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## INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE IRANIAN OPPOSITION AGAINST THE QAJARS IN THE OTTOMAN TERRITORY

Akın KİREN\*

### Abstract

Iranians in the Ottoman territory, especially in Istanbul, came to become a well-organized community in the 19th century. From the beginning of the second half of the century, they played a significant role in spreading of new ideas to Iran and in growing criticism towards the Qajar rule. In this context, becoming an active oppositional society against the Qajars is the most distinct speciality of the Iranians in Istanbul at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Some works explain the emergence and increasing influence of the Iranian community as a result of the Ottoman Empire's lenient policy towards different ethnic and religious groups after the well-known Tanzimat Era. Besides that, some others emphasize the Ottoman Empire's desire to benefit from such groups, or its wish to influence the Iranian politics by means of them. On the other hand, internal dynamics of the community should be kept in mind, too. Because, emergence and rise of a powerful Iranian community in Istanbul was primarily a consequence of their increasing economic power, political influence, and self-confidence. In other words, their own dissent feelings serve as a better explanatory factor rather than the Ottoman's lenient policy or its desire to manipulate Iranian politics through the use of Iranians.

**Keywords:** Iranians, Ottoman Territory, Opposition, Interest, Modernization.

### 1. Introduction

Charles White, who wrote about Istanbul in 1840s, referred to the *taziye* ceremonies convened secretly in a dervish lodge, *Koca Mustafa Paşa Tekkesi*, on the tenth day of the first month of the Islamic calendar (White, 1846: 220-221).<sup>1</sup> However, only a quarter century after White's observation, at the end of the 1860s, the Iranian community in Istanbul was publicly performing the *majalis-i rauza khani*.<sup>2</sup> In other words, they were commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain without fear.<sup>3</sup> Both the memoirs of the Western diplomats and travelers, and the official documents of the time reveal information about big crowds, thousands of Shi'ites, who gathered for this occasion. Also, some of the foreign representatives took their seats to watch these commemorations as guests of the Iranian Embassy.

In addition to "these ceremonies at the heart of the capital of the Sunni Caliphate", some other instances of tolerance towards the Shi'ites and their practices continued during the reign of Abdulhamid II, who is known with his Islamist policy championing Sunnism. Furthermore, later on his reign, the Ottoman press gave wide coverage to the performance of these rituals (Glassen, 1993: 115).

Likewise, Iranians in Istanbul came to become a well-organized community, and from the beginning of the second half of the 19th century, they played a significant role in spreading of new ideas to Iran and in growing criticism towards the Qajar rule. This issue, in other words becoming an active oppositional society, is the most distinct speciality of the Iranians in Istanbul at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century.

There are two different approaches in the literature on Iranians in Istanbul in the late 1800s. The first one explains "the emergence and increasing influence of the Iranian community" as a result of the Ottoman Empire's lenient policy towards different ethnic and religious groups after the well-known Tanzimat Era. The second account, on the other hand, emphasizes Ottoman Empire's desire to benefit from such groups,

\* Dr., akinkiren@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> This day is known as *Ashura* in the month of *Muharram*.

<sup>2</sup> Iran and Persia are usually used interchangeably to mean the same country or the territory. But, indeed, Persia is an ancient kingdom that lived within this territory. Iran came to be known as Persia in the West thanks to classical Greek authors who wrote during the time of this kingdom. Today, Persia is an area which is only a province of Iran. Hence, to call all of Iran "Persia", would be like calling all of Britain "England". Also the Ottomans did not use the word Persia, or Persians. In official documents, to describe the territory, they used two words. These are *Iran* and *Acemistan*. Besides, they used *Iranî* or *Acem* for the people who were from Iran. By these two names they were referring to all the Shi'ites from this territory no matter which ethnic identity they had. In his map which was printed in 1729, Ottoman subject Ibrahim Müteferrika named this territory as "Memâlik-i Iran". See. (Ahmad, 1984: 58).

<sup>3</sup> At these days, only the *majalis-i rauza khani* were publicly being held. The bloody *qâmâ-zadan* (sword-beating) practices were still forbidden. Later on, the community had built a huge tent inside the Valide Han and performed the *rauza khani* at night. See. (Glassen, 1993: 114).

or its wish to influence the Iranian politics by means of them. In this context, the main reason to give permission to Iranians' activities is thought to be an attempt to put the rival Qajar administration in a tight spot (Soofizadeh, 2014: 286-296).

However, in this article, I want to draw attention to the internal dynamics of the community. Because, as a result of my analysis, emergence and rise of a powerful Iranian community in Istanbul was primarily a consequence of their increasing economic power, political influence, and self-confidence. In other words, internal dynamics of the Iranian community in Istanbul serve as a better explanatory factor rather than Ottoman's lenient policy or its desire to manipulate Iranian politics through the use of Iranians.

Meanwhile, it can not be said that all the Iranians in Istanbul supported opposition. Some of them, for example those who were connected to the ambassador of Iran, objected to such activities.<sup>4</sup> Besides, Iranians in Istanbul had the chance to come into contact with Western orientalist like Edward G. Browne (Gurney, 1993: 149-175) or with the Ottoman intellectuals and members of the Young Turks Movement. They also had the opportunity to participate in the Masonic lodges of the city. But, these issues are outside of the scope of this work.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Increasing Numbers and A Widened Network

In his useful study, Bruce Masters examines the changing status of Iranians in the Ottoman territory after the Treaties of Erzurum in the 19th century. He states that "during any period of its history there were probably more Iranians in the Ottoman Empire" than from any other foreign state's subjects (Masters, 1991: 3). In addition to Masters, Zarinebaf-Shahr shows that some major migration waves from Iran to the Ottoman borders took place during the Islamic period. The first of these waves was just after the Mongol invasions in the 13th century. The second one occurred in the 16th and the 17th centuries after the foundation of the Safavid State. Yet, it is the 19th century when Iranians increased in numbers and became an active community in the Ottoman Empire, especially in Istanbul. In other words, the third and the biggest wave occurred in the 19th century (Zarinebaf-Shahr, 1996: 373-75).

At the beginning of this century, Iranians were not still a respected community in Istanbul. In 1822, Joseph von Hammer published a book on the different ethnic groups of Istanbul, named *Constantinopolis und der Bosphorus*. In this book, he wrote that Iranians in Istanbul were few in number, and most of these people were merchants and derwiches. Also, as Shi'ites, that means as heretics, they were more hated than the Jews, by some of the Ortodox Sunnis (Glassen, 1993: 113).

On the other hand, this century brought a new dimension to the Ottoman-Iranian relations. Compared to the relations between Selim I and Shah Ismail, or between Suleyman the Magnificent and Tahmasb I in the 16th century, the relations were much more constructive. Different sources link this with some political or economic developments, and, they accept them as the critical turning points. Erzurum Treaties, signed in 1823 and 1847 respectively, formed the first turning point in this context (Litvak, 1998: 165-166; Masters, 1991: 5-7, 9, 15).<sup>6</sup> These treaties initiated a new era between the two states. Because, the Tabriz-Trabzon-Istanbul trade route emerged after the signing of the first treaty.<sup>7</sup> This route provided favorable commercial conditions and a major boost to the trade between the two countries from 1830s onward.<sup>8</sup> Then, the second treaty in 1847 (1263) entitled the two governments to appoint consuls (*shahbandars*) in each other's major cities and ports to protect their subjects' interests (Masters, 1991: 13).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> To illustrate, some people did not involve in the protests after the Parliament bombing in 1908 (Gurney, 1993: 165).

<sup>5</sup> Concerning their relations with Masonic lodges see Hamid Algar's article: (Algar, 1993: 33-44).

<sup>6</sup> For the articles of the agreement also see. (Farâhâni, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Erim explains that after the opening of the Black Sea to the international trade by 1830s, Ottoman-Iranian commercial relations started to increase. Consequently, this improvement influenced the political relations in a positive manner. (Erim, 1990: 577); Another route was a branch of the so-called Transcaucasian route. It stretched north from Tabriz to Tiflis to join the overland route, traversing the Transcaucasian province from Batum to Baku. This route became active after the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828. A progressive trade between Iran and Russia was carried out. However, after the Russian Government determined not to impose customs duties on foreign goods passing by this route in 1865, the traffic of the route and its branch developed until 1883 when the policy of duty free on imported goods was abandoned. (Issawi, 1971: 143). Also see. (Issawi, 1970: 18-27).

<sup>8</sup> The establishment of the steam navigation between Trabzon and Istanbul improved the conditions of transportation. Additionally, the treaty reduced and regularized the customs rates on Iranian goods. Iranian merchants were required to pay only 4 percent customs duties on their goods, a rate which is equal to that charged to Ottoman Muslim merchants. Besides, they became exempt from all extra dues, tolls, and taxes. (Zarinebaf-Shahr, 1993: 207-08).

<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, some other treaties signed between Iran, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and the Britain affected the Ottoman-Qajar relations, as well. (Russo-Iranian Treaties in 1813 (Gulistan) and 1828 (Turkmenchay), the Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Treaty in 1838 and the Anglo-Iranian Commercial Treaty in 1841.)

Another turning point or reason which promoted the relations was the Ottoman Empire's increasing isolation from the European political system and its defeat in the Russo-Ottoman war between the years 1875 and 1878 (Eraslan, 1992: 132-135).<sup>10</sup>

As a consequence of all these developments, in the second half of the century, Istanbul became indispensable for Iran as an international intermediate market with Europe. For example, according to Sakamoto, the first stop of Manchester cotton goods was Istanbul before being exported to Iran. Besides, main Iranian products or raw materials like carpet, silk, and tobacco were being sent to the European countries through Istanbul, not directly.<sup>11</sup>

These different developments which occurred during the Ottoman Tanzimat Era had a positive impact on the relations.<sup>12</sup> In this era, emergence of diplomatic representations of Great Powers inside both countries foreshadowed the regularization of official affairs between the two states. By 1860s, besides London, Paris and St. Petersburg, Iran had opened its permanent embassy in Istanbul and many consulates in the Ottoman cities (Marashi, 2008: 20).<sup>13</sup> In return, the Ottomans opened a few consulates in major Iranian cities. Some analysis indicates that the administrators of both countries who realized their ineffectiveness against the Western technology and military supremacy comprehended the importance of diplomacy. Therefore, they avoided new problem areas and strived to improve their relations. In general terms, the relations between the two states continued more coherently after the second half of the century.

When we focus on the end of the century, we see Abdulhamid II's sending letters to the Shi'ite ulama via Jamal al-din Afghani and his companions in 1892. Together with some other examples, it can be expressed that the overall Ottoman policy towards Iran pursued convergence and alliance in this period. Yet, it did not achieve a decisive result.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, number of the Iranians who went to the Ottoman territory to take part in trade groups, to look for a job, or to pursue travel and education rose gradually. In addition to them, some Iranians went to the Ottoman Empire on permanent diplomatic missions or as political exiles and refugees. In this sense, the Ottoman territories which were physically closer to Iran than Europe and which offered more opportunities to the people in search of them became a better alternative for Iranians. According to Cetinsaya, Istanbul played the same role for the Iranians which Paris played for the Young Turks (Çetinsaya, 2000: 13)...

The biggest groups of all Iranians in the Ottoman Empire in this century were merchants or members of the trade groups. They concentrated in major Anatolian commercial centers on the trade route from 'Erzurum and Trabzon' to Izmir.<sup>15</sup> Some of these people were travelling regularly between the Iranian commercial centers and the Ottoman cities. But, some of them settled permanently in the Ottoman side. In the second half of the century, their number rose greatly. According to Khan-Malek Sasani, Iranian consul in Istanbul in this period, the number of Iranian families residing in Istanbul had grown to about 4,000 families in 1888. That is to say, about 16,000 Iranians were living in Istanbul.<sup>16</sup>

Iranians, who increased in numbers, gathered around some specific districts of Istanbul. They lived mainly in the European side neighborhoods of the city, around and inside some large commercial buildings called khans. At first, they were resident in khans like Hoca Han, Vezir Han and Sunbul Han, then the Valide Han. According to some sources, just the Valide Han housed approximately two thousand Iranians at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the city, they were employed in numerous fields like the carpet, silk, tobacco, leather, soap, coffee house, printing, writing, dry goods, and vegetable industries. They dominated 'the Istanbul carpet trade with Europe'; rose to the forefront of some fields like cargo, portage and coachmanship; and lead some labor forces. In this context, they mixed with the local people more than the other foreigners did. Even, some of them became Ottoman subjects and married Ottoman women despite the prohibition against the marriage of Sunnis to Shi'ites (Metin, 2011: 201-204).

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<sup>10</sup> Besides the isolation of the Ottoman Empire, Iran's economy was nearly collapsed at the same period. For example, the great famine in 1870-71 had deeply effected Iran. For the effects of this famine see. (Okazaki, 1986: 183-192).

<sup>11</sup> In Istanbul, the wholesale dealings with Greek or Armenian big merchants of the city were being done. Afterwards, they were reexported to Iran via Armenian and Azerbaijani traders. (Sakamoto, 1993: 214).

<sup>12</sup> Zarinebaf-Shahr, who studies on modernization and constitutional movements in both Ottoman Empire and Iran explains that the intellectual interaction between these two countries' reformists and intellectuals began first in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1878) (Zarinebaf, 2008: 155).

<sup>13</sup> Also see. (Sheikholeslami, 1971: 107).

<sup>14</sup> See. (Kiren, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Particularly the big cities on the caravan routes such as Erzurum, Tokat, Aleppo, Bursa, and Izmir. Trabzon became the entrepot for Tabriz. Also the Europeans were carrying on the bulk of their trade with Tabriz via Trabzon route. According to Iranian consular sources, in 1888 there were 2,714 Iranians in Adana, 955 in Izmir, 850 in Aleppo, 664 in Samsun, 448 in Van, 270 in Trabzon, etc. The total number of Iranians in Anatolia in 1888 was 10,800. (Zarinebaf-Shahr, 1993: 209-210).

<sup>16</sup> 80 percent of these Iranians were from Azerbaijan. See. (Sassani, AH 1345 (1966): 94).

After establishing wide networks within the city, they also opened an elementary school named “*Debistan-e Iranian*” in the Valide Han. Likewise, they obtained opportunities to have their own social domains and establishments. They enlarged the Shi’ite cemetery in Uskudar,<sup>17</sup> and founded a hospital and a charity organization, named “*Bimarkhane-ye Iranian*” and “*Anjuman-i Hayriyye*”.

### 3. *The Akhtar and the Opposition*

Particularly, after increasing of their economic potential, by 1870s, the Iranians in Istanbul started publishing the first Persian newspaper abroad. In the 13th of January, 1876, a newspaper called *Akhtar* released its first copy.<sup>18</sup>

The *Akhtar* was supported by the Iranian government in the beginning, and avoided political issues. Actually, it was founded under the auspices of the Iranian Ambassador Mohsen Khan Mo’in al-Mulk. He even sent the embassy’s secretary to help the newspaper’s editor with his work. At the same time, to have a newspaper in the Ottoman capital was considered a good idea by the Shah and his ministers. They wanted the *Akhtar* to serve as a weapon against the Ottoman newspapers (Pistor-Hatam, 1993: 141-142). Within this framework, according to Keddie, compared with *the Qanun* which was also an influential newspaper published by the Iranians in London, *the Akhtar* was more moderate in oppositional activities against the Iranian administration in its first decade (Keddie, 1999: 45).

On the other hand, the Iranians in Istanbul experienced relatively more modern legal arrangements, establishments, and Western products before people in Iran. Additionally, as a result of the economic concessions given to the foreigners by the Iranian government, economic interests of the Iranian traders dissolved. Hence, the Iranians in Istanbul started to demand similar modern benefits for their country and began to criticize their rulership. Finally, the *Akhtar* became one of the focal points of the opposition abroad against Naser ud-Din Shah’s rule by the middle of the 1880s.<sup>19</sup> It served as the voice of modernization and calls for reform through the support of intellectuals and exiles like Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, Sheikh Ahmed Rukhi, Malkam Khan and Jamal ad-din Afghani (Metin, 2011: 209).

Edward G. Browne, who wrote in 1888, described the *Akhtar* as “*the only Persian newspaper worth reading*”, and pointed to the fact that “*subscribers or followers of the Akhtar*” were identifying themselves as “*Akhtari Mazhab*” (Browne, 1914: 18). In other words, reading this newspaper was like having a special sectarian identity. In a similar manner, Pistor-Hatam describes the newspaper as the “*transmitter of Ottoman Political Ideas*”. For example, when the Ottoman constitution was proclaimed on 23 December 1876, it was translated into Persian and published in the *Akhtar* on 7 February 1877. Further, subjects like patriotism and nationalism were discussed in the *Akhtar* before Iran. These subjects became discussion topics in Qajar lands much later than amongst the Iranians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, these developments posed an annoyance to the Qajar administration and the Iranian Embassy in Istanbul.

In the mean time, on March 20, 1890, Naser ud-Din Shah granted a concession to an English citizen. With this concession, Major Talbot obtained a full monopoly over the production, sale, and export of tobacco in Iran for fifty years. As a result of this, one of the most important uprisings in the history of modern Iran occurred.<sup>21</sup> During the movement and just after Jamal ed-din Afghani’s reaching out to Istanbul and becoming a sort of leader of the Iranian community there in 1892, *the Akhtar circle* outspokenly started to bring up the need for change in Iran and guided public opinion in this direction. Naturally, as a consequence, the *Akhtar* was suspended in Iran in 1892 (Pistor-Hatam, 1993: 142).

The molding of the public opinion against the Naser ud-Din Shah’s rule had continued until the Shah’s assassination in 1896 by Reza Khan Kermani, known for his relationship with Afghani. After the

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<sup>17</sup> Iranians in Istanbul had their own cemetery in the Asian side of the city. The cemetery is said to have been constructed originally by the daughter of Shah Sultan Hosayn, Huri Sultan, in 1747. But, this claim is suspicious. It was enlarged first in 1853 than in 1290/1873. See. (Kurşun, 2006: 198-199).

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, there may have been another paper called “*Torkestan*” a couple of years earlier. However, informations about this paper is very limited. According to Pistor-Hatam, “*Newspapers published in Iran during the 19th century mainly occupied themselves with official news from the palace. Iranian statesman like Amîr Kabîr and Mîrzâ Hosayn Khân founded their own papers to publish their ideas on government reforms. They also used these journals as a medium of influencing the Persian bureaucracy whose members - as in the case of Amîr Kabîr’s Vaqâye-e ettefâqîya (‘Newspaper of Current Events’) - were sometimes forced to subscribe to the official newspaper. Until the Constitutional Revolution, which took place at the beginning of the 20th century, no independent newspapers existed in the country. The ‘true press of that time’ could only develop outside Iran.*” (Pistor-Hatam, 1993: 141).

<sup>19</sup> Of course other than the Iranians in Istanbul or the major Ottoman cities there were some other places that Iranians came together and acted dissedently. For example, Iranians had also increased in numbers in London, Cairo and Kalkuta, and owned their own instruments. Egypt was another attractive country with free enterprise and liberal-cosmopolitan atmosphere. In 1882 nearly 400 Iranians were living in Cairo. Luesink determines 1301 Iranians mentioned about ten years later in 1892. According to Egyptian Statistics in 1907 it was counted 1385 Iranians. Besides, newspapers like *Qanun* in London and *Habl al-Matin* in Kalkuta, *Hekmat*, *Sorayya*, *Parvoresh* and *Chehrenamâ* were published in Egypt. See. (Luesink, 1993: 193-195).

<sup>20</sup> Based on the hadîth: “*hub al-watan min al-îmân* (love of one’s fatherland was regarded as an obligation of the faith)” (Pistor-Hatam, 1993: 144).

<sup>21</sup> See. (Suzuki, 1986a: 310-331; Suzuki, 1986b: 143-175).

assassination, the Ottoman administration changed its attitude towards the Akhtar, and the newspaper was closed in a few months. At that moment, the Ottoman administration wanted to avoid any damage in the relations. On the other hand, it was not enough of a precaution.

The killing of the Shah caused tension between the two states due to Afghani's extradition. Iranians requested him by claiming he was the abettor. But, the Ottomans rejected this request. The given reasons for rejecting were as follows: First, they stated that they could locate no evidence about his complicity in the assassination. Second, they asserted Sayyid Jamal ed-Din was not an Iranian. As he had himself claimed, Ottomans pretended like he was an Afghan subject albeit his origin from Asadabad in Iran. Thus, the relations between the two countries continued unpleasantly for a while up to Afghani's death from cancer in March 1897.

From this date forward, Iranians in Istanbul stayed away from the political activities until the first sparks of the Iranian Constitutional movement in 1905. This was somewhat due to the reformist character of Muzaffar ud-din Shah's initial years in power. In addition to reasons like the death of Naser ud-Din Shah and Afghani, and the closing of the *Akhtar*, Muzaffar ud-din Shah's activities in his initial years lead the opposition to remain silent for about ten years.<sup>22</sup>

In the middle of this ten-year period, the new Shah visited Istanbul as a part of his first trip to Europe in 1900. He received a very warm welcome and was treated with high-level respect in Istanbul. Ottoman archival documents and the Istanbul press from the time reveal that between the 30th of September and the 4th of October, he was hosted as the most special guest of the Sultan (*misafir-i hassü'l-hass-i hazret-i şehriyari*). During the visit, both rulers presented a very close image that had never been seen in either country's history. Beginning from the moment the Shah crossed over the Ottoman border, whenever possible, he declared how happy and grateful he was to be in the Caliph's lands. Moreover, according to the Ottoman newspapers *Ikdâm* and *Servet* from the first of the October, the Shah kissed the Sultan's hand when they first met.<sup>23</sup> As a result, this very close image of the two rulers influenced the Iranians in Istanbul in their later activities...

Iranians in Istanbul increased their criticisms of their country again immediately before and during the Iranian Constitutional Movement between the years 1905 and 1909 (Zarinebaf-Shahr, 1993: 203-212). This well-established and prosperous community succeeded in influencing the Iranian intellectuals who feared persecution in Iran on the eve of the Revolution. Nevertheless, they did not reorganize in real terms until 1908 (Zarinebaf-Shahr, 1996: 375).

In the summer of the mentioned year, the Iranian Parliament was bombed by the order of Muhammad Ali Shah as a part of his coup d'état. Following this event, number of Iranian refugees in the Ottoman territory increased again. In June, only a few weeks after the bombing of the Parliament, an organization called *Anjuman-i Sa'adat* was formed in Istanbul. According to John Gurney, with the formation of this organization, "the first overt political action" was taken against the Iranian rulership. Additionally, the community endeavoured to revive the Persian press in Istanbul. In the same days when *the Anjuman-i Sa'adat* was formed, Persian newspaper *Shams*<sup>24</sup>, and in June of the next year *Surûsh* started their short-lived publications (Gurney, 1993: 165-167).

As is known, in April 1909, Abdülhamid II was deposed by the Young Turks, and his brother was proclaimed Sultan. After his time, the Iranians' activities in Istanbul continued.<sup>25</sup> However, this paper is limited to the end of the era of Abdulhamid II.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Istanbul was not only the capital of the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also largely contributed to the political, cultural and commercial development of the neighboring Islamic territories. Iranians within Ottoman territory, especially those living together with Ottoman subjects and officials in Istanbul, made a significant contribution to the relations. Independently from their relations with the Iranian opposition, their presence in the city was effective in overcoming prejudice, promoting exchange of information, and developing trade.

On the other hand, when we talk about the Iranians in Istanbul at the turn of the century, at first, we come across their oppositional activities. In my opinion, the works that link these activities with the Ottoman

<sup>22</sup> Martin describes Muzaffar ud-din Shah as the most liberal of all Qajar Shahs. (Martin, 2013: 3).

<sup>23</sup> *Ikdâm* Newspaper (October 1, 1900). No. 2248, p. 2; *Servet* Newspaper (October 1, 1900). No. 838, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> "The director of *Shams* was Seyyid Hasan who was the owner of the *Shams* bookstore in Tabriz. This newspaper basically voiced the views of the liberal merchants resident in Istanbul. Most of the articles were written by such prominent merchants as Âgâ Mîrzâ 'Ali İsfahânî, Hâjji Rizâ Qulî Khurâsânî, and Hâj Zayn al-'âbidîn Âgâ Marâgha'î, while many were signed by *Anjuman-i Sa'adat-i İrânîân*." On the other hand, the newspaper did not enjoy the popularity of the *Akhtar*. See. (Zarinebaf-Shahr, 1993: 210).

<sup>25</sup> In her work on Muharram ceremonies of Istanbul, Erika Glassen uses detailed eyewitness accounts between 1881 and 1926. It means, Iranians continued their activities after the era of Sultan Abdulhamid II. See. (Glassen, 1993: 129).

Empire's lenient policy or the passion of the Abdulhamid administration overlook and underestimate the internal dynamics of the community. It is true that there was a more liberal environment than their own country for the Iranians in Istanbul, and, having such a trump card against the Qajars would be beneficial for the Ottoman administration. Besides, the Ottomans took advantage of the situation while employing their realpolitik. However, these facts do not entirely explain how the Iranian opposition was able to mobilize in Istanbul.

Political exiles and merchants came to the forefront of the community in question. The first of these two groups had gone to Istanbul or had been expelled because of not compromising with the Iranian rulership. Hence, involvement in dissident activities was inevitable for these people. As for the second group, they created their oppositional identity following the dissolution of their economic interests.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the Iranian opposition in Istanbul arose and expanded by the community's own will due to the reasons like "the situation in Iran from the beginning of the 19th century" and "failure of the Iranian administrations to transform the country". As it was in the period between 1896 and 1905, when the community thought that the Iranian government would meet their expectations or when the government gave some signs of new reforms, the Iranians in Istanbul remained more silent. But, after experiencing further, later disappointments, they restarted oppositional activities. Therefore, oppositional activities of the Iranians in Istanbul must be linked with the community's economic interests or their political standing against their country's administration.

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<sup>26</sup> Due to a general decline in the Trade of Tabriz, many Iranian merchants resident in Istanbul were taking big financial loses like those in Tabriz during the last decade of the century. Their discontent materialized in opposition to foreign capital and commercial expansion in Iran. As a result, the merchants started supporting the Iranian constitutionalists living in exile in Istanbul or those who visited Istanbul frequently.

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