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Author(s)	Rajabzadeh, Hashem
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MODERNIZATION OF IRAN AND
THE EXAMPLE OF JAPAN;
IMAGES AND IDEALS

Hashem RAJABZADEH

ABSTRACT

At the dawn of modern times, with the memories of the glorious exchanges through the Silk Road already faded in the mist of history, Japan had become known to Persian authors as a wonderland, a country rich in minerals and precious metals.

In the modern history of Iran a number of modernizing efforts are distinguished, of which the most admired but short lived reform of Amīr Kabīr in mid 19th century was the first one.

The Meiji Restoration and its social reforms, followed by economic achievements and political changes introducing the constitutional government, awakened Iranians to a socially advanced Japan and provided them with a good example to follow in their search for freedom and justice.

On the eve of the Constitutional Revolution of Iran of 1906, the Japanese victory over Russia, a dominant Power in the political life of Persia, was hailed by Iranians. The intelligentsia in Iran tried to set off the image of a modernized and victorious Japan to advantage in the minds of Iranians who longed for freedom, peace and progress.

After the Pacific War, when Japan emerged from the ashes of the war to rebuild the country and reconstruct her economy to the envy of the whole world, an advanced economy became the dominant image of modern Japan. Iranian thinkers joined the universal search for the mystery of her fantastic achievements, and ambitious development plans claimed to change Iran into "the Japan of the West Asia" in a decade.

A debate has simultaneously been going on on whether traditional values could be preserved in a modern society, or tradition should be

sacrificed for, and replaced by, modernity. The example of Japan has, rightly or not, served to prove that the traditional values are adaptable, and even indispensable, to a reasonable modern society. To many Iranians the most impressive feature of Japan's social and cultural modernization has always been the country's advance in science and education. Otherwise they have considered Japanese society as an extremely conservative one and one loyal to its traditional values.

Thus, to Iranians modern Japan first emerged as a socially advanced country, then a newly risen power in Asia, and, finally, an economic giant with sophisticated technology and management.

This simple paper tries to examine the dominant images of Japan in modern times viewed in Iran as an example for modernization.

INTRODUCTION

The 19th century is referred to as the age of progress and culture, signaled in Iran by the emergence of Amîr Kabîr, the Great Minister in the Qâjâr Court from 1848 to 1851, who "opened the door to science and progress," and whose main objective was to establish law and order.¹⁾

Upon his inauguration in 1848, Nâser al-Din Shâh appointed Mîrzâ Taqî Khân, the most celebrated statesman in the recent history of Iran, his chancellor and trusted him with the affairs of state. Mîrzâ Taqî Khân, well deserved for the title of Amîr Kabîr (great ruler) bestowed on him, launched a comprehensive reform plan aimed at modernizing Iran, and resolved to carry it out with vigour and percision. In a matter of a few months he succeeded in changing the features of the country by re-establishing rule and order, and proceeded to such matters as military forces, foreign affairs, agriculture and industry, trade, finance and economy; and is said to have aimed at a constitutional government.²⁾ Meanwhile, his first and foremost concern was education. He tried to set a fine example for the people by his deeds, founded the first modern University in Iran (Dâr

al-Fonûn), and arranged for the dispatch of groups of students to Europe.

Considering the experience, it is commonly said that Iran started the modernization process some twenty years earlier than Japan did after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, although the task could not be accomplished. The corrupt elements in the court gathered forces and conspired Amîr Kabîr's dismissal, and his execution shortly afterwards. His reform was proved to be ill-fated to the great regret of his many admirers. His time in office lasted some three years, whereafter Iran experienced 60 years more of the unenlightened and despotic rule^{of} Nâser al-Din Shâh and his son, Mozaffar al-din Shâh. In the reign of the latter, however, public unrest gained momentum, ending in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.

Hampered by factional fighting, maladministration, foreign intervention and the unpreparedness of the public for parliamentarianism, the new system, however, failed to respond to Iranian's high expectation. Moreover, Mohammad Ali Shâh, inaugurated shortly after the grant of the constitution by his father, set out to demolish the newly established institutions, causing five years of disturbances and public unrest which finally forced his dethronement. The chaos persisted under his successor and the last Qâjâr king whose incapability and ignorance prompted the decline of the dynasty in 1925. Rezâ Shâh, the first Pahlavi king, launched a reform in the style of Âtâturk, considered to be the third modernizing attempt, the social aspect of which did not commend itself to the public in Iran.

Considering its more dominant element of people's involvement, and notwithstanding some forty years time lag and differences in their dimensions and achievements, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 is being compared here with the Meiji Restoration of 1868 as the starting points of modernization in Iran and Japan respectively.

THE MODERNIZATION OF JAPAN

There is no commonly accepted interpretation for the term

"modern", especially when it is applied to non western societies. According to one analyst³⁾: "Modernization is a process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's knowledge, permitting control over his environment, that accompanied the scientific revolution." Intellectually, modernization involves a new way of looking at the self and the world. Economic modernization stems from the scientific and technological revolution which has dramatically increased productivity.⁴⁾

In the case of Japan there is a consensus among scholars that she entered the road to modernity after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when the leaders of Japan decided to establish a new order and to modernize their country.

The modernization of Japan, like other non-Western societies, is said to be characteristically defensive, prompted by overseas threat.

Tokugawa Japan (1603-1867) Submitted to American pressure (1853-1854) to open the country to foreign trade.⁵⁾ Thereafter the British, Russians, Dutch, and French pressed the issue upon Japan one after another. Foreign intervention during these years reflects a close similarity to the practice of the powers in Iran.⁶⁾

Japan, who had been saved the experience of conquest and colonial status, was now facing a serious threat to her security, and moved fast to build up her strength to cope with the situation. The task was perfected, and Mehdiqolî Hedâyat writes of his impression of the country he visited on the eve of the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War early in 1904: "The Japanese who were harrassed by a few ships (of Commodore Perry) are now beating drums of war with Russia."⁷⁾

Japanese leaders, like the intelligentsia in Iran, realized that if the advance of Imperialism is to be resisted, Japan must be modernized.

The Mito slogan "Repel the barbarian," which at first rejected all intercourse with the West, was in a few years time softened to allow for "opening of the country" as the only practical way of building up

Japan's strength against the West.⁸⁾ Earlier contact with Russia made Japan take serious heed that her isolation might soon be broken, and gave new impetus to the movement to make the nation technologically and militarily equal of Europe.⁹⁾

AN IMAGE IN THE MAKING

Until the eve of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, Iranians had little knowledge about Japan. In Montazam-e Nâserî, an official history of Qājār Iran compiled in 1880, we find only a brief reference to Japan.¹⁰⁾ Al-Maâther va al-Âthâr, by the same author, has a passage on the Japanese Embassy, headed by Yoshida Masaharu, visiting the Court of Nâser al-Din Shâh in 1880.¹¹⁾

Referring to the Japanese Embassy sent by Mikado to the Qājār Court, Habl al-Matin, a Persian newspaper published in Calcutta since 1892, in its Aug. 5, 1912 issue suggested that the main obstacle in the way of the Embassy's success was Russia, who was blocking closer ties between Iran and the Ottoman Empire and Japan.¹²⁾

Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 greatly enhanced the image of Japan in Iran. Iranians rejoiced over the emergence of an awakened Asian nation as a new world power, and the defeat of a neighbouring state whose imperialist policy and persisting intervention were a constant threat to the independence and integrity of their country.

The intelligentsia in Iran tried to utilize the image of a modernized and victorious Japan to awaken the public. Tâleboff (1834~1911), a keen advocate of "science and freedom", in one of his enlightening treatises asserts: "If the people of Japan, like many spiritless Asian nations, had hesitated and had not taken action against the Russian advance on the shores of the Pacific, their ignorance could have only resulted in their submission and negation."¹³⁾

In Sep. 4, 1905 when Japan emerged victorious in her war with Russia, Habl al-Matin wrote: "The people of Russia who, from the time of Alexander ¶ intended to establish a constitutional government, have

benefited handsomely from this war (to realize their wishes).... Strangely enough, the Russian Government has itself now deemed it necessary to benefit from (its relations with) Japan.... Now that all nations, friend and foe, are similarly benefiting from the relations, why should not this neighbouring country (namely Iran) benefit?" The reference is clearly to the wisdom of following the example of Japan in modernization.

Seven years later (Sep.9, 1912), the paper in an editorial reviewing the developments of the Constitutional Revolution of Iran (1906) wrote: "An outside factor also beneficial to the process, was the war in the Far East and the grave defeat of the Russian Government that awakened Iranians to the fact that an Asian nation could rise to secure its legitimate rights and gradually free itself from economic dependence on and fear of the outside, and could claim equality with, and even superiority to, the European Powers."

JAPAN, A GOOD EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

Early in the 20th century the image of an awakened and modernized Japan was being employed by Iranian writers to promote the cause of the Constitutional Government as a prerequisite for social and economic modernization. A History of the Awakening of Iranians contains many such references. The author quotes his own statement in a meeting of constitutionalists, saying: "Why don't you observe the world situation? Here is the example of Japan, an Asian nation, who has exalted itself and demonstrates outstanding performances."¹⁴

In another development, a group of constitutionalists drafted a telegram addressed to the Mikado asking him to extend his benevolence and support to the moslem community of Japan, and had the message signed by Said Mohammad Tabâtabâi, thereby sending a signal to Said Abdollâh Behbahânî, Tabâtabâi's rival, to make him reverse his high handed and arrogant attitude by inciting his jealousy.

Hayât, a Persian paper published in Bâku, answering a letter of praise from one of its readers wrote (Sep.4, 1904): "We Iranians shall

be praiseworthy only after we had made efforts and have accomplished the task of refining our nature, as did the Japanese."

Not all references to the Japanese performances are positive. In Aug.6, 1907, Nêdâ-yê Vatan, a popular Persian newspaper, commented: "It is a well known fact that Japan fought Russia to seize the vast land of Korea. After freeing the country from Russia's hand, Japan herself set to occupy it.... In the diplomacy of conquest there is no difference between the European and Asian (Powers)."¹⁶⁾

MODERN JAPAN AND THE IRANIAN INTELLIGENTSIA

In dealing with the subject of modernization, most Oriental thinkers and intellectuals of modern times have had the Western advance in science and technology in mind. They have all maintained that modernization to this end is indispensable for their societies. Disagreement among them is limited to the degree and scale of adopting the Western way of life. At the same time, they have rejected, and warned against, a blind imitation and superficiality in adopting the Western institutions.

Iranian social analysts of the 19th century were also following the same line of thinking. Mirzâ Âqâ Khân Kermânî (1853~1896) and Tâleboff Tabrizî (1834~1911) are distinguished among those Iranian writers who tried to enlighten people and have called them to modernize their country.

Mirzâ Âqâ Khân's approach is said to be similar to that of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835~1901), who both considered modernization in the form of westernization indispensable for the survival of their respective nations.¹⁷⁾

Tâleboff, while emphasizing the universality of modern civilization and commending its achievements in science and civil rights, warns against superficiality in imitating it: "Beware not to be attached to their (Western) superficial civilization. It is the very barbarity.... Wherever you are, you should always remain Iranian."¹⁸⁾

Tâleboff is enthusiastic about "the natural affection among Asian and Oriental nations", and believes in Asian potentiality to excel the West provided that Asians "make their nations independent from European industries" and advance their minds, knowledge and political institutions.¹⁹⁾ His example for a successfully modernized nation is Meiji Japan, who, he believes, has modernized herself without sacrificing her traditional values.²⁰⁾ To him, modernization is a challenge for the nations' survival: "If we Iranians fail to grasp the essence of civilization, and can not initiate an incentive to lead us to progress, our country will be headed for an imminent decline."²¹⁾ He foresees an "Asian resurrection" which will cause the annihilation of Imperialism and the dominance of the West.

THE DEBATE ON EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND FREEDOM

During the Constitutional Movement of Iran, the intelligentsia were emphasizing the two concepts of freedom and knowledge as the prerequisites for political, economic and technological advance of a society, disagreement among them being on the periority of one of these two.

Tâleboff, who says that an inquiring mind distinguishes man from beast,²²⁾ considers knowledge and the rule of law as the secret of a nation's progress: A benevolent king invites his people to participate in running the affairs of their country; "otherwise, they will come uninvited and stir up trouble"²³⁾ In the light of this wisdom he considers Japan a good example for Asian nations: "The Emperor of Japan made an effort in educating the people, established a constitutional government and advanced his nation. This great achievement became possible by replacing private motive with social objective." The Emperor had said that he realized the evil of absolute rule, and had deemed it necessary to improve the situation before it did more harm.²⁴⁾ The Tsâr, on the contrary, did not recognize this point and, in the war between the two countries, the "knowledge and freedom" of Japan won a victory over the "ignorance and oppression of

the absolute rule of Russia.²⁵⁾

Iranian social analysts have all stressed the necessity of educating the people. To them, the task of awakening the people is entrusted to the intelligentsia. Zein al-'Ābedin Marāgheī who was critical about the despotic rule of Qājār kings and the prevalent disorder in the country, and wrote an imaginary travel book aimed at awakening Iranians, blames the people's ignorance and their lack of knowledge for the situation.²⁶⁾ Considering the grave task of educating the people, Tāleboff remarks: "It is not difficult to rule people; it is difficult to educate them."²⁷⁾

Mehdiqolī Hedāyat quotes from Ito Hirobumi (the most celebrated aid to Emperor Meiji) his interpretation of the process of Japanese modernization, writing: "Marquis Ito has a seaside villa and comes to the city (Tokyo) once in a while.... We (Mīrzā Ali Asghar Khān, Atābak, the ex-Prime Minister of Iran, and his companions) went there by train.... After lunch we had the opportunity for a dialogue.... Atābak started the intercourse, saying: 'We know that Japan's advance was made possible by Your Excellency's wisdom and instructions.' Ito answered that the Emperor should be praised for all these achievements. Then Atābak asked Ito how they had started, to which he answered: 'Being faced, from the outset, with a need for experts, we sent talented young students to Europe and America to master various fields of science and technology, and, when this task was accomplished, we established all kinds of schools in Japan....'" Hedāyat takes Ito's remarks as added support for his own conviction in the decisive role of education in modernization.²⁸⁾

Said Mohammad Tabātabāī, a leader of the Constitutional Movement, in an exciting speech (July 6, 1906) called iranians to fall in step with the advanced world, and blamed them for having failed to send a representative to Japan, a country supposedly considered a good example to follow. Following the speech, 'Ein al-Douleh, a reactionary Prime Minister who resisted the people's demand for a constitutional government, called a meeting of some educated bureaucrats who formulated a treatise addressed to the clergy in which Mikado, the

Emperor of Japan, is praised as the only king in the history of mankind who granted a constitution to his people by his will. However, the treatise stresses, he did so only after some twenty years after his inauguration, when he completed a cultural reform preparing the Japanese for freedom and a constitutional government.³⁰⁾

The treatise is based on the argument that educating people and an advanced degree of enlightenment are the prerequisites for a functional constitutional government. The reasoning is parallel to the logic of the so called "Gradualists" in Meiji Japan that to acquire legislative power, people must be endowed with bouth education and spirit.³¹⁾ Topics like civil rights and freedom, a national assembly, a cabinet system and other constitutional features had been controversial issues for many years.³²⁾ Some observers even maintain that the whole idea of popular rights was alien to Japan. The ideas the leaders of the popular rights movement propagated, as well as the examples they cited, were from the West and ultimately failed to appeal to the masses.³³⁾

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

In Japan, the movement for an elective assembly started in 1874 by the so called "memorialists" who called for the assembly's convening, claiming that, aside from curbing bureaucratic despotism, the assembly would propel the people toward enlightenment by deepening their wisdom and installing in them a spirit of independence.³⁴⁾ howener, the civil rights recognized by the Constitution of 1889 were so minimal that some observers considered the amount of freedom granted to the people remarkably small.³⁵⁾

Tâleboff, who presents a translation of the 1889 Constitution of Japan for Iranians to take as an example,³⁶⁾ elaborates that the rulers of other constitutional kingdoms could not claim the considerable rights preserved for the Emperor, since his privilege resulted from Japan's background and was endorsed by the fact that the Japanese Emperor has granted the constitution and has recognized the

rights of the people of his own will.³⁷⁾

Habl al-Matîn (Sep.25, 1905) in a reference to Admiral Togo's refined nature, writes: "It is this merit and excellence that has made Japanese the envy of the civilized world," and concludes that this and other merits in a nation results from the people's participation in social life: "No noble people can enjoy this refined nature unless a principle of justice, an indispensable source of national unity, prevails among them; and no government can provide its people with the blessing of justice unless despotism is removed first; and despotism can only be rooted out by people's participation."

In this set of consecutive causes and effects, the refined nature of people is considered to be a product of their participation, in contrast with the commonly held opinion of considering the former a result of the latter.

A History of the Awakening of Iranians quotes a constitutionalist saying: "Some believe that the public should acquire knowledge, and that knowledge is the prerequisite for enlightenment. I maintain that the people can not be educated unless the cherished foundation of a constitutional government is laid first."³⁸⁾

Reporting on the proceedings of another meeting, the same author writes: "When a legislative assembly is held, it would be appropriate to concentrate on the following 12 topics: 1) The judiciary system... 2) The land registration... 3) Tax reform... 4) Armed forces. 5) Local administration 6) Trade 7) Customs 8) Provisions and the retail system 9) Science, industries and mines 10) Foreign relations 11) Stipends 12) Clarification of the power of the Clergy and the Ministers. By regulating only these affairs, Iran can excell Japan in twenty years time."³⁹⁾ Simpleness of the logic is apparent from the fact that it does not concern itself with the cultural and social aspects of the modernizing process.

QUALITIES OF THE JAPANESE

For Iranian writers of that time, the most celebrated virtue in

the Japanese was their refined nature. The nation's leaders were especially praised for this quality.

Modesty, self-possession and self-sacrifice, honesty and uprightness, patriotism, fraternity and humanity, dignity, gentleness, serenity, politeness and insight are among the merits Iranian writers believed existed in the Japanese, and more so among their leaders,⁴⁰ by which merits, "despite their small stature, tiny eyes, yellow skin and charmless face, they have come to be loved and admired by friend and foe.... This is true prosperity, a prize for their righteousness." (Habl al-Matīn, Aug.14, 1905)

This idealistic reference to the qualities of the Japanese oligarchy, unequalled among their Iranian counterparts, is an evident reminder to the latter to correct themselves.

Habl al-Matīn (Feb.27, 1905) blames "the corrupt nature of Russian generals and their lack of honour and national spirit" as the cause of the successive defeats in their war with Japan. In its July 24, 1905 issue, the paper praises the Japanese for their unity, that is "the essential condition for the prosperity of a nation." In a more elaborate way, scholars speak of a sense of consensus among the Japanese.

Mehdīqolī Hedāyat commends the cordiality among the Japanese leaders exemplified in the manner of Ito Hirobumi who introduces a few of the ex-ministers as his close friends, compared to the begrudging sense of jealousy among the Iranian ministers.⁴¹

Apart from the favourable historical, geographical and traditional background and decisiveness of the Japanese leaders, one factor that contributed greatly to the success of the modernizing process in Japan was the adaptability of her people to the trend of world development as seen in more than one instance in modern history. the 250 years of seclusion of Japan during the Tokugawa rule was certainly detrimental in breeding a sense of respect for law in her decent people.

Other qualities of the Japanese, such as their medical skills and craftsmanship are also being referred to and admired in Iranian sources.⁴²

THE ROLE OF EMPEROR MEIJI

Iranian's reverence and praise for Emperor Meiji as the founder of new Japan, was high.

Excited by their surprising victory over Russia, Habl al-Matîn (April 10, 1905) commends the Emperor of Japan and his generals who "in thirty years time have inspired the advance of their country, nation and army as much as in the preceding three hundred years...."

In an editorial on the decline of morals in the East, the paper (Sep.18, 1905) emphasizes the decisive role of monarchs and rulers in these countries and concludes that the Mikado was the main force behind Japan's advance and the Chinese Emperor should be held responsible for his country's decline.

Nedâ-ye Vatan, another Iranian paper, in its political analysis (June 20, 1907) pronounces the same judgement.

The praise of the Japanese Emperor is an implicit reproach of the Qājār kings for their lack of spirit and lofty purposes.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the authorities' failure to educate the public, the author of A History of the Awakening of Iranians writes: "During the recent 11 years (during the reign of Mozaffar al-Dīn Shāh, 1896~1906) only a few schools have been founded, but these were incongruous to the title of school". The reason why they could not succeed (in educating people) like Mikado, he adds, "is that Mikado is at the same time the spiritual leader of his people.... His instructions, therefore, have more binding force and he faces less obstacles in executing his sacrosanct plans...."⁴³⁾

An editorial by 'Alī Akbar Dehkhodā in the first issue of Sūr-e Êsrâfīl newspaper, published immediately after the establishment of the Constitutional Government, asks Mohammad 'Alī Shāh to contrive a plan to "save the capsized ship of the nation in the sea of revolution and lead it to the shore of safety;" and reminds him of the fair judgement history has passed on Mikado as a benevolent king.

Siyâhat-name-ye Êbrâhīm Beik, an imaginary travel-book written toward the end of the 19th century, criticizes the fanciful trips of

Nâser al-Dîn Shâh to Europe ,the only result of which for the nation was a loss of wealth and face. "A king's foreign visit should be like the tour ventured on by Peter the Great (of Russia), as a result of which the 18 million population of Russia has increased to 118million. Many resolute kings have never toured (overseas) and revived their nations by their enlightened mind and insight. The Emperor of Japan, for example, elevated his nation and his government to everybody's surprise without leaving his home (country)."⁴⁴⁾

IMPRESSION OF MODERN JAPAN ON IRANIAN LEADERS

Mehdîqolî Hedâyat could represent the few Iranian statesmen who had a first-hand experience about Japan and had been impressed by her.

Hedâyat, an ardent admirer of Japan after his short visit to the country in the winter of 1903~04, regrets to find a completely different atmosphere upon his return to Iran.⁴⁵⁾ Hedâyat, one of the most celebrated statesmen the recent history of Iran has produced, later became Prime Minister(1927~33) in the early years of Rezâ Shâh's rule and in this capacity should have contributed to initiating and enforcing the policy of industrial and economic modernization attributed to the king. He, however, is critical of the social aspects of the policy which he finds incongruous with Iranian tradition and culture.⁴⁶⁾

In a reference to King Amân al-Lâh Khân of Afghanistan who visited Iran in 1928, he writes: "He has imitated Kamâl Pâshâ (Âtâtürk)'s style of Westernization in a way that appeals to rascals and villians, and by far lacks the essence of national elevation...."⁴⁷⁾ He quotes from the Speaker of the Afghani Parliament accompanying the king his confidential grievances, expressing his concern about the future of the policy and of the king himself.

Hedâyat who had stayed in Europe as a student, is critical about Western nations who, he believes, consider only their own interests, want to profit by any means, and maintain an aggressive attitude towards the Asians. He finds the American way of life more

disagreeable than the European one, comparing the Europeans, in their restless search for material gain and accumulating wealth, to ants, and the Americans to fast-moving ants.⁴⁸⁾

He names Japan as an ideally modernized country, writing: "The most commendable thing in the Japanese is their insight, by which merit they have adopted (from the outside) only what is worthy and desirable, have maintained their originality and have not been deluded by outward appearances."⁴⁹⁾ Observing the situation some years later, however, Hedâyat regrets that the Japanese have gone a little too far in social westernization and find it difficult to make amends for it. He shows sympathy for the Chinese whom he regards as being enclosed by their modesty, self-reliance, seclusion, and the lack of such decisive and right leaders as the Japanese have. He concludes that, to set the stage for progress, "a nation can not be political; politics, rather, should be national."⁵⁰⁾

When retired from his first term in office, Mirzâ 'Alî Asghar Khân-e Amin al-Sultân, Atâbak, the influential Prime Minister of three Qâjâr kings, set out for a long trip to Japan, America and Europe under the pretext of a pilgrimage to Mecca. Mehdîqolî Hedâyat, his close aid and companion on the trip, attributes the visible change in Atâbak's attitude during his subsequent term of office to what he had seen and heard in Japan. In his last term of office as the Prime Minister in 1907, Atâbak showed a different attitude, siding with constitutionalists and modernists.

Hedâyat who maintains that his main purpose in accompanying Atâbak on his trip to the Far East was to influence his mind and prepare him for enforcing progressive measures in Iran,⁵¹⁾ finds him impressed by the experience and to have come to realize the interests of his country. He writes that Atâbak had been awakened by Ito Hirobumi's remarks, and regrets his assassination shortly afterwards.⁵²⁾

On a call they paid to Count Katsura, the Japanese Prime Minister, on Dec. 19, 1903, Hedâyat writes: "Asked by Katsura what he had done during his office to improve the economy, Atâbak said: 'We had an agreement with Russia limiting customs tariffs to 5 per cent, and

customs was out of our jurisdiction. We recently succeeded to revise the agreement.'

The Count said: 'faced with a similar problem, we adopted the European judiciary system, enacted (necessary) laws and strengthened our military forces. Europeans could have no objection. Moreover, considering our military build-up, they consented.'⁵³⁾

The popularity and success of the first Majlis (parliament), inaugurated in 1906 after the grant of the Constitution by Mozaffar al-Din Shâh, the event in which Hedâyat was instrumental, have been attributed mainly to its limited election process and its class structure. Hedâyat, an admirer of Ito Hirobumi and having the example of the Japanese Diet in mind, should have been influential in shaping the Majlis.

Japan's progress, marked by the country's victory over Russia, had apparently impressed Mozaffar al-Din Shâh (d.1906) and made him consider the constitutionalists' demand more favourably. Hedâyat writes: "The Shâh was a democrat by nature. Once he summoned me to Farah-âbâd (Palace); I went. Nobody was present except Sayyed-e Bahreini (his guro). Yet, he came close to me and quietly asked whether Japan has a parliament. I answered that she does, and for eight years now...."⁵⁴⁾

Hedâyat recalls another instance when he spent a whole night at the bedside of the ailing king, speaking about Japan as had been instructed. He comments: "The king seeks to reform, but it does not commend itself to his associates...",⁵⁵⁾ and, "he was so reserved that whenever I started to tell about Japan's progress (in the presence of others) he would ask me to speak of Japanese plants instead."⁵⁶⁾

IMAGE OF MODERN JAPAN IN PERSIAN LITERATURE

Images of Japan as a highly advanced nation and of the Japanese as a people of refined nature have also reflected in modern Persian literature in the form of references and characterization, a typical example of which is an essay written by Mohammad Hejâzi and titled

"The Japanese Report."⁵⁷⁾ In this fictional type essay, the writer admires the Japanese head of a delegation co-attending an international conference, who, in a report to his government, regrets having expressed himself in a session of the conference merely out of ostentation and without due consideration. The head of the delegation remarks that this merit of self evaluation is the secret behind Japan's success in bridging the wide gap of backwardness in a matter of only fifty years time and distinguishing herself among the civilized nations.

An independent literary work in Persian in praise of the Japanese is Mikado-nâmeḥ, a book of poem composed in 1906 in the style of Shâh-nâmeḥ (The Book of Kings), in which the overwhelming victory of Japan over Russia is applauded and attributed mainly to the Japan's constitutionalism. The author concludes his detailed and versified account of The Russo Japanese War by advising Iranians to follow the example of Japan, from where "the sun of civilization has risen."⁵⁸⁾

NOTES

- 1) F.Ādamiyyat, Andishehâ-ye Tâleboff-e Tabrizî (Tehrân, 1363/1984), p.51.
- 2) -----, Asnâd va Āgâhihâ-ye Tâzeh dar bâre-ye Amîr Kabîr, in Maqâlât-e Târikhî (Tehrân, 1352/1973).
- 3) C.E.Black, Dynamics of Modernization (N.Y., 1966), in H.Wray & H.Conroy (ed.), Japan Examined (Honolulu, 1983), p.6.
- 4) Ibid.
- 5) Even before the arrival of Commodore Perry's squadron, King William of Holland wrote to the Shogun to ask for the opening of Japan and to "ameliorate the laws against the foreigners, lest happy Japan be destroyed by war..." (Meiji Japan through Contemporary Sources, Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies (ed.) (Tokyo, 1970), vol. I, pp.1~5.)
- 6) Cf. B.A. Mitford, Mitford's Japan, the Memories and Recollections, 1866 ~1906 (Cambridge, 1985), p.64.
- 7) Mehdiqolî Hedâyat (Mokhber al-Saltaneh), Safar-nâme-ye Tasharrof be

- Makke-ye Mo'azzameh az Tariq-e Chîn, Zhâpon va Âmrîka (Tehrân, 1324/1945), p. 119.
- 8) Cf. R. Tsunoda and others (ed.), Sources of Japanese Tradition (N.Y., 1958), p. 603.
- 9) Donald Keene, The Japanese Discovery of Europe (London, 1952), pp. 68-69
- 10) E'temâd al-Saltaneh, Mohammad Hasan Khân, Târikh-e Montazam-e Nâserî (Tehrân, 1363/1984), vol. I, p. 564.
- 11) -----, Al-Maâther va al-Âthâr (Tehrân, 1363/1984), p. 331.
- 12) According to the recently found records, Amîr Kabîr, the enlightened Great Munister in the Quâjâr Court and the pioneer in modernizing attempt in Iran, holds Russia responsible for the failure of the experience (cf. F. Âdamiyyat).
- 13) Tâleboff, Masâ'el al-Hayât (Tbilyisi, 1906), p. 63.
- 14) Nâzem al-Eslâm-e Kermâni, Târikh-e Bidârî-ye Irâniân (Tehrân, 1362/1983), vol. I, p. 246.
- 15) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 463.
- 16) In its Aug. 25, 1924 issue, Habl al-Matîn, disappointed with "the bragging people," warns Iranians to do something to amend their long negligence, and realize the ultimate threat in the words of an American thinker who, in rejecting the Japanese protest against the Anti-immigration Bill, claimed that there is no more promising area for immigrants' settlement than the vast untouched land of Iran.
- 17) F. Âdamiyyat, Andishehâ-ye Mirzâ Aghâ Khân-e Kermâni (Tehrân, 1357/1978), p. 247. Interestingly enough, Fukuzawa Yukichi was advocating "de-Asianization" of Japan, asserting that "there can be no other policy for Japan to move on with the rest of the world and join them in dripping into the sea of civilization..." (Y. Fukuzawa, On de-Asianization of Japan (March 16, 1885), in Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources (Tokyo, 1972), vol. II, pp. 129-33.)
- 18) Tâleboff, Masâlek al-Mohsenîn (Cairo, 1905), pp. 150-51.
- 19) F. Âdamiyyat, Andishehâ-ye Tâleboff..., pp. 95-96.
- 20) *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 21) Tâleboff, Masâlek al-Mohsenîn, pp. 231-34.
- 22) -----, Ketâb-e Ahmad (Istanbul, 1912), vol. I, p. 2.

- 23) -----, Masâ'el al-Hayât, p.121.
- 24) Ibid, pp.117~18.
- 25) Ibid, p.72.
- 26) Zein al-'Âbedin-e Marâghei, Siyâhat-nâme-ye Ebrâhim Beik, B.Mo'meni (ed.) (Tehrân, 1357/1978), p.140.
- 27) F.Âdamiyyat, Andisheha-ye Tâleboff, pp.63~64; Tâleboff, Masâel al-Hayât, p.117.
- 28) Mehdiqoli Hedâyat, Safar-nâme..., pp.101~102, and Khâterât va Khatarât (Tehrân, 1344/1965), p.134.
- 29) Nâzem al-Eslam-e Kermâni, p.448.
- 30) Ibid, pp.454~59.
- 31) Nishimura Shigeki, On Change, in: Meiroku Zasshi (issue forty-three, Nov.1875).
- 32) Cf. Against the Freedom and Civil Rights Movement, in: Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources, Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies (ed.) (Tokyo/1972), vol. II, pp.30~70.
- 33) Cf. J.Fisher, The Meiji Government and its Critics, in: Japan Examined, p.81.
- 34) Cf. Nishimura Shigeki. Of the Japanese thinkers in the Meiji era, Katô Hiroyaki held that the Japanese people were not yet ready to grasp liberty since they had been ground down by 2500 years of despotism. Other social analysts, like Fukuzawa Yukichi, maintained that the liberties of the people had been greatly expanded since the abolition of the domains ("han".) (Cf. Kato Hiroyaki, Abuses of Equal Rights for Men and Women, in: Meiroku Zasshi (issue thirty-one, March 1875); Sakatani Shiroshi, Honoring the Emperor and Expelling the Barbarians, in: Meiroku Zasshi, W.R.Braisted (tr.) (Tokyo, 1976) p.531, n.10.
- 35) E.Baelz, Awakening Japan: the Diary of a German Doctor (London, 1974), p.83. The comment goes on: And "within a month of the promulgation (of the constitution) the government has found it necessary to suspend publication of no less than five newspapers published in the capital....This is a bad sign. It shows, moreover, how unripe the country is for parliamentary institutions." (ibid)

- 36) Tâleboff, Kêtâb-e Ahmad, vol. I, pp.92~108.
- 37) -----, Masâ'el al-Hayât, p.102.
- 38) Nâzem al-Eslâm-e Kermanî; p.288.
- 39) Ibid., p.302.
- 40) Cf. Habl al-Matîn, issues Nov.14, 1904, and Jan.22, July 24, Aug.14, and Sep.25, 1905; Mehdiqolî Hedâyat, Safar-nâme..., pp.103, 110, 149; --- Khâterât va Khatarât, p.412. In an editorian on Oct.2, 1905, Habl al-Matîn quotes from an American adviser who was in the service of the Japanese Government since 1861, that the most encouraging thing in providing expert service to the Japanese was "the spirit of their leaders who were eagerly trying to learn from us.... I have seldom seen a people who so earnestly wish to advance their country as the Japanese. Some characteristics are seen in the Japanese ministers that I believe underly their outstanding achievements;

- 1) The absence of private motives in the Cabinet, the progress of the nation being its only concern,
- 2) Their great interest in inquiring into the stste affairs,
- 3) Ideal collaboration, unanimity and co-operation among the Cabinet members,
- 4) The absence of corruption among them, and,
- 5) Their surrprising sharp-mindedness and talent for learning."

This idealistic reference to the qualities of the Japanese oligarchy, unequalled among their Iranian counterparts, is an evident reminder to the latter to correct themselves.

- 41) Mehdiqolî Hedâyat, Safar-nâme..., p.102.
- Commenting on the successive Russian defeats in the war with Japan, Habl al-Matîn(Aug.14, 1905) advises the Tsar and his generals to conclude a peace agreement before it is too late, and, thereafter, take an example of the statesmanship of the Japanese leaders, and the rule of Justice in Japan, so that they can advance their country to the same level.
- 42) Ibid., p.99, and; Habl al-Matîn, July 25, 1905.
- 43) Nâzem al-Eslâm-e Kermâni, p.460.

"The Emperor Meiji effectively symbolized and inspired two of

most powerful forces for social unity in the new Japan. One of them was nationalism... which quickly grew into an all-pervasive creed and cult. Often enough in the modern world such nationalism has taken on a religious character. In Japan, with the help of Neo-Shintoism and a tradition of Imperial absolutism inherited from the Chinese, a nationalistic cult centered upon the God-Emperor became in fact the most widely accepted and compelling belief among the people. Increasingly, as a result of the profound changes affected by the Meiji leadership, the lives and activities of the Japanese were organized around the Imperial house and directed to the fulfillment of its divine mission."(R.Tsunoda...,p.642.)

44) Zein al-'Ābedin-e Maraghef, p.146.

It is said that Emperor Meiji "relied heavily upon his advisers, as the Confucian conception of the wise sovereign called for him to do, and was always ready to hear different points of view. Yet when momentuous decisions had to be made, his own judgement commanded the respect of the counsellors who might be deeply divided among themselves."(R.Tsunoda...,p.642)

Mehdīqolī Hedāyat, whose party was given an audience by Emperor Meiji on Dec.25,1903, describes: "The Emperor was a handsome man and of a nice figure....He looked attractive and resolved. We were told that the Emperor, determined to avenge the seizure of Port Arthur by the Russians, had not left his palace for eight years, and was preoccupied with preparations."(Safar-nāme...,pp.101~102.)

45) Mehdiqoli Hedayat,Khāterāt va khatarāt,pp.136~37.

46) Ibid.,pp.407~408.

47) Ibid.,p.379.

48) Mehdiqoli Hedayat,Safar-nāme...,p.149.

49) Ibid.,pp.118~19.

50) Ibid.,p.137.

Blucher, the German Ambassador to Iran during 1931~33, writes in his memoirs that a question for which he was trying to find an answer was "whether Iran will be a more prosperous nation by westernization, or not?" To the enlightened people of Iran who knew

the West, it was clear that Western culture had some dark points behind its magnificent appearance, exemplified by extravagance and a sharp deviation from the man's ultimate goal of happiness. He goes on: "In 1933 Tagor, the Indian poet (and philosopher,) visited Tehran... He was obviously impressed by what he had seen and was trying to frame his observations within the image he had of the East and the West. He stressed the essential differences between these two, adding that it is unconceivable that one of the two can ultimately absorb the other.... With far-sightedness, he maintained that the traditional values, either of the East or the West, have historical duties yet to accomplish, and, moreover, they have to develop and perfect each other and thereby provide unforeseen opportunities for the elevation of the righteous man." (Wipert V. Blucher, Zeitenmende in Iran (Safar-nâmeh), K. Jahândârî (tr.) (Tehrân, 1363/1984), p. 232.

- 51) Mehdiqolî Hedâyat, Khâterât va khatarât, p. 135.
- 52) Ibid., pp. 152-59.
- 53) Mehdiqolî Hedâyat, Safar-nâme..., p. 100.
- 54) -----, Khâterât va khatarât, p. 142.
- 55) Ibid., p. 137.
- 56) Mehdiqolî Hedâyat, Gozâresh-e Iran (Tehrân, 1363/1984), p. 143. Hedâyat writes: "whenever I was given an audience, the Shâh would ask about Japan, but won't listen to political remarks. Once I started to tell about Marquis Ito (Hirobumi) and his reforms, when he interrupted and asked me to speak of Japanese plants instead." (ibid., p. 137.)
- 57) Mohammad Hejâzî, Râport-e Zhâponî, in: Âiîneh (Tehrân, 1348/1969), pp. 54-58.
- 58) (Âqâ Mîrzâ) Hosein 'Ali Tâjer-e Shirâzî, Mikado-nâme (Calcutta, 1325/1905-6), pp. 55-56, 110.