İkdam*, which addressed the Ottoman public opinion, stated that the ruler

[299] "Şah Hazretlerinin Teba-i İraniye Tarafından İstikballeri", in *İran Şahı Muzaffereddin'in 1318/1900 İstanbul'u Ziyaretine Ait fotoğraf Albümü*, İstanbul University Rare Collection, http://nek.istanbul.edu.tr:4444/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90508---0007.jpg [accessed on 17 November 2023].

of the Iranian country was the most respected ruler of Asia and Europe, equally to the Ottoman Sultan. Iranians, therefore, had to glorify the Shah in order to prove that they were as respected as the Ottomans because the Sultan and the Shah were considered equal, in the same way their nations could be considered equal. Moreover, within this welcoming group, there were also individuals who had distanced themselves from the basic features of the Iranian community, such as not being able to speak Persian, and who were perhaps Ottomanized. This demonstrated the inclusive nature of Iranian political identity, apart from the impositions of nationality. However, regardless of whether they were Ottoman or Qajar nationals, they expressed their affection and respect for the Shah in the most ostentatious way they could, so that the spectators could see this. In this way, they sought to strengthen their presence in Istanbul by manifesting their loyalty to their respected ruler, who was a component of their political identity.[300]

One of the major distinctive elements of Iranian community was their language and its representation in Istanbul. In the previous chapter, we tried to examine the economic dimension of *Akhtar* newspaper and how it provided the necessary infrastructure for Iranian printers to turn to alternative ways of making money. However, one should not underestimate the socio-political nature of *Akhtar*, which was used by Iranians in Istanbul to convey messages to a wide audience. Even the establishment of the newspaper in Istanbul was itself a message. While the overwhelming majority of Iranians in Istanbul were Turkish-speaking Azerbaijanis, the establishment of a Persian-language newspaper signalled that Persian language as a cultural element had transformed into an identity component. Like other distinctive features of Iranians, Persian was also needed to be manifested in Istanbul to claim the city. As stated in the first issue of *Akhtar* published on 13 January 1876, Istanbul was considered by Iranians as a cosmopolitan and special city: "*Islambul*, the home of the sultanate and the fortunate capital of a great Islamic state, is the pupil of many countries. It is like a sea where knowledge and science are gathered from different

[300] The Iranians in Istanbul had shown similar respect for the Qajar Grand Vizier Amin al-Dowleh Haj Mirza Ali Khan, who visited Istanbul in 1898, two years before Mozaffar al-Din Shah. In Amin al-Dowleh's travelogue, it is noted that Iranian merchants in Istanbul intercepted the Grand Vizier on his way out of the hammam and presented him a silk Iranian carpet. Amin al-Dowleh, *سفرنامهٔ امین الدوله / Safarnameh-e Amin al-Dowleh*, p. 353: The original text in Persian:
"تجار ایرانی قالیچه ای ابریشمین آورده در سر حمام مفروش کرده بودند و چون بیرون منتظر بودند"

countries."[301] In this cosmopolitan venue, "newspapers are published in various languages and those who speak those languages receive and benefit from these newspapers", but "Persian, the most important and sweetest of the ancient languages" could not find a place for itself. However, as it was claimed in the first issue of *Akhtar*, Persian speakers were "one of the great nations of Islam" and Persian was a language suitable for printing "in the eyes of all nations".[302] Moreover, Persian was "one of the most important languages of the Supreme Ottoman Empire and, obviously, the capital city of *Dersaadet*".[303] Therefore, a Persian-language newspaper should be published in Istanbul and this newspaper would "speak on various topics of news, political, economic, scientific, literary and other issues for the benefit of the society."[304]

The newspaper's portrayal of Persian and its specific positioning this language and its speakers among the other languages and nationalities in Istanbul was glorifying. Just as Iranians glorified the Shah of Iran as a cultural symbol, Iranians presented the language they spoke as a distinctive feature of their community by publishing a newspaper in Istanbul. Moreover, they did not print it with a temporary enthusiasm or as a short-lived propaganda impulse since the newspaper continued to be published for nearly twenty years from 1876 to 1896.



اختر

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Figure 4.17. The first issue of *Akhtar* Newspaper published on 13 January 1876.[305]

[301] روزنامه و کازت" / Gazata va Rooznameh" *Akhtar*, 16 Zilhiccce 1292 (13 January 1876), p. 1.
[302] روزنامه و کازت" / Gazata va Rooznameh", *Akhtar*, 16 Zilhiccce 1292 (13 January 1876), p. 1.
[303] روزنامه و کازت" / Gazata va Rooznameh", *Akhtar*, 16 Zilhiccce 1292 (13 January 1876), p. 1.
[304] روزنامه و کازت" / Gazata va Rooznameh", *Akhtar*, 16 Zilhiccce 1292 (13 January 1876), p. 1.
[305] روزنامه و کازت" / Gazata va Rooznameh", *Akhtar*, 16 Zilhiccce 1292 (13 January 1876), p. 1.

Although for a significant part of this period it served as a political medium of opposition against the Qajar Empire's politics, it was continued to be published in Persian. This long-term journey of *Akhtar* also highlights the importance of its cultural dimensions as well as its political aspects. *Akhtar* did not only represent Persian, but also carried the Iranians' claim in Istanbul in many geographies where it was sold, such as Tabriz, Rasht, Tbilisi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Lahore. For this reason, *Akhtar*'s political role in manifestation of Persian language in Istanbul should not be underestimated.

As another layer of Iranian political identity, the distinctive Iranian sense of entertainment can also be traced in Istanbul. Some Iranians, who left *Suriçi* and accessed the "tavern-theatres" (*batakhane tiyatroları*) in Galata, displayed their distinct musical taste in the entertainment venues of the city. Reşat Ekrem Koçu claimed in his *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* that with the appearance of Iranian coffee, tea and tobacco sellers in venues, the Armenian, Greek and Jewish female singers began to compose unique musical compositions for this new customer profile.[306] These works were known as "*Acem* duettos and cantos".[307] In addition, the cultural references to Iranian audience in these items recorded by Koçu indicating the Iranian contribution to the entertainment culture and ability to transform this area according to their own tastes.[308] The *hüzzam* piece known as the "New Acem Canto" was the most well-known of these and begins with the name of one of the largest cities in Iran: "There is a well in Isfahan, it has sweet water in it" (*Isfahan'da bir kuyu var, içinde tatlı suyu var*). Iranian girls were mentioned in the same piece in a manner reflecting the desires of Iranian men: "Every beauty has her own behaviour, how capable is the Acem beauty" (*Her güzelin bir huyu var, ne yamandır Acem güzeli*).[309] Another canto was sung by one of the most famous canto singers of the period Şamram Hanım, an Ottoman Armenian singer who would later take the surname Kelleciyan: "A cypress tree grows in Isfahan, double mole on her cheek, an Acem girl with a slim waist"

[306] Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları", in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 6 vols. (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kolektif Şirketi, 1958), vol. I, pp. 182 – 184.
[307] I would like to thank my dear interns Gülce Telli and Nisa Yıldırım for drawing my attention to the existence of these musical pieces about Iranians living in late Ottoman Istanbul.
[308] Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları", p.182.
[309] Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları", p.182.

(*Isfahan'da olur servi, yanağında çifte beni, Acem kızı ince belli*).[310] Şamram Hanım included the characteristics of her audience in the lyrics to express that the cantos were special for Iranian customers: "I sell tea in my shop, I put amber in it" (*Dükkanımda çay satarım, içine amber katarım*) or "My name is Acem, my homeland is Iran, smoker of scented tonbaku, I'm addicted to you" (*Nâmım Acem, memleketim İran, kokolu tönbeki keşan, mübtelâ oldum ben sana*). Also Şamram Hanım referred to the competitive environment in which Iranian tobacco sellers found themselves as a consequence of their economic marginalisation: "Mahmutpaşa is our motherland, we have a tobacco shop, we are always surrounded by competitors" (*Mahmutpaşa vatanımız, var tütüncü dükkânımız, hep rakiptir her yanımız*).[311] These works shed light on the atmosphere of the period and they are significant in terms of supporting the findings of this thesis with cultural elements. After revealing the reflections of Iranians in the entertainment scene of Istanbul at that time, we should also focus on how they looked.

Just as the Iranian taste in music found a place in the entertainment life of Galata, their distinctive appearance also remarkable in the daily life of the city. The clothing styles of Iranians in Istanbul reflected the clothing style of urban middle class men in their homeland. In the Qajar Empire, it can be observed that men living in big cities had a style of clothing that was less pompous than that of high-level statesmen and courtiers (Figure 4.20.), but more standardized and identical to the clothing of different ethnic groups in the provinces. The photograph album of Iran in the National Palaces Library of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) can be used to compare the clothing style of the urban middle class in Qajar Iran with the attire of Iranians in Istanbul.

It should not be assumed that this style of clothing, which was specific to a certain social class in Iran, was unique for all Iranians. In different parts of Qajar Empire, clothing styles differed depending on socio-economic conditions. In the provinces of Qajar Empire various ethnic groups had their own style of lothing reflecting their culture (Figure 4.21. and Figure 4.22.). Also in the lower income groups of the big cities cities such as Tehran, the style of clothing varied drastically. As one moves down

[310] Blackthorne-O'Barr, Erik, "Singing on 'The World's Stage': Kanto and Late Ottoman Social Life*", Kadim Journal,* 2 (2021), p. 17.
[311] Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları", p. 182.

to the lower strata, the similarity of clothing with the urban middle class style gradually diminished.



Figure 4.18. A photograph of Naser al-Din Shah strolling through the gardens of Tehran. The Iranian *kalpakh* can be seen on the heads of all the men.[312]



Figure 4.19. Photo of Iranian musicians in Tehran. The *kalpakh*s and the *'aba* (a traditional outer garment) they wear and the sash around their waists were consistent with depictions of Iranian merchants in Istanbul.[313]

[312] "İran'a Ait Fotoğraf Albümü", TBMM Milli Saraylar Kütüphanesi, https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/items/377cab77-c957-4302-8521-0c4b71aedcf2 [accessed on 14 December 2023].

[313] "İran'a Ait Fotoğraf Albümü", TBMM Milli Saraylar Kütüphanesi, https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/items/377cab77-c957-4302-8521-0c4b71aedcf2 [accessed on 14 December 2023].



Figure 4.20. Photo of Qajar princes, viziers and courtiers. Compared to the clothing style of Iranian men living in the cities, a more formal clothing style can be seen. The lion and the sun, the symbols of Iran, appeared on the *kalpakh*, and the uniform-like light coloured upper garments were noticeable.[314]



Figure 4.21. In this photograph, entitled "Iranian Kurdish Dancers", the turban-like headdresses replaced the *kalpakh*s and long shirts replaced the '*aba*, which were frequently seen in photographs from Tehran.[315]

[314] "İran'a Ait Fotoğraf Albümü", TBMM Milli Saraylar Kütüphanesi, https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/items/377cab77-c957-4302-8521-0c4b71aedcf2 [accessed on 14 December 2023].

[315] "İran'a Ait Fotoğraf Albümü", TBMM Milli Saraylar Kütüphanesi, https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/items/377cab77-c957-4302-8521-0c4b71aedcf2 [accessed on 14 December 2023].



Figure 4.22. "A Gathering of Zoroastrians". Zoroastrians were dressed very differently from the urban middle class. Without exception, they all wear turbans on their heads. The sashes appeared broader and more prominent. Instead of the dark-colored clothing style in the cities, lighter colored fabrics seem to replaced it.[316]

The difference in clothing styles in the center and the provinces of Qajar Empire was striking. Even among social classes in the center, there were differences in the way they dressed, but to a certain extent there were some similarities in headdresses and outer garments. However, the most standardised form of clothing was the one that was typical of the Iranian urban middle class (Figure 4.19.). The best evidence for a typical style of dressing identified with Iranians was the perception of foreigners who have observed their distinctive attire. The distinctiveness of this attire and its exclusivity to a particular social group probably impressed them and even led them to imitate it. Edward Granville Browne, a British Iranologist, was photographed in Iranian dress (Figure 4.23.), as seen on the first page of his famous work *A Year Amongst the Persians*, published in 1893, and he probably chose this style of dress

316 "İran'a Ait Fotoğraf Albümü", TBMM Milli Saraylar Kütüphanesi, https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/items/377cab77-c957-4302-8521-0c4b71aedcf2 [accessed on 14 December 2023].

because he perceived it as typical of the Iranian middle class. Iranians in Istanbul probably also had this appearance.

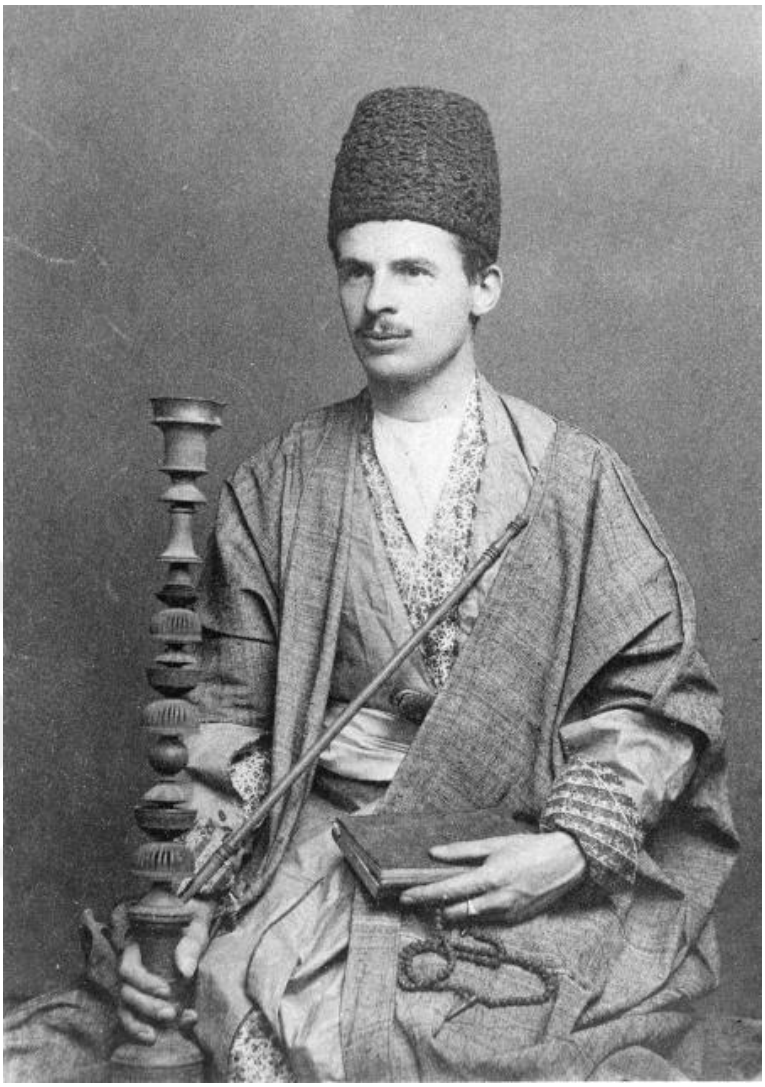


Figure 4.23. Iranologist Edward Granville Browne created an 'Iranian look' that incorporates many features of Iranians such as *kalpakh*, *'aba*, open robe, sash, waterpipe probably with tonbaku, a dagger on his sash and a ring on his finger, an accessory often used by Shiites.[317]

Browne's characteristic Iranian appearance was also carried directly to Istanbul by Iranian migrants. It it known from letters to his parents that Edward Granville Browne spent some time in Istanbul before he left for the Qajar Empire.[318] Unable to meet an

[317] Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Characyer & Thought of the People of Persia*, p. 1.
[318] Gurney, John, "E. G. Browne and the Iranian Community in Istanbul", in *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul,* Thiery Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds.) (Paris, Tehran and Istanbul: Institut français de recherches en Iran and l'Institut français d'Études Anatoliennes, 1993), p. 151.

Iranian through the Ottomans he met, Browne went to bazaar in Istanbul and picked "the most genial looking Persian" and he asked: "I wanted to talk Persian and did [you] know anyone who would teach me?"[319] The fact that a British visitor was able to identify the Iranians in a crowded bazaar only by their appearance proves the distinctiveness of their appearance in the urban life of Istanbul.

Iranians' maintainence such a distinctive appearance in Istanbul had a political meaning. They did not only display it in their own social spaces, but also in the daily life of the city. This distinctive appearance, which they had carried with them from their homeland, easily distinguished them from others and once again emphasised their presence in Istanbul. Therefore, their distict appearance can be easily seen in the visual materials that emerged from the beginning of 1850s. A drawing showing the dressing style of "Persian Shawl Merchants in Constantinople" from the book of drawings by Forbes Mac Bean titled *Sketches of Character and Costume in Constantinople, Ionian Islands* published in 1854 (Figure 4.24.).[320] Forbes Mac Bean's selection and portrayal of the Iranian merchant among the thousands of inhabitants of Istanbul and his specific identification of this man by his nation was an indication of this distinctiveness.

In Forbes Mac Bean's sketch, which can be dated to the 1850s, Iranian shawl merchants in Istanbul, who were depicted in light-coloured clothes, were carrying shawls on arms and shoulders reflecting their profession. On their heads, they had long pointed black cones that would probably distinguish them from the rest of the Istanbulites. On their feet, they were depicted wearing shoes and pink silk stockings (Figure 4.25.). The distinctive clothing style of the Iranians must have been so identified with the Iranians in Istanbul, as it was frequently encountered in daily life. Thus, almost 40 years later, in one of Şamram Hanım's songs about an Iranian young man, we can find the same elements in the description of Iranian clothing style: "Shoes on his feet, with French colouring his pink silk stockings, my delicate young man will come!" (*Ayağında kundurası, üstü Fıransız boyası, penbe ipek çorabı, nazlı civânım gelecek!*).[321] Just as Şamram Hanım reflected the economic challenges of Iranians in her lyrics, she also included the appearance of the Iranians she encountered in the daily

[319] Gurney, "E. G. Browne and the Iranian Community in Istanbul", p. 151.
[320] "Persian Shawl Merchants, Constantinople", in The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs Art & Architecture Collection housed in The New York Public Library Digital Collections, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-65c8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 [accessed on 17 November 2023].
[321] Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları", p.183.

life of the city, because they were not imaginary people, but inhabitants of the city, and they probably came to taverns in the same style of dress. This style of dress was such a strong element of Iranian identity that it remained unchanged over the years.



Figure 4.24. "Persian Shawl Merchants in Constantinople" by Forbes Mac Bean and lithographed by Justin Sutcliffe, 1854.[322]

[322]I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Professor Ebru Boyar for finding and sharing this visual material with me, see: "Persian Shawl Merchants, Constantinople",



4.25.A. **4.25.B.** **4.25.C.**[323]

Figure 4.25. In the two sketches (1854 and 1880s) analyzed and in a photograph taken in Bergrren's studio (between 1870s – 1910s), shoes and stockings of Iranian men can be seen.

The other sketch entitled "Perser aus Konstantinopel", taken from the book *Blätter für kostümkunde: historische und Volkstrachten* dated to 1880, published by the German collector Franz von Lipperheide and owned by the Bartele Gallery in the Netherlands (Figure 4.26.) had some elements in common with Forbes Mac Bean's.

An Iranian man wears the dark colored *'abâ* which is an Iranian style outer garment. Shoes and socks were noticeably similar with the other sketch, despite differences in colour. Both of them were characterised by their common Iranian beards and long conspicuous moustaches. (Figure 4.27.) This moustache style was characteristic of the Qajar period. Even today it is recognised as one of the dominant features of that period.

The long pointed black cone, which has become the symbol of the Iranians, was also seen on the heads of the men depicted in these illustrations. The most distinctive feature of their appearance, these black cones, had become very much identified with the Iranians. In this matter Sasani noted that after the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the Ottoman police despised Iranians who wore these headgears.[324] "Despite being occasionally beaten with a stick for wearing black cones..." noted Sasani, "the most of

https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-65c8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 [accessed on 17 November 2023].

[323] "[Rug Merchants]; [Studio Portrait of Iranian]; Marchand persan, Neg. no. 14; Marchands persans du Caucase, Neg. no. 2895", Online Archive of California, Accession No: 96.R.14 C33.2, https://rosettaapp.getty.edu/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2908575 [accessed on 1 December 2023]

[324] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 95.

the Iranians in Istanbul did not abandon their cones."[325]



Figure 4.26. Dated circa 1880, "Perser aus Konstantinopel" belongs to the Bartele Gallery Collection in Netherlands.[326]

[325] Sasani, یادبودهای سفارت استانبول / *Yadbudha-e Sefaret-e Estanbul*, p. 95.

[326] "Perser aus Konstantinopel", in the Bartele Gallery, https://bartelegallery.com/product-category/antique-prints/prints-fashion-and-costumes/ [accessed on 17 November 2023].



4.27.A. **4.27.B.** **4.27.C.**

Figure 4.27. In the two sketches analyzed and in a photograph taken in Berggren's studio, the distinctive beard and Qajar-style moustache styles of Iranian men can be observed.[327]

The Iranians did not abandon their cones because to abandon their cones meant abandoning their identity. Every conscious choice of clothing was a representation of their socio-political self-perception and directly their identity. Thus, they chose to maintain wearing them despite the repression of Ottoman authorities. That is why, two sketches were continuous even though more than 30 years passed between them, and they complemented each other in harmony with the photographs taken at the Berggren studio in the late nineteenth century.

4.6. Conclusion

Iranians who came to Istanbul as economic migrants managed to spread across the city while maintaining their socio-economic network. As the map showing the spatial distribution of Iranians in the city and the maps showing the route of Muharram ceremonies demonstrate,[328] Iranians were appeared not only in *Suriçi*, with its commercial centers and the Iranian Embassy, but also in the predominantly non-Muslim neighborhoods of Galata, Beşiktaş, and even in Üsküdar on the other side of the Bosphorus. This Iranian visibility showed that they were able to develop strong ties with Istanbul and claim their belonging to the city as a distinct group. Iranians were claiming their existence in Istanbul by creating Iranian spaces in the city, by annually organising Muharram commemorations with pomp and pageantry, by

[327] "Persian", Accession No: 3563, Online Archive of California, https://rosettaapp.getty.edu/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE1303033, [accessed on 1 December 2023].

[328] See: "Chapter 4. Making a Society", p. 68 and 89, in this thesis.

remarkably promoting their distinct Iranian cultural features in the city and by their attire and physical appearance in the everyday life of the city. All these visibility shows that their identification with city on their own terms and, in a sense, meant the creation of a unique urban identity. They positioned themselves among the many different communities that existed within the cosmopolitan structure of Istanbul, but refused to be assimilated or being Ottomanized and emphasized their dictinctive Iranian feautures. This urban identity, constructed directly in Istanbul, was unique and though it was influenced by the perception of Iranianness in Qajar Iran, it was markedly different and was transformed by the city's itself.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century, Istanbul became a vibrant commercial centre for Iranian economic migrants. While in Istanbul, the Iranian migrants maintained their commercial networks in Qajar Iran and their connections with their fellow countrymen, and hoped to build a prosperous life in this “great capital”. They were active in the commercial life of Istanbul and their numbers gradually increased in many different sectors that they operated. Unlike the previous centuries, Iranians were determined to remain in the city permanently, and thus forged deeper social ties with Istanbul beyond just trade. They created their own Iranian public and private venues, as well as bringing and visibly displaying many different features of Iranian culture into Istanbul's cosmopolitan urban life. This situation caused Iranians to perceive themselves as a vibrant part of the city over time and led to the formation of a clear urban identity unique to Iranians in Istanbul. This urban identity allowed Iranians to define themselves as a distinct community living on the margins of the city, and simultaneously they claimed Iranians’ presence in the cosmopolitan urban scene of Istanbul in a very visible way. In order to determine the factors shaping this urban identity, the political, economic and social transformations experienced by Iranians in Istanbul were analysed in this thesis.

As elaborated in Chapter Two, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the Ottoman Empire began to establish a definition of nationality for its subjects. This definition set the boundaries of Ottoman nationality: those who could be considered Ottoman nationals and those who was excluded from this category. In other words, the Ottomans created their fixed nationality definition. This new situation affected Iranians who had lived within the fluid and transitional nature of Ottoman imperial identity before the emergence of fixed nationality definition. To some extent, it prevented them from living as a distinct social group within the Ottoman Empire, as

they had done before, because they had to legally identify themselves either Ottoman national or as a Qajar national. However, when Iranians chose the Ottoman nationality between the two, they were subjected to severe reactions and pressure from the official authorities of the Qajar Empire. The Qajar officials opposed their change of nationality and emphasized their ties with Iran and in a sense dictated Iranian nationality. On the other hand, it can be argued that Iranians instrumentalized this imposition of nationality by double state pressure according to their interests. This situation even reached such a level that when there were conflicts of interest between the Iranians in Istanbul and the Qajar Empire, the change of nationality even became a threat to the Qajar authorities. Therefore, it was an inevitable consequence of this situation that some Iranians chose Ottoman nationality, others remained in the Qajar nationality, but most importantly, a significant number of them preferred to remain within the Iranian network regardless of their nationality. This was because the ability to remain within the Iranian network in Istanbul was an important element creating their urban identity. Despite the imposition of nationality and all kinds of political interventions and legal arrangements they had experienced, Iranians were somehow able to preserve their network and based on these bonds they were able to survive and spread all over Istanbul. This shows that they prioritised a more practical and useful belonging over being national of Qajar or Ottoman empires: Being Iranian in Istanbul.

The efforts of both Ottoman and Qajar officials to legally define Iranians in Istanbul should not considered as the main factor pushing them to the margins. As discussed in Chapter Three, it was mainly the economic transformation that change their position in the city because a large number of them were economic migrants from Iran. Istanbul's central position in the transit trade between Europe and Qajar Iran made the city a prosperous place to live for many Iranians initially, but this changed over time. Due to the changes in international economic conjuncture and the economic adjustments brought by the political situation of the Ottoman Empire, Iranians began to be economically marginalised. These arrangements and changes were interrupting their *raison d'être* in Istanbul. Their number decreased in business lines related to international trade and they began to disperse into various sectors, becoming tradesmen and engaging in petty trade. However, this situation also caused Iranians in Istanbul to take advantage of their existing networks in the city to start alternative economic activities, in other words, the economic transformation also transformed

Iranians' relations with Istanbul. Instead of choosing to stay in mainstream businesses and struggle with intense competition, Iranians took this economic marginalization as an opportunity to establish their own business areas, either legal or illegal, which would later become strongly associated with them. Despite the deteriorating economic conditions and being pushed to the margins in terms of their economic activities, Iranians consciously chose to remain in Istanbul rather than returning to their homeland or migrating to other cities where Iranian transit trade had shifted, and this was one of the most important indicators of their commitment to the city. This commitment was further supported by the Iranian community's strong bonds with their fellow countrymen (*hemşehri*), which gave them the necessary courage to do what others could not do in the city, to operate in forbidden spaces, and to consciously continue to remain on the margins. In this way, Iranians have managed to survive in Istanbul. Although they were expected to dissolve as a result of economic transformations, they changed their shape and embedded in the veins of the city. Iranians' socio-economic relations with the city by prioritising their own survival indicates that they defined an urban identity on their own terms, similar to their self-defined position against the imposition of nationality.

As explained in Chapter Four, Iranians in Istanbul's sense of belonging to the city enabled them to create socio-economic spaces of their own. They organized events such as Muharram commemorations, which include multiple religious and cultural components of their culture, in such a way they manifested the existence of a distinct Iranian community in the public space of Istanbul to the inhabitants of the city. This manifestation of their presence was not only through being visible in the public space, but also through emphasizing and glorifying the symbols of Iranian culture in Istanbul. They spectacularly celebrated Muzaffar al-Din Shah's visit to Istanbul in 1900 to underline that being Iranian was at least as respectable as that being Ottoman and to highlight the legitimacy of their presence in the city. Moreover, by publishing a newspaper to promote the Persian language, which Iranians of Istanbul were dedicated to preserve, and by distributing this newspaper to Persian-speaking communities in many different cities of the world, Iranians in Istanbul manifested that they were more privileged than other Iranian communities in the world in terms of belonging to the city they lived in. This process, which enabled Iranians to claim a strong sense of belonging to Istanbul, was also reflected in the daily life of the city: Iranians introduced

the Iranian taste for entertainment, to the tavern-theaters of Galata, famous for its variety of entertainment, and gave rise to a new Iranian genre. Also, the distinctive Iranian style of dress remained visible in many different neighborhoods of Istanbul, despite the pressures they encountered at times. These examples in the case of Iranians in Istanbul show that they had a strong sense of belonging to Istanbul but resisted assimilation and gradually became Istanbulized while preserving their distinctiveness. This was a process that made them unique and hard to define, differentiating them from other religious and ethnic communities in Istanbul.

As a result, Iranians living in Istanbul in the nineteenth century developed a clear urban identity around these variables. This urban identity, which developed beyond the political decisions of the Qajar and Ottoman empires and the Sunni - Shiite sectarian divisions, enabled them to integrate with the city they migrated to and to establish deep ties with it without assimilation. Thanks to the sense of belonging to Istanbul and their bonds with fellow countrymen that provided them a broad network, they were able to survive in Istanbul despite the economic transformation. They embraced marginality and increased their visibility in Istanbul's cosmopolitan urban scene by creating social spaces and displaying their distinctive cultural features. All these qualities formed the determining factors of their urban identity that helped Iranians to become even more and more Istanbulites.

Thus, despite living and operating on the margins, Iranians claimed Istanbul by creating an urban identity. As it was noted in the fiftieth issue of *Akhtar* in 1879, they became "residents of the Supreme House of the Sultanate (*darü's-saltanat-ı seniyye*) from the honoured people of Iran".[329]

[329] "داخلیه / Dakheliyeh", *Akhtar*, 25 Zilhicce 1296 (10 December 1879), p. 3.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez on dokuzuncu yüzyılda müreffeh bir yaşam elde etmek ve maddi kazanç sağlamak uğruna Kaçar İmparatorluğundan Osmanlı İstanbul'una göç eden İranlıların ne zaman ve nasıl kendilerini İstanbul'a ait bir toplumsal grup olarak algılamaya başladıklarını incelemektedir. İstanbul'da yaşayan İranlılara özgü bu benlik algısının Osmanlı ve Kaçar otoritelerinin siyasi kararlarının ve Şii – Sünni mezhepsel ayrımlarının ötesinde İstanbul'daki İranlı kimliğinin belirlenmesinde ne ölçüde pay sahibi olduğu ve benlik algısı dışında İstanbul'daki İranlı kimliğini belirleyen diğer hukuki, ekonomik ve sosyal değişkenlerin tespit edilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

İstanbul'daki varlıkları 1840'lardan itibaren giderek belirginleşen İranlı nüfusu, birçok açıdan benzersiz özelliklere sahipti. Evvela, İstanbul'daki İranlıların anavatanlarına, yani Kaçar İmparatorluğu'na olan bağlılıkları, güçlü bir milliyetçilik duygusunun tezahüründen ziyade esnek bir kültürel aidiyet olarak nitelendirilmelidir. Bu esneklik, ekonomik saiklerle göç ettikleri İstanbul'la güçlü bağlar kurmalarını kolaylaştırıyor ve geldikleri şehre aidiyet hissetmelerine neden oluyordu. Bu kente aidiyet iddiası doğrultusunda, İstanbul'daki İranlılar, kozmopolit bir mekân olarak algıladıkları İstanbul'da nüfuslarının büyük çoğunluğu Türkçe konuşabilmesine rağmen, kültürlerinin ayırt edici niteliklerinden biri olan Fars dilinin korunması ve genç kuşaklara öğretilmesi konusunda hassas davranmışlardı. Dil konusundaki hassasiyetlerine benzer şekilde, dini değerlerini korumuşlar ve hatta zaman zaman ritüellerini ve törenlerini şehrin kamusal alanında kent sakinlerine sergilemişlerdir. İstanbul'daki İranlılar, şehirle olan güçlü bağlarını vurgularken aynı zamanda kendilerine has özelliklerini de belirgin bir şekilde ortaya koymuşlar ve böylece kendilerini asimilasyona -başka bir deyişle Osmanlılaşmaya- direnen bir grup olarak tanımlamışlardı. Bu özelliklerinin bir sonucu olarak İstanbul'daki İranlılar ne geleneksel anlamda Ermeniler ya da Rumlar gibi bir cemaat ya da müstakil bir Osmanlı milleti, ne de modern anlamda bir ulus ya da diaspora grubu olarak ortaya

çıkmıştır. Bu nedenlerle, İstanbul'daki İranlıların özgünlüğü, hem Osmanlı İstanbul'unun kentsel tarihinin önemli bir bölümünü anlamak hem de bu süreçteki kimlik oluşumunu keşfetmek için incelenmeye değerdir.

İstanbul'daki İranlı varlığının modern anlamda bir diaspora olarak tanımlanamayacağı öne sürülürken klasik diaspora tanımının kabulleri göz önüne alınmıştır. William Safran'ın diaspora tanımında yer alan belirli bir merkezden dağılma, İstanbul'daki İranlılar özelinde gözlemlenebilse dahi anavatana dair ortak bir hafıza, hayal ya da mit oluşturabilecek ölçüde belirgin bir milli aidiyet tanımının tarihsel olarak henüz ortaya çıkmadığı bu tezin iddiaları arasındadır. Bunun yerine İranlıların akışkan bir emperyal kimlik içerisinde konumlandıkları, bu sayede imparatorluklar içerisinde yaşayıp göç edebilmelerinin kolaylaştığı ve bu kimliğe dayanarak gittikleri yerde ayrı bir topluluk oluşturabildikleri öne sürülmektedir. Diaspora tanımının bir başka önemli özelliği olan, diaspora üyelerinin ev sahibi topluluk tarafından asla tam olarak kabul görmeyeceği ve entegre olamayacağı iddiası da İstanbul'da yaşayan İranlılar için geçerli değil gibi görülmektedir. Zira onlar bilinçli olarak kendilerini ev sahibi topluluktan ayırt ederek kendi kimliklerini tanımlamışlar ve bu görünür sosyal marjinalliklerini İstanbul'a olan aidiyetlerini vurgulamak için kullanmışlardı. Son olarak diaspora mensuplarında sıklıkla görülen anavatanın idealize edilmesi ve şartlar iyileştiğinde anavatana geri dönüş fikrinin İstanbul'daki İranlılarda belirgin bir biçimde görülmediği iddia edilmektedir. İstanbul'da varolma sebepleri olan müreffeh bir yaşam sağlama ve para kazanma amaçlarının önüne engeller çıktığında dahi İranlılar, anavatanlarına dönmek veya İstanbul'u terk etmek yerine şehirdeki konumlarını müzakere ederek ve ekonomik faaliyetlerini çeşitlendirerek hayatta kalmayı başarmışlardı. Bu sebeplerle, önceki yüzyılların aksine on dokuzuncu yüzyılda İranlılar, İstanbul ile daha derin bağlar kurmuşlar ve bir diaspora grubundan ziyade alışılmışın dışında bir biçimde İstanbullulaşmış bir topluluğa dönüştüler.

İstanbul'daki İranlıları kendine has ve özel yapan bir diğer özellik topluluğun ortaya çıktığı dönemdir. On dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısı Osmanlı ve Kaçar İmparatorluklarında ekonomik ve yönetimsel dönüşümlerin hızlandığı bir döneme işaret ediyordu. İki imparatorluk da doğrudan müstemleke haline gelmeseler dahi Avrupalıların topraklarındaki ticari nüfuzunu ve siyasi etkilerini tecrübe ettiler. 1881'de yayınlanan Muharrem Kararnamesi ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun iflasını

açıklamasını, Avrupalı tahvil sahiplerinin çıkarlarını temsil eden bir komite tarafından Düyûn-ı Umûmiye-i Osmaniye Varidat-ı Muhassasa İdaresi'nin kuruluşu ve Avrupalı tüccarlara ticari imtiyazlar verilmesi takip etti. Öte yandan, Kaçar İmpatatorluğunun uluslararası ticarete entegre olması büyük ölçüde Rusya ve İngiltere ile yapılan ticari antlaşmalar ve iki devletin tüccarlarına verilen ticari imtiyazların bir sonucuydu. Bunlara ek olarak Avrupa'da ulus devletlerin ortaya çıkışı ve onların modern ulus devlet pratiklerini benimsemesi imparatorlukları da benzer idari dönüşümleri gerçekletirmeye teşvik etti. Küresel ölçekte ilişki ve etkileşimlerin artmasıyla birlikte imparatorluklar, halklarını akışkan bir emperyal kimlik içindeki tebaalar olarak değil, ulus devlet pratiklerinin etkisiyle net bir şekilde tanımlanmış bir millet olarak tanımlamak zorunda kaldılar. İstanbul'daki İranlıların bu küresel değişimlerden etkilenmemesi mümkün değildi.

Bu tezin ana konusu olan İranlıların on dokuzuncu yüzyılda İstanbul'da ayrı bir sosyal grup oluşturacak kadar görünür olmaları dikkat çekicidir. Ancak İranlıların İstanbul ile ilişkileri on dokuzuncu yüzyıl öncesine kadar uzanmaktadır. Çoğunluğunu Ermeni ve Azerilerin oluşturduğu Acem tüccarlar, on altıncı yüzyılın başlarından itibaren İran ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu arasındaki ipek ticaretinin ana aktörleriydi. İpek ticaretinin gerilemesiyle birlikte Acem tüccarlar, on sekizinci yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren kervan taşımacılığı yoluyla pamuk ticareti yapmaya başladılar. Bu tüccarlar İstanbul'da ticari faaliyetlerde bulunmalarına rağmen, yukarıda görüldüğü gibi İstanbul'da kendi cemaatlerine sahip olacak ve kendilerini ayrı bir topluluk olarak tanımlayacak kadar yerleşik değillerdi ve bu nedenle on dokuzuncu yüzyılda İstanbul'da ortaya çıkan yerleşik İranlı topluluğundan ayrılıyorlardı. İstanbul'daki varlıkları aslında on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ilk yarısının ekonomik dinamikleri ile ilgiliydi. Kaçar İran'ının Avrupalı devletlerle imzaladığı ticari anlaşmalarla uluslararası ticarete entegre olması, birçok İranlı girişimci ve tüccar için yeni fırsatlar yarattı. Kaçar İmparatorluğu ile Rusya arasında imzalanan 1813 tarihli Gülistan Antlaşması, ithalat ve ihracatta sadece yüzde beş gümrük vergisi öngörerek ithal Rus mallarının İran pazarına girişini kolaylaştırmıştır. Benzer şekilde, 1841 yılında İngiltere ile Kaçar İmparatorluğu arasında imzalanan Ticaret Antlaşması, İngiliz ticari malları için ithalat ve ihracatta Rusya'ya uygulanan gümrük vergisi ile aynı düzeyde gümrük vergisi uygulamayı öngörüyordu. Bu sayede İngiliz ticari malları İran pazarına da akmaya başladı. Ayrıca 1841'deki Ticaret Antlaşması ile Kaçar

İmparatorluğu'nun Tebriz, Buşehr, Tahran, Şiraz ve İsfahan gibi çeşitli şehirlerinde İngiliz Ticari Konsülleri kurulmaya başlandı. Gümrük vergilerinin düşürülmesi ve ticari konsülleri kurulması yoluyla İngilizlerin, İran ticari hayatına müdahil olması, bir grup İranlı aracı tüccarın inkişafına yol açtı. Bu aracı tüccarların temel görevi, Kaçar İmparatorluğu içindeki ticari ağlarını kullanarak İngiliz mallarının ülkedeki dağıtımını yapmaktı. Ancak bu malların toptan ticareti İstanbul'daki İngiliz ticari acenteler tarafından yürütülüyordu ve 1840'larda buharlı gemi taşımacılığı Karadeniz'de düşük maliyetli ve verimli bir seçenek haline geldiğinden, mallar genellikle önce Trabzon'a, oradan da Erzurum yolu üzerinden Tebriz'e taşınıyordu. Üstelik aynı güzergâh ihracat için de kullanılıyordu. Transit ticaretle uğraşan İranlı tüccarlar, İran'ın yerel pazarlarından Tebriz'e akan tekstil, tütün ve halı gibi İran ürünlerinin ihracatını sağlıyordu. Bu yerel mallar ya İstanbul'a ya da burada faaliyet gösteren tüccarlar aracılığıyla Avrupa'ya ihraç ediliyordu. Bu nedenle, Avrupa - İran transit ticaretinden yararlanarak para kazanmaya hevesli bir İranlı tüccar topluluğu İstanbul'a göç etmeye başladı. Bu ticari faaliyet nedeniyle İranlı tüccarların İstanbul'a akın etmesinin üç ana nedeni vardı. İlk olarak, bu tüccarlar İstanbul'dan alınan İngiliz ticari mallarını İran iç pazarlarına dağıtacak ticari ilişkiler ağına sahiptiler. İkinci olarak, önemli bir yeniden ihracat merkezi olan Tebriz, İran'da üretilen ve tüccarların İstanbul'da yeniden satabilecekleri birçok değerli malı kendine çekiyordu. Üçüncü olarak, 1823'te imzalanan Birinci Erzurum Antlaşması, İranlı tüccarları Osmanlı tüccarlarıyla eşit bir şekilde hem ihracatta hem de ithalatta yüzde dört gümrük vergisine tabi tutulmasını öngörmüştü. Başka bir deyişle, İranlı tüccarlar İstanbul'dan İran'a ve İran'dan İstanbul'a mal taşımak için en uygun grup haline gelmişti.

Bu ticari ilişkiler Tebriz ve İstanbul arasında şekillendiği için, İstanbul'da faaliyet gösten İranlı tüccarların bileşimi şehrin ticari yaşamına kolayca uyum sağlayabilecek kişiler tarafından meydana getirilmişti. 1919-1921 yılları arasında İstanbul'daki İran Büyükelçiliği Maslahatgüzarı olan Han Malik Sasani anı kitabında, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında İstanbul'da ikamet eden İranlı tüccarların yüzde 80'inin Tebriz, Huy, Salmas ve Şebistar şehirlerinden gelen Azeriler olduğunu belirtmişti. Onları İsfahanlılar, Tahranlılar, Kazvinliler, Horasanlılar ve Kaşanlılar takip ediyordu.

Azerilerin ağırlıklı olarak İstanbul'da ikamet etmelerinin birkaç nedeni vardı. Birincisi, ticaret yolunun başlangıç noktası olan Tebriz, birçok Azeri tüccarın bu

ticarette aktif bir rol oynamasını sağlamıştı. Tüccarların kendileri ya da temsilcileri İstanbul ile sürekli temas halindeydi. Tebriz aynı zamanda Kaçar Devleti içinde de önemli bir pazar olduğundan, Tebrizli Azeriler becerikli tüccarlar olarak görülüyordu. İngiltere'nin Tebriz Başkonsolosu Henry Jones, İngiliz Dışişleri Bakanlığı'na sunduğu yıllık raporunda Tebriz Azerilerinin ticari becerileri hakkında şu gözlemde bulunmuştu: "Yerli tüccarın taşıdığı kurnaz ve hilekar karakter, gerçek bir İranlıdan çok bu vilayetin (Azerbaycan) Türklerine özgü görünüyor." İkinci olarak, Azeriler iletişim becerileri nedeniyle bu ticaret rotasında önemli bir aktördü. Azerilerin hem Türkçe hem de Farsçayı akıcı bir şekilde konuşabilmeleri, onları ticari faaliyetler için son derece başarılı aracılar haline getirmişti. 1890 yılında Tebriz'deki İngiliz Başkonsolosu C. E. Stewart, İngiliz Dışişleri Bakanlığı'na gönderdiği raporda Azerilerin dil becerileri hakkında şunları yazmıştır: "Azerbaycan lehçesi, İstanbul'daki Türklerin konuştuğu lehçeden önemli ölçüde farklıdır, aynı şekilde Buhara ve daha doğudaki Türklerin konuştuğu lehçeden de farklıdır; ancak Azarbeycan lehçesini konuşan kişiler şu avantaja sahiptir: lehçeleri Türkçenin farklı lehçeleri arasında bir ara lehçe olduğu için, kendilerini İstanbul'da ya da Buhara'da anlaşılır kılabilirler, bu da tüccar ve mal taşıyıcıları olarak onlara büyük avantaj sağlamaktadır." Azeri tüccarların İstanbul'daki yoğun varlığı ve şehrin ticari hayatına dahil olmaları bu nedenlerle açıklanabilir.

İstanbul'a akın eden İranlı nüfus sadece toptan ticaretle uğraşan tüccarlardan oluşmuyordu. Tüccarların aileleri, yanlarında çalışanlar, İran ağı içinde çaycı, terzi, tütüncü, kahveci gibi hizmet sektöründe çalışanlar ve hamal, seyyar satıcı, arabacı gibi küçük işleri yapan İranlılar da düşünüldüğünde İstanbul'da büyük bir İranlı nüfus oluşmaya başlamıştır. Ancak Birinci Dünya Savaşı öncesinde İstanbul'daki İranlıların nüfusu hakkında kesin bir veri bulunmamaktadır. Karpat'a göre bunun başlıca nedeni, Osmanlı resmi nüfus kayıtlarının, gayrimüslim nüfusun aksine Müslüman nüfusu etnik veya dilsel ayrımlara göre ayırmamasıydı. Aynı durum yabancıların nüfusu için de geçerliydi. Bu nedenle İranlı nüfus da sayımlarda Müslüman nüfus kategorisi altında değerlendirilmiş ve sayılmıştır.

On dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında İstanbul'da yaşayan İranlıların sayısını belirlemek için dönemin tanıklıklarından yararlanmak gerekir. Sasani anılarında İran Büyükelçiliği'nin her yıl yaklaşık 4.000 aile tezkiresi verdiğini, bunun da İstanbul'da en az 16.000 İranlının yaşadığı anlamına geldiğini iddia etmektedir. Ancak bu sayıya

Osmanlı uyruğuna geçen İranlılar dâhil değildir. Sasani'nin iddiasıyla tutatlı olarak, 1885 yılında Mekke'ye hacca giderken İstanbul'u ziyaret eden Kaçar bürokratı Mirza Muhammed Hüseyin Farahani, *Safarnameh-e Mirza Muhammed Hüseyin Farahani* (Mirza Muhammed Hüseyin Farahani'nin Seyahatnamesi) adlı seyahatnamesinde İstanbul'da yaklaşık 16.000 İranlının yaşadığını, bunların bininin tüccar, geri kalanının ise esnaf olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bunlar sadece yazarların gözlemleridir ve resmi bir kesinlikleri yoktur. Ancak Dâhiliye Nezareti Ecnebiler Kalemi'nde yer alan bir sayım tablosu, 1917 yılında İstanbul'da yaşayan yabancı nüfusun milliyetlerine göre ayrıntılı bir dökümünü vermektedir. Bu tabloya göre, 1917 yılında İstanbul'da yaşayan İran uyrukluların sayısı 3.441'i erkek ve 295'i kadın olmak üzere 3.736'dır. Bu nüfusun 3.390'ı Müslüman, 346'sı ise gayrimüslimdir (muhtemelen İran Ermenileri kastediliyor). Bu nüfusun mesleklere göre dağılımı aşağıdaki gibidir: 1234'ü ticaretle, 74'ü tarımla, 879'u zanaatkârlıkla, 309'u serbest meslekle ve 940'ı diğer çeşitli mesleklerle uğraşmaktadır. Bu rakam resmi bir sayımın sonucu olsa bile, ekonomik faaliyetlerin kesintiye uğradığı ve İstanbul'un İranlılar için cazibesinin sona erdiği bir dönemi ifade eden Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında yapıldığı ve Osmanlı uyruğuna geçen İranlıların sayısını içermediği göz önüne alınırsa şehirdeki İranlı nüfusunu tam olarak yansıtmadığı görülebilir. İranlıların demografik verileri Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşundan sonra da takip edilebilmekteydi.

1927 yılında daha ayrıntılı bir nüfus sayımı yapılmıştı. Her ne kadar 1927 Nüfus Sayımı İstanbul'daki yabancı nüfus hakkında muayyen bir bilgi vermese de, ülke genelindeki İran vatandaşlarının nüfusu ve İran'da doğmuş ancak artık İran vatandaşlığına sahip olmayanlar hakkında fikir vermektedir. Bu sayıma göre, İran uyruklular Türkiye'deki yabancı uyruklular arasında Yunan ve İtalyan uyruklulardan sonra üçüncü sırada yer almaktadır. 1927 yılında Türkiye'deki İran uyrukluların sayısı 8.840 (5.621 erkek ve 2.859 kadın) olup, o tarihte Türkiye'deki toplam yabancı nüfusun yüzde 9,78'ini oluşturmaktadır. Yabancı nüfusun çoğunlukla İstanbul, İzmir ve Ankara gibi il merkezlerinde bulunduğu bilgisi göz önüne alındığında, diğer şehirlerde kayda değer bir İranlı nüfus bulunmadığından, Türkiye'deki İran uyruklu nüfusun çoğunluğunu İstanbul'daki İranlıların oluşturması muhtemel görünmektedir. 1927 yılında Türkiye nüfusu içinde İran doğumluların sayısı 7.117'si erkek, 3.079'u kadın olmak üzere 10.196'dır. Bu sayıya hem yabancı uyruklular hem de Türk vatandaşları dâhildir, dolayısıyla Türk vatandaşlığına geçen İranlıların da bu sayıya

dâhil olması mümkündür. Türkçe dışında başka bir ana dile sahip olan kişilerle ilgili verilere bakıldığında, 1.114 erkek ve 573 kadın olmak üzere 1.687 kişinin anadilinin "Acemce" (Farsça) olduğu görülmektedir. Bu rakam muhtemelen Türkçe konuşan ve Türkiye'deki İranlı nüfusun çoğunluğunu oluşturan Azeriler dışındaki Farsça konuşan etnik grupları ifade etmekteydi. İstanbul'da yaşayan İranlıların nüfusları hakkında bu bilgiler ve şehirle kurdukları ilişki bu şekilde anlatıldıktan sonra bu tezin ana argümanları sıralanacaktır.

İranlı göçmenler İstanbul'da faaliyetlerini sürdürürken Kaçar İran'ındaki ticari ağlarını ile geldikleri şehirdeki hemşehrilik bağlarını korudular ve bu "büyük başkentte" müreffeh bir hayat kurmayı ümit ettiler. 1840'lardan itibaren İstanbul'un ticari hayatında aktif olarak yer aldılar ve faaliyet gösterdikleri birçok farklı sektörde sayıları giderek arttı. Önceki yüzyıllardan farklı olarak İranlılar şehirde kalıcı olmaya kararlıydılar ve bu nedenle İstanbul'la ticaretin ötesinde daha derin sosyal bağlar oluşturdukları gözlemlenebilmektedir. İstanbul'daki İranlıların kendilerine ait kamusal ve özel mekânlar yarattıkları ve İran kültürünün birçok farklı ayıcı özelliğini İstanbul'un kozmopolit kent yaşamına taşıdıkları ve görünür kıldıkları bu tezin araştırma sürecinde tespit edilmiştir. Bu durum zamanla İranlıların kendilerini kentin bir parçası olarak algılamalarına ve İstanbul'da İranlılara özgü belirgin bir "kent kimliğinin" oluşmasına neden oldu. Bu kent kimliği, İranlıların kendilerini kentin çeperlerinde yaşayan müstakil bir topluluk olarak tanımlamalarını sağlarken, aynı zamanda İranlıların İstanbul'un kozmopolit kent sahnesindeki varlıklarını da görünür bir şekilde ortaya koyabilmekteydi. Bu kent kimliğini şekillendiren faktörleri belirlemek amacıyla, bu tezde İranlıların İstanbul'da yaşadıkları siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal dönüşümler analiz edilmiştir.

İkinci Bölüm'de İranlıların oluşturdukları kent kimliğini niteleyen bir faktör olarak yönetimsel reformların İstanbul'daki İranlılara etkileri incelenmiştir. On dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren Osmanlı İmparatorluğu kendi tebaası için bir milliyet tanımı oluşturmaya başlamıştır. Bu tanım, Osmanlı vatandaşlığının sınırlarını belirlemişti. Başka bir deyişler Osmanlı vatandaşı olarak kabul edilebilecekler ve bu kategorinin dışında tutulacaklar netleştirilmişti. Bu yeni durum, sabit milliyet tanımının ortaya çıkmasından önceki dönemlerde Osmanlı imparatorluk kimliğinin akışkan ve geçirgen doğası içinde yaşamış olan İranlıları derinden etkiledi. Zira daha önceki dönemlerin aksine Osmanlı İmparatorluğu içinde ayrı bir sosyal grup

olarak yaşamaları artık mümkün değildi, çünkü kendilerini yasal olarak ya Osmanlı vatandaşı ya da Kaçar vatandaşı olarak tanımlamak zorundaydılar. Ancak İranlılar bu ikisi arasında Osmanlı uyruğunu seçtiklerinde Kaçar İmparatorluğu'nun İstanbul'daki resmi temsilcilerinin şiddetli tepki ve baskılarına maruz kaldılar. Kaçar yetkilileri onların uyruk değiştirmelerine karşı çıkmış ve İran ile olan bağlarını vurgulayarak bir anlamda İran uyruğunu dikte etmişlerdi. Öte yandan İranlıların da bu milliyet dayatmasını kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda araçsallaştırdığı bu tezin iddiaları arasında yer almaktadır. Hatta bu durum öyle bir boyuta ulaşmıştı ki, İstanbul'daki İranlılar ile Kaçar İmparatorluğu arasında çıkar çatışmaları yaşandığında, tabiiyet değişikliği Kaçar otoritelerini tehdit etmek için İranlılarca kullanılır hale gelmişti. Dolayısıyla bazı İranlıların Osmanlı uyruğunu seçmesi, bazılarının Kaçar uyruğunda kalması ama en önemlisi önemli bir kısmının da uyruğu ne olursa olsun İranlı ilişkiler ağı içinde kalmayı tercih etmesi bu durumun kaçınılmaz bir sonucuydu. Çünkü İstanbul'daki İran ağı içinde kalabilmek onların kent kimliğini oluşturan önemli bir unsurdu. Milliyet dayatmasına ve yaşadıkları her türlü siyasi müdahale ve yasal düzenlemeye rağmen İranlılar bir şekilde ağlarını koruyabilmiş ve bu ilişkilete dayanıp hayatta kalarak İstanbul'un dört bir yanına yayılabilmişlerdir. Bu da Kaçar ya da Osmanlı imparatorluklarının vatandaşı olmak yerine daha pratik ve kullanışlı olan 'İstanbul'da İranlı olma' aidiyetine öncelik verdiklerini gösteriyor.

Hem Osmanlı hem de Kaçar yetkililerinin İstanbul'daki İranlıları yasal olarak tanımlama çabaları, onları çeperlere iten ana faktör olarak görülmemelidir. Üçüncü Bölüm'de tartışıldığı üzere, İranlıların büyük bir kısmı İran'dan gelen ekonomik göçmenler olduğu için şehirdeki konumlarını değiştiren esas unsur ekonomik dönüşüm olmuştur. İstanbul'un Avrupa ile Kaçar İran'ı arasındaki transit ticaretteki merkezi konumu, şehri başlangıçta birçok İranlı için yaşanacak müreffeh bir yer haline getirmişti, ancak bu durum zamanla değişmişti. Uluslararası ekonomik konjonktürdeki değişiklikler ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun siyasi durumunun getirdiği ekonomik düzenlemeler sebebiyle İranlılar ekonomik olarak marjinalleşmeye başladılar. Bu düzenlemeler ve değişimler onların İstanbul'daki varoluş nedenlerini sekteye uğratıyordu. Uluslararası ticaretle ilgili iş kollarında sayıları azaldı ve çeşitli sektörlere dağılmaya, küçük ticaretle iştigal olmaya ve günlük işlerle uğraşmaya başladılar. Ancak bu durum aynı zamanda İstanbul'daki İranlıların şehirdeki mevcut ağlarından yararlanarak alternatif ekonomik girişimler başlatmalarına, başka bir deyişle

ekonomik dönüşümün İranlıların kentle ilişkilerini de dönüştürmesine neden oldu. İranlılar, ana akım işlerde kalıp yoğun rekabetle mücadele etmeyi tercih etmek yerine, bu ekonomik marjinalleşmeyi bir fırsat olarak değerlendirerek, daha sonra kendileriyle güçlü bir şekilde özdeşleşecek olan yasal ve/veya yasadışı iş alanlarında faaliyet göstermeye başladılar. Kötüleşen ekonomik koşullara ve ekonomik faaliyetler bakımından çeperlere itilmelerine rağmen İranlıların anavatanlarına dönmek ya da İran transit ticaretinin kaydığı diğer şehirlere göç etmek yerine bilinçli olarak İstanbul'da kalmayı tercih etmeleri, şehre bağlılıklarının en önemli göstergelerinden biriydi. Bu bağlılık, İranlı toplumunun güçlü hemşerilik bağlarıyla daha da desteklendi ve bu da onlara şehirde başkalarının yapamadıklarını yapma, yasak alanlarda faaliyet gösterme ve bilinçli olarak kenarda kalmaya devam etme konusunda gerekli cesareti verdi. Bu şekilde İranlılar İstanbul'da hayatta kalmayı başardılar. Ekonomik dönüşümler sonucunda çözülmeleri beklenirken, şekil değiştirerek şehrin damarlarına zerk oldular. İranlıların şehirde hayatta kalmayı önceleyerek kentle kurdukları sosyo-ekonomik ilişkiler, milliyet dayatmasına karşı kendi tanımlarını belirlemeleri gibi, kendi terimleriyle bir kent kimliği oluşturduklarına işaret ediyor.

Dördüncü Bölüm'de ise İstanbul'daki İranlıların şehre duydukları aidiyet hissinin, kentte kendilerine ait sosyo-ekonomik alanlar yaratmalarını sağladığı ifade edilmektedir. Kültürlerinin birçok dini ve kültürel bileşenini içeren Muharrem anmaları (*'Azadari*) gibi etkinlikleri tertip ederek, İstanbul'un kamusal alanında müstakil bir İranlı topluluğunun varlığını kent sakinlerine göstermişlerdi. Varlıklarının tezahürü sadece kamusal alanda görünür olmakla değil, aynı zamanda İstanbul'daki İran kültürünün sembollerini vurgulamak ve yüceltmek yoluyla da gerçekleşiyordu. İranlı olmanın en az Osmanlı olmak kadar saygıdeğer olduğunun altını çizmek ve şehirdeki varlıklarının meşruiyetini vurgulamak için Muzafferüddin Şah'ın 1900 yılında İstanbul'a yaptığı ziyareti görkemli bir şekilde kutladılar. Dahası, İstanbullu İranlıların korumaya adanmış oldukları Farsçayı tanıtmak için bir gazete çıkarması ve bu gazeteyi dünyanın pek çok farklı kentinde Farsça konuşan topluluklara dağıtması, İstanbullu İranlıların yaşadıkları kente aidiyet konusunda dünyadaki diğer kentlerde yaşayan İranlı topluluklardan daha ayrıcalıklı olduklarını göstermişti. İranlıların İstanbul'a güçlü bir aidiyet duymalarını sağlayan bu süreç, şehrin gündelik hayatına da yansıdı: İranlılar, eğlence çeşitliliğiyle ünlü Galata'nın meyhane-tiyatrolarına İranlıların eğlence anlayışını getirerek yeni bir türün doğmasını sağladılar. Ayrıca,

İranlıların kendilerine özgü giyim tarzı, zaman zaman karşılaştıkları baskılara rağmen İstanbul'un birçok farklı semtinde görünür olmaya devam etti. İstanbul'daki İranlılar özelindeki bu örnekler, İranlıların İstanbul'a güçlü bir aidiyet duygusu beslediklerini, asimilasyona direndiklerini ve özgünlüklerini koruyarak giderek İstanbullaştıklarını göstermektedir. Bu süreç, onları İstanbul'daki diğer dini ve etnik topluluklardan ayırarak benzersiz ve tanımlanması zor bir hale getirmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, on dokuzuncu yüzyılda İstanbul'da yaşayan İranlılar bu değişkenler etrafında belirgin bir kent kimliği inşa ettiler. Kaçar ve Osmanlı imparatorluklarının siyasi kararlarının ve Sünni - Şii mezhepsel ayrımlarının ötesinde gelişen bu kent kimliği, göç ettikleri kentle bütünleşmelerini ve asimile olmadan derin bağlar kurmalarını sağlamıştı. İstanbul'a duydukları aidiyet ve kendilerine geniş bir ağ sağlayan hemşerilik bağları sayesinde ekonomik dönüşümlere rağmen İstanbul'da ayakta kalabildiler. Marjinalliği benimsediler ve kendilerine ait sosyal alanlar yaratarak ve ayırt edici kültürel özelliklerini sergileyerek İstanbul'un kozmopolit kent sahnesinde görünürlüklerini artırdılar. Tüm bu nitelikler, İranlıların giderek daha fazla İstanbullu olmalarına yardımcı olan kentli kimliklerinin belirleyici faktörlerini oluşturdu. Böylece, çeperlerde yaşamalarına ve faaliyet göstermelerine rağmen, İranlılar bir kent kimliği yaratarak İstanbul'u bir nevi sahiplendiler.

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