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In the Late Ottoman State: Shiite Ulama and Their Organization in the Atabāt al-Āliyah Region

Serkan Şenel^{1,a*}, Abdullah Ekinci^{2,b}

¹ Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Modern History Şanlıurfa/Türkiye

² Harran University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Medieval History Şanlıurfa/Türkiye

* Corresponding author

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Ethical Statement: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited

This study was prepared based on the doctoral thesis titled, *Serkan Şenel, Shiite Concerns in the Ottoman Empire in the case of Atabāt al-Āliyah: Propaganda, Precaution and Ideology (1796-1914) (Şanlıurfa: Harran University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph. D.Thesis 2023).*

ABSTRACT

This article examines Shiite ulema's social and economic organization, which established its presence in the Atabāt region, its political and activist groups, and the factors that facilitated their emergence. The research investigates the perception of the Sunni state in the late Ottoman Empire and the reasons behind the spread of Shiism in southern Iraq, which became a dominant power in the region. In doing so, the focus was on the state's reactions to the spread of Shiism, which were analyzed from the Sunni state's perspective. The scope of the research focuses on the period between the Qajar Dynasty (1796-1925) and the First World War. In the early days of the Ottoman Empire, people of different religions and sects lived in the border regions. With the opening of madrasahs and the rise of the ulama, the state shifted to a more madrasah-based form of Islam. The socio-cultural divide between the center and the periphery widened as Sunni authoritarianism gained influence in the center. Some Anatolian Turkman communities became part of the Safavid State. In the eastern part of the empire, this situation was exploited to the advantage of the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1736). Early in the 16th century, the Safavids crystallized Ottoman Sunnism and established Shiism as the official state religion. Thus, the two states engaged in fierce battles as they sought to present themselves as global empires and the sole defenders of Islam. This process influenced the stability of sectarianism in both nations, the legitimacy discourses they employed, and their attitudes in forming their communities. The Safavids continued their theological conflict until 1722, when the Afghans decisively defeated them. The subsequent period saw extensive negotiations regarding the Sunni-Shia war between Mahmud I (d. 1168/1754) and Nadir Shah (d. 1160/1747). However, Shiism was not recognized as a Sunni sect. The conflict between Sunnis and Shiites, which had been absent from the agenda for a long time, entered a new era with the establishment of Shiite ulama as dawah (invitation) centers in Atabāt al-Āliyah (Najaf, Karbala, Kazimiyya, and Samarra) and the rise to power of the Qajar Dynasty in Iran in the early 19th century. The sources for this research include Ottoman archival records, British archival records, and secondary literature on the topic. In the relevant archival records, one can observe both the Ottoman state's Sunni reactions and the Iraqi Shiite ulema's rise as a dominant force in the region.

Keywords: History of Islamic Sects, Ottoman, Iran, Southern Iraq, Sunnism, Shiite Ulama

Son Dönem Osmanlı Devleti'nde Atebât-ı Âliye Bölgesinde Şîî Ulema ve Teşkilatlanması

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İntihal: Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelendi ve intihal içermediği teyit edildi.

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Etik Beyan: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.

Bu çalışma, Serkan Şenel, Atebât-ı Âliye Örneği Üzerinden Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Şîa Kaygısı: Propaganda, Tedbir ve İdeoloji (1796-1914) (Şanlıurfa: Harran Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2023) başlıklı doktora tezi esas alınarak hazırlanmıştır.


ÖZ

Bu makale, Atebât bölgesine yerleşen Şîî ulemanın sosyal ve ekonomik yapısını inceleyerek onların aktivist ve siyasi örgütlenmelerini ve bölgedeki varlıklarını destekleyen konuları incelemektedir. Araştırma, son dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Sünnî devlet algısını ve güney Irak'ta yayılan Şîîliğin bölgede başat bir güç haline almasının arkasındaki nedenleri irdelemektedir. Bunu yaparken devletin Şîîliğin yayılması karşısında verdiği tepkilere odaklanılmıştır. Söz konusu tepkiler Sünnî devlet bakış açısı üzerinden okunmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırmanın kapsamı, Kaçar Hanedanlığı (1796-1925) ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı süreci arasında kalan döneme odaklanmaktadır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ilk dönemlerinde sınır bölgelerinde farklı din ve mezheplere mensup insanlar yaşıyordu. Medreselerin açılması ve ulemanın yükselişiyle devlet daha çok medrese temelli İslam'a yöneldi. Sünnî otoriterlik merkezde güçlendikçe merkez ile çevre arasındaki sosyo-kültürel farklılıklar derinleşti. Anadolu'dan gelen bazı Türkmen toplulukları Safevî Devleti'ne katılmıştı. İmparatorluğun doğu kısmındaki Safevî Hanedanı (1501-1736) bu durumu avantaja dönüştürdü. Safevîler'in 16. yüzyılın başlarında Şîîliği resmî devlet mezhebi haline getirmeleri Osmanlı Sünnîliği'ni de kristalize etti. Böylece İslam'ın tek koruyucusu olma ve evrensel bir imparatorluk imajı inşa etme çabasında iki millet arasında şiddetli mücadeleler başladı. Bu süreç, her iki devletin toplumlarını şekillendirirken benimsedikleri tutumları, kullandıkları meşruiyet söylemlerini ve her iki taraftaki mezhepçiliğin istikrarını etkilemiştir. Safevîler, 1722'de Afganlar karşısındaki büyük yenilgilerine kadar dinî mücadelelerini sürdürdüler. Sonraki dönemde Sünnî-Şîî çatışması, I. Mahmud (öl. 1168/1754) ile Nadir Şah (öl. 1160/1747) arasında uzun uzadıya müzakere edildi. Ancak Şîîlik, Sünnî bir mezhep olarak kabul edilmedi. Sünnîler ve Şîîler arasında uzun süredir gündemden uzak olan çatışma, Şîî ulemanın Atebât-ı Âliye'de (Necef, Kerbela, Kâzimiyye ve Sâmerrâ) davet merkezleri olarak yerleşmeleriyle ve 19. yüzyılın başlarında İran'da Kaçar Hanedanı'nın iktidarı ele geçmesiyle yeni dönem başladı. Bu araştırmanın kaynaklarını Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri, İngiliz arşiv belgeleri ve konuyla ilgili ikincil literatür oluşturmaktadır. İlgili arşiv belgeleri özelinde hem Osmanlı devletinin Sünnî tepkilerini hem de Iraklı Şîî ulemanın söz konusu bölgede başat bir güç olarak yükselişini görebilmek mümkündür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Mezhepler Tarihi, Osmanlı, İran, Güney Irak, Sünnîlik, Şîî Ulema

^a  serkansenel@harran.edu.tr

^{ID} 0000-0002-7219-4057

^b  aekinci@harran.edu.tr

^{ID} 0000-0002-4767-2002

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Giriş

Although the problems experienced by the Ottoman Empire in the last period related to Shiism may seem to be Iran-centered to readers and researchers who are unfamiliar with the subject before researching it, the main force that increased the spread of Shiism in the region was the Shiite ulama who came and settled in the Atabāt region in Southern Iraq. However, beginning the explanation of the subject with the Safavid period will enhance its significance. Safavids required a scholar for legitimacy in their wars against the Sunnis. Shiite ulamas from Iraq and Lebanon were invited to integrate Shiism into the national system.¹ They gained influence over administrative processes after arriving in Iran.² Following the Safavid period, Shiite ulamas lacking state support relocated to the Atabāt al-Āliyah³ (Najaf, Karbala, Samarra, and Kazimiyya) to establish their sectarian identity. Some of them traveled to India.⁴ Despite losing state assistance, Shiite ulamas in Iraq continued their educational efforts. A rivalry emerged between the Akhbari and Usuli scholars, with the Usuli emphasizing reason and ijtihad, while the Akhbari stressed adherence to the mujtahids' knowledge.⁵ The Usuli philosophy also sought influence in state administration competition.

Among the Iranian ulama, various authorities existed, with the Marja al-taqlid at the top. Prominent scholar Muhammad Baqir Behbahani (d. 1206/1791-92) advocated the Usuli perspective in the Akhbari-Usuli debate. His success led to the emergence of a strong class of mujtahids, significantly influencing Iran's political landscape. This allowed the Usuli school to be established in Karbala, leading some Akhbaris to leave while others joined. Behbahani taught Ja'far bin Khidr Kashif al-Gita (d. 1228/1813), who sought to expand the Usuli philosophy. Kashif al-Gita's pupils included Ahmed Ahsai (d. 1241/1826), Muhammad Hasan Najafi (d. 1265/1849), Agha Muhammad Taqi Najafi, Muhammad Baqir Isfahani, and Javad Amili, alongside notable Shia scholars Muhammad Taqi Shirazi, Mirza Hasan Shirazi, and Sheikh Murtaza Ansari (d. 1281/1864). The ulama faced a long period of confusion and instability before the Qajar era.⁶ The state, aiming to enhance its legitimacy, gained clergy support, which the ulama, having lost since the Safavid era, regained with the Qajars.⁷

The Qajars seized control of the government during this period, which saw a revival of Sunni-Shiite tensions. The official founding of the Qajar State occurred in 1796 under Agha Mohammad

¹ Joyce N. Wiley, *Irak Şiîleri* (İstanbul: Ekin Yayınları, 2004), 26.

² Yılmaz Karadeniz, "Safevî Devleti'nin Kuruluş Temelleri", *Safevîler*, ed. Mehmet Dağlar (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2021), 186.

³ The plural of atebe, which means "threshold," is atebât. Najaf, Karbala, Kazimiyya, and Samarra are the locations of these locations, which are more widely referred to as "atebât-ı mukaddese" and "atebât-ı âliye." Avni İlhan, "Atebât", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1991), 4/49-50.

⁴ Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq: The Ulama of Najaf and Karbala* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13.

⁵ Metin Yurdağür, "Ahbâriyye", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988), 1/490-491, Mustafa Öz "Usûliyye", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2012), 42/214-215.

⁶ Henry Corbin, *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 2/151.

⁷ Qajar Mohammad Khan had the shrine of Imam Musa in Baghdad decorated with gilded panels. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Hatt-ı Hümayûn Tasnifi [HAT]*, No. 274, Gömlek No.16137.

Shah (d. 1211/1797), although real power rested with his successor, Fath Ali Shah (d. 1250/1834). Sulayman Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, notified the Ottoman State of this change in leadership. However, the Qajar State was still in its infancy and lacked a well-established institutional framework. Fath Ali Shah sought to maintain close ties with the Shiite ulama to bolster his authority. It seems that the Wahhabi assaults on Atabāt's sacred sites laid the groundwork for the unity between the Iranian State and the ulama, anticipating.⁸ In the world of Shia faith, Atabāt al-Āliyah holds a significant position. The Shia's regions of belonging are the religious rites they perform and the visits they make to the graves of the imams in these cities. Shia believers consider the Atabāt regions to be a place of pilgrimage. Karbala is a destination of sadness for Shia pilgrims, who carry soil from the city back to their homes. Najaf and Karbala are popular places for Shia people to bury their dead. They claim that intercession hereafter will result from burial at these locations.⁹

The Qajars backed the ulama by establishing Shiism as the state's recognized religion. Their sectarian choices, however, were not predicated on a tribalist link. Still, they placed much theological and political significance on Shiism.¹⁰ Unlike the Safavids, the Qajars stressed their Mongol ancestry and denied any imam ancestry. They did, however, understand that the legitimacy of their authority and the survival of the society they had created depended on the backing of the Shiite ulama.¹¹

The interaction between the Qajars and the ulama led to the emergence of an ulama profile that advanced in the institutionalization process and gradually increased its authority. This practice made the ulama's power, supported by the Qajar shahs, evident in several areas, including the courts, foundation lands, social issues, and political matters. One of the most obvious signs of this authoritarianism was the presence of gangs of mullahs around each mujtahid.¹² Over time, the ulama also became financially professional and advanced the institutionalization process, earning significant money through donations, patronage, and religious taxes. Additionally, by enlarging the ulama basins, they established an unofficial hierarchy.¹³

The power that made the Ottomans anxious in Atabāt was the Shiite ulama, who had adopted the mission of spreading Shiism here, rather than the Iranian State. The ulama, who roamed among the tribes, carried out excellent propaganda through similar rituals. One of the most significant factors that strengthened the Shiite ulama's hand was that they did not have any financial difficulties. Testamentary funds came from India, and religious taxes were from Iran. In addition, the ulama were independent of the central state authority and had no obligations to the state.

This research aims to correctly understand and make sense of the measures taken by the empire and the counter-propaganda moves it produced against the increasing Shiite expansionism in the

⁸ BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye [C. HR]*, No. 88, Gömlek No. 4355, BOA, *Hatt-ı Hümayûn Tasnifi [HAT]*, No. 95, Gömlek No.3844.

⁹ Hamid Algar, "Atâbat", *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* (Accessed 08 July 2022).

¹⁰ Ali Bademci, *Şamanizmden Kızılbaşlıca Şiiliğin Türkmen Yüzü* (Konya: Çizgi Yayınevi, 2019), 411.

¹¹ Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Los Angeles: University of Colifornia Press, 1980), 41.

¹² Azar Tabari, "The Role of the Clergy in Modern Iranian Politics", *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 49.

¹³ Behrooz Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 107.

Atabāt cities of Iraq during the last period of the Ottoman Empire. The study aims to draw attention to Atabāt, which had less space on the agenda of researchers during the disintegration period of the empire, and to the Iranian ulama who wanted to spread the Shiite thought there. For this reason, some questions were sought to be answered in the research. For example, did Shiism suddenly increase in Atabāt? What were the socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors that facilitated this situation? What was the problem of the Sunni scholars and students, and what was the mission assigned to them? Was the main power against the Ottoman Empire the Iranian State or the Shiite ulama? This research sought answers to why the Ottoman Empire showed more interest in Atabāt because of the Berlin Agreement signed after the Ottoman-Russian war in 1877-1878.

The literature contains noteworthy research on the function of Shiite clergy in the Atabāt al-Āliyah area. In his study, Hamid Algar tackled the state and clergy dispute. He looked at how the relationship between these two powers grew more strained.¹⁴ The role of religion in governmental operations and the steps taken to make Shiism Iran's official state sect have been explained in length by Said Amir Arjomand.¹⁵ In his analysis of Twelver Shiism's evolution, Moojan Momen has highlighted its differences from Sunnism.¹⁶ Nikkie R. Keddie describes the Qajar era's reunification of Iran, the introduction of westernizing reforms, and the internal responses to these changes.¹⁷ Meir Litvak analyzed the influential role of the Shiite ulama in shaping political policies.¹⁸

Even though Yitzhak Nakash discusses Shiism in the more recent era, he thoroughly examines the socioeconomic foundations of Shiism in Iraq.¹⁹ In this way, his work contributes significantly to the article's argument. In contrast, Behrooz Moazami assessed the institutionalization of the Qajars as a state and the politicization of the Shiite ulama through Orthodoxy as a simultaneous trend.²⁰ Furthermore, the book format of Gökhan Çetinsaya's thesis study draws attention. Significant work in this field has presented Iraq's position during the late Ottoman era and the region's evaluations based on sources.²¹

Yaslıçimen holds a master's and doctoral degrees in Shiism studies. His master's thesis examines Shiism through Ottoman settlement policies and internal changes, focusing on the Akhbari and Usuli distinction. He asserts that the Ottoman Empire's centralization policy significantly influenced Shiism's growth. His doctoral thesis investigates Shiism in Iraq and Lebanon,

¹⁴ Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Los Angeles: University of Colifornia Press, 1980).

¹⁵ Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (London: Chicago Press, 1984).

¹⁶ Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (United States: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Nikki R. Keddie, *Qajar Iran and The Rise of Reza Khan (1796-1925)* (California: Mazda Publishers, 1999).

¹⁸ Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq: The Ulama of Najaf and Karbala* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁹ Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shiis of Iraq* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), Yitzhak Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler* (Ankara: Elips Kitap, 2005).

²⁰ Behrooz Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018).

²¹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, *II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Irak'ta Osmanlı İdaresi* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2020).

particularly among Shiite minorities in the Ottoman administration, and discusses fatwas from Shiite ulama during World War I. These studies are vital for 19th-century Shiite literature.²²

This study utilizes primary sources, including the British National Archives (NA) and Ottoman Archives (BOA), as well as relevant literature analyses. While some theological studies address Shiite ulama, few take a historical approach to the sectarian dispute over Atabāt, and even fewer examine the Ottoman Empire's interpretation of Islam. This research aims to analyze Sunni-Shiite relations within an ulama framework following the reigns of Mahmud I and Nadir Shah, focusing on the Qajar State's ties with Shiite ulama, their politicization, the interactions between the Union and Progress and them, and the unity forged with Iraqi Shiite ulama in the context of World War I.

Unlike previous studies in the field, it argues that the Ottoman policy in the region was not entirely unstable, but rather that socioeconomic reasons contributed to its failure. The study also claims that the Ottomans did not always perceive Shiism as an active threat, and that there was a specific threshold beyond which this perception changed. Another point is that the reports of Ottoman statesmen in the region are not exaggerated, but rather an expression of the current situation. Although the level of mutual conflict appears low, the differences between Sunnism and Shiism are deepening.

1. Shia Ulama in the Qajar Era

The Qajars established themselves in the state scene during the first era of the ulama (1796–1848). The ulama created an authority based on religious orthodoxy. They became the dominating power in the spiritual realm during the second phase, coinciding with the Qajars' institutionalization and attempts to establish the state framework (1848-1906).²³ The Shiite ulama received tremendous support from Fath Ali Shah. He had shrines and mosques constructed, some restored, and others embellished. Additionally, he let the ulama move freely across the nation.²⁴ He eventually proclaimed Samarra, Najaf, Kufa, Karbala, Kazimiyya, Hilla, and Basra as centers of mujtahid, among other Shia holy sites. Iranian academics thus embraced the Shia holy sites in Atabāt as sectarian and religious schools.²⁵

The ulama sought to demonstrate this authority by gradually increasing their political influence. Iran was defeated in 1813 because of the war that began with Russia in 1804, during which a fatwa was received from the ulama. The Treaty of Gulistan was signed after this defeat. By stating, "I gave the permission" in the fatwa he issued, Marji-i Taklid Kashifulgitā demonstrated a haughty demeanor.²⁶ Feth Ali Shah was unsure if he wanted to go to war with Russia again.

²² Faruk Yashlıçimen, *Sunnism Versus Shi'ism? Rise of the Shi'i Politics and of the Ottoman Apprehension in Late Nineteenth Century Iraq* (Ankara: Bilkent Üniversitesi Ekonomi ve Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2008). Faruk Yashlıçimen, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Shiite Subjects: State-Society Relations in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (München: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2015).

²³ Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 109.

²⁴ Mazlum Uyar, *Şii Ulemânın Otoritesinin Temelleri* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2004), 187.

²⁵ BOA, *Maarif Nezareti Mektubû Kalemî [MF. MKT]*, No. 84, Gömlek No.15, Tanju Ateş, "Kaçarlar Döneminde İran'dan Atâbat-ı Aliyâta Yapılan Şîa Ulama Göçü", *Ankara Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1/1 (2018), 41.

²⁶ Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, 224, Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 136.

Nonetheless, the ulama were adamant about the call for jihad and desired a second conflict. They even publicly said they would issue the fatwa even if the Shah didn't approve it. The war started after Feth Ali Shah was convinced. The Turkmenchay Treaty was eventually signed, leading to Iran's loss.²⁷

The assignment of a Russian mission led by Griboyedov (d. 1244/1829) in 1829 was another significant occasion in which the ulama participated in politics following the Turkmenchay Agreement. A crisis culminated in the deaths of Griboyedov, several of the delegation members who were with him, and forty-four Kazakh soldiers while Russia was acting to collect the agreed compensation. Initially, as the ulama took on the role of mediator, they were unable to control the situation as it spiraled out of control. One ulama²⁸ heightened tensions during this process by issuing a fatwa that was motivated by xenophobia. It took four days to put an end to this turmoil, which was fueled by the local bazaar and ulama.²⁹

The ensuing decade witnessed several significant events, beginning with the Griboyedov affair, during which the Shiite ulama emerged as a powerful and opposing force to the Shah. The shrewdness of the ulama in the political sphere was shown by the suppression of the Babis,³⁰ the privilege given to Reuter in 1872 for the extraction of natural resources, the transfer of fisheries to Lianazoff in 1888, the trade privilege on the Karun River to the British Lynch Brothers Company, the approval of the construction of a railway network to the Russian Dolgorosky in 1889, the revocation of the tobacco privilege in 1891, and, lastly, the shift to the constitutional regime in 1905.³¹

Although there was a fair amount of harmony between the state and the ulama under Fath Ali Shah's rule, this did not hold under Muhammad Shah (d. 1264/1848). Muhammad Shah appreciated these organizations that the ulama did not accept and showed a favorable attitude toward the Sufis.³² Even his attitude toward the Naqshbandi sheikhs was not indifferent. The Shia ulama and Muhammad Shah had a tense relationship as a result, and the ulama retired to the Atabāt region of Iraq, where they began to oppose him.³³ Atabāt provided them with a safe refuge in this regard.

²⁷ Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 138.

²⁸ He was Mirzâ Mesîh. Uyar, *Şîî Ulemanın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 184.

²⁹ Gene R. Gartwaite, *İran Tarihi* (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 2021), 179.

³⁰ Babism was a messianic movement in Iran and Iraq in the 13th/19th century under the overall charismatic leadership of the Bâb (d. 1266/1850), led by Sayyid Ali-Muhammad Shirazi. D. M. Maceoin, "Babism", *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Accessed on 7 Ağustos 2022). Detailed information: D.M. Maceoin, "Changes in Charismatic Authority in Qajar Shi'ism", *Qajar Iran 1800-1925*, ed. Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 148-176.

³¹ Gartwaite, *İran Tarihi*, 190. For the East Indian colony, England began to establish a commercial network in the region, starting with Karim Khan Zend in 1762. It also sent many civil servants and theorists to the area. One of the most important of these was Sir J. Malcolm. Muhammed Ahmed Penâhî Semnânî, *Lütf 'Ali Han Zend* (Tahran: İntişârât-ı Kitâb-ı Numûne, 1373), 220-221.

³² Uyar, *Şîî Ulemanın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 194.

³³ Tanju Ateş, "Kaçarlar Döneminde İran'dan Atâbat-ı Aliyâta Yapılan Şîa Ulama Göçü", *Ankara Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1/1 (2018), 37.

The Babism movement,³⁴ which arose in Iran during the final years of Muhammad Shah's reign, was initially somewhat acceptable despite being perceived as going against the conventional wisdom on Shiism. The confrontation between this movement, characterized as Heterodox and Orthodox Shiism, is symbolized by the battle with Babism. It is evident that to sustain its existence and grow its power, the newly established Shiism Orthodoxy required a hierarchical and institutional authority, the updating of religious regulations, and the presence of a real or imagined Heterodox adversary with whom it might align itself. In this regard, the Babism movement, which had greatly expanded its popularity between 1844 and 1848 and which Orthodox Shiism saw as a threat, was put down by the movement,³⁵ which sought to preserve its authority in harmony with the state. This job was carried out by the Qajars, who, under Nasir al-Din Shah's rule, repressed the Babi movement and sent its leaders to Akka and Famagusta.³⁶ These changes had a significant impact on how Shiite religious Orthodoxy ended up looking.

The relationship between the state and the ulama appears to have improved during the rule of Nasir al-Din Shah (d. 1313/1896).³⁷ The Shah gave his three daughters to three prominent Shia mujtahids in Iran during this time.³⁸ Over time, structural issues developed between the two, even though goodwill measures were made at the start of the period, and there was a public perception that there were no issues. Due to their respective institutionalization processes at the time, both powers exhibited strong reactions that occasionally attracted and repelled one another.

After being shut out under Muhammad Shah, the Shia ulama reclaimed the Atabāt region and strengthened their power. They made significant strides toward an independent hierarchy, especially during Sheikh Muhammad Hasan an-Najafi, the first *Marji of Taqlid*. Sheikh Murtaza Ansari succeeded Najafi after his death in 1850, becoming the *Marji-i Taqlid-i Absolute* and the *Naib al-Imam*.³⁹ In this process, the ulama, a central authority, collected taxes such as zakat and khums. Therefore, the Shiite ulama in Iraq was shaped as a central power center against the Qajar State and began to be perceived as such.

The tension between the Nasir al-Din Shah government and the Iranian ulama started when the state adopted liberal reforms modeled after those in the West and gave foreigners several rights. As “national leaders”, the ulama responded to these events throughout the Nasir al-Din Shah reign,

³⁴ BOA, *İrade Hariciye [İ.HR]*, No.198, Gömlek No.11268. Memâlik-i İrânîyyede bir mikdâr Sünnî ve Ermeni ve Yahûdi var ise de bunların öyle mezheb mücâdelesine kıyâm idecek bir hâlde olmamalarına ve şu vukû'ât-ı Acemler'in eyyâm-ı mâtemî olân mâh-ı Muharrem'de vukû' bulmasına nazaran bunun Keşfiyye ve Şeyhiyye ve Aliyullahî ve Bâbi gibi Şi'iyenin mezâhib-i mütenevviasında bulunânların yek-diğereine olân tezâd ve ihtilâflarından ilerü gelmiş bir vaka olması ve husûsiyle şimdiki hâlde Bâbî mezhebî pek ziyâde revâc bularak mezâhib-i sâirede bulunânların kîn ve gayzını mûcib olmasıyla aralık aralık bu misüllü münâzaa ve mücâdeleler vukû' bulmasına bakılır ise iş bu 'arbedenin dâhî yine Bâbîler mâddesinden neş'et itmiş bulunması vârid-i hâtır olur. Zevra Gazetesi, “İran” (12 Rebiülevvel 1286), 2, Mine Ersoy, *Zevra Newspaper (S.1-100)'nin Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirmesi* (Kilis: Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2014), 25.

³⁵ Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 110-111.

³⁶ BOA, *Zabtiye Nezareti [ZB]*, No.2, Gömlek No.74.

³⁷ During the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, dozens of Shia clerics opened schools based on Ja'fari doctrine. These clerics taught in Iraq and Iran. Said Reşid Zimeyze, *Düvelü's- Şîa 'İbere't-târîh* (Şam: Dâru'l-kârî, 2008), 327.

³⁸ Ateş, *Kaçarlar Döneminde İran'dan Atâbat-ı Aliyâta Yapılan Şîa Ulama Göçü*, 38.

³⁹ Uyar, *Şîa Ulemânın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 198-199.

further escalating tensions.⁴⁰ The reform movements in the Ottoman Empire impacted Mirza Hussein Khan Sipahsālār, who spent twelve years as Iran's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ He wanted his country to follow suit. When Sipahsālār traveled to Europe with the Shah in 1873, he had the opportunity to discuss these reforms upon his return to Iran in 1871.⁴²

Nasir al-Din Shah's three voyages to Europe and visiting Atabāt were expensive. The Iranian people experienced hunger, starvation, and epidemic calamities in 1870. When the Shah was ill, he promised to go to the imams' holy graves if he recovered.⁴³ The Ottoman Empire was eventually convinced to permit the Shah's visit despite its initial opposition, which saw it as a political initiative. Tribal movements in the border region and the existence of a sizable Shiite population in Iraq were among the reasons for the Ottomans' reservations. However, the Shah emphasized that his visit was purely religious and had no political motives.⁴⁴ In this context, the Shah visited Atabāt before his European travels and then traveled to Europe and Russia.

The Ottoman State used the individuals designated for this purpose to prepare carefully for the Shah's coming to Atabāt. During the visit, Ottoman guard battalions were also present. Servants from Istanbul planned the Shah's dinner in Baghdad on this occasion, and their travel costs were paid.⁴⁵ Additionally, many goods and dinnerware were shipped to the area from Istanbul. In September, the Shah said he was satisfied with his trip to Karbala and concluded it without any problems. Issues, including enabling Shia pilgrims and burial practices at Atabāt, were also covered during this visit.⁴⁶ The governor of Baghdad himself took on the task of overseeing the procedure.⁴⁷ When the Shah returned from Europe in 1873, he also visited Istanbul.⁴⁸ The favorable environment that the Shah's visit to Ottoman territory produced set the groundwork for future discussions about an Ottoman-Iranian alliance.⁴⁹

Despite the assertions that Nasiruddin Shah opposed changes, was hostile to new ideas, and excluded Europeans, the Shah supported reform.⁵⁰ In this regard, the Tobacco Protest of 1892 was sparked by the freedoms he provided. However, the anti-reform ulama group planned this demonstration. The Bazaar, which oversaw the tobacco market, rebelled because the Shah granted

⁴⁰ Uyar, *Şiî Ulemânın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 197.

⁴¹ BOA, *Sadaret Âmedî Kalemi Defterleri [A. AMD]*, No.92, Gömlek No.38.

⁴² Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906* (California: University of California Press, 1980), 174-176, Uyar, *Şiî Ulemânın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 200.

⁴³ Mohammad Reza Nasiri, *Nâsireddîn Şah Zamanında Osmanlı-İran Münasebetleri (1848-1896)*, (Tokyo: Institute For The Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Ph.D. Thesis, 1991), 151.

⁴⁴ Nasiri, *Nâsireddîn Şah Zamanında Osmanlı-İran Münasebetleri (1848-1896)*, 151.

⁴⁵ BOA, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, Defter [TS. MA. D]*, No.8182, Gömlek No.3.

⁴⁶ BOA, *Hariciye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi Evrakı [HR. MKT]*, No.705, Gömlek No.93.

⁴⁷ BOA, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, Evrak [TS. MA. e]*, No. 611, Gömlek No. 40.

⁴⁸ BOA, *Hariciye Nezâreti Londra Sefareti Belgeleri [HR. SFR. 1]*, No.37, Gömlek No.73, BOA, *[HR. MKT]*, No.809, Gömlek No.3.

⁴⁹ Nasiri, *Nâsireddîn Şah Zamanında Osmanlı-İran Münasebetleri (1848-1896)*, 124-125, Yılmaz Karadeniz, *İran Tarihi 1700-1925* (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2020), 406.

⁵⁰ Yahyâ Devlet Abâdî, *Hayât-i Yahyâ* (Tahran: Kitâbhâne-i İbn-i Sinâ, 1362), 1/46. The author states that Nasir al-Din Shah was fundamentally against such ideas, but after his trip to Europe, new arrangements were made, and the Shah gave importance to institutions and works in Europe. Upon his return from his journey, his first decision was to establish a police organization in Tehran. Yahyâ Devlet Abâdî, *Hayât-i Yahyâ*, 1/49.

the Imperial Tobacco Company a monopoly privilege, which put local tobacco producers in a precarious position.⁵¹ Although the mullahs willingly backed this uprising,⁵² demonstrations against the Shah were planned in response to a fatwa⁵³ purportedly issued by Shirazi at the Samarra shrine in Iraq⁵⁴.

A group known as the populist coalition spearheaded these demonstrations. This alliance, comprising merchants, urban masses, and traditional priests, had previously played a crucial role in quelling the Babi uprisings and the Griboyedov event.⁵⁵ It was claimed during the demonstrations that the state was being increasingly influenced by the West, that it was being exposed to Western culture while striving for technological progress, and that the economy was having severe problems. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1283/1897) was one of the organizations participating in the anti-Shah protests and endorsed these concerns.⁵⁶ The ulama are thought to have made their most noticeable appearance in the political sphere during this time. Ultimately, they forced the Shah to back down, a significant ulama victory regarding social and political influence.

The constitutional discussions of 1905–1906, which shaped modern Iranian politics, demonstrated the mullahs' active political participation.⁵⁷ There were quite a few mullahs on the liberal side. Halm claims that the ulama's goal for the country's democracy was not the cause of this circumstance but rather their perception of any flaw in the absolute monarchy as a chance to improve their standing.⁵⁸ In reality, they formed a council of five mujtahids to expand their power and were given the power to ensure that legislation was passed by sharia.⁵⁹ Therefore, the ulama's formal involvement in politics has elevated their interests and existence to a higher plane, guaranteeing their social and political stability.⁶⁰

The establishment of the Qajar state and the institutionalization of Shiite Orthodoxy happened nearly simultaneously.⁶¹ These two actors gained power together, and their domains of influence became increasingly distinct. Before the Tobacco Crisis, there was no open confrontation between these two powerful nations. However, for a variety of reasons, including the Iranian state's economic reliance on foreign countries, its repressive governance, and its departure from Islamic principles, the ulama started to feel more and more uneasy with the state policies.⁶² In this regard, the ulama initially assumed a significant political role and became involved during the Tobacco

⁵¹ Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906*, 207-208.

⁵² BOA, *Yıldız Perakende-Askerî Maruzât Evrakı [Y.PRK.ASK]*, No.79, Gömlek No.76.

⁵³ BOA, *Dahiliye Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemi [DH. MKT]*, No.2012, Gömlek No.37.

⁵⁴ Heinz Halm, *Şiîler* (İstanbul: Runik Kitap, 2020), 74.

⁵⁵ Garthwaite, *İran Tarihi*, 191.

⁵⁶ Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906*, 210.

⁵⁷ The conflicts between the ulama and the Iranian government disrupted public order and excitement. BOA, *Dahiliye Nezâreti Şifre Kalemi Belgeleri [DH. ŞFR]*, No.367, Gömlek No.35.

⁵⁸ Halm, *Şiîler*, 75.

⁵⁹ Halm, *Şiîler*, 75.

⁶⁰ Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 154-155.

⁶¹ Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 149.

⁶² Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906*, 207, Mazlum Uyar, *Arap-Fars Şiîliği Bağlamında Irak Şiîliği* (İstanbul: İyidüşün Yayınları, 2022),75.

Crisis of 1891–1892. The Tobacco Crisis was a significant turning point in which the ulama showed their power in the political sphere more tangibly and decisively, notwithstanding their prior involvement in the Griboyedov Crisis of 1829 and the persecution of the Babis in the middle of the 19th century.⁶³

Their demands were met, and the ulama's resolve to revoke the privilege granted to the British paid off. The ulama gained a crucial advantage from this triumph, which later helped them establish a more substantial presence in the political sphere. The Ottoman Empire's reform initiatives significantly impacted Iran as time passed, and the Ottoman-Iranian relationship grew stronger through newspapers and periodicals. With the active involvement of the mujtahids, Iran's constitutional demands, which started in 1905, took on a new dimension, and these developments significantly aided the nation's political transformation process.

2. The Politicization Process of Shiite Ulama

Merchants and ulama joined forces to oppose Nasiruddin Shah, whom they deemed a dictator, in the tobacco uprising. As a result, one ulama was instrumental in both the Constitutional Revolution and the Tobacco Crisis.⁶⁴ Erkilet highlights that the ulama's participation in the tobacco uprising alongside the merchants guaranteed their solidarity and established a favorable environment for that solidarity to succeed.⁶⁵ The ulama's mindset and rationale for engaging in the matter was the assertion that religion could be practiced more correctly. They were able to stir the Shia people under their protection by issuing fatwas. The ulama's remarks gave them both a formal identity and raised their perceived worth in the public's eyes.⁶⁶ Thus, they were granted well-defined legal and political rights for the first time. They developed a substantial representation rate for the parliament.⁶⁷ As a result, this change led to the ulama's current societal standing taking a far more helpful turn.

What made the ulama feel compelled to participate in these procedures? The 19th century was already witnessing the beginning of a process that saw the ulama become more centralized and reinvigorated, notably after they accepted the Usuli school. The ulama did not require financial support from the Iranian government.⁶⁸ The ulama's economic stability was maintained by religious levies collected from the populace and testamentary donations from India. Additionally,

⁶³ Garthwaite, *İran Tarihi*, 192.

⁶⁴ Algar, *Religion and State in İnan 1785-1906*, 208.

⁶⁵ Alev Erkilet, *Orta Doğu'da Modernleşme ve İslâmî Hareketler* (İstanbul: Büyüyenay Yayınları, 2017), 347.

⁶⁶ Karadeniz, *İnan Tarihi 1700-1925*, 450, Abdolvahid Soofizadeh, *Kaçar Hanedanlığı Döneminde Osmanlı-İnan Siyasi İlişkileri (1795-1925)* (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 2020), 152.

⁶⁷ Ahmad Ashraf, "Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 1/4 (1988), 546, Moazami, *İnan'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 157.

⁶⁸ According to Yahya Devlet Abadi, "They have property and assets; they intervene in important matters. Whoever comes to this position is the ruler and the owner. As their property increases, their credit and power also increase, and while governments see them as necessary against possible rebellions of the people, they sometimes want to ignore them. They consider them special, implement the decrees they issue, reduce property taxes, and pay them pensions and allowances. Their children and relatives are not harmed. The power of true religious leaders is weakening because of such scholars. Religious leaders who are knowledgeable and virtuous do not care about state titles." Yahyâ Devlet Abâdî, *Hayât-i Yahyâ*, 1/51-52.

the ulama and merchant class acted in concert, which played a significant role in the events surrounding the tobacco monopoly in 1891–1892 and the Constitutional and Constitutional Monarchy movements in 1905.⁶⁹

The mujtahids in Iraq and Iran were in close communication with their communities and each other. Propaganda and their public behavior also contributed to their rise in popularity.⁷⁰ At the end of the process, the ulama, who had taken part in the tobacco crisis because foreign states were using the state, which was heavily indebted, and that an oppressive regime ran it, and that it was not run with religious considerations in mind, became politicized.⁷¹ Due to this circumstance, the state and the ulama also began to think differently. Before the Constitutional Era, the ulama had no official status, even though they entered politics. Consequently, the Constitutional Era gave the ulama a legitimate position.

The Iranian ulama protected Shiism during the Constitutional Revolution, but the first assembly lacked a clause requiring members to uphold Shiism or Islam, resulting in a democratic and secular Kanuni Esasi.⁷² The Constitution gained religious content through new legislation adopted after 1907, incorporating Twelve Imam Shiism. The Sharia Committee became the assembly's authoritative body, emphasizing the Shah of Iran's duty to propagate and teach Shiism.⁷³ This implied that the ulama would eventually bring things to their desired level and that the constitution was updated with a sectarian perspective. Despite appearing to be constrained, the ulama, who were legally present during the Constitutional Revolution, eventually incorporated the focus on Shiism into the constitution.

The Iranian ulama, who had an organic bond with the merchant class and opposed the Qajars, the Ottomans, and the colonialists, emerged as the political victor of the constitutional revolution. Whether the Shiite clergy's opposition was ideological or motivated by their rights is up for debate. Still, the Shiite ulama who backed the constitution saw it as a check on the oppressive rulers.⁷⁴ Iran's governance was altered by the Constitutional Revolution, a massive uprising and political upheaval. Iran paved the way for a stormy modernity as a nation-state after that.⁷⁵

Characterizing Iran's 1905 Constitutional Revolution solely as an internal issue is incomplete. The Iranian context was influenced by innovations like the Tanzimat Edict, the Kanuni Esasi, and the Ottoman Empire's Constitutional Monarchy. Many dissident ulamas resided in Istanbul, where Melkum Khan engaged in discussions about constitutionalism, believing it could save Iran. In 1890, he published the Kanun Newspaper in London on this theme. Supporters of pro-Western constitutionalism included Yusuf Khan Tabrizi, Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani, Khosrow Mirza, and

⁶⁹ Ashraf, "Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions", 544.

⁷⁰ BOA, *Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı [Y.MTV]*, No.73, Gömlek No.71, BOA, *Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Başkitabet Dairesi Maruzatı [Y. PRK. BŞK]*, No.57, Gömlek No.16.

⁷¹ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 49.

⁷² Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 159.

⁷³ Moazami, *İran'da Devlet, Din ve Devrim*, 161.

⁷⁴ İsmail Safa Üstün, "İmamîye Şîâsında Otorite Problemi Âyetullah Humeynî'nin Velâyet-i Fakîh Kavramı", *Milletlerarası Tarihte ve Günümüzde Şiilik Sempozyumu* (İstanbul: İSAV Yayınları, 1993), 384.

⁷⁵ Hamid Dabashi, *İran: Ketlenmiş Halk* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2021), 104.

Mirza Salih Shirazi.⁷⁶ Istanbul continued to publish numerous newspapers prohibited from publication in Iran owing to censorship. Because they intended to use these journals as leverage against Iran in the future, the Ottomans refrained from interfering with their printing.⁷⁷ In this regard, the Ahter daily persisted in publication in Istanbul until Nasiruddin Shah's murder. Despite Iran's discomfort with this circumstance, Istanbul was a significant city for many Iranian dissidents.

3. Interactions with Istanbul During the Constitutional Monarchy

In 1905, the Ottoman State maintained close ties with the Shiite ulama and the Iranian government. Many mujtahids were uneasy about loans from the British, Russians, and Belgians within the bureaucracy.⁷⁸ Abdulhamid II sought collaboration with the ulama. He corresponded with Sheikh Muhammed Fadil Sharabiyani of Najaf, who could send a telegraph of up to 49 words to Istanbul daily.⁷⁹ The international bureaucracy made a partnership with Atabāt impossible, causing discomfort for Russia, Iran, and England. Sultan Abdulhamid warned the Atabāt mujtahids against interfering in Iran's domestic issues, stating that they would be banished to Medina if their attitudes persisted.⁸⁰ The turmoil there left the Ottoman State aware of what was happening. Conversely, a lot of telegrams had been dispatched about the problem.⁸¹

In Iran, secret organizations supporting the constitutional monarchy emerged after opposition in Istanbul regained momentum. The Ottoman Empire took advantage of the chaos, promoting Sunnism in the region.⁸² In Iran, secret organizations supporting the constitutional monarchy were created after the opposition in Istanbul regained its voice. The Iranian constitutional monarchy advocates and the Young Turks accused Abdulhamid II of aiding Muzafferiddin Shah. Despite being perceived as an internal Iranian problem, the Ottoman Empire and the holy city of Atabāt were indirectly implicated. Even if Iraqi Shiism appeared unscathed by the events, what occurred here had an impact.

Scholars with ties to Istanbul, such as Sheikh Fazlullah Nuri (d. 1327/1909)⁸³ and Seyyid Behbahani (d.1327/1910),⁸⁴ were involved in Iran's constitutionalism experiment. Shams al-Din

⁷⁶ Cemil Hakyemez, *Şîa'da Gaybet İnanıcı ve Gaip On İkinci İmam El-Mehdî* (Ankara: İSAM Yayınları, 2017), 112.

⁷⁷ Soofizadeh, *Kaçar Hanedanlığı Döneminde Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1795-1925)*, 164.

⁸⁰ Sheikh Muhammad Fadil Sharabiyani of Najaf never accepted the receipt of these debts. BOA, *Dahiliye Nezâreti Tesri-i Muamelat ve Islahat Komisyonu [DH. TMIK. M]*, No.163, Gömlek No.9.

⁷⁹ Çetinsaya, *Irak'ta Osmanlı İdaresi*, 256.

⁸⁰ Çetinsaya, *Irak'ta Osmanlı İdaresi*, 257.

⁸¹ BOA, *Yıldız Sadâret Hususî Maruzât Evrakı [Y.A. HUS]*, No.526, Gömlek No.132.

⁸² Çetinsaya, *Irak'ta Osmanlı İdaresi*, 264.

⁸³ Sheikh Nuri opposed the translated constitution. According to him, Islam called for justice and consultation. He opposes the laws coming from Paris. Sheikh Nuri also insisted on not using the concept of "constitutional monarchy". Because, Sheikh Nuri, who was afraid of using constitutional monarchy in the same sense as democracy, used the concept of "justice" and emphasized that the concept of justice has a more central importance in the Islamic tradition. See Ismail Sarı, "The Process of Shiite Secularization in Modern Iran", *Turkish Journal of Shiite Studies* 2/2 (December 2020), 161.

⁸⁴ He is a Shiite scholar and one of the pioneers of constitutionalism in Iran. Hamid Algar, "Abdullah b. İsmail Bihbehânî", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1992), 6/142.

Bey, the Ottoman envoy in Tehran, also served as a mediator between the shah and the mujtahids. A mediator between the Shah and the mujtahids was also Shams al-Din Bey, the Ottoman envoy in Tehran.⁸⁵ During the Iranian Revolution, the Ottoman Embassy in Tehran took the initiative to treat the former Iranian Grand Vizier, Mushir al-Saltana, properly. The former Grand Vizier thanked the Ottoman Embassy for their kindness.⁸⁶ Many refugees sought sanctuary in the embassy during the revolution, in addition to the previous grand vizier, and the embassy provided various forms of assistance.⁸⁷ Additionally, many mujahideen sought safety within Hakaniye's borders following the revolution.⁸⁸

Islamic modernists' opinions emerged in Iraq post-1908, fueled by increasing newspapers and periodicals. It is essential to connect these changes. The Ottoman Empire's constitutional procedures influenced Iran, impacting Iraq as well. Consequently, some Iranian students and mujtahids in Iraq became pro-constitutional, while others resisted. Iraqi Shiism was also shaped by the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, allowing it to engage in political matters and address key religious and national issues. It reflected Islamic modernist views in Iraq post-1908, fueled by increasing newspapers and periodicals.⁸⁹

4. The Relationship of the Committee of Union and Progress with the Iraqi Shia Ulama

Previously, outsiders to the Iranian constitutional revolution, Iraqi Shia clerics, became increasingly involved in politics. They began sharing thoughts on restarting the Iranian constitutional process, which had been put on hold. Prominent figures, such as Sheikh Abdullah Mazandarani, Akhund Khorasani, Mirza Hussein Tehrani, and Mirza Hussein Naini, discussed the overlap between Islam and constitutional monarchy, theoretically laying the foundation for an Islamically acceptable government form.⁹⁰ As a result, they outlined their ideas on what an Islamic state should be.⁹¹ These methods caused some people to favor the Constitution while others opposed it. These were led by Muhammad Kazim Tabatabai Yazdi (d.1339/1921),⁹² who backed Sheikh Fazlullah Nuri.⁹³ The ulama in Najaf who supported the Constitution were commended in a 1907 report by Shura-i Ummah. In contrast, the ulama in Iran who opposed it were referred to as anti-Constitutionalists.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ BOA, *Yıldız Esas Evrakı [Y.EE]*, No.10, Gömlek No.20.

⁸⁶ BOA, *İrade Hususi [İ. HUS]*, No.181, Gömlek No.20.

⁸⁷ BOA, *Hariciye Nezâreti Tercüme Odası Belgeleri [HR. TO]*, No. 590, Gömlek No.50.

⁸⁸ BOA, *Dahiliye Nezâreti Siyasî Kısım Belgeleri [DH. SYS]*, No.95, Gömlek No.5.

⁸⁹ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiîler*, 52.

⁹⁰ Uyar, *Şiî Politik Düşüncesi*, 238.

⁹¹ Üstün, "İmamîye Şîâsında Otorite Problemi Âyetullah Humeynî'nin Velâyet-i Fakîh Kavramı", 385-388.

⁹² He was one of the pioneers of the Iranian constitutional monarchy movement. According to Tabâtabâi, the most fundamental problems of Iran during his time were that the people's education level was not at the desired level, the administration resorted to tyranny instead of implementing justice, and the state was poorly governed. Abdullah Kahraman, "Seyyid Muhammed Tabâtabâi", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 39/308-310.

⁹³ Uyar, *Şiî Politik Düşüncesi*, 238.

⁹⁴ M. Volkan Atuk, "İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin İran Politikası", *Bellekten* 83/296 (Nisan 2019), 283.

The Committee of Union and Progress established branches in Karbala and Najaf. The local populace, particularly the renowned priests, supported it here. There was agreement among the clerics in Najaf, as evidenced by the Shiite authorities in Iraq's religious awakening. This circumstance guaranteed cooperation between the Committee of Union and Progress and the Shiite clerics.⁹⁵ The opposition groups to the Constitutional Monarchy were alarmed by the Committee's growing support in the area.⁹⁶

The reconciliation of the Union and Progress with the Shiite clerics in Atabāt also resolved some economic issues that benefited the state. Sunni clerics in the area, particularly those of the Naqshbandi branch, were paid before the Union and Progress administrations. One of the most recent instances involved the placement of clandestine individuals among the tribes in Syria (30–40 people) and Baghdad (15–20 people) to live there permanently and follow the Sunni school of thinking, with the state providing them a salary.⁹⁷

It was said that these people would no longer receive compensation. Despite the provincial administration's assertion that this was a mistake and would make the war against Shiism more complex, the Union and Progress administration refused to concede.⁹⁸ There were a lot of Shia students attending the new schools that were established in the area. Many of the schools were Shia schools with a secular appearance. Some of them were founded by securing fatwas from Shia ulamas, and they taught Shia faith in addition to modern education. The central education authority did not approve most of the schools in question. It was anticipated that privatization would not be able to stop such schools.⁹⁹ Newspapers and periodicals started to arrive in Shiite cities every week as the cultural resurgence grew throughout the Second Constitutional Era. The public was able to access these through libraries.¹⁰⁰

The Shiite ulama examined the Ottoman State's conflicts with other nations, which affected solidarity against Russia and England. It provided an opportunity to address sectarian divisions. They played a crucial role during the Tripoli War, issuing supportive edicts, and this unity was significant in the years leading up to World War I. However, the ulama struggled to openly support the Ottoman State due to the increasing public awareness generated by the press and the favorable views of prominent Shiite scholars towards a constitutional monarchy and freedom of expression, as guaranteed by the Turkish Constitution.¹⁰¹ The Shia clerics in Atabāt were more politically active and laid the groundwork for Muslim opposition since they voiced their opinions on political

⁹⁵ Ziya Abbas, *Irak'ta Şii Merciliği'nin Siyasî Rolü* (İstanbul: Önsöz Yayıncılık, 2013), 113.

⁹⁶ Ramazan Sonat, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyetinin Irak Misyonu (1908-1914)* (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2022), 187.

⁹⁷ BOA, Y.EE, No.9, Gömlek No.14.

100 Yashçımen, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Shiite Subjects: State-Society Relations in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 119.

101 Yashçımen, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Shiite Subjects: State-Society Relations in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, 117.

¹⁰⁰ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 53.

¹⁰¹ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 53.

matters, supported the continuation of Iran's¹⁰² constitutional monarchy, and issued fatwas calling for unity in the Tripoli War.¹⁰³

During Muharram, many Sunnis and Shias attended a public assembly in Kazimiyya, a significant Shia center near Baghdad. The mob gathered in the provincial building after congregating at the shrine. Chanting "Ali is the beloved of Allah and the heir of the Prophet of Allah, Allah is great, Muhammad is the Prophet, Allah is great, Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah," the mullahs and sayyids marched towards the provincial headquarters.¹⁰⁴ The district governor said that the Shiites should not abandon the Sultan of Islam and questioned how they could keep quiet in the face of these attacks on Islam. Women started crying due to this speech's impact on the audience. The Italian occupation of Tripoli was condemned, and the concept of jihad was reinforced during the rally organized by the Union and Progress. Information about the war was published in the provincial newspaper *Zawra*.¹⁰⁵ Over time, the ulama gained political power. The Shiite ulama's readiness to exercise their power was further demonstrated by the fatwas they issued in support of the jihad movement.¹⁰⁶

The path to unification before World War I was paved by the Shia clergy in Iraq, steadily drifting away from Iran and toward the Committee of Union and Progress. This was undoubtedly a significant result for the Ottoman Empire. However, others also believe that the Ottomans' sectarian and nationalist policies were successful since the Shia clergy's unambiguous position was not rewarded after the battle. This discourse claims that during the British occupation of Basra in 1914, demands for jihad came from every mosque in Iraq. The Ottoman sultan took advantage of this and exploited the war for his gain, leading the Shia clerics in their response.¹⁰⁷

5. From Division to Unity: World War I and the Iraqi Shia Ulama

It was not the case that Shia mujtahids in Iraq and some in Iran refrained from issuing fatwas endorsing jihad.¹⁰⁸ According to these fatwas, jihad was required. The Ottoman Empire presented the Tehran Expedition with the authenticated fatwas of the Iranian mujtahids to disprove Iran's assertion that the fatwas were baseless. These actions could be interpreted as an attempt to use the mujtahids' fatwas to influence Iran toward jihad. But, as was previously said, Iran lacked the autonomy to decide. The British consuls in Kermanshah and other locations were making proclamations against the Ottoman Empire. Personal encouragement was given to the Sanjabi¹⁰⁹ and other tribes, who were told that the Ottoman consuls were doing little and that the British and

¹⁰² Uyar, *Şiî Politik Düşüncesi*, 239.

¹⁰³ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiîler*, 54.

¹⁰⁴ NA, National Archives, *Foreign Office [FO]*, No.195, 2164-8.

¹⁰⁵ NA, *FO*, No.195, 2164-6.

¹⁰⁶ Abbas, *Irak'ta Şiî Merciliği'nin Siyasî Rolü*, 115.

¹⁰⁷ Caferiyan, *Teşeyyu' fi'l Irak ve Salate bi'l Merciiyet-i İnan*, 95.

¹⁰⁸ *Sebilürreşad Dergisi*, "Cihad-ı Ekber Hakkında Beyannâme-i Hazret-i Hilafetpenâhi" (19 Kasım 1914), 14-15.

¹⁰⁹ While they were a tribe of Iranian nationals working in Kermanshah, a significant portion of them went to the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Ali Akbar Khan. They were settled in the village of Kehriz near Gaziantep. BOA. *DH. MKT*, No.325, Gömlek No.41.

Russians were gathering the mujtahids' fatwas. The consuls were told to put in more effort in response.¹¹⁰

The necessary precautions were made to guarantee the telegraph capabilities of the mujtahids in Iraq. Therefore, the Council of Ministers decided that the *Mesarif-i Mesture* (covert stipend) should be used to pay the telegraph fees that the mujtahids would have to pay to publish their fatwas and directions on jihad both domestically and abroad.¹¹¹ To expedite the publication of fatwas and directions on Jihad, the Council of Ministers agreed that the Ministry of Internal Affairs Mesarif-i Mesture Organization, would pay the fees for the telegraphs that would only be provided from the telegraph facilities in Najaf and Karbala.¹¹² Additionally, it was reported in the Iranian telegraph offices that the Russian and English consuls would not share the fatwas chosen by the mujtahids from Karbala in Baghdad.¹¹³

The Ottoman Empire asked that the Shah of Iran and the deputies be informed by telegraph of the mujtahids' fatwas.¹¹⁴ These fatwas focused on a defense mechanism for maintaining Islamic unity. The Ottoman Archives of the Presidency contain the pertinent Arabic-language texts. "Jihad is obligatory, Islam must be protected with full devotion, and Allah's mercy must be obtained by running and striving for this" were among the statements used in the fatwas.¹¹⁵ The General Security Directorate telegraphed the Baghdad Province Ministry to inquire about the content of a fatwa on jihad that was issued by the mujtahids in Karbala, Sadr-i Isfahani and Haji Sheikh Hussein Mazandaranî, Sharif Isfahani in Najaf, and Mirza Ebrahim Shirazi in Samarra.¹¹⁶ The interrogation revealed that Mirza Ebrahim Shirazi, Shariat Isfahani, and Haji Sayyid Ismail Sadr Isfahani had all signed and issued fatwas on jihad.¹¹⁷

Influential mujtahids in Iran and Iraq provided the anticipated backing, not the Iranian government. Tehran Ambassador Asim Bey said that the Iranian Shah could only back the war if he could stifle his fear of Russia.¹¹⁸ Jihad-i Akbar was sanctioned by the fatwas issued by the ulama. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked that the fatwas issued by Seyyid Mehmed Kazim Yazdi (d.1337/1919), Agha Mirza Mohammad Taqi Shirazi,¹¹⁹ and Haji Ismail Sadr-i Isfahani¹²⁰ be

¹¹⁰ BOA, HR. SYS, No.2338, Gömlek No.33.

¹¹¹ BOA, *Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti 4. Şube Belgeleri [DH. EUM. 4.Şb]*, No.1, Gömlek No.18.

¹¹² BOA, *Bâb-ı Âli Evrak Odası [BEO]* No. 4323, Gömlek No.324172.

¹¹³ BOA, HR. SYS, No.2338, Gömlek No.39.

¹¹⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.7.Şb, No.2, Gömlek No.45.

¹¹⁵ BOA, DH. EUM. 6. Şb, No.2, Gömlek No.25, Suat Zeyrek ve Hasan Hakan Ulutin, "I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Savunulmasında Şîf Müçtehit ve Ulamasının verdikleri Fetvalar Üzerine Bazı Değerlendirmeler", *International Journal of Social Sciences Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 3/14 (2019), 111.

¹¹⁶ BOA, DH. ŞFR, No.48, Gömlek No.42.

¹¹⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.7.Şb, No.2, Gömlek No.52.

¹¹⁸ BOA, HR. SYS, No.2337, Gömlek No.9.

¹¹⁹ According to Yahya Devlet Abadi, Muhammad Taqi Shirazi was buying real estate and real estate. This person was also taking bribes for business. He called himself Agha Najafi. The fact that he translated some Arabic religious books and wrote some works on jurisprudence and ethics gave him the appearance of a scholar in the eyes of the people, and those who did not know Isfahan expressed their loyalty to him. Yahyâ Devlet Abâdî, *Hayât-i Yahyâ*, 1/37. 122 In July 1911, the Russian invasion of Iran and their attempts to restore Muhammad Ali Shah to the throne coincided with the Italian invasion of Libya. Mazandaran and his friends sent telegrams condemning both invasions

forwarded to the Darsaadet due to the Iranian administrators' attempts to sway the ulama by asserting that the fatwas issued by the Iranian mujtahids were not genuine.¹²¹

The Iranian government, however, maintained that the fatwas issued by Mazandaran's Iranian mujtahids were not genuine. The signed and sealed fatwas of the pertinent mujtahids were surreptitiously transmitted to the Tehran Embassy to lessen the impact of the fatwas.¹²² Later, a trustworthy official was said to return the relevant fatwas to the Baghdad Embassy that same day. This suggests that Iran was again at risk from Russian and British forces.¹²³ Consequently, certain Shia mujtahids and the Ottoman Empire cooperated during the years preceding and during World War I. The Iranian government, however, was unable to back the jihad.

6. The Heritage of Avaz: The Right of Access of Mujtahids

Every year, Iranian mujtahids receive about 120,000 rupees (10,000 euros), contributing to the growth of Shiism in the area. It was anticipated that the impoverished, as well as mujtahids, would profit from this funding. When Gaziüddün Haydar's (d.1242/1827)¹²⁴ wives died, this money also began to arrive in Atabât to their wishes. The Avaz Heritage was the name of this fund.¹²⁵ Only two families managed the money coming to Atabât for an extended period. The so-called "rightful owners" also had to profit from the bequest. In 1850, Meryem Begüm and Sultan Mahal passed away, and the Avaz Inheritance arrived in Najaf and Karbala. The mujtahid Murtaza al-Ansari received around 20,000 Euros, using the official currency rate of the mid-19th century when religious levies were also factored in. Students, ulama, and mujtahids were the primary recipients of the funds.¹²⁶

Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi (d. 1265/1849), Seyyed Ali Naki al-Tabatai, and his successor, Murtaza al-Ansari, were the beneficiaries in Najaf until 1852. England got involved in the allocation of this money after 1852.¹²⁷ Following that, the British envoy handled the money distribution. Many Indians arrived in the area because of the Indian Fund established in 1860.¹²⁸ This fund lasted until

and calling on Sultan Mehmed Rashad to wage jihad and other parts of the Islamic world to show solidarity. Not content with issuing fatwas, Mazandaran and the ulama set out to wage jihad against the Russians themselves; however, they could not go further than Kazimiyya, first due to the sudden death of Akhund Molla Khorasani and then due to telegrams from the Tehran ulama and the Iranian government asking them to return. Hamid Algar, "Mâzenderânî", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2003), 28/192.

¹²³ BOA, HR. SYS, No.2338, Gömlek No.42.

¹²² BOA, DH.EUM.7.Şb, No.2, Gömlek No.63.

¹²³ BOA, DH. ŞFR, No.48, Gömlek No.259.

¹²⁴ Since the time of Begum Khan, the grandmother of the King of Avaz, Gaziuddin Haydar, large amounts of money were sent to Atebât. Between 1814 and 1816, the East India Company borrowed large amounts of cash from Gaziuddin Haydar three times during the war in Nepal (approximately 30,000,000 rupees). According to the agreement made in 1825, the Haydar family would receive 5% interest on this money. One-third of this would be allocated to Haydar's wives (four), while the remaining two-thirds would be transferred to the mujtahids of Najaf and Karbala. İsmail Safa Üstün, 19. Yüzyılda Hindistan'dan Atebât'a Gönderilen Teberrular: "Vesika-yı Hindiyye Hayır İçin Mi Siyaset İçin Mi?", *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* (İstanbul, 2007), 83-85.

¹²⁵ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 209.

¹²⁶ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 210.

¹²⁷ Litvak, "A Failed Manipulation: The British, the Oudh Bequest and the Shi'i 'Ulama' of Najaf and Karbala", 71.

¹²⁸ NA, FO, No.195, 2214-618.

1902. Rawlinson significantly impacted how the funds were allocated to the British in 1852.¹²⁹ He claimed that the passage of so much money from India to Atabāt caused discomfort for the Ottomans.¹³⁰ He persuaded both mujtahids to have the British handle the distribution by using this justification and arguing that the funds were used for private goals rather than altruistic endeavors.¹³¹ The mujtahids in Najaf received half of the money, while the “rightful owners” in Karbala were to receive the other half. The mujtahids who received a share of the Avaz Inheritance in Karbala were Seyyid Mohammad Hashim Qazwini (II), Sheikh Ali Yazdi (II), Seyyid Mohammad Shashani (III), Seyyid Mohammad Baqir Tabatai, Seyyid Mohammad Baqir Behbahani, Kalbi Baqir Hindi, and Seyyid Hussein Qomi (III).¹³²

This money was disbursed for the King of Avaz’s soul’s benefit and in his honor. All or some of the mujtahids living in Najaf and Karbala should have received the money under the terms of the will. In this case, whether some or all the mujtahids would receive the bequest was unclear. Listing every mujtahid in Karbala and Najaf proved challenging. Thus, giving the mujtahids who lived there this privilege made more sense.¹³³

Rawlinson, Newmarch, Ramsay, and Lorimer were the most significant of the several names that successfully allocated the funds in England. Before Colonel Newmarch, the Avaz Inheritance was divided by a single mujtahid in Karbala and Najaf, with most of the funds going to “undeserving people.” On the recommendation of Colonel Newmarch, this was altered. There were now ten distributors in each location. The British believed that this approach was more equitable, but the Indian authorities viewed it with suspicion.¹³⁴

The mujtahids in Najaf and Karbala were privileged in Iran and the Shia world. They felt political power as well. The Indian government had relations with Baghdad through some mujtahids. Arrangements were made in 1902-03 to distribute this money through the mujtahids. As a result of the investigations that lasted 13 months, 41 mujtahids were identified in Najaf and Karbala. There was one mujtahid at level I, eight at level II, and twelve at level III in Karbala, compared to twelve at level I, two

¹²⁹ In 1843, he was sent to Baghdad as a political agent. He was responsible for some of the diplomatic relations of the East India Company. He remained in Baghdad until he retired from the service of the East India Company in 1854. Royal Asiatic Society, “Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson”, <https://royalasiaticsociety.org/sir-henry-creswicke-rawlinson-1810-1895/> (Accessed 12 December 2024).

¹³² NA, FO, No.195, 464-341. In 1910, a kind of internal crisis was mentioned in Najaf. It is between the mujtahids and the students. About 500 of the students left education and went to Iran. Two hundred of them have already left education. It is feared that if this continues, no students will be left in Najaf. Someone named Molla Kazim was seizing the money coming from the students and was no longer helping them. The Molla was giving some money to his children with the money he received, but the other children were being condemned to starvation. He was also buying land for himself. The students were saying that the mujtahids taking all this religious money should receive equal shares, as in the treasury, and report how they used it. The mujtahids rejected this, and thereupon, the students demanded the establishment of a council to fight the mujtahids. They were saying that everyone should receive equal shares of the money.

¹³¹ Meir Litvak, “Money, Religion, and Politics: The Oudh Bequest in Najaf and Karbala 1850-1903”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33/1 (February 2001), 3.

¹³² NA, FO, No.195, 2214-155.

¹³³ NA, FO, No.195, 2214-612.

¹³⁴ NA, FO, No.195, 2214-616.

at level II, and six at level III in Najaf. Major Newmarch carried out these investigations. More than 200 people in Karbala and more than 2,000 in Najaf claimed to have a mujtahid diploma. Another possibility is that this figure is inflated. Hajji Sheikh Abdullah Mazandarani (I), Sayyid Muhammad Hasan (III), Muhammad Kazim Khorassani (I), Sheikh Abdul Hasan (III), Sheikh Fethullah Shariat (I), and Sayyid Abul Kasim (I) are among the mujtahids who were eligible to receive this inheritance at Najaf in April 1906.¹³⁵ The ulama's title and position were successful, but their classification did not accurately represent their ultimate standing. Instead, the ulama's personal traits were more important.¹³⁶

Later, the British brought up the distribution subject again, emphasizing that the mujtahids should receive an equal share of the money. In 1910, they claimed they had virtually taken control of the funds.¹³⁷ In addition, the British faced challenges in locating a mujtahid over inheritance distribution. Sayyed Mohammad Kazim and Sayyed Mohammad Ismail Sadr were revered mujtahids in Najaf and Karbala, but they disputed the British distribution; therefore, they did not think it was proper to consult them about the inheritance.

In January 1908, Ramsay wrote that Seyyid Muhammed Kazim did not accept or recommend names. Initially, Seyyid Ismail declined to provide a written response. A year later, he stated he could not accept a letter asking for a share.¹³⁸ To disperse the inheritance, England sought a mujtahid. Sheikh Abdullah Mazandarani was in Najaf, and Musa Kazim Khorasani was in Hille. The English characterized these individuals as unyielding. Sayyid Ismail Sadr and Sayyid Mohammad Kazim were said to have long denied any connection to this fortune. There hasn't been a new distributor (money distributor) since he arrived in Baghdad, according to the English official here, who is most likely Lorimer. He also added that, in his experience thus far, no mujtahid should be trusted unsupervised.¹³⁹

A committee was intended to be established to oversee the distribution of the funds arriving from India. The British desired a seat on the committee as well. It was said that this would be more equitable and that the committee members, who a chairman would oversee, might be replaced if issues arose.¹⁴⁰ To allocate the funds to "deserving persons,"¹⁴¹ a public committee would be established in both Karbala and Najaf. The distributors themselves or their designees were to make up each committee, which would be chaired by the British Vice-Consul in Baghdad and Karbala, with an equal number of British Consuls in Baghdad. A portion of the money would be distributed

¹³⁵ NA, FO, No.195, 2275-154.

¹³⁶ Christoph Werner came to such a conclusion in his study on the status of the Tabriz ulama. Christoph Werner, *What is a Mujtahid? Functions and Stratification of Tabrizi 'Ulama in the Early Qajar Period* (Tokyo: Islamic Area Studies, 2000), 19/22.

¹³⁷ NA, FO, No.195, 5-621.

¹³⁸ NA, FO, No.195, 1142-610.

¹³⁹ NA, FO, No.195, 464-615.

¹⁴⁰ NA, FO, No.195, 354-617.

¹⁴¹ NA, FO, No. 195, 2274-614. It was stated that there was no statement that the testament money coming from India could be given to poor people or deserving persons. In this sense, it was noted that the testament money was distributed through the mujtahids in Najaf and Karbala. If a mujtahid wanted to help a poor person, he could give it out of his own money. It was stated that the Indian Shiites had no claim to this money.

correctly as a result, and the distributors would handle the remaining amount in accordance with their moral convictions.

This plan somewhat compromises all claims. Lorimer stated that committees may be used to distribute two-fifths of all funds. Nevertheless, the amount might be cut in half, and if the system functioned properly, more distributors might occasionally be added to progressively raise the percentage given out by committees. According to the statement, the Governor-General's delegates on the committee ought to be fairly compensated with the monies since they are worthy individuals. A sinecure shouldn't be used here. The governor needed to be able to influence the committees' decisions and have some degree of control over them. Otherwise, the funds can be misappropriated once more.¹⁴²

England began to exert influence over cash allocation through its established committees. Of course, it has its own political goals. Above all, it felt that ensuring the equitable distribution of funds would increase its reputation in Iraq, Iran, and India.¹⁴³ In Najaf and Karbala, the British started to meddle with the status of the groups and the hierarchy of mujtahids and students simultaneously. Many of the mujtahids were now in line to join the committees and get a piece of the money.¹⁴⁴ Five Indians were among the fourteen mujtahid distributors in Najaf and Karbala by 1913, while six Indians were among the fourteen committee members. With the help of the Indian wholesalers, the British increased their power. By doing this, they gained the support of some mujtahids and increased their power in the area against both Russia and Iran.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

The Sunni and Shiite struggle for power surged in Iraq's Atabāt cities (Najaf, Karbala, Kazimiyya, Samarra) during the late 19th century as the Shiite population grew. Shiism's development in Atabāt began after the Afghan conquest of the Safavids in 1722, when many Shiite academics relocated there. These ulamas established a base, and the number of Shiite ulama increased after the Qajars' rise in 1796. They resisted the Wahhabis during the 1802 conquest of Karbala and Najaf, strengthening the ulama's regional identity. With no central Ottoman control in the early 19th century, the Mamluk pashas ruled, allowing the Shiite ulama some autonomy and propaganda tools to reach the public.

Shiite students were attracted to the area by the ulama and received good living conditions while being educated in madrasahs of holy cities. This led them to become spokespersons for Shiite propaganda as a more political Shiite ulama emerged. The institutionalization of the Qajars and Shiite ulama co-occurred. The political rise of Shia ulama framed the Babism movement (1844-1848) as 'other' and resulted in a shift toward orthodoxy. Their significant political representation was evident during the Tobacco Crisis of 1891-1892 when they protested the Shah with a supportive fatwa, opposing the state's liberal, western-style initiatives.

¹⁴² NA, FO, No.195, 2116-617.

¹⁴³ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 217.

¹⁴⁴ BOA. BEO. No.4099, Gömlek No.307373, Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 220.

¹⁴⁵ Nakash, *Irak'ta Pandoranın Kutusu Şiiler*, 223.

The constitutional movements of 1906 mirrored this approach. The Shi'ite ulama became politically active and integrated into the government. Instead of the Iranian State, the ulama promoted Shiism in Atabāt, causing Ottoman apprehension. Their similar ceremonies and excellent propaganda among tribes contributed to their influence. Financial stability strengthened their position, with religious levies from Iran and testamentary payments from India. Additionally, the ulama had no responsibilities to the state and were not subject to central government authorities.

This was adopted with the assent of many Shiite converts. The Shiite ulama could coordinate this with their marja' al-taqlid authority, educational institutions, and the pupils they instructed there since they were well-organized, active, and politically and economically present. The scenario in Basra supports the same findings regarding the outcomes it yields when contrasted with Baghdad. Thus, dismissing the Ottoman bureaucrats' worries as unfounded is impossible. Precautions against a potential danger from both Iran and the Wahhabis can also be considered, considering this circumstance. Statesmen in the area may have filed reports full of worries.

The Union and Progress took charge of state administration after March 31st in the Ottoman Empire, with branches in Karbala and Najaf. They were interested in the region during Iran's shift to a constitutional monarchy, leading to increased publications about local political events. The Shiite ulama maintained good relations with the Union and Progress, which was influenced by the Islamic Union concept from the era of Abdulhamid II. Russia and England were united against a common enemy, and 176 Iranian ulama offered support, but the Iranian State could not provide the necessary backing.

In 1907, Iran lacked decision-making power due to the strong influence of Britain and Russia. Russia sought access to the warm seas, while Britain aimed for seamless access to India. Iran and Iraq were central to the interests of both superpowers, fueling their ongoing rivalry. The Ottoman Empire never accepted the active policymaking of these external powers in this crucial area, yet struggled to defend against it. The Russians and British supported the Shiite ulama, recognizing their political influence, a treatment mirrored by the Ottomans. Consequently, the Shiite ulama became a focal point for attention from regional states.

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