

# **GOVERNMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF MODERN SCIENCES IN THE ERA OF NASER AL-DIN SHAH**

**(State Institutions and Their Role in the Transfer of Modern Sciences)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

After the sovereignty of Qajar Dynasty, which was about the same time as the significant progress of Europe, Iran began to get familiar with modern sciences in a serious manner. Moreover, the competition of different European countries throughout the world and the situation of Iran in the battlefield of these countries paved the way for Iranian people to become familiar with western civilization and have sight of new technology and science. This first steps toward obtaining modern sciences were taken in the era of Fath'ali Shah Qajar and continued until the era of Mohammad Shah. During these two epochs, primary efforts were devoted to obtain modern sciences in a limited manner proportional to the knowledge and understanding of Iranian scholars of these sciences.

In the era of Naser Al-Din Shah, the familiarity of Iranian with these sciences expanded vastly and the elites and political leaders of Iran felt the need to apply such sciences. This need forced the government to change the fields of its institutions and create new institutions to obtain and disseminate new technology in Iran.

This paper aims to study the efforts expended to establish institutions in the field of government and transferring new sciences, and one of the most important institutions of the government established to transfer and educate people using new sciences in Iran will be studied.

**Keywords:** Era of Naser Al-Din Shah, Official and State Institutions, New Sciences, Transfer Methods

## **Introduction**

The significant changes in the Europe, and its impacts on Iran, which was along with political changes, made it required to create modern administrative establishments proportional to the increase of the tasks and duties of the government.

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The change in the administrative and governmental structure of the state was proposed firstly in the era of Naser Al-Din Shah and after his trip to Europe. Upon his return, the number of ministries was changed gradually based on the requirements and necessities of the state. Any changes, increase or decrease in the number of the ministries or their merger was carried out based on the personal taste of the King. However, the efforts of the government to establish official institutions such as ministry of science to spread modern sciences, was of great importance. Hence, we study the deliberate efforts of the government to spread modern science and technology, which was realized by the establishment of different institutions such as ministry of science.

### 1- Ministry of Science

The ministry of science was established for the first time in the era of Naser Al-Din Shah in 1859.<sup>2</sup> E'tezad Al-Saltaneh, the learned prince and proponent of new Idea of Qajar Dynasty, who had knowledge of most industries and sciences, was appointed as the head of this ministry;<sup>3</sup> thus, he was the first minister of science of Iran.<sup>4</sup> During his office, he rendered valuable services to promote the scientific level of Iran. After his death in 1881, the powers and authorities of the ministry of science were delegated to Ali Gholi Khan Mokhber Al-Doleh son of Reza Gholi Khan bearing the title "Amir Al-Sho'ara" (Prince of Poets) and having the pen name "Hedayat".<sup>5</sup>

In the following, we discuss the measures taken by the ministry of science (during the office of E'tezad Al-Saltaneh and Mokhber Al-Doleh) to disseminate modern science and technology.

It must be noted that the framework of the ministry of science and the outlines of what this ministry had to carry out, as well as the policies of this ministry for transferring and spreading modern sciences was instructed by Naser Al-Din Shah Qajar in his order (dated 1866) to the ministry of science. Based on this order, the tasks of the ministry of science, which was one of the most important institutions of the government was assigned to E'tezad Al-Saltaneh. According to this assignment, the minister was in charge to do his best to promote sciences and industries, regulate the affairs of telegraph offices, and supervise the state newspapers and state news to be published properly.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, E'temad Al-Saltaneh, Al-Ma'aser va Al-Asar, Vol. I, coordinated by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Asatir Publications, 1374), P. 142).

<sup>3</sup> Ali Gholi Mirza, E'tezad Al-Saltaneh, Eksir Al-Tavarikh, coordinated by Jamshid Kianfar (Tehran: Visman Publications, 1370), P. 19

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, E'temad Al-Saltaneh, Al-Ma'aser va Al-Asar, Vol. 2, P. 478.

<sup>5</sup> Mehdi Bamdad, Sharhehale Rajale Iran (Biography of Iranian Great Men), in 12, 13, 14 Century, Summerized by Zabih Allah Alizadeh Oshkori (Tehran: Ferdos Publications, 1384) P. 441.

<sup>6</sup> Document no. 296000005, place in archive 1ZA1A105 (1311 105), Iran National Documents

The services rendered and measured taken by E'tezad Al-Saltaneh, minister of science show that he tried to most extent to obey the instructions of the said order and in some cases, he acted beyond the instructions. These measures can be classified into the following items:

#### **A- Sending Students Abroad**

In 1856, E'tezad Al-Saltaneh sent forty-two students of Dar Al-Fonun, who were supervised by Abdol Rasul Khan great grandchild of Sadr Esfahani, to France to study in different fields of science and technology.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Hassan Ali Khan Garousi was in charge of the students as the minister plenipotentiary of Iran in France and Great Britain. He was responsible to prepare reports of their educational progress in France and send them to the royal court of Iran. Some of these reports were published in the state newspapers of Iran such as "Dolat Elliye Iran Newspaper".<sup>8</sup>

In 1861, the minister plenipotentiary sent a letter to Mirza Sa'id Khan Moshir Al-Doleh, minister of foreign affairs, to report the educational conditions of these students including Heidar Ali Najar, Mirza Mahmud, Mirza Ali Khan and other.

The important issue in this letter is that the minister plenipotentiary requests the minister to procure any materials and equipments required for the profession of each student so that they can begin their work after return to Iran, since he believed that the student sent abroad to study different sciences should spread and apply their knowledge otherwise the objective of sending students abroad were not met.<sup>9</sup>

To meet the request of the minister plenipotentiary, the government of Iran sent money to procure required materials and equipment for each student. For example, the sum of 4750 Franc was assigned for buying tools, devices and books of agriculture, or the sum of 4500 Franc was spent for the purchase of equipments required for the production of porcelain.<sup>10</sup>

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Organization.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, E'temad Al-Saltaneh, Tarikh Montazam Naseri, Vol. 3, edited by Mohammad Esmaeel Rezvani (Tehran: Donyaye Ketab Publications, 1376), P. 1812.

Abd Allah, Mostofi, Sharhe Zendegani Man Ya Tarikh Ejtemaee va Edari Dore Qajar (my biography or social and administrative history in Qajar Era), Vol. 1 (Tehran: Zavar Publications, 1371) P. 86

<sup>8</sup> For Example refer to: Dolat Elliye Iran Newspaper (Iran High Government Newspaper), No. 491, 10<sup>th</sup> Zi-Ghade 1277 AH(Ghamari) & No. 555, 10 Ramadan 1280 AH.

<sup>9</sup> The copy of document extracted from Vahid Magazine, First Year, No. 4 has been enclosed

<sup>10</sup> Ahmad Soheyli Khansari, Sefarat Amir Nezam va Ezame Daneshjoo be Orupa (Embassy of Amir Nezam and Sending Iranian Students to Europe), Vahid Magazine, First Year, No. 4, P. 237/ Khan Baba, Bayani, Panjah Sal Tarikh Iran dar Dore Naseri (Fifty years of Iran history in Naseri Era) Vol. 1 (Tehran: Elm Publications, 1374) P. 279.

However, most of these students rendered various services in their fields of study after returning to Iran, and they paved the way for the dissemination of modern sciences in Iran.

### **B- Telegraph**

The telegraph of Iran is indebted hugely to E'tezad Al-Saltaneh and Mokhber Al-Doleh, i.e. E'tezad Al-Saltaneh was effective in the establishment of telegraph in Iran, and Mokhber Al-Doleh was influential in its management and promotion. When E'tezad Al-Sataneh was appointed as the head of Telegraph Administration, he sent 30 Iranian students to Tbilisi to study telegraph systems. Among these students, Mirza Javad Khan Sad Al-Doleh was the most famous one.<sup>11</sup>

The establishment of telegraph in Iran, which was very effective in the social and political life of the people of that era, has been described by Vaghayeh Etefaghieh Newspaper: "in European countries, many surprising and strange inventions have been marketed, which are not common in Iran; one of these inventions is telegraph, a wire system sending messages over long distance. According to the order of Naser Al-Din Shah, it is ordered Monsieur Kerziz, Austrian artillery teacher of Dar Al-Fonun to procure the required equipments for implementing the order of King under the supervision of Prince E'tezad Al-Saltaneh.<sup>12</sup>

In 1274 AH (1858), telegraph lines was installed between Golestan Palace and Lalehzar Garden through E'tezad Al-Saltaneh's efforts.<sup>13</sup>

In the next year, a telegraph line was installed from Tehran to Zanjan and Soltanieh under the assistance of E'tezad Al-Saltaneh; this line was extended in 1276 AH (1860) to Tabriz.<sup>14</sup>

The telegraph network was spread throughout Iran; for example, in 1284 AH (1868) a telegraph line was installed between Azerbaijan and Ghazvin.<sup>15</sup>

The efforts of E'tezad Al-Saltaneh are of great importance because according to the existing documents he supervised and protected telegraph lines and their performance.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, Etemad Al-Saltaneh, Al-Ma'aser va Al-Asar, Vol. 2. P. 702.

<sup>12</sup> Vaghayeh Etefaghieh Newspaper, No. 372, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shaban 1274 AH (Ghamari).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. No. 379, 21<sup>st</sup> Ramadan 1274 AH.

<sup>14</sup> Eghbal, Yaghmaee, Vaziran Olum va Ma'aref va Farhang Iran (Ministers of Iran Science, Education, and Culture) (Tehran: Markaz Nashre Daneshgahi, 1375) PP. 12-13. Khan Baba, Bayani, Vol. 3, P. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Document No. 295003522, Place in Archive 1 R A 1B830 (1 ج 11-830), Iran National Documents Organization.

In the meantime, the assistance and cooperations of Aligholi Khan Mokhber Al-Doleh worked under supervision of E'tezad Al-Saltaneh in telegraph administration shall not be forgotten. After the death of E'tezad Al-Saltaneh, Mokhber Al-Doleh was appointed to administer and supervise telegraph administration and improve it. The development of telegraph under supervision of Mokhber Al-Doleh was in such a way that in 1306 AH (1889) all cities and important centers of Iran as well as the territory of Ottoman's Empire, France and Britain were able to contact with Dar Al-Khelafeh Naseri (Capital of Iran in the Era of Naser Al-Din Shah) through telegraph lines.<sup>17</sup>

Anyhow, the efforts to expand telegraph lines in Iran was very useful for the government, for example, the news of different cities of Iran sent to the capital and notification of orders and decrees to the public servants in different points of Iran helped the government to be more dominant and administer more conveniently the affairs.

On the other hand, the application of this new phenomenon helped the news of western countries to penetrate into and spread in Iran and it caused the Iranians to be familiar with the western civilization and modern sciences.

### **C- Publication of Press and State Newspapers**

In the era of Naser Al-Din Shan, despite the censorship of newspapers and magazines, many publications in different topics were published. Several of these publications belong to the period, when Etezzad Al-Saltaneh had office as the minister of science and head of Publications Administration.

These newspapers are as follows:

#### Dolat Elliye Iran Newspaper (State Newspaper)

After the publication of the issue no. 471 of Vaghayeh Etefaghieh Newspaper on 26<sup>th</sup> Moharam 1277 AH (Ghamari) (Aug. 14, 1860), the next issue of this newspaper was published bearing the title Dolat Elliye Iran Newspaper. This newspaper was published until 1283 AH (1866).

The newspaper of Dolat Elliyeh was supervised by the ministry of science and E'tezad Al-Saltaneh. This newspaper was the first illustrated newspaper of Iran and published domestic news (about royal affairs, governmental affairs and other territories of Iran) and foreign news. Thus, some parts of these news was about the news of the ministry of science reporting the educational

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<sup>16</sup> Document No. 295000208, Place in Archive 1 R A 1 A 310 (1 ر آ 1 آ 310), & Document No. 295002254 , Place in Archive 1 R A NA 349 (1 ر آ ن آ 349), Iran National Documents Organization.

<sup>17</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, E'temad Al-Saltaneh, Al Ma'aser va Al-Asar, Vol. 1, P.124. For more information refer to: Jahangir, Ghaem-Maghani, Sabeghe Telegraph dar Iran (Background of Telegraph in Iran), Barasihaye Tarikhi, 7<sup>th</sup> year, No. 1, PP. 75-88

situation of the students of Dar Al-Fonun and those students sent abroad to continue their studies.<sup>18</sup> From the issue no. 593, Dolat Elliyeh Iran Newspaper changed its name to State Newspaper.<sup>19</sup>

#### Mellat Saniye Iran Newspaper (National Newspaper)

The first issue of this newspaper was published on 15<sup>th</sup> Moharam 1283 AH (May 30, 1866) under the ministry of E'tezad Al-Sataneh and administered by him. After the third issue, this newspaper changed its name to "National Newspaper".<sup>20</sup>

This newspaper published literary topics including the biography of classic and temporary poets of Iran. The last issue of this newspaper was published on 20<sup>th</sup> Jamadi Al-Akher 1287 AH (Sept., 17, 1870).<sup>21</sup>

#### Ellmiye Newspaper

Another newspaper established under the ministry of E'tezad Al-Saltaneh was "Ellmiye Newspaper", which was the first scientific newspaper of Iran discussed scientific issues specifically. This newspaper was published for the first time in 1280 AH (1863) in three languages of Persian, Arabic and French. It was published until 1287 AH (1870).<sup>22</sup>

According to the editorial of the first issue of this newspaper, this newspaper aimed to publish and disseminate useful topics of science and technology.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, this newspaper assigned to the publication of various scientific issues and new discoveries of the western countries to pave the way for Iranians to be more familiar with new achievements of the West.

#### Danesh Newspaper

This newspaper was published firstly under the ministry of Aligholi Mokhber Al-Doleh, minister of science and principal of Dar Al-Fonun School, in 1299 AH (1881). The last issue of this newspaper was published in 16<sup>th</sup> Safar 1300 AH (Dec. 27, 1882).

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<sup>18</sup> Mohammad Sadr Hashemi, Tarikh Jarayed va Majalat Iran (History of Iran Newspapers and Magazines), Vol. 2 (Esfahan: Kamal Publications, 1364), PP. 302, 306.

<sup>19</sup> Mohammad, Sadr Hashemi, Vol. 2, P. 307

<sup>20</sup> Eghbal, Yaghmaee, p.17; Mohammad, Sadr Hashemi, vol.4, pp 237-238.

<sup>21</sup> Ali Asghar, Kia, Vaziati Rooznamehaye Payetakht pish az mashrootiyat (situation of capital newspaper befor constitutionalism, Ganjine Asnad Magazine, 11<sup>th</sup> year, no. 41-42, p.28

<sup>22</sup> Mohammad, Mohit Tabatabaee, Tarikh Tahlili Matbooot Iran (Analytic History of Iran Press) (Tehran: Be'sat Publications, 1366), P. 28. & Mohammad, Sadr Hashemi, Vol. 4, P. 45.

<sup>23</sup> Ellmiye Newspaper, No. 1,1 (first) Sha'ban 1280 AH.

The main topics of this newspaper published in 14 issues were on useful scientific topics of natural sciences, chemistry, medicine, agriculture, astrology, music, etc.<sup>24</sup>

The study of the newspapers published under the supervision of ministry of science shows that there were several newspapers such as Ellmiye, Danesh, Dolat Elliye Iran, which focused mainly on modern sciences and scientific issues. These newspapers were important channels for disseminating and spreading new sciences in Iran.

#### **D- Publications and Translations**

Translation and publication of book began in the era of Abbas Mirza crown prince of Fathali Shah Qajar along with other reforming measures taken by him and continued in the era of Mohammad Shah Qajar. This trend improved highly in the era of Naser Al-Din Shah especially under the office of Grand Minister Amir Kabir.

In this era, there were two factors motivated the translation and publication of different books: Establishment of Dar Al-Fonun School, and State Translators' Department, which compiled and translated many books through its translators.<sup>25</sup> These two institutions helped hugely to transfer the works and thoughts of European scholars and thinkers to Iran and expand modern sciences in Iranian society.

Moreover, in the era of Amir Kabir almost many books were imported to Iran. For example, in 1265 AH (1849), 293 books on natural sciences, agriculture, mineralogy, economics, military sciences and technology, medicine, etc were sent from France to Iran.<sup>26</sup>

Through efforts and under supervisions of Amir Kabir many books and papers were translated or authored to promote the awareness of the society and enlighten Iranian people.

The process of translation and publication of books was developed upon the improvement of Dar Al-Fonun, graduation of its first students, and the establishment of the ministry of science and its related directorates.

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<sup>24</sup> Danesh Newspaper, No. 1, 23, Rajab 1299 AH, P. 1.  
Abbas Eghbal, Tarikhnegari dar Iran, Yadegar first year, No. 7, PP.15-17.

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Amir, Sheykh Noori, Faraz va Forood Eslahat dar Asre Amir Kabir (up and down of reforms in Amir Kabir's Era) (Tehran: Farhang and Andishe Publications, 1386), P. 383.

<sup>26</sup> Fereydoon Adamiyat, Amir Kabir and Iran, PP.380 – 381.

For more information about the names of books refer to: up and down of reforms in Amir Kabir's Era. P. 385

Translation department, which was in charge of translating books and foreign newspapers in cooperation with Publication Department worked under supervision of E'tezad Saltaneh, minister of science, and was active as a directorate of the ministry of science until 1288 AH (1871).<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, this historical epoch is full of works regarding literature, mysticism, and history. Fortunately, among the publications and translations of this era, there can be found several books about modern sciences, such as "Dadr Al-Hesab", "Falak Al-Sa'adat", "Jaresghal", "Janevar Nameh", "Badee Al-Hesab", "Dorre Maknon", "Tohfah Al-Sehe", "Dastoor Al-Ateba", "Nameh Daneshvaran".<sup>28</sup>

In these works and other publications of this era, the tendency towards modern sciences such as natural sciences, mathematics, military sciences can be seen.

For example, Janevar Nameh, a valuable book of this period, addresses zoology, which is a modern science. This book was compiled by Mirza Taghi Ansari Kashani Doctor of Medicine, one of the teachers of Dar Al-Fonun and an active translator of Naser Al-Din Shah's Era. This book is about different fields of natural science and biology and different insects of Iran.

To compile this book, Ansari researched and studied deeply as he mentioned, "I decided to author a book on the toxic animals of Iran, and therefore I gathered all my travelogues and works to write this book, bearing the title Janevar Nameh".<sup>29</sup>

Another valuable service of E'tezad Al-Saltaeh in this field is the establishment of a foundation for preparing a grand encyclopedia. This encyclopedia, which was not completed, named "Nameh Daneshvaran". It was authored by four famous scholars of that era: Shams Al-Olama Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Abd Rab Abadi, Mirza Abolfazl Savoiji, Molla Abdolvahab Ghazvini, and Mirza Hassan Ghazvini. This book contains the biography of the scholars of different fields of science.<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

At the beginning of the era of Naser Al-Din Shah, the familiarity of Iranian with modern sciences improved vastly, since the political leaders of Iran required applying and transferring modern sciences to Iran in order to

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<sup>27</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, E'temad Al-Saltaneh, Al-Ma'aser va Al-Asar, Vol. 1, PP. 44,46

<sup>28</sup> List of Stone Editions Books, Islamic Republic of Iran National Library;  
List of translations of Qajar Era, National Consultative Assembly Library

<sup>29</sup> Mirza Taghi Khan, Ansari Kashani, Janevar Nameh, 1287 AH, 2<sup>nd</sup> Volumes, central Library of Tehran University, manuscript no. 5 256 and microfilm no. 2804, Page Introduction.

<sup>30</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan, E'temad Al-Saltaneh, Al-Ma'aser va Al-Asar, Vol. 2, P. 480.  
Yahya Aryan pour, Az Saba ta Nima, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Zavar Publications, 1375), PP. 196-198.



renovate the country along with the changes of the world. Therefore, new institutions were founded to teach and train such sciences.

The establishment of official institutions such as ministry of science indicates that the Iranian state felt the need for renovating the country along with the changes in the works and on the other hand, it shows the deliberate efforts of the government to develop modern sciences and technologies, which is itself of a great importance.

Sending students to Europe to study, publication of state newspapers and magazines, flourishing of translation and publication of books especially in the field of modern sciences was the most important achievements of the ministry of science, which was established to meet the objectives of the government in developing modern sciences.

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