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THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL POLICIES IN REZA SHAH'S PERIOD ON THE STATUS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES' SCHOOLS IN SANANDAJ (JEWS AND CHRISTIANS)

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ABSTRACT

After assuming power in 1925, Reza Shah promoted and strengthened nationalism in Iran and moved toward nation-building and enhancing national unity. Since the very beginning of his rule, the Reza Shah government paid contributions to foreign and national schools belonging to religious minorities with the intention to gradually oblige them to follow the Ministry of Education's programs. The present research has adopted a descriptive-explanatory approach, taking advantage of primary sources, not available to the previous authors, in order to analyze Reza Shah's cultural policies and the effect of these policies on the position of Jewish and Christian minority schools in Sanandaj.

Keywords: Reza Shah, Sanandaj, Kurdistan, Minority schools, nationalism, Iranian Jews and Christians, national curriculum

GLI EFFETTI DELLE POLITICHE CULTURALI DEL PERIODO DI REZA SHAH SULLO STATUS DELLE SCUOLE DELLE MINORANZE RELIGIOSE (DEGLI EBREI E CRISTIANI) A SANANDAJ

SINTESI

Dopo aver preso il potere nel 1925, Reza Shah promosse e rinforzò il nazionalismo in Iran, adoperandosi in questo modo per la costruzione della nazione e l'unità della società multietnica iraniana. Sin dai primi giorni, il governo di Reza Shah concesse fondi alle scuole delle minoranze religiose, sia straniere che statali, con l'intento di obbligarle gradualmente a seguire i programmi del Ministero dell'Istruzione. La presente ricerca ha utilizzato un approccio descrittivo-esplicativo, avvalendosi di fonti primarie non disponibili in passato ai ricercatori, per analizzare le politiche culturali di Reza Shah e il loro impatto sulla posizione delle scuole delle minoranze ebraiche e cristiane a Sanandaj.

Parole chiave: Reza Shah, Sanandaj, Kurdistan, scuole delle minoranze, nazionalismo, ebrei e cristiani iraniani, curriculum nazionale

INTRODUCTION

Kurdistan has historically been inhabited by various ethnic and religious denominations and peoples. As a result of its geographical and economic location, the city of Sanandaj, in the center of Iran's Kurdistan Province, in particular, has traditionally accommodated significant communities of Sephardic Jews and Chaldean (Assyrian) Christians. During the Qajar Period (1796–1921), the existence of religious minorities in Sanandaj drew the attention of French religious missionaries and cultural institutions to the city and thus they began establishing their own schools there. Accordingly, the French Lazarists established the first modern school in Sanandaj in 1894 (Nateq, 1990, 93). Sometimes later, a special school for the Jewish community was established in Sanandaj by the French Alliance Israelite. These schools taught modern sciences and foreign languages, especially French language to their students. As a result, some Muslim families in Sanandaj were encouraged to send their children to be educated in these schools.

Since these schools were administered through people's donations and French contributions, the Qajar government made little interference in their educational content, curriculum, and methodologies. Upon the assumption of power by Reza Shah and specially the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925, however, this state of affairs changed; i.e., the state contributed financially to these minority religious schools and accepted to pay for some of their expenditures. In return, these schools were now required to follow programs and curriculum set forth by the Iranian Ministry of Education. This meant that these schools were required to teach the Persian language and literature and Iranian history and geography to their students. By examining new archival sources, the present research endeavors to review the effect of Reza Shah's

cultural and educational policies on schools belonging to religious minorities residing in Sanandaj, particularly by its Chaldean Catholics and Alliance Israelite School.

It is noteworthy that, in recent years invaluable works have been published regarding the religious minorities' schools in Iran, such as those studies by Homa Nateq (Nateq, 1990; Nateq, 1996), Abutalib Soltanian (Soltanian, 2010, 57–80; Soltanian, 2011, 63–84), and Aniseh Sheikh Rezaei (Sheikh Rezaei, 1992, 95–109). In addition, Nour al-Din Ne'mati and Mazhar Edway (Ne'mati & Edway, 2013, 153–172), in their joint article have reviewed the effects of the modern education system on Jewish schools in Iran. Nonetheless none of the mentioned studies have dealt so much with the status of religious minorities' schools in the city of Sanandaj during Reza Shah's reign and have only sufficed themselves with providing a brief history of the construction of such schools in this city. The present research has adopted a descriptive-explanatory approach, taking advantage of primary sources particularly archived documents, not available to the previous authors, in order to review and analyze Reza Shah's cultural policies and the effect of these policies on the position of Jewish and Christian minority schools in Sanandaj.

THE STATUS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN
SANANDAJ'S HISTORY

Sanandaj is the capital city of Iranian Kurdistan Province which was established during reign of Ardalans (as a vassal to the Persian Safavid Dynasty) in 1636 by Suleyman Khan Ardalani. The geographical location, climatic condition, and economic advantages of Sanandaj not only attracted the Muslim Kurds (both Sunnis and Shiites) to the city, but also attracted some followers of other Abrahamic religions, such as Jews and Christians.¹ For

¹ The history of the presence of Jews and Christians in Iran goes back to 3,000 years ago when they were forced to migrate from Jerusalem and the Holy Land to Assyria, Babel, and central and western parts of Iran during a couple of consecutive decades. In 750 BC and almost 200 years before the establishment of the Achaemenid Dynasty, for instance, a group of Jews were enslaved and brought to Gilliard Region which nowadays is called Damavand Reign. After the conquest of Babel by Cyrus the Great in 539 BC, Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and Canaan, which were part of the Achaemenid territory and reconstruct the Solomon's Temple. However, some of them remained in Iran and maintained their religion and culture freely (Foltz, 2013, 77). The Bible has referred to Cyrus the Great's tolerance towards the Jews. Therefore, they consider him as one of the saviors of Jews (The Book of Ezra 1, 2–3, Nehemiah & Ester 7). The emergence of Christianity in Iran dates back to the time of Parthian Empire. Between 70 AC to 80 AC, some Mesopotamian cities, such as Arbela, Odesa, and Nusaybin, which were parts of the Parthian Empire converted to Christianity. Since people in these cities were Aramaic/Syriac speaking and had lingual and cultural affiliations with Syriac-speaking cities in the Roman Territory, such as Antioch, inviting people to convert to Christianity was developing very rapidly. In addition, Syriac-language Jews were concentrated in Mesopotamia and western parts of Iran. Meanwhile, the primary Christian missionaries, who were trying to promote the new religion, were speaking the same language. The Acts of the Apostles refers to Median and Parthian people who had traveled to Jerusalem on the occasion of Pentecost Celebrations (Roshdi, 2006, 14–16). Unlike Syriac-speaking communities in Mesopotamia and coasts of the Persian Gulf, in which Christianity was flourished rapidly, this religion was not so common among Aryans and in the Iranian Plateau up to at least 2nd century AD. The issue of language was the main obstacle for the flourishment of Christianity. In addition, the lower levels of culture, arid climate of central Iran, and lack of the Greek philosophical traditions – like the one developed in Roman Empire and Mesopotamia, were man obstacles that hindered the development of Christianity in the Iranian Plateau. When Christianity was adopted as the official religion in the Roman territories and Zoroastrianism became the state religion in Iran, the Sassanid Dynasty prevented the promotion of Christianity in its territory (Roshdi, 2006, 18–19). Concurrent with the promotion and development of Christianity in Syriac-speaking cities and Jewish communities in Mesopotamia and Western Iran, Christianity was gradually adopted by Assyrians and Armenians, which were parts of the Parthian Empire, in 2nd century AD. Therefore, Assyrians and Armenians were first communities who welcomed Christianity. It can, therefore, be argued that the beginning of the development of Christianity in Iran is intertwined with the history of this country. In other words, we can say that first Christians were living in the Iranian territory (Bradley, 2008, 197).

this reason, Sanandaj was not a religiously homogenous city when the Qajars emerged as rulers of Iran. In this regard, one of the local historians of that period in 1901 referred to Sanandaj as a city with “diverse communities” (Ne’mati & Edway, 2013, 17). Considering the fact that western parts of Iran, and especially Kurdistan, have been a key center for the Jewish culture and community in Iran and the Middle East (Kohan, 2013, 189)², the Jews have attached such special importance to the city of Sanandaj that they have referred to it as a “small Jerusalem” (Kohan, 2013, 190). There are, however, different assessment regarding the number of Jewish and Christian families living in Sanandaj. James C. Rich, the British politician and diplomat who traveled to Iran in 1820, reported that 50 Chaldean Catholic and 200 Jewish families were living in Sanandaj (Rich, 2002, 198). A century later, Vladimir Minorsky mentioned that there were 60 Chaldean Catholic and 500 Jewish families in Sanandaj in 1918 (Minorsky, 2007, 67). Razmara, a military commander of the Reza Shah Period, elaborated on the geographical situation and location of Kurdistan and reported that 50 Christian and 300 Jewish families were residing in Sanandaj (Razmara, 1941, 24). Then there is another report dating back to Reza Shah’s period which puts the Jewish and Christians number of the city up to 3,000 and 1,500 respectively (Mohseni, 1948I, 111).

Religious minorities residing in Sanandaj, including Jews and Christians, were free in observing their religious rituals and had their own peculiar worshipping centers. Christians had a church in Sanandaj which had been constructed over the ruins of the older church in 1840 (Minorsky, 2007, 77) and “Muslims could hear the sound of its bell every morning and evening” (Vaqa’at-e Negar-e Kurdestani, 2002, 17). The Jews meanwhile had three synagogues in Sanandaj and had a separate cemetery, which was 300 years old (Kohan, 2013, 191).

Eugène Boré, the leading Lazarist French missionary, during his time in Iran, writes that Iranian Christians, as a religious minority in a majority Muslim society, enjoy proper freedoms and in comparison, to other religious minorities such as Jews and Zoroastrians, have a better living condition (Boré, 1840, 272). Such was the state of affairs in Sanandaj, too³.

During Reza Shah’s reign, there were also records that Iranians of Jewish and Christians minorities were employed in governmental offices. In 1929, for instance, a Christian was the head of the Sanandaj Post Office and a couple Christians had been employed in the Financial Department of the city (NLAI, 1935, sheet 2). Employment of some members of the Jewish and Christian communities in governmental organizations in Sanandaj can arguably be considered as one of the main consequences of the establishment of modern French schools during the Qajar Period and the enhancement of literacy rates among religious minorities in the city. Also, it can be regarded as an indicator of the elevation of their social position during the Reza Shah Period.

HISTORY OF FOREIGN SCHOOLS IN IRAN AND KURDISTAN DURING THE QAJAR PERIOD

The first modern-styled European schools in Iran were established during the Qajar dynasty for Chaldean-Assyrian Christians outside Iranian Kurdistan in the city of Urmia and nearby villages in 1838 by Protestant American missionaries. Due to the lower population of Christians in Kurdistan, the first Lazarist School was established in Sanandaj with delay, i.e., in 1894. The school was run by Reverend Father Hilarion Montague, head of the Lazarists in Iran. This school was mostly involved in teaching the French language and its expenses were covered by Lazarists in Tehran

2 The city of Ur, located in Mesopotamia, is the birthplace of Prophet Abraham and Jews consider themselves as this prophet’s descendants. Therefore, this city is considered as the second sacred place by Jews. In addition, Jews were often forced to migrate to Mesopotamia by Assyrians and Babylonian monarchs as a result of which a relatively huge community of Jews was established in this region. When Cyrus the Great conquered Babylonia, some of these Jews did not return to Jerusalem and preferred to remain in Babylonia, which had become part of the Achaemenid Empire. Some of them preferred to migrate to western parts of Iran and reside in cities such as Ctesiphon, Jondishapour, Shush, Ahwaz, Shoushtar, Hamadan, and Nahavand. They established a township in Isfahan called “Yahoudieh” (Miskawayh Razi, 1987, 257). Tombs of great Jewish prophets are spread throughout the western cities of Iran. There are 17 such tombs in Iran, such as the tomb of Daniel in Shoush, the tomb of Isaiah in Isfahan, the tomb of Ezekiel in Dezful, the tomb of Esther and Mordechai in Hamadan, and the tomb of Kedar in the city of Qeydar in Zanjan Province. The existence of such tombs has been another motivation for the continuous presence of Jews in western parts of Iran since old times (Fawzi Tuyserkani, 2016, 72–73). After the emergence of Christianity, Jewish communities in Mesopotamia and western Iran converted to the new religion. In fact, early Christian missionaries were Syriac/Aramaic speaking and had lingual and cultural commonalities with the people of these regions. Meanwhile, green and flourished cities of western Iran, compared with arid deserts of central Iranian Plateau, were more attractive for Jews and Christians. People in cities of western Iran were less religiously biased and Jews and Christians preferred to live in the western parts of Iran, which were proximate to the territory of Roman Empire and their fellow-religion people. Upon the acceptance of Christianity by Armenia in the beginning of the 4th century AD, an epicenter of Eastern Church was created in Caucasus which was gradually extended in west and northwest of Iran. As a result, large groups of people converted to Gregorian Christianity in different cities of Azerbaijan, such as Tabriz, Urmia, and Salmas. Following the migration of Armenians to western parts of Iran and centers of political power such as Isfahan and Hamadan, the number of Christians in Iran increased dramatically. As a result of these migrations, Armenians form the greatest number of Christians in contemporary Iran (Foltz, 2013, 131).

3 Sanandaj was traditionally the key trade centers in western Iran and located on its main trade routes (Minorsky, 2007, 67). The majority of Jews residing in Sanandaj were therefore involved in trade and commercial activities accumulating extensive wealth (Oubene, 1983, 345).

Table 1: Number of Jewish and Christian Communities' Schools and their Students and Teachers.

Academic year	Number of schools				Number of students				Number of graduated students				Number of teachers			
	Jewish Alliance		Chaldean Christians		Jewish Alliance		Chaldean Christians		Jewish Alliance		Chaldean Christians		Jewish Alliance		Chaldean Christians	
1928–1929	1	-	1	-	148	-	51	-	-	-	4	-	6	-	7	-
1929–1930	1	1	1	-	90	45	63	-	-	-	-	-	10	1	6	-
1930–1931	1	1	1	-	193	41	70	-	2	-	4	-	7	1	7	-
1931–1932	1	1	1	-	202	45	80	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	6	-
1932–1933	1	1	1	-	220	47	97	-	6	-	1	-	12	-	7	-
1933–1934	1	-	1	-	178	-	132	-	4	-	4	-	6	-	6	-
1934–1935	1	-	1	-	180	-	126	-	3	-	5	-	7	-	6	-
1935–1936	1	-	1	-	164	-	104	-	9	-	-	-	10	-	5	-
1936–1937	1	-	-	-	135	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
1937–1938	1	-	-	-	144	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
1938–1939	1	-	-	-	154	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-
1939–1940	1	-	-	-	190	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
1940–1941	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1941–1942	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

(Nateq, 1996, 203–204). In a report written by Lazarist authorities, which provides statistics over the number of Lazarist schools in Iran in 1905, it is mentioned that “there is a school for Catholic Armenians” in Sanandaj “with 2 teachers and 25 pupils” (Nateq, 1996, 219).

In their initial stage, the Lazarist schools in Iran had a 4-year curriculum with courses on Old and Modern Syriac language, religious scriptures, French language, Persian language, mathematics, history, geography, history of philosophy, religious jurisprudence, religious tenets, and songs (Nateq, 1996, 171). In the beginning, Lazarist schools were mostly concentrated on religious education and religious promotion among the Christian community in Iran in order to compete with American Protestant missionaries. Nevertheless, these schools gradually moved towards adopting a temporal approach and incorporated the curricula on modern sciences and foreign or indigenous languages. As a result, many Muslims, too, were attracted by these schools.

Alliance Israelite School was another school established by religious minorities in Sanandaj during the Qajar Period. Preparations for the establishment

of the first branch of Alliance Israelite School in Iran were made during Naseraddin Shah's trip to Paris in 1872. However, their first school was not established up until 1898 - during Muzaffareddin Shah's reign. In 1898, the first boys-only Alliance Israelite School was established for Jews in Tehran. It should be mentioned that a couple of years before the establishment of this school, Jews residing in Sanandaj dispatched a letter to the Alliance Israelite in Paris and requested for the establishment of a school in their city so that they can enhance their social position (Levy, 1960, 772). The Hamadan branch of Alliance Israelite schools was opened in 1900. One year later, the Isfahan branch was inaugurated (A'lame Yahoud, 1954). In 1904, Alliance Israelite also opened its branches in the Iranian cities of Shiraz, Kermanshah, and Sanandaj (Nateq, 1996, 140–146). The Sanandaj branch was administered by a couple, the Hayouns, who had previously been involved in teaching activities under the supervision of instructors in the Isfahan branch (Nateq, 1996, 145). The Christian community of Sanandaj did not however welcome the establishment of the Alliance Israelite School in

this city. According to a report by the head of Lazarists in Sanandaj, "There are a lot of Jews in the city of Sennah (Sanandaj) and they have opened a big school in this city that teaches all languages. This is a great danger for Christians" (Nateq, 1996, 147). Sometime after the establishment of the Alliance Israelite School in Sanandaj, another branch of this school was opened in the city of Bijar. Such schools were established through the contributions of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, a Paris-based international Jewish organization. As a matter of fact, providing cultural and economic support for the Jews all around the world was the main objective of establishing such schools (Ne'mati & Edway, 2013, 88).

As reported by Ahmad Moqbel, who was the agent of the Education Department of Kurdistan in 1922, in addition to the two state schools of Ahmadiyah and Ettehad in Sanandaj, there were two other schools in this city, one belonging to Christians and the other to the Jews. This report also refers to the dire financial condition of the Alliance Israelite School in Sanandaj at the time. Moqbel's report then suggests that Alliance Israelite in Tehran and the French embassy should be encouraged to "pay their contributions to the Sanandaj branch as before" (NLAI, 1922, Sheet 6–7).

In table (1) the number of schools, students, and teachers from the Jewish and Christian communities have been shown in a categorized form by the years of the reign of Reza Shah.

During that time, many Muslims, and especially the rich families of Sanandaj, were used to send their children to any of these two schools. Most Muslim children were, however, sent to the Jewish schools. One of the reasons that Muslims were interested in Alliance Israelite schools was the fact that the curriculum did not have or promote Judaism.

POLITICAL CONTEXT OF REZA SHAH'S INITIATIVES AND POLICIES FOR IRANIAN NATIONAL UNITY

Iran's exposition to western civilization dates back to pre-19th century. When Iran experienced consecutive and irreparable failures in its wars with Russia, however, Iranian identity was faced with various challenges and crises. Between 1801 and 1828, Iranians signed two agreements of Golestan and Turkamanchai with Russia as a result of which Iran lost large swaths of its territory in Caucasus. This failure threatened Iran's national authority and the country's dispersed political power as a result of which Iranian political, social, and economic life was fundamentally transformed.

Iranian society in the 19th century was a multi-ethnic society comprised of ethnicities such as Persians, Kurds, Azeris, Arabs, Turkmans, Gilaks, etc. In addition to ethno-cultural differences, Iranians were also divided along the sectarian lines of Shiism and Sunnism. Muslims and non-Muslims of Iran had also their own

differences. At the same time, old differences between nomadic life and urban/rural life have always been considered as a source of division within the Iranian demographic, political, and economic structure and have created complicated dilemmas for the country. These features along with linguistic differences created an image of 19th-century Iran, which was a multi-ethnic, dispersed, and often nomadic society. Despite all these divergences and ethno-religious difference, Iranian society had managed to maintain its existence and unity as an ancient country. Before the wars of early 19th century between Iran and Russia, Iranian integrity and unity had been maintained, because of the existence of ancient structures of governance in the country. In addition, there were firm cultural and civilizational bonds, such as the Persian language and common history, which had connected various Iranian ethnicities (Atabaki, 2001, 80).

Following Iran's humiliating defeat from Russia and the loss of extensive swaths of its territory, Iranian society was faced with a crisis and its structural unity was undermined. Iran's failures from Russia were vitally important incidents, because these failures influenced Iranian political and ideational structure. These failures were not limited to just politico-military spheres or merely loss of territorial integrity of the country. Following the conclusion of Turkamanchai Agreement, however, a legal basis was created in Iran-Russia relations and in the foreign policy of Iran which is referred to as "positive balance". This imposed policy forced Iran to give balanced politico-economic concessions to Russia and Britain. The policy of "positive balance" continued even after the collapse of Qajar Dynasty and it was pursued even during the Pahlavi Period and up to the eve of the Oil Nationalization Movement. It was only in a short period of time, i.e. during the premiership of Amir Kabir, that Iran adopted a policy of "negative balance". During this short period, Iran did not give any concessions to foreign powers and adopted an independent policy toward them.

During the whole 19th century, Iranian foreign policy was influenced by the bipolar paradigm of Russia and Britain. These two countries had totally extensive influence in Iran. As a result, other actors and powers were unable to practice any influence in Iranian politic-economic affairs. As a matter of fact, all efforts by Iranian politicians and leaders to introduce a third power into Iranian political and economic affairs and reduce the influence of Russia and Britain were doomed to failure (Ali Soufi, 2010, 213). In several occasions in 19th century, for instance, Iranian politicians endeavored to provide opportunities for getting American and French governments involved in political affairs of their country. However, Russia and Britain synergized their efforts and prevented the American and French governments from playing any role in Iran (Homa Katouzian, 2007, 231–232).

Iranian intellectuals and statesmen were greatly concerned of all these issues during the whole 19th century. They were looking for solutions to get rid of these problems and move the country toward progress and development. These mental and practical endeavors resulted in the formation of a reform movement. Reformists such as Abbas Mirza, Qaem Maqam Farahani, and Amir Kabir were forerunners of this movement all of whom were statesmen of the Qajar Period. These individuals were concerned about their country and its development. They are considered as early Iranian nationalists who advocated the existence of a powerful central government with a mighty and permanent army.

Following Iran-Russia wars and the evolution of reformist movement, the Iranian social identity – which was an amalgamation of ancient traditions, eastern monarchism, Islamic thought, and Shiism – underwent tremendous shifts. Influenced by European worldviews, which were promoted by Europe-educated thinkers and statesmen, the Iranian society resorted to a new identity based on nationalism. Iranian nationalism was, at the outset, a reaction to aggressions of great colonial powers and adopted an anti-despotism nature in its internal and domestic dimension (Katem, 1999, 65). Influenced by orientology and thoughts of theorists, such as Schlegel, Gobineau, and Gustav Le Bon, Iranian educated classes – the majority of whom had received modern Western education – used nationalism and ethnic consciousness as instruments for creating an integrated national unity (Vaziri, 1991, 214).

Iran's humiliated status and its comparison with past grandeur, especially the ancient-times grandeur, had created a nostalgic feeling among Iranian elites which was dependent on public, intellectual, and political mobilization for saving the country from its current state of affairs. This consciousness toward past Iranian history and the grandiose of this history along with feeling humiliated because of the current condition of the country are reflected in the works of poets, writers, and political elites of Iran both before and after the Iranian Constitutional Movement (Ahmadi, 2011, 145).

In such an atmosphere, Islam was highlighted as a collective identity rather than a religious ritual tradition which should have been used for strengthening the nationalism. Confrontation with Arabs and omission and marginalization of clergies – pursued with whatever intention – created a kind of radical and intolerant nationalism which was fascinated with the grandeur of ancient Iranian monarchies. This nationalism stood against Islam. Its outcome was nothing but efforts for undermining the Islam (Homa Katouzian, 1981, 125). This kind of nationalism attached great importance to national identity. It prioritized national identity over all subnational,

lingual, local, or regional identities. Based on this principle, which is deemed as a kind of political ideology, the only accepted form of governance was national governance. It highlighted history, culture, shared mythology, official language, common bitter or sweet memories, etc. Iranian national identity and Iranian nationalism were, therefore, formed during political upheavals of the 19th century and concurrent with developments such as the Constitutional Revolution and World War I (Atabaki, 2006, 190).

This new identity was formed within the context of history. Developments such as World War I, foreign interference, efforts to impose the so-called 1919 Agreement on Iran, decadence of authority of the central government, emergence of separatist groups and local resurgent factions, made it necessary to establish a powerful central government, modern military forces, bureaucratic infrastructures, and ultimately create national unity (Amanat, 2017, 433–434). Egalitarianism, freedom-seeking spirit, and romantic nationalism were inspiring forces for the first generation of Iranian intellectuals and their efforts for introducing change and reform throughout the country. However, Iranian intellectuals emerging after World War I were influenced by developments in Germany, Italy, and Portugal. These groups of intellectuals considered political authoritarianism and lingual nationalism as necessary and efficient factors in the materialization of their dreams (Atabaki & Zürcher, 2006, 93).

They believed that European-based pattern of development exemplifies an integrated society explicitly formed according to concepts of nation and state. They also argued that only an authoritarian and integrated government can introduce reform in society and, at the same time, protect the country's unity and territorial integrity. As a matter of fact, different societies were dreaming of establishing powerful and competent governments in the post-World-War-I period. Due to crises in modern structures of identity, this dream was evolved immediately after World War I. Various intellectuals, including Hussein Kazemzadeh Iranshahr, Mahmud Afshar Yazdi, Ahmad Kasravi, Malek al-Shoara Bahar, Ali Akbar Siasi, and Seyed Hassan Taqizadeh – despite their different attitudes – believed that democratic dreams and visions of the Constitutional Revolution are not so much attractive and cannot settle the problems. Therefore, they argued that society should move toward establishing an intellectual and reformist dictatorship in order to get prepared for accepting a social revolution (Vahdat, 2002, 129).

Such a system – referred to as the National State – was the outcome of a confluence of nationalism and statesmanship. From one hand, this system was

an advocate of the empowerment and enhancement of the state authority. From the other hand, it was endeavoring to create an identity-making and a unity-promoting atmosphere according to which all cultural elements were required to pursue a prevalent official norm (Vincent, 1992, 134). In such circumstance, Reza Khan rose to power and various groups of intellectuals and statesmen welcomed his ascendance in the political hierarchy. In addition, Reza Khan – like many military leaders of the 20th century – had a special personality and a peculiar military discipline which were compatible with views and attitudes of the intellectuals of that period (Ansari, 2003, 48).

Reza Khan had clearly witnessed foreign interference in Iranian affairs during the Qajar Period. He had seen how Iran had been occupied by states that were at war with each other during World War I. Therefore, Reza Khan knew how to build a modern Iran which can protect its independence based on the pattern that had turned out to be common in the post-World-War-I period. This pattern was based on the concept of modern state supported by its powerful army derived from Iranian nationalism.

Appealing intellectual effects of the Constitutional Movement and emergence of western-educated classes among the ruling elites were major factors that encouraged Reza Shah to move the country toward modernization. Nevertheless, we cannot deny Reza Shah's role in the establishment of Iranian modern army, integration of Iran, unification of dress codes, development of roads, ratification of the law of compulsory military service, establishment of National Organization for Civil Registration, etc. and their effects on the creation of national unity in the country. Undoubtedly, these initiatives were not rooted in Reza Shah's military spirit. Rather, they were the crystallization of wishes and ideals of intellectuals who believed that the only way to follow Western civilization is getting distanced from religious traditions prevalent in Iranian society (Foran, 1992, 349).

Iranian nationalism was crystallized in the cultural behavior of the Pahlavi Dynasty within the context of xenophobic approaches and through expressing hatred toward whatever element deemed as non-Iranian. Later on, European culture was excluded and Islamic culture along with Arabic language was put at the center of these assaults (Safaei, 1978, 91). According to Reza Shah's pattern of identity, centralism was the means for introducing modernism into Iranian society. It was deemed as the proper context for giving legitimacy to the ideology of nationalism. In this period, the state-oriented outlook was basically concentrated on seeking a unity and an integrity whose ultimate purpose was creating a theoretical framework for

unifying the tribes, groups, and factions living in a specific geographical domain or ruled over by the state and government (Kashani-Sabet, 2002, 162).

In pursuing his modernist objectives, Reza Shah was mainly influenced by Mostafa Kamal Atatürk and his plans and programs for modern Turkey. Influenced by the Turkish leader's thoughts and initiatives, Reza Shah pursued his secularization and Westernization policies. Reza Shah had several important similarities with his Turkish counterpart and followed his example: military dictatorship, development of militaristic spirit in the society, and promotion of extremist nationalism (Atatürk was promoting pan-Turkism in Turkey and Reza Shah advocated a kind of nationalism based on ancient Iranian history and a return to pre-Islamic Iranian civilization). During this period, both Iran and Turkey adopted policies based on Westernization patterns and the example of European countries. Modernization pattern in both countries were based on authoritarian development. As a result, modernization was imposed on both societies from top to the bottom. Both Iran and Turkey were moving toward secularism, albeit with different paces in each country. In Turkey, this process was accompanied with anti-religion practices. However, anti-religious practices in Iran were not as severe as those in Turkey (Volkan, 2017, 223).

In his only foreign trip in June 1924, Reza Shah travelled to Turkey and adopted most of the modern and secular policies of the Turkish leader. Some of these policies are as follows: he established numerous state-controlled schools throughout the country which undermined the position of religious schools supervised by clerics; he substituted traditionally-educated judges with lawyers that had received academic and Western-type education; he revoked the prerogative right of clerics in establishing notary offices and transferred this right to non-religious individuals; he controlled the number of clerics and reduced their number through implementing the law of the unified dressing code and making it compulsory upon clerics to participate in exams in order to receive the permission to wear the cleric's cloths and turbans; he prohibited or limited the observation of many religious rituals, such as Ta'zieh Rituals which were practiced on the occasion of Imam Hussein's martyrdom; he confiscated religious endowed properties on behalf of the state; and he prohibited Iranians from wearing the Pahlavi hat after his return from Turkey and made compulsory upon people to wear international hats (Movasaghi, 2001, 156–157).

Despite similarities between Reza Shah and Atatürk in pursuing their Westernization and secularization policies, a comparison of their initiatives indicates that these initiatives are greatly different

in terms of intensity and diversity. Atatürk, for instance, introduced some initiatives which were not implemented in Iran. Some of these initiatives were as follows: declaring Turkey as a laic state; revoking the religious hierarchy and religious position of Sheikh al-Eslam; shutting down the Khanqahs (buildings designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood); prohibiting the use of religious symbols; formulating a European and anti-Islam civil law; changing the Turkish alphabet and calendar; making it mandatory to recite Quran, prayers, and Azan in Turkish language; and substituting Friday with Sunday as the Sabbath (Koca, 2020, 359). In fact, it was impossible to carry out such initiatives in Iran. Unlike the religious position of Sheikh al-Eslam, which was a state-controlled position, the Shiite *Marjaeyat* had been an independent institution during the whole history of Iran. Therefore, Reza Shah was unable to revoke the position of Shiite *Marjaeyat*. In the Turkish civil law, which was mainly derived from the Swiss laws, men are not allowed to have more than one wife; women are eligible to have the right of divorce; Muslim women are allowed to marry with non-Muslim men; men and women are considered as equal, including in their ransom and inheritance; people are free to change their religion; Muslims and non-Muslims are deemed as equal; and Islamic penal laws are revoked (Coskun Can, 1997, 168). Iranian civil law was ratified by parliament in 1928. Despite the fact that general provisions of Iranian civil law were mainly translations from French laws, legal issues that deal with personal affairs were derived from Islamic law and jurisprudence (Makki, 1994, 323).

NATIONALISM, CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION, AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

According to intellectuals of the Reza Shah era, the existence of different tribes and multiple ethnicities in Iran is considered as one of the major threats against the Iranian national unity.

Therefore, they argued that after establishing order and serenity in the country, the government, as its most important responsibility, is to promote nation-building principles and strengthen the bases of national identity through advancing the idea of nationalism. The intellectuals also believed that the establishment of modern state in Iran requires less cultural diversity and greater tribal homogeneity. Intellectuals and cultural officials during Reza Shah's reign consequently considered national unity as the eradication of all existing differences in terms of lifestyle, dress code, language, etc. This perception of national unity, which can be described as 'cultural homogenization', was concentrated on creating a totally united and homogenous nation through combining the diverse ethnicities, languages, and religious sects existing in the country.

Statesmen and intellectuals of Reza Shah's era were quite aware of the historical role of the Farsi language in strengthening national unity amongst all Iranian peoples (Atabaki & Zürcher, 2004, 246). They believed that the existence of different local languages and dialects among Iranians was a serious obstacle to establishing a centralized political system and achieving national unity in the country (The Cambridge History of Iran, 1991, vii, 231). Therefore, they argued, the government was required to mobilize all its material, spiritual, and propaganda potentials for the development of Farsi in those regions of the country which did not speak Farsi.⁴

As a matter of fact, Reza Shah's government and many intellectuals of that period were mainly concentrated on centralism and national unity among different Iranian ethnicities. According to them, concentration on nation-building and cultural homogenization among different Iranian ethnicities through promoting and strengthening the Farsi language was the best way to achieve these objectives.

As a result of the existence of an ancient-history-based nationalistic ideology, western-oriented and secular modernization objectives and programs, and national unity ideals, Reza Shah put the

4 Due to ethnic and lingual diversity in Iran, the concept of nation in this country is a multi-ethnic and imbalanced concept. According to demographic statistics of Iran in 1930s, Persians comprised some 70 percent of the country's population. Azeris with 15 to 17 percent of Iranian population were the second largest ethnic group in Iran. Sunni and Shiite Kurds living in west of Iran constituted 5 percent of the country's population and were the third largest ethnic group in Iran. Arabs living in southwest of Iran and Baluchis residing in southeast of country constituted 3 and 2 percent of the Iranian population, respectively (Hafeznia, 2002, 147). According to the census, 98 percent of Iranian population were Muslims out of which 90 percent were Shiites and 8 percent were Sunnis. After Muslims, Christians constituted 0.87 percent of the Iranian population and were deemed as the second religious group in the country. Zoroastrians and Jews constituted 0.56 and 0.58 percent of the country's population, respectively (Iranian Statistics Center, 1951, 8). Various Iranian ethnicities have always considered Persian language as their common cultural asset. This language has unified different ethnic groups and religious denominations living within the boundaries of cultural geography of Iran. All of them have played their role in the development of the Persian language. During the Constitutional Movement and following the development of printing industry and circulation of newspapers in Iran, the Persian language went through a simplification process and was further promoted in different parts of the country. During Reza Shah's reign, Ministry of Education, Academy of Persian Literature, and mass media contributed to the omission of alien terminologies from the Persian language. Through coining new terminologies, these institutions introduced new standard words and the Persian language was used as the official language in the education system of the country (Safaei, 1977, 66).

education reform on the top of his political and social agenda of modernization program in Iran (Rahmanian, 2016, 214).⁵ By taking advantage of educational mechanisms and prerogative monopoly on determining the form and contents of education materials (Matthee, 2007, 335), the government was trying to transfer its preferred values regarding the favourable social identity to its citizens (Akbari, 2014, 271).

In order to promote the government-sponsored ideology through public schools, the state had to practice its prerogative control over educational programs, the curriculum and textbooks. During this period and concurrent with the establishment of public schools in different parts of the country, especially ethnical regions such as Kurdistan, the government imposed constraints on private and foreign schools and religious educational institutions and practiced its prerogative control over the compilation of textbooks.

FOREIGN AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO FOLLOW THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S PROGRAM DURING REZA SHAH'S REIGN

By the end of the Qajar dynasty, an integrated educational system had not been formed in the country, and the Qajar rulers had little involvement in the management of administration of schools.

Furthermore, Iran's geopolitical position turned this country into the epicenter of competitions between its two major neighbors, i.e. Russia in north and UK in south. During 19th century, Russia's policy was concentrated on getting access to the Persian Gulf. Russians did whatever they could to materialize the abovementioned objective, i.e. war with Iran in the early decades of the 19th century and annexation of Caucasus cities to Russia based on Golestan and Turkamanchai Agreements; expanding Russia's influence in Central Asia and annexation of some cities of this region to the Russian territory through imposing Akhal Agreement on Iran; and dividing Iran between Russia and Britain based on 1907 Agreement. The British policy in the 19th century was concentrated on protecting its extensive and huge colony in India. As a result, Iran's foreign policy – and even its domestic policy – was totally influenced by these two states. The only sphere in which other European states, such as France and the US, were allowed to participate was the sphere of education and religious missionary activities. In fact, there was no comprehensive education system during the Qajar Period. As a result, Western Christian missionaries were provided with an opportunity to establish public education and charity centers and pursue their religious education and propagation objectives as freely as possible. Christian missionaries arrived in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar. The French Lazarist Catholic missionaries along with two protestant missionaries

5 Ancient Iranian history refers to the pre-Islamic history of Iran. This ancient history is divided into two periods: the period before the arrival of Aryans in Iran; and the period after their arrival. Pre-Aryan ancient Iranian history is associated with the names of civilizations existing in Iranian Plateau which are dated back to as much as 5,000 years BC. For instance, we can refer to the civilization of Shahr-e Soukhteh (or burned city) in Sistan and Elam Civilization in Khuzestan which lasted from 4,000 BC up to 1,000 BC; Jiroft Civilization in Kerman, Tepe Hissar Civilization in Damghan, Tepe Sialk in Kashan, Uratu Civilization in Azerbaijan, etc. Since 1,000 BC, migrant Aryan tribes resided in Iranian Plateau (Diakonoff, 2001, 65). Among Aryan tribes residing in Iranian Plateau, the Medes were the first one that established a state headquartered in Hamadan, west of Iran, from 713 BC up to 550 BC. Establishment of the Median Empire is considered as a turning point in the ancient Iranian history, because it was the beginning of the Aryans' surge toward establishment of ruling dynasties, which continued afterwards (Pigulevskaya *et al.*, 1974, 12–13). In 550 BC, Cyrus captured the Median territory. He was the head of Pars Tribe, an Aryan tribe and a relative to the Medes. From 545 BC up to 539 BC, Cyrus captured major cities such as Balkh, Merv, and Sogdia and laid the foundation of an extensive kingdom. In 539 BC, he conquered Babylon, the politico-cultural center of the ancient Near East, and established the biggest kingdom of the world up to that time. After defeating Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king and conquering Babylon in 538 BC, Cyrus issued his famous charter, known as Cyrus Cylinder. The Cyrus Cylinder can be considered as the first charter of human rights. Achaemenid Empire reached its greatest extent during the reign of Darius I. the Achaemenid Dynasty was toppled by Alexander III of Macedon (also known as Alexander the Great). He defeated Darius III, the last Achaemenid king, in several wars in Mesopotamia. The final defeat happened in Darband in 330 BC as a result of which the Achaemenid Dynasty came to an end. When Alexander died confrontation and rivalry began among his successors. Finally, a Seleucid-Hellenic empire was established in Iran in 312 BC by Seleucus. Alien Seleucid Empire ruled over Iran for almost 150 years. In 247 BC, however, Arsaces I of Parthia, the leader of one of the Parthian tribes known as Parni Tribe, separated Parthia from the Seleucid Empire and declared its independence. Parthia was located in southeast of Caspian Sea and Arsaces I was ruling over this territory. After Arsaces I, his brother Tiridates I, defeated the Seleucid army and recaptured the lost cities and territories of the Achaemenids. He established the Parthian Empire in 238 BC. During the reign of Mithridates I, the Parthian Empire reached to greatest extent of its power and revived Achaemenid territory. Ruling over Iran for 470 years, the Parthian Empire had the longest reign of a dynasty in the ancient Iran. Following the defeat of the last Parthian monarch, Artabanus V, in a war with Ardahir Babakan, founder of the Sassanid Empire in 224 AD, the Parthian Empire was collapsed and substituted by the Sassanid Empire (Wiesehöfer, 2001, 198–201). During its reign, the Sassanid Dynasty had colossal civilization achievements for Iran and the world. Sassanid monarchs ruled over Iran from 224 AD up to 651 AD, when their dynasty was overthrown by Muslim Arabs. Following the collapse of the Sassanid Dynasty, the era of ancient Iran came to an end and the Islamic Period began in the country (Pigulevskaya *et al.*, 1974, 67). Iranian romantic nationalists of the 19th and 20th centuries have always depicted Iran's ancient history as a period of grandeur and glory – unlike the Islamic Period of Iranian history. Following archeological discoveries in Iran and decoding the Iranian ancient history by orientalist and Iranologists, such images and ideas were introduced in Iranian books and the education system of the period of Constitutional Movement. When the Pahlavi Dynasty was established, the Iranian government adopted the promotion of Iranian ancient history as its official ideology.

from UK and US came to Iran and were granted the license of doing religious and educational activities in the country (Torabi Farsani, 2011, 83).

Out of these 3 missionaries, the American one managed to establish its first school in Iran in January 18, 1836. Since then up to the end of Qajar Period, numerous schools were established in different Iranian cities by European and American missionary groups. Supported by the embassies of their respective countries in Iran, these missionary groups were involved in intensive competitions for receiving concessions from the Iranian government and gaining influence among minority Christians, especially the Armenians and the Assyrians (Soltanian, 2011, 69–70).

Contrary to modern education system adopted by missionary groups, Iranian education system was mainly based on traditional patterns supervised by religious clerics. Higher education was pursued in religious seminary schools. Influenced by modern education system in Europe, some statesmen of the Qajar Period gradually embarked on expanding modern education throughout the country and established modern schools, first, in major cities and then developed such schools in other parts of Iran. This important development was further intensified after the establishment of Dar al-Fonoun in 1852 (Mahboubi Ardakani, 1991, 408).

Despite extensive efforts for promoting the modern education system, only a small fraction of Iran's population was literate on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution. It was an indicator of the fact that modern education system cannot be promoted so easily in a religious and traditional society like Iranian society. In other words, mere sporadic efforts by a couple of people who were acquainted with modern education system were not sufficient for the development of this modern system throughout the country. Promotion of this modern education system was dependent on an all-out support by the state and required a formulated and regulated education plan. During the Constitutional Revolution and the formation of Iranian Constitution, Iranian politicians and intellectuals realized the importance and necessity of promoting such a modern education system. Article 19 of Iranian Constitution stipulated: "Based on the laws of Ministry of Education, schools should be established by the state and through allocating public funds. Compulsory education is a must and all schools should be supervised and managed by the Ministry of Education." (Etehadieh, 1982, 97)

There were several articles in the Iranian Constitution which emphasized on the importance of public education. There were some provisions in the Constitution which highlighted that public education should be compulsory and free of charge. In 1911, Iranian Parliament ratified the Education Law which was comprised of 28 articles (Etehadieh, 1982, 99). Ministry of Education had relatively good achievements during this period. As a result of these efforts, the number of Iranian students increased from 57,000 in 1923 to 257,000 in 1936. During the same

period, Iran had 11,370 teachers and 4,901 schools. In 1940, there were 497,000 students, 13,646 teachers, and 8,237 schools in the country (Ivanov, 1978, 86).

While modern education system was expanding in Iran, the number of religious and seminary schools was dwindling. In the education year of 1924–1925, for instance, there were 282 religious schools, and 5,984 students went to these schools. However, in the education year of 1940–1941, the number of such schools and students who went to these schools reduced to 206 and 784, respectively. There were only 249 teachers in these seminary schools in the education year of 1940–1941 (Ivanov, 1978, 87).

Reduction of students in religious schools and increased number of students in modern schools were directly related to Reza Shah's educational and cultural policies. These policies were concentrated on introducing secularism to education system of Iran and undermining the influence of clerics in the educational affairs of the country and reducing their role in this sphere. Emphasizing on sports and military exercises, the modern education system was, in fact, an anti-thesis to the old and traditional education system in Iran.

Considering the fact that the budget of Jewish and Christian schools was provided by local people and the contributions of European countries, especially the French embassy, these schools enjoyed some independence in running their own affairs and adopting their own training syllabus.

This independence of finance and budget continued throughout the Qajar period and there were much opposition in accepting the government's official curriculum and education system by the foreign-run schools. As mentioned in Moqbel's report on Kurdistan in 1922, the two schools of Jewish and Christian minorities in Sanandaj did not implement the program introduced by the Ministry of Education: "Ministry of Education's program has by no means been implemented in these two schools and they are seriously reluctant of accepting this program". Elsewhere in his report, Moqbel refers to his negotiations with managers of these schools by convincing them to implement the Ministry of Education's program (NLAI, 1922, Sheet 7). Certainly, Iran's government at the time was unable at first to make any interference in running the affairs of these schools and any such interference was faced with strong opposition from the French embassy. On March 14, 1922, for instance, the French embassy sent a letter to Prime Minister Qavam al-Saltaneh and complained over the increased interferences of Education Department of Kermanshah in the affairs of the Alliance Israelite School there. In this letter, the French embassy threatened that "if instructions are not issued to prevent the head of the Education Department of Kermanshah from making any interference in the affairs of the Alliance Israelite School, necessary serious measures will be adopted by my government" (Farahani, 2006, 329). In another letter addressed to Qavam al-Saltaneh, the

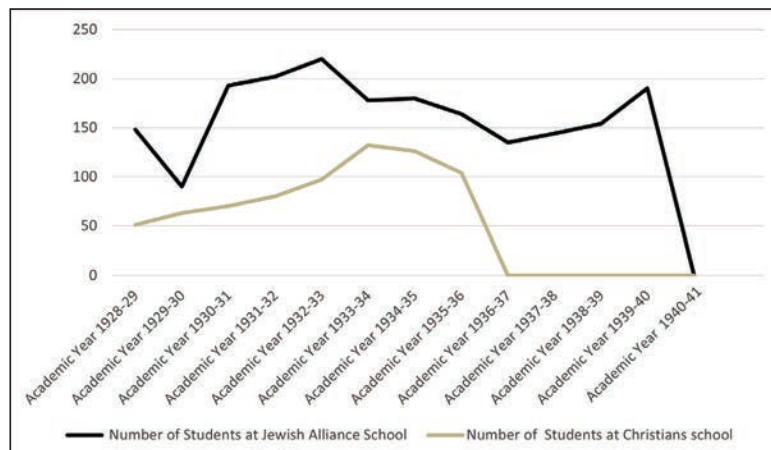


Chart 1: Statistical Comparison of Students at Jewish and Christian Schools in Sanandaj during the Reza Shah Period.

French embassy expressed its surprise over the closure of another branch of Alliance Israelite schools and emphasized that this school acts according to instructions issued from France. In this letter, the French embassy had urged the Iranian government to allow the reopening of this Alliance Israelite school and the resumption of its activities under the protection of the French government. The letter then ended with a somewhat threatening tone that could result in retaliatory actions by the French government: “I deem it as unnecessary to further remind His Highness over this issue” (Farahani, 2006, 373).

With Reza Shah’s ascendance to power in 1925, however, the state’s non-interference in the affairs of foreign and religious minority schools came to an end. It came to an end since most of Reza Shah’s actions were rooted in his desire to practice his control and supervision on all state affairs, particularly the government’s control over the education system and the implementation of a unified curriculum as set by the state (Menashri, 1992, 137).

In order to practice its control on the curricula of religious minorities’ schools, the Reza Shah’s government, since the very beginning of Reza Shah’s rise to power, allocated some monthly financial contributions to these schools. These contributions came to the minority religious schools provided that their education syllabus would be compatible with the ratified program of the Ministry of Education including teaching Persian language and Iranian history and geography. Meanwhile, Ministry of Education’s inspectors were occasionally dispatched to these schools in order to test students in those fields (Nateq, 1996, 113).

In its report of December 16, 1926, to the Ministry of Education, the Kurdistan Education Department pointed out that a monthly contribution of 50 Tomans is paid to the Chaldean Catholics School in Sanandaj and “currently, education in this school is pursued according to the

Ministry of Education’s program and all aspects of this program, except education of Koran and Islamic scriptures, are observed there”. In this report, it has been pointed out that since students of this school are Jews and Christians, they have been allowed to learn their own religious books instead of Koran and Islamic texts. “Education Department is pleased with this success and it is expected to be honored by His Highness”, the report concluded (NLAI, 1926, Sheet 8). In 1929, Esfandiyari, the head of the Education Department of Kurdistan, in another report writes on the condition of the Chaldean Catholics School in Sanandaj complaining that this school cannot simply be run by only 55 Tomans of monthly state contributions. Referring to his efforts for convincing the Christians residing in Sanandaj to increase their donations to the school, Esfandiyari reiterates that the Christian community of the city has promised to “form a commission in near future in order to allocate some monthly donations to the school from students’ tuitions, contributions by rich individuals, and revenues obtained from the sale of alcoholic drinks”. Esfandiyari made a visit to that school and upon finding out that the Christian community “has accommodated one of their priests in this school and that priest has used the school as his personal house”, he became angry and ordered the priest to gather his belongings and leave the school immediately (NLAI, 1935, Sheet 1–2). The content of this document indicates that the Education Department of Sanandaj has practiced its supervision over the affairs of religious minorities’ schools in that city, through occasional dispatching one of its inspectors. Generally speaking, during Reza Shah’s reign, the government did accept to bear some expenditure of religious minorities’ schools, provided that it can have total control over their education syllabus and methodology. In fact, compatibility of these schools’ curricula with the Ministry of Education’s programs has been one of the preconditions for receiving the state contributions.

TEACHING THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE IN FOREIGN AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND CHANGING THEIR NAMES

Enhancement and expansion of the Persian language was one of the main missions of the official education system during Reza Shah's reign. It was considered as one of the major pillars of nationalism in order to strengthen national unity. Therefore, establishment and expansion of educational institutions in different parts of the country, especially in tribal regions, became significantly important (Dehqani *et al.*, 2017, 153). In a confidential letter to the Ministry of Interior Affairs on February 27, 1932, the governor of Kurdistan considered "the establishment of numerous schools in the city and villages and dispatching teachers from the capital to these schools" as a 'necessity'. Because the people of Kurdistan "as a result of receiving basic educations, finally are estranged from their Kurdish language and are no longer familiar with this language" (NLAI, 1931, Sheet 3).

For the promotion of the Persian language in tribal regions, the Reza Shah government did not merely suffice itself to the establishment and development of state schools in these regions. Rather, it created constraints for the usage of local languages in tribal regions and endeavored to dispatch non-indigenous teachers, who had no familiarity with the indigenous local languages in tribal areas" (Rasouli *et al.*, 2016, 85). In a circulation, issued on September 6, 1928, the Kurdistan Department of Education instructed all governmental and non-governmental schools as follows: "All school staff are obliged to observe measures for the promotion of the Persian language so that both teachers and students speak the Persian language specifically" (NLAI, 1928, Sheet 19).

Efforts for using the Persian language for educational purposes were not limited to state schools. On October 13, 1927, Ministry of Education issued a circulation that required all foreign and national schools belonging to religious minorities to "teach the Persian language to Iranian children, including Muslims, Armenians, and Assyrian, since grade one". This circulation emphasized that schools that refuse to comply with this order would be closed (NLAI, 1936d, Sheet 25). When this circulation was issued, these schools' authorities requested the Ministry of Education to exempt them from complying with its provisions. They argued that it is not common to speak the Persian language in regions in which Armenians and Assyrians are living. Therefore, they requested from the Ministry of Education to exempt these schools from observing this law and allow them to start teaching the Persian language to their students from grade three. Ministry of Education, however, rejected their request and emphasized that students "should start their education with the Persian language since the first year, i.e.

when they are 7 years old" (NLAI, 1936d, Sheet 25). A study on the curricula of religious minorities' schools in the city of Sanandaj indicates that these schools have followed the provisions of the above-mentioned circulation. According to this study, teachers in the Alliance Israelite school of Sanandaj in June 1929 taught the Persian language reading and essay writing to their students as follows: 14 hours for Grade one; 8 hours for Grade two; and 6 hours for Grades three and four (NLAI, 1936e, Sheet 3).

Establishing the Academy of Persian Language and changing the foreign names of many shops, centers, and schools were amongst the government's initiatives in this regard (Hekmat, 1976, 146). As some sources have indicated, Reza Shah hated European terminologies. For example when traveling to the city of Khorramabad in 1929 Reza Shah visited the Alliance Israelite school and was seriously infuriated upon hearing the foreign name of this school (Valizadeh, 2003, 226). In 1934, the Ministry of Education issued a circulation addressing the provincial Education Departments and urged them to oblige Armenian, American, and Alliance schools change their names and "based on their location and position, adopt a Persian name for themselves – for instance, adopt the name of one of the Iranian historical figures". This circulation recommended the provincial Education Departments "implementing this initiative immediately and reporting the outcome of their efforts in this regard" (Ettela'at, 1934, 8). Accordingly, "Le Lycée Franco-Persian" was renamed as "Razi High School"; Saint Louis School was renamed as "Tehran School"; 'Jeanne d'Arc School' was renamed as "Manouchehri School"; 'American School for Girls' was renamed as "Nourbakhsh School"; 'American School for Boys' was renamed as "Alborz High School", and the 'French Alliance' was renamed as "Ettehad School" (NLAI, 1934a, Sheet 1). Before the issuance of the above-mentioned circulation, the Chaldean Catholics School in Sanandaj had been renamed as 'Pahlavi Primary School'. In 1935, the Alliance Israelite Primary School of this city was renamed as Ferdousi School (NLAI, 1934b, Sheet 8). After a year, however, the Alliance Israelite School of Sanandaj, like other Alliance schools throughout the country, was changed to "Ettehad" (Yearbook of the Education Department of Kurdistan 1936–1937, 1937, 172).

INSUFFICIENT BUDGETS TO RELIGIOUS MINORITIES' SCHOOLS AND EFFORTS FOR CLOSING THEM

Concurrent with the development of the state-run schools in different regions of the country, the government was dissatisfied with the performance of foreign and religious minorities' schools, especially

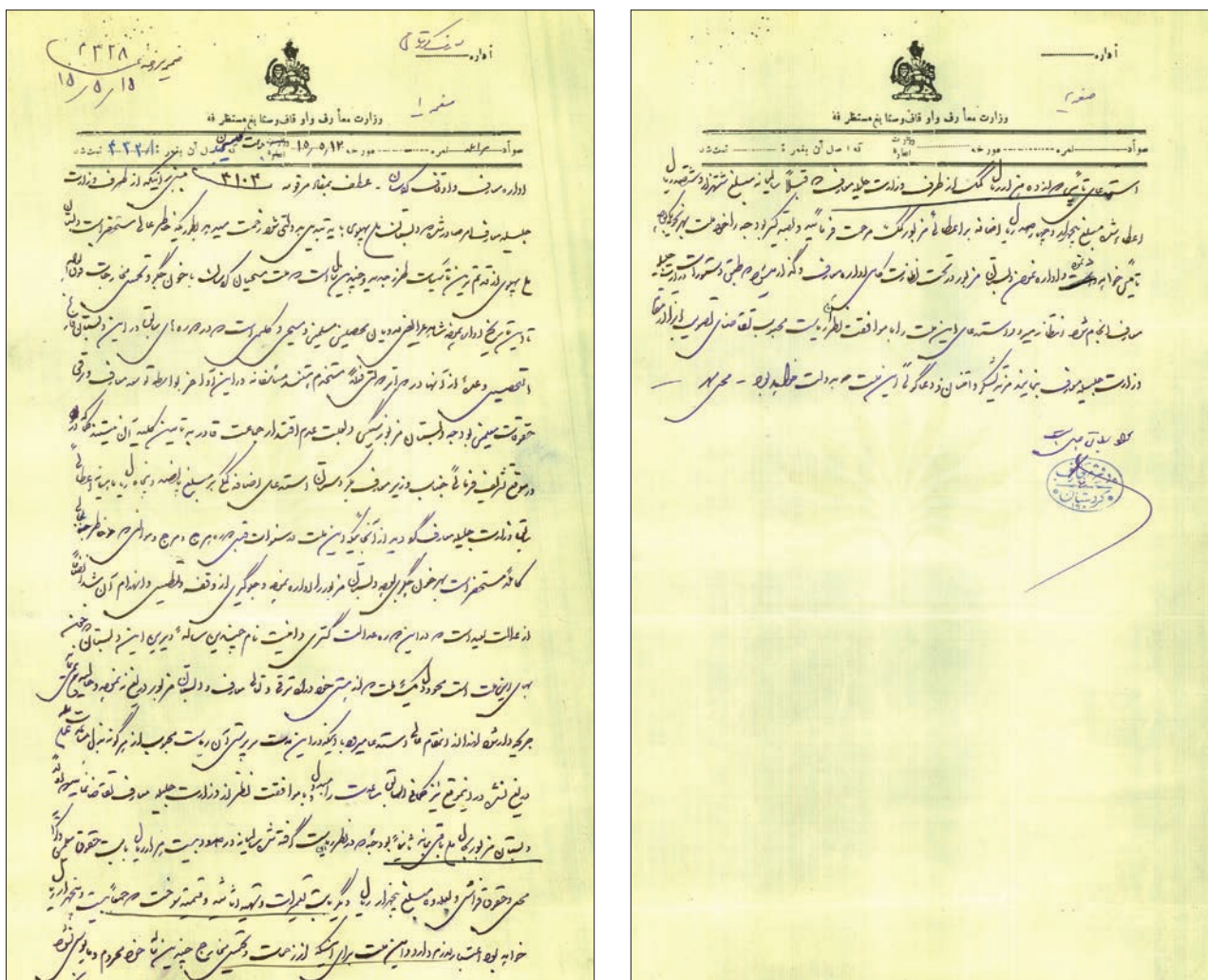


Image 1: The Christian Community of Sanandaj's request for reversing the decision to change the Pahlavi Chaldean School into a State School (National Library and Archives of Iran, Document Code No. 14372/297).

their programs for teaching languages such as French and Hebrew. By allocating insufficient budgets to these schools, therefore, the government tried to undermine their activities and force their students to register in state schools. Accordingly, the government always ignored the demands of Christian and Jewish communities for increasing the state contributions allocated to their schools. In 1927, the Jewish community wrote a letter to the Ministry of Education and requested for an increase to the budget of Jewish minority schools, "which have been teaching based on programs put forward by the respectful Ministry of Education". In their letter, the Jewish community had requested for a monthly contribution of 30 Tomans for each of their schools in the cities of Bushehr and Yazd and 20 Tomans for each of their schools in the cities of Sanandaj, Hamadan, Golpaygan, and Rasht. The Ministry of Education, however, rejected

this request and emphasized that "we do not have surplus credits for such expenditures" (NLAI 1936f, Sheet 31).

Referring to the Jewish community's request from the Ministry of Education "to allocate a monthly contribution of 100 Tomans to the Alliance Israelite School in the current year", the Education Department of Kurdistan argued that the budget for 1929 has been finalized and ratified and their request is "unacceptable and meaningless" (NLAI, 1936f, Sheet 34). In the same year, i.e., 1929, the Jewish community of Sanandaj wrote another letter to the Ministry of Education and observed: "It is almost 10 years that Alliance Israelite Committee has been unable to provide the required budget for this school. We have managed to run this school for 8 years. However, the Jewish community with a population of almost 2,000 poor individuals is no longer able to meet this school's financial requirements

such that the school is on the verge of the impending closure". At the end of their letter, the Jewish community had requested the Ministry of Education to provide their school with sufficient contributions (NLAI, 1936f, Sheet 2–3).

In the same year, the Jewish community wrote a private letter directly to Reza Shah and requested the monarch to help them. The Special Royal Office sent their request to the Ministry of Education and the Department of Public Education of that ministry replied their letter as follows: "Due to lack of necessary credit, no proper and effective measures can be adopted for the time being"; however, in order to prevent any interruption in the education of the Jewish community's children, it urged the Education Department of Kurdistan to register these children in state schools (NLAI, 1936f, Sheet 37). The Education Department of Kurdistan's letter of January 1930 to the Ministry of Education indicates that state schools in Western Iran "especially in Hamadan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan, and Qasr-e Shirin, accepted to register the children of Jewish and Christian communities" and a large number of them were studying in state schools (NLAI, 1936f, Sheet 48). This document specifies that parents of Jewish and Christian children in many parts of Iran, including Kurdistan, due to their economic and financial problems and high costs of studying in their communities' peculiar schools, have refused to register their children in such schools and instead have registered them in state schools that provided free-of-charge education to children.

In its letter of February 12, 1930, to the Ministry of Education, the Jewish community of the city of Bijar wrote: "Due to the reduced budget and lack of necessary credits to pay the teachers' salaries, our school is rapidly moving toward dissolution". Elsewhere in their letter, they emphasized the fact that "we have repeatedly, by writing either to the local education department or directly to the Ministry of Education, requested for contributions to our schools in order to prevent their closure; unfortunately, we have received disappointing answers in all these correspondence". During this period, the letter pointed out that, "education has been provided for all towns and villages throughout the country; unfortunately, this miserable Jewish community has totally been deprived of benefits of such an initiative". "Based on the law of equality", therefore, they request the Ministry of Education "to pay due attention to their community's school in the annual budget of 1931" (NLAI, 1936f, Sheet 49–50). Rejection of their request by the Ministry of Education urged them to raise similar demands in upcoming years to receive budgets for handling the chaotic condition of their schools. In 1936, for instance, the Kurdistan Jewish community requested the Ministry of Education to allocate a monthly contribution of 300 Rials to their school. As usual, the Ministry of Educati-

on once again rejected their request under the pretext of "lack of credits". However, the Ministry ordered the Education Office of Garous (Bijar) "to register children of the Jewish community in state primary schools so that they can continue their education easily" (NLAI, 1936g, Sheet 3–6).

In its letter of June 21, 1936, to the Ministry of Education, the Education Department of Kurdistan wrote that the Pahlavi National Primary School in Sanandaj, which belonged to the Chaldean Catholics, "receives a monthly contribution of 550 Rials from the state. For two years, we have, through numerous correspondents, endeavored to increase this sum. Unfortunately, we have so far been unable to achieve our objective and nothing has been done in this regard. In the current year, this school had 4 students in grade 6 all of whom have failed to pass final exams". Therefore, "it is no longer required to waste the state budget. For this reason, it is proposed that either the state's contributions to this school are cut and its grade 5 and grade 6 classes are dissolved or the credit allocated to this school is raised and it is turned into a state primary school" (NLAI, Document Code No. 16254/297, 1936, Sheet: 1). Issuing necessary instructions, Ministry of Education urged the Chaldean Catholics School of Sanandaj to turn into a state school. Consequently, the Christian community of Sanandaj wrote a letter to the Ministry of Education and complained of instructions issued by that ministry. They requested the Ministry of Education's officials to allow them to maintain their independence as a primary school and as a national educational institute and increase state contributions to this school (NLAI, 1936c, Sheet 4–6).

In 1936, the Education Office in the city of Saqqez, in Iranian Kurdistan, ordered the closure of a newly established Jewish primary school, which taught the Hebrew language. This school had been constructed by the Jewish community of the city. Authorities closed this school because, as they argued, "teaching the Hebrew language to students, who are under 7 years old, is contrary to educational laws and regulations" (NLAI, 1936b, Sheet 4). For this reason, the Jewish community of Saqqez wrote a letter to the Ministry of Education and protested against "the total closure of the Jewish Hebrew School of Saqqez by the head of the Education Office of this city" (NLAI, 1936b, Sheet 5). Ministry of Education, however, wrote a letter to the Education Department of Kurdistan and observed: "It is necessary to order all children of the Jewish community of Saqqez to get registered in the state primary school of that city and report the results to the Ministry of Education immediately" (NLAI, 1936b, Sheet 6).

These documents indicate that, during the Reza Shah's reign, the government has totally welcomed the closure of national schools belonging to religious minorities. The government cut its contributions,

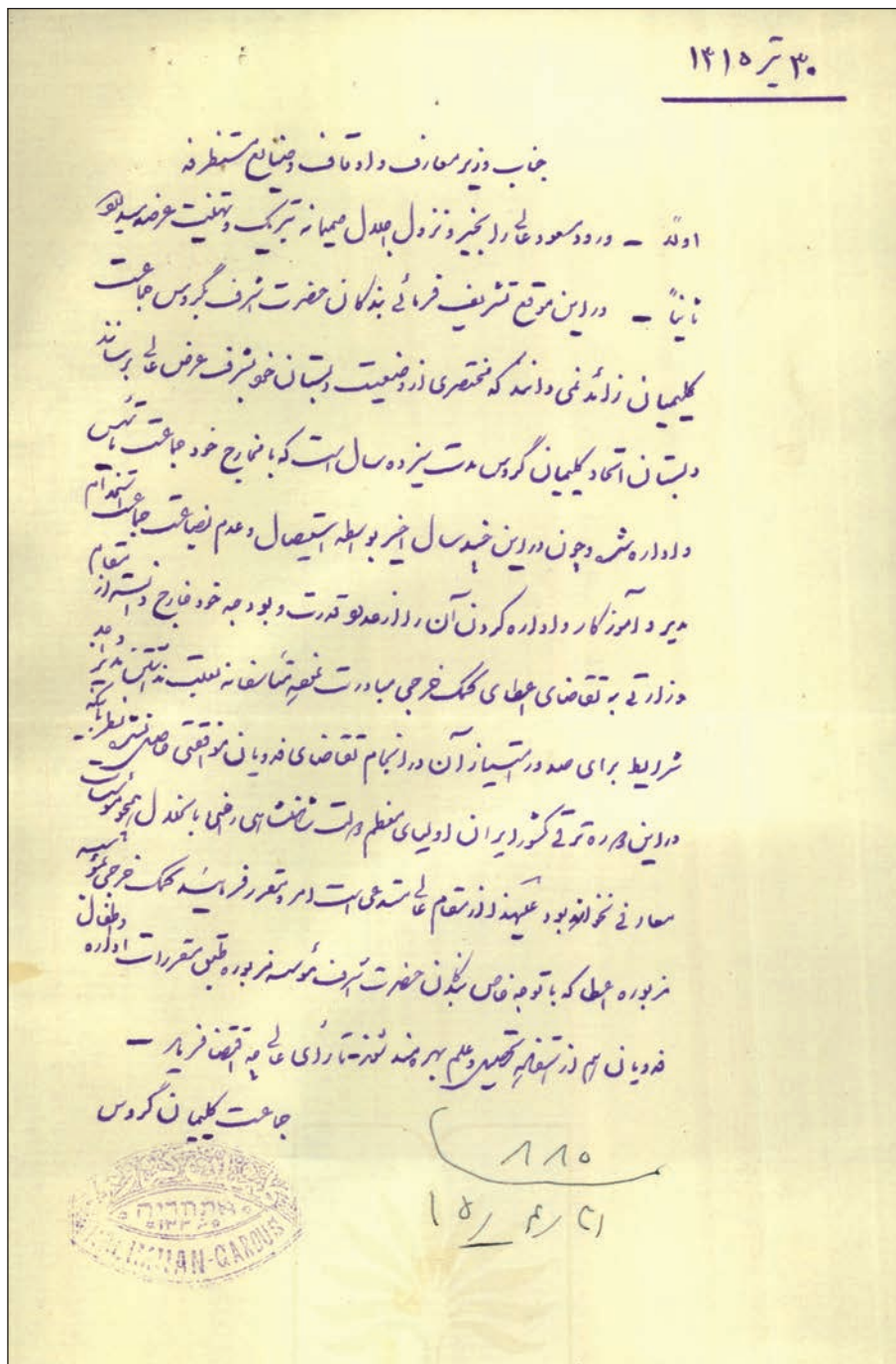


Image 2: The request of the Jews of Garous for receiving financial contribution for the Alliance Israelite School and its rejection by Ministry of Education (National Library and Archives of Iran, Document Code No. 14224/297).

particularly financial, to Jewish and Christian schools under various pretexts in order to have those schools closed and force Jewish and Christian communities to register their children in state-owned schools. Despite its numerous financial problems and reduction of state contributions to religious minorities' schools,

the Jewish community's school in Sanandaj survived up to the end of the academic year of 1939-1940. However, lack of any reference to the statistics of this school in the *Yearbook of the Ministry of Education* indicates that it had been closed during the last year of Reza Shah's reign.

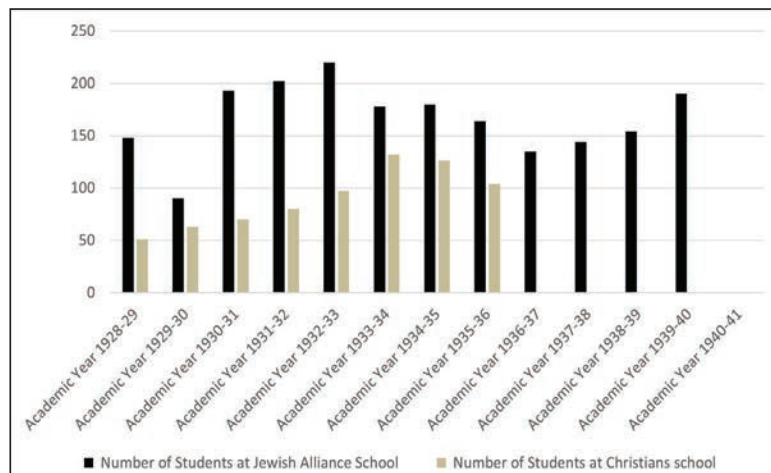


Chart 2: Statistical Comparison of Students at Jewish and Christian Schools in Sanandaj during the Reza Shah Period.

CONCLUSION

After assuming power in 1925, Reza Shah promoted and strengthened nationalism in Iran and moved toward nation-building and enhancing national unity. Since the expansion of public education within the context of schools was one of the key instruments for creating a national identity, the government underlined the issues of culture and education and practiced a monopolized prerogative control over the curricula in both state and non-state schools. Since the very beginning of his rule, Reza Shah paid contributions to foreign and national schools belonging to religious minorities with the intention to gradually oblige them to follow the Ministry of Education's programs. What's more interesting is that under Reza Shah's rule, the Ministry of Education tried to enforce these minority-religious schools to teach the Persian language and Iranian history and geography as a compulsory curriculum. Findings of the present research indicates that although Jewish and Christian minorities' schools in Sanandaj followed the instructions of the Ministry of Education, the government was not so much interested in the expansion of these schools and the continuation of their activities. By refusing the repeated requests of the authorities of Jewish and Christian minorities' schools for increasing the state contributions to these schools, the government prepared the context for their closure and absorbing their students in the state-run schools. Despite the fact that the government had adopted such a policy and although religious minorities' schools were severely suffering from a lack of financial resources, Jewish and Christian minorities' schools in Sanandaj were

not totally closed. However, the government was trying to close these schools under different pretexts. Generally speaking, it can be argued that concurrent with the expansion of state schools throughout the country during Reza Shah's reign, the government adopted different initiatives to constrain the activities of non-state schools and even have them closed in order to practice its monopolized control over the nation's education system. The Chaldean Catholics and Alliance Israelite schools in Sanandaj were not an exemption from this procedure and government policies of the time. Adoption of such a policy resulted in changes in the names of these schools based on nationalistic and pan-Iranian policies and the government's educational programs. Meanwhile, the perilous economic condition of religious minorities' schools in Sanandaj and pressures exercised by state institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, forced the Jewish and Christian communities of this city to close their schools and register their children in state schools.

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UČINKI KULTURNIH POLITIK V OBDOBJU REZE ŠAHA NA POLOŽAJ ŠOL JUDOVSKÉ IN KRŠČANSKE MANJŠINE V SANANDADŽU

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POVZETEK

Reza Šah Pahlavi, splošno poznan kot Reza Šah, si je v prvi polovici 20. stoletja načrtno prizadeval za krepitev in širjenje nacionalizma ter kulturne homogenizacije v Iranu, ki naj bi pripomogla k izgradnji države ter k intelektualni in duhovni enotnosti iranske večetnične družbe. Osrednji pomen izobraževalnih institucij za razvoj državne nacionalistične in ideologije in dogme v tem obdobju ter vladni monopol nad vsebino in obliko izobraževalnega sistema sta poganjala nadaljnje utrjevanje in širitev mreže javnih šol. Reza Šah je s svojimi politikami začel v ta namen spodbujati popoln vladni nadzor nad nacionalnim kurikulumom in njegovim izvajanjem v tujih in državnih šolah, še zlasti v tistih, ki so vključevale populacije verskih manjšin, s čimer je poskrbel za brezizjemno izvajanje programov, ki jih je določalo Ministrstvo za izobraževanje. Pričujoča raziskava skuša na osnovi arhivskih dokumentov in virov podati pregled ciljev in postopkov oblikovanja politik, ki jih je za nejavne šole določala vlada Reze Šaha, obenem pa preučiti učinek teh politik na državne šole judovskih in krščanskih manjšin v mestu Sanandadž (v iranskem Kurdistanu).

Ključne besede: Reza Šah, Sanandadž, Kurdistan, manjšinske šola, nacionalizem, iranski judje in kristjani, nacionalni kurikulum

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