

honors us generously with his desire to make us *see* our lived experiences and *see through* them through the intermediation of his artworks.

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Der Unermessliche Schatz oder Die Wirtschaftliche Lage Irans. Ğamālzādes Studie zur iranischen Volkswirtschaft am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs, Leila Nabieva (ed.), *Islamkundliche Untersuchungen* 268. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2006, ISBN 3-87997-329-6 (hardback), 171 pp.

Sayyed Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh (1895-1997) is first of all remembered as a pioneer of modern Persian prose literature, a reputation which is mostly based on his famous collection of short stories, *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud*. It was published in 1921 in Berlin, where Jamalzadeh had spent the period of World War I together with a group of Iranian nationalists who had linked their political cause with the wartime aims of Imperial Germany. In recent years, the subsequent political activities of Jamalzadeh and his associates, and their effect on Iranian politics during the Reza Shah era, have received stronger interest among scholars in Germany, for instance in the studies by Keivandokht Ghahari and Tim Epkenhans.¹ The book under review, however, points out another aspect of Jamalzadeh's commitment aside from his literary and journalistic activities, namely his efforts as a national economist. Almost ninety years after its first publication in Berlin in 1917, Leila Nabieva has offered the first publication of *Der Unermessliche Schatz, oder Die Wirtschaftliche Lage Irans* (The Untold Treasure, or The Economic Situation of Iran), in German translation.

With regard to his political commitment, Jamalzadeh had written this book not only out of a mere scientific interest, but also as an attempt to raise the political awareness of his fellow countrymen. Based on broad-based data and information, his aim was to demonstrate the importance of economic matters in Iran's independence and development, and also the negative impact of foreign dominance. Programmatically, he names a key feature of colonialism, the control of one country over the natural resources of another country, as Iran's major problem (pp. 1-2). On the other hand, Jamalzadeh was also anxious to demonstrate to his readers the natural wealth of Iran, and the economic potential it would offer for their country's progress and welfare, if it could only be administered and developed properly, by a sovereign Iranian government. In this spirit, his ultimate aim was to support the transformation of Iran into a modern nation which would be able to face the challenge of the Age of Industry (p. 1).

Regarding the content, the structure and arguments of his study are based on the above intention. After a short introductory chapter that deals with the geography

and population of Iran (p. 3), Jamalzadeh gives an account of Iran's imported (pp. 9-13), and especially of the exported, products and commodities (pp. 13-31), such as carpets, fruit, tobacco, opium, cotton and silk, to name a few.

Subsequent chapters are dedicated to topics such as customs administration (pp. 31-38), infrastructure and communication systems (pp. 38-57), and in particular the commercial sector: especially mining and oil production (pp. 57-63), handicraft and trade (pp. 63-67), and measures aimed to improve tapping of natural resources or the productivity of uncultivated areas (pp. 67-77).

Another chapter deals with various companies and factories, successful or unsuccessful, which had been founded in Iran in the recent past, and particularly with concessions for the founding of such companies that had been granted to foreigners (pp. 77-98). In the latter chapter he examines once more the actual subject of his study, the negative impact of foreign intervention, a subject he indirectly discusses in the two following chapters, in which he attempts to present a balance-sheet of the revenues and expenditures of the Iranian treasury, and the situation of the national budget (pp. 131-139).

The last part of the book contains miscellaneous information such as lists of the currencies, weights and measures that were then in use (pp. 139-147), the tariffs for letters, telegrams and telephone connections (pp. 147-154), prices for staple foods and commodities in Tehran (pp. 154-157) or a random list of trade agreements with other states during the last 300 years (pp. 159-166).

Intended to be a geopolitical survey as well as a political pamphlet, one remarkable feature of Jamalzadeh's approach is his avoidance of any direct polemic, and his attempt to convince his audience with facts and figures rather than by accusations or lengthy moral reflections. He preferred an indirect approach, pointing out the wealth and economic potential of his home country, calling upon the patriotic sentiment of his readers, combined with a sublime appeal to turn their presumed apathy into economic and ultimately political activism—a form of motivational discourse which he may have learnt from his father, the popular preacher of the constitutional period, Sayyed Jamāl al-Din Vā'ez Isfahani.

Due to the impossibility of accessing up-to-date and reliable sources and documents, Jamalzadeh was compelled to use available travel accounts, statistical yearbooks, official papers, and geographical and economic surveys. Notwithstanding the fact that his book constitutes a compilation of available information rather than a result of thorough research, Jamalzadeh still offers a wealth of information on the state of Iran's economy, industry, financial affairs and communication systems which could hardly be found in other contemporary publications. The reader learns from his account, for instance, of numerous attempts in Iran to establish a domestic industry for basic commodities such as matches, bricks, glass and sugar. These efforts were successful in some cases but in most cases were not. We are also informed of early efforts to cope with ecological problems, such as projected measures towards reforestation (p. 76), and the existing roads and the extent of motorized traffic in Iran. Also remarkable, and in some cases surprising, is the information on trade and communications. Here we learn that Iran, in spite of its relative military weakness, possessed the biggest

merchant navy in the Persian Gulf (consisting of some twenty-seven steamers and over 2,000 sailing vessels) (p. 54), hence the information on the average duration for a letter to arrive in Berlin from various places in Iran (p. 149), or the extent of the telephone systems in selected cities (which in 1914 numbered 370 connections in Tehran and 46 in Bushehr) (p. 153).

Even more than in pointing out the economic potential of Iran and the progress already achieved, Jamalzadeh was drawn to demonstrate the obstacles that prevented the country developing its facilities. Here, for the most part his description turns into a sharp and detailed critique of Russian and British policies in Iran, and also of the harmful consequences of traditional policies of financing the state by granting concessions and monopolies to foreign investors. As two of the most striking examples, Jamalzadeh points out the role of the British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia (p. 129), and the customs administrations jointly controlled by Russia and Britain, which served to secure the back payment of Iran's foreign loans, and at the same time absorbed two-thirds of the country's revenues (p. 110). Another example of this large-scale sellout was the grant of a concession for a team of French archaeologists to carry out excavations at Susa (pp. 96-97)—as he regarded Iran's cultural heritage as part of the national wealth.

In these sections of his book, Jamalzadeh brings up issues that formed a central demand of and a major aspect of nationalist politics in the postwar period, which culminated in two widely celebrated measures as major achievements of Reza Shah's rule—the abolition of capitulations and the dismissal of foreign customs inspectors in 1928, and the foundation of a national bank in 1927. Here, Jamalzadeh's book, apart from its purely descriptive aspects, also offers insights into the development of the nationalist discourse of the radical and secular opposition, voiced by politicians such as Ali-Akbar Davar, Mohammad-Ali Foroghi, Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh and Abdolhossein Teymurtash, who were to dominate Iranian political and economic decision making for more than two decades. Just like them, he shared a conception of Iran as a uniform nation with a common civilization, cultural heritage and history. Therefore, in his country survey at the beginning of his work, irrespective of the physical and ethnic diversity of Iran, Jamalzadeh simply defines Iran as a territory with fixed boundaries inhabited by people which he defines ethnically simply as Indo-Europeans (p. 3).

Regrettably the value of this edition is very limited by the circumstance that the editor has limited herself to: a simple translation of Jamalzadeh's book. The editorial apparatus is confined to a mere two-page introduction (pp. V-VI), in which the editor-translator mainly explains her aim: for her translation to be as close as possible to the Persian original, its linguistic and stylistic features, such as Jamalzadeh's attempt to combine literary style with accessibility to a broader audience (p. V), without elaborating this on the basis of providing concrete examples. For that reason, this edition lacks useful explanations regarding places, names, linguistic particularities or background information, or any additional references regarding the figures and data given in the text. The editor has at least made an attempt to find out the sources used by Jamalzadeh, which are listed in the bibliography at the end of the book, together with details of the books quoted by Jamalzadeh (pp. 166-169).

In addition, Nabieva has refrained from incorporating Jamalzadeh's book into the contemporary political and intellectual context, especially with regard to the discourse that was common among the community of Iranian nationalists in Berlin, on which, as mentioned before, several monographs are available. Therefore one of the basic questions concerning the text remains unresolved: what was Jamalzadeh's motivation to write this book, and what readership had he in mind?

The translation itself is readable and can give at least a first impression of the original text. The fact that the editor is not a native German speaker may excuse the occasionally awkward style and the at times unfortunate choice of words, such as "Elektrofabrik" (electric factory) instead of "Elektrizitätswerk" (power plant) (p. 64), or "oil mines" instead of oil wells (p. 59). The exclusive concentration on translation of the text with little or no regard to the historical context at times leads to strange misspellings or misunderstandings, such as when a famous company such as the "Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft" (AEG) becomes the "Allgemeine Elektrizitätsfirma" (p. 78) or the Belgian customs inspector Camille Molitor appears as an Iranian called Kamil Moulitar (p. 113). The attempt to render the text as authentic as possible has also led to all dates in the text only being given in the original Hijri era, which makes reading arduous for western readers (an annoyance which could have easily been avoided by the application of a calendar converter program).

In its existing form this work is therefore an informative source for scholars and students with a good command of German language. Given the service of this edition to the study of the social and economic history of late Qajar Iran, it would on the other hand be unfair not to credit Nabieva for discovering this lost treasure of information for research on modern Iran, which one would otherwise be compelled to pick out laboriously from a great number of sources that may be largely difficult to access. In order to get this treasure minted into polished pieces of gold, however, a critical and annotated edition of the original text, together with an English translation, would be highly desirable in the near future.

Note

1. See Keivandokht Gahari, *Nationalismus und Modernisierung in Iran in der Periode zwischen dem Zerfall der Qājāren-Dynastie und der Machtfetigung Reżā Schahs* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2001); and Tim Epkenhans, *Moral und Disziplin. Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh und die Konstruktion eines progressiven Selbst in der frühen iranischen Moderne* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2005).

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