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From Yazd to Bombay—Ardeshir Mehrabān ‘Irani’ and the rise of Persia’s nineteenth-century Zoroastrian merchants

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Abstract

This article begins by surveying the commercial structure of nineteenth-century Yazd, centring on the economic activities of its Zoroastrian inhabitants. Next, we examine the house of Mehrabān, arguing that they were intermediate figures in Persia’s transition from a pre-capitalist to an inchoate capitalist mode of production. Throughout the mid- to late nineteenth century, the Mehrabāns were significant socio-economic players and precursors for later generations of prosperous, worldly Iranian Zoroastrians. Ardeshir in particular epitomised the gradual emergence of an Iranian bourgeoisie in the urban centres of Persia, specifically Yazd. Concurrently, the rise of prominent members of the Mehrabān family was intimately related to their education, ‘cultural capital’, socio-economic connections, and business ventures in Bombay as well as their constantly developing political clout in Persia and India.

Keywords: The house of Mehrabān; Zoroastrians; Yazd; Bombay; nineteenth-century socio-economic history of Iran; commerce; bourgeoisie; capitalism

In what follows, we will argue that—apart from their own agency, that is, entrepreneurship; hard work; accomplishment as British *compradors*, including their role as intermediaries in Indo-Persian trade, bankers, landowners, philanthropists, and leaders of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd—a combination of four interrelated factors helps to explain the rise of the house of Mehrabān: a) the long-term socio-economic florescence in Yazd; b) the extant Zoroastrian activities of that city throughout the first half of the nineteenth century; c) the pivotal patronage of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society from the mid-1850s and the partial improvement of the legal conditions of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd; as well as d) the increasing importance of international commerce at the interface of Persia’s slow steps towards developing a capitalist mode of production.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Yazd was the lifeline of South Persia’s trade and the epicentre of the Zoroastrian community of Iran (along with Kerman).¹ Since the early nineteenth century, many Europeans reported that Yazd was a major emporium of commerce in West Asia and it was celebrated for its security. During the course of

¹ Only a few English language monographs have examined eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian Zoroastrian socio-economic history. For an exception, see J. Kestenberg-Amighi, *The Zoroastrians of Iran: Conversion, Assimilation, or Persistence* (New York, 1990).

the nineteenth century, it was also a leading manufacturing centre of Persia, producing goods and commodities such as textiles (silk, cotton, and wool), carpets, felts (*namad*), shawls, pottery, sugar, sweetmeats, wheat, bread, various fruits, and dyes.² More recently, the historian Willem Floor has confirmed that nineteenth-century Yazd was ‘the hub of Persian trade and industry, located at the junction of roads from Isfahan and Kashan via Na’in; from Shiraz via Abarquh; from Kerman; and from Mashhad and Herat via Tabas’.³

We cannot say with certainty how many Zoroastrians existed in mid-nineteenth century Persia, but primary evidence suggests that in 1860 the number of those who were openly committed to Zoroastrianism had dwindled to fewer than 10,000 out of a population of about 6.5 million inhabitants.⁴ They were even fewer in number than Persia’s Christian (at least 51,000) and Jewish (at least 18,000) minorities.⁵

In the early nineteenth century, Yazd exported to India a considerable quantity of madder (a plant, the root of which was used for dyeing). At that time, most Zoroastrians were cultivators. A number of them worked as gardeners, masons, and grooms, but they also toiled as silk and cotton spinners and produced a variety of cloth. Indeed, some Zoroastrians possessed 60–70 looms. Moreover, a small number were involved in commerce and the mechanical arts, despite heavy taxes and other extortions. It was further reported that Zoroastrians in Yazd made excellent candied sugar.⁶ By the late 1810s, a few local Zoroastrian merchants also seemed to have established favourable relations with the British. During Sir Gore Ouseley’s embassy in Persia, various sums of money, amounting to 170,000 pounds, were entrusted to a Zoroastrian called Fereydu.⁷

² E. S. Waring, *A Tour to Sheeraz, by the Route of Kazroon and Feerozabad...* (London, 1807), p. 76; Sir J. M. Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* (London, 1813), p. 113; Sir H. Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde...* (London, 1816), pp. 421–422; C. Malte-Brun, *Universal Geography, Or, a Description of All the Parts of the World...*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1822), p. 272; J. B. Fraser, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia, From the Earliest Ages to the Present Time...* (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 57; A. Conolly, *Journey to the North of India Overland from England through Russia, Persia and Afghanistan*, vol. 1 (London, 1834), pp. 349–350; J. Kitto, *Uncle Oliver’s Travels in Persia*, vol. 1 (London, 1835), pp. 93–94; C. Ritter, *Die Erdkunde im Verhältniss zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen oder allgemeine vergleichende Geographie* (Berlin, 1838), p. 166; idem, ‘Briefliche Mitteilungen über die Oase Yezd’, *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Erdkunde* 5 (1855), pp. 76–88, p. 76; J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia* (London, 1856), p. 124; R. B. M. Binning, *A Journal of Two Years’ Travel in Persia, Ceylon, Etc.*, vol. 2 (London, 1857), p. 356; Sir F. J. Goldsmid, *Telegraph and Travel; A Narrative of the Formation and Development of Telegraphic Communication between England and India...* (London, 1874), pp. 570–572; idem, *Eastern Persia: An Account of the Journeys...*, vol. 1 (London, 1876), p. 96; *Special-Catalog der Ausstellung des Persischen Reiches* (Wien, 1873), pp. 63, 54; Sir C. M. MacGregor, *Narrative of a Journey through the Province of Khorassan...*, vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. 77–78; C. J. Wills, *Persia As It Is: Being Sketches of Modern Persian Life and Character* (London, 1886), pp. 234–235; J. Bleibtreu, *Persien: das Land der Sonne und des Löwen: Aus den Papieren eines Reisenden* (Freiburg, 1894), p. 201; H. S. Landor, *Across Coveted Lands or a Journey from Flushing (Holland) to Calcutta, Overland*, vol. 1 (New York, 1903), pp. 382–385.

³ W. Floor, ‘Commerce vi. In the Safavid and Qajar periods’, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 2011 [1992], <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/commerce-vi> (accessed 25 November 2022).

⁴ C. Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa* (New York, 1982), p. 94. Persia’s population numbered about 5 million in 1800, 5.8 million in 1830, and 9.9 million in 1900. *Ibid.*

⁵ D. Yeroushalmi, *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century. Aspects of History, Community, and Culture* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 65–67.

⁶ J. Oshidari, ‘Matbu’āt va Nivishtehā-e Zartushtiyān’, *Chistā* 1.6 (Bahman 1360/January 1982), p. 681; N. Mohajer and K. Yazdani, ‘The commerce of Yazd and the economic activities of its Zoroastrian merchants and laborers’ (forthcoming).

⁷ Sir W. Ouseley, *Travels in Various Countries of the East: More Particularly Persia...*, vol. 1 (London, 1819), pp. 355–356. Lady Sheil (d. 1869) corroborated that Persia’s Zoroastrians ‘preserve a connexion with their brethren the Parsees of Bombay, and it is on this account, in all likelihood, that their intercourse with us is so intimate’. She added that up to 200 gardeners of the British embassy ‘were always Gebrs [Zoroastrians]...They dwell chiefly in the eastern province of Yezd, from whence they migrate annually in great numbers during spring.’ Lady M. L. W. Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* (London, 1856), pp. 135–136.

The Scottish traveller and artist James Baillie Fraser (1783–1856), who visited Persia in the early 1820s, reported that the chief Zoroastrian at Yazd ‘was Moollah Mazbanee, a man whose credit was so high, not only with his own sect, but with the whole city, that he had influence enough on one occasion, even to effect a change of governors’.⁸ By the mid-1820s, several Zoroastrians had been hired as messengers for the postal system by British envoys.⁹

In the mid-1840s, Yazd suffered a huge setback due to a raging cholera pandemic. It had spread from India to West Asia (about 15,000 people died in and around Mecca), East Asia (in Vietnam approximately 800,000 people perished in the late 1840s), Russia (where there were about one million victims between 1847 and 1851), across the Atlantic, and it also struck Iran.¹⁰ In 1846, the British diplomat Robert Grant Watson, who lived in Persia for some time, reported that ‘the cholera [in Yazd] was fatal to between seven and eight thousand of their inhabitants...The number of the Guebres [Zoroastrians] in and around Yezd is reduced to about eight hundred families.’¹¹

In 1849–1850, the British Consul, Keith Edward Abbott (1814–1873), reported that the Zoroastrians were the principal cultivators of the poppy, which was raised in about 21 villages around Yazd.¹² By the mid-nineteenth century, Yazd seems to have recovered from the pandemic and 20 to 25 Zoroastrian merchants were living there again. While most Zoroastrians worked in agriculture, many also laboured as artisans, bricklayers, carpenters, weavers, or in mechanical occupations.¹³ In the early 1860s, the grinding, trade, and export of dyestuff (*rubia tinet*) in Yazd was guided by Zoroastrians. A few years later, the Austrian physician and writer Jakob Eduard Polak (1818–1891), who played a pivotal role in fostering Western medicine in Persia, noted that Zoroastrian merchants mediated the trade between India and Persia, and possessed caravanserais in Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz.¹⁴ However, this information needs to be cross checked. If Polak’s claim is true, it needs to be clarified when exactly this process started. When, and under what circumstances, were Persian Zoroastrians granted permission to build caravanserais in such major Persian cities? Regardless of the accuracy of that claim, it is worth noting that in 1865, Major R. M. Smith, Acting Director of the Persian Telegraph, referred to Yazd’s commercial connections as spanning from the western Indian Ocean to East Asia: ‘The external trade appears to be very considerable, and the merchants of Yezd are reputed to be amongst the most enterprising and respectable of their class in Persia. Some of their agents have lately gone, not only to Bombay, but to the Mauritius, Java, and China.’¹⁵

⁸ J. B. Fraser, *Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822* (London, 1825), p. 22. See also idem, *An Historical and Descriptive Account*, p. 57.

⁹ R. C. Money, *Journal of a Tour in Persia, during the Years 1824 and 1825* (London, 1828), p. 132; E. von Eichwald, *Reise auf den Caspischen Meere und in den Caucasus. Unternommen in den Jahren 1825–1826* (Stuttgart, 1834), p. 219.

¹⁰ J. Snow, ‘Asiatic Cholera Pandemic of 1846–63’, <http://www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/Snow/pandemic1846-63.html> (last accessed 17 July 2022); C. Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (New York, 2016), p. 60; G. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 9.

¹¹ R. G. Watson, *A History of Persia from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the Year 1858...* (London, 1866), pp. 187, 189.

¹² National Archives (NA), Kew (London): FO 50/165: Trade Report. Notes on the Trade, Manufactures, and Productions of various Cities, and Countries of Persia, visited by Mr. Consul Abbott in 1849–50, p. 70. By 1852, the British were already complaining about competing Persian opium. It was imported by Bombay firms, mainly to Karachi, and was re-exported to China or sold on to American firms. See Kate Boehme, ‘Origins of a modern Indian capitalist class in Bombay’, *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (2019), pp. 1–18, p. 9.

¹³ D. F. Karaka, *History of the Parsis, Including their Manners, Customs, Religion and Present Position*, vol. 1 (London, 1884), p. 55.

¹⁴ J. E. Polak, *Beitrag zu den agrarischen Verhältnissen in Persien* (Wien, 1863), p. 33; idem, *Persien: das Land und seine Bewohner; ethnographische Schilderungen von Jakob Eduard Polak*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1865), p. 29.

¹⁵ H. Yule (ed.), *The Book of Ser Marco Polo...*, vol. 1 (London, 1871), p. 85.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as a result of the rise of the Parsis, who had become the leading industrialists and modernisers of India between the mid-1830s and the 1850s, a profound Parsi interest in improving the living conditions of their Persian co-religionists could and did emerge. In 1853, the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society of Bombay was founded by the wealthy Parsi philanthropists Seth Merwanji Faramji Panday, Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit (1823–1901), and others. One year later, its first representative, Maneckji Limji Hataria (1813–1890), an affluent Parsi Gujarati merchant and agent of the British, was despatched to Persia.¹⁶ In an undated letter to a state official by the name of Sheikh ul-Mashāyekh, penned during his earlier years in Persia, Hataria claimed that Zoroastrians were only permitted to work as construction labourers, carpenters, tailors, and muleteers, and they were not allowed to sell their homegrown fruits and vegetables in the markets.¹⁷ At that juncture, trade and commerce in Yazd began to grow steadily and was further enhanced when the Indo-European telegraph line was installed in Yazd from the mid-1860s.¹⁸ The endeavours of the Persian Zoroastrians and their Parsi co-religionists bore some fruit when in 1860 the ban on Zoroastrians trading officially was lifted and in 1870 they were formally granted the right to open schools for their children.¹⁹ At that point, the house of Mehrabān had become a central commercial hub in Yazd.²⁰

During a 23-year period, from the late 1850s to the abolition of the *jazieh* (head tax) in 1882, the Parsi managers of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society spent about Rs 109,564 to pay the head tax of their co-religionists in Persia.²¹ The *farmān* (royal edict) issued by Nasser ed-Din Shah Qajar in 1882 and the abolition of the *jazieh* for Zoroastrians were a turning point and significant stepping stone in the transformation of Zoroastrian subjects into Iranian citizens during the later Constitutional Revolution (1905–1909). By 1882, there were 12 Zoroastrian schools in Tehran, Kerman, and Yazd and its villages, mostly as a result of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society and its emissary's (Hataria's) advocacy. Two of the first teachers in Tehran's Zoroastrian school were Parsis who had been persuaded by Hataria to move to Persia. The latter

¹⁶ R. Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān: Farzanegān-e Zartoshti* (Tehran, 1363/1984), pp. 617–622; T. Amini, *Asnādi az Zartoshtiān-e Moāsser-e Irān (1258–1338)* (Tehran, 1380/2001), p. 1; F. M. Kotwal, J. K. Choksy, C. J. Brunner and M. Moazami, 'Hataria, Maneckji Limji', *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2016) <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hataria-maneckji-limji> (accessed 25 November 2022). The foundation of the abovementioned society was an immediate response to increased Zoroastrian immigration to Gujarat and Bombay during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and their subsequent urge to help their relatives, friends, and co-religionists back in Persia. It was especially Burjoji Faramji Panday (Merwanji's brother) and his mother Golestān who established a fund in 1834 to help recent Persian Zoroastrian immigrants in Bombay. Golestān herself had escaped with her father to Bombay in 1796 to avoid a forced marriage to a Yazdi Muslim. In Bombay, she was married to the affluent Parsi Faramji Bhikaji Panday who, according to Boyce, aided 'with body, mind and money' those Iranians who reached Bombay, and it is said that he earned the right to be called 'the father of the Irani Parsis'. Mary Boyce, 'Maneckji Limji Hataria in Iran', *K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Golden Jubilee Volume* (1969), pp. 19–31, p. 20.

¹⁷ M. L. Hataria, *Resāla-e Tarjoma-ye Ezhār-e Siāhat-e Irān* (Bombay, 1280/1863–1864), p. 41.

¹⁸ Mohajer and Yazdani, 'The commerce of Yazd'.

¹⁹ According to the British Reverend Napier Malcolm (who spent five years in Yazd between 1898 and 1903), up until about 1860, Zoroastrians 'could not engage in trade. They used to hide things in their cellar rooms, and sell them secretly. They can now trade in the caravanserais or hostelrys, but not in the bazaars, nor may they trade in linen drapery.' N. Malcolm, *Five Years in a Persian Town* (London, 1905), pp. 46–47. The circumstances under which the trade ban was abolished still remain obscure. But we know that linens were considered to be more polluting than other types of cloth but also a lucrative trade item. J. Kestenberg-Amighi, 'Kerman xiii. Zoroastrians of Nineteenth-Century Yazd and Kerman', *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2014), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kerman-13-zoroastrians> (accessed 25 November 2022).

²⁰ For the house of Mehrabān's early commercial activities in Yazd, see the sections in this article titled 'Mollā Arbāb Mehrabān Rostam' and 'A Sketch of the Lives of Ardeshir Mehrabān Irani and his Brother Keikhosrow'.

²¹ Karaka, *History*, vol. 1, p. 81.

also brought 12 Kermani and 20 Yazdi students to Tehran. With the financial assistance of the Parsis, these students then continued their studies in Bombay.²²

In the early 1880s, it was reported that Zoroastrians were exporting a dye-root called 'rhnas' (that is, madder, grown around Yazd) to Bombay.²³ In small workshops, Zoroastrians in Yazd 'made a special kind of head-dress for export to Arabia via Charbar and Maskat' and they were also said to control the weaving of silk stuffs.²⁴ At that time, Edward Stack confirmed that the Zoroastrians were important poppy cultivators and that Zoroastrians from Yazd 'seem to deal chiefly in opium'.²⁵ Lieutenant Henry Bathurst Vaughan, who spent about two years in Persia, observed that Yazdi Zoroastrians 'drink, but do not smoke, and produce excellent wine'.²⁶ He noticed that about 15 Zoroastrians were naturalised British subjects, while 'the greater part of trade is in their hands'.²⁷ At that point, Yazd's exports mainly consisted of opium, cotton, wool, madder-roots, cumin seeds, almonds, walnuts, and pistachio nuts.²⁸ However, Vaughan believed that '[o]wing to their unprotected state' Zoroastrians 'dare not invest more than one quarter of their fortunes in trade'.²⁹ Significantly, as late as the 1880s and early 1890s, Zoroastrians had to pay a tribute of 20 per cent to the *ruhāniat* (clergy) on inheritances, bargains, and sales transactions.³⁰

²² Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartosthiān*, p. 626; Boyce, 'Maneckji'; M. Ringer, 'Reform transplanted: Parsi agents of change amongst Zoroastrians in nineteenth-century Iran', *Iranian Studies* 42.4 (2009), pp. 549–560, p. 556. According to Boyce, 'Maneckji', 'the education offered was a modern secular one, based on reading, writing and arithmetic' (p. 28). It was a boarding school where the children had to stay for five years and all costs were defrayed by Hataria, including financial support for their parents. In the next decades, these pupils went on to become some of the most prominent Zoroastrians. Amini, *Asnādi*, p. 8.

²³ C. E. Stewart, *Through Persia in Disguise*, (ed.) Basil Stewart (London, 1911), p. 268.

²⁴ E. A. Floyer, *Unexplored Baluchistan. A Survey, with Observations Astronomical, Geographical, Botanical, etc., of a Route through Mekran, Bashkur, Persia, Kurdistan, and Turkey* (London, 1882), pp. 353–354. Floor confirms that, as early as 1876, the trade in textiles (especially silk) in Persia was mostly in the hands of Zoroastrians from Yazd. W. Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500–1925* (Paris, 1999), p. 21.

²⁵ E. Stack, *Six Months in Persia*, vol. 1 (London, 1882), pp. 263, 269.

²⁶ Lieutenant H. B. Vaughan, 'Journeys in Persia (1890–91)', *The Geographical Journal* 7.1 (1896), pp. 24–41, p. 29. See also Landor, *Across Coveted Lands*, p. 383; MacGregor, *Narrative*, vol. 1, pp. 77–78.

²⁷ India Office Records, British Library (IOR): /L/PWD/7/1097: Lieutenant H. B. Vaughan, Memorandum on the Parsis of Yazd, 22 July 1889, p. 4. However, he later noted that the 15 naturalised British subjects comprised both Zoroastrians and Muslims. IOR/L/PS/20/91: Henry Bathurst Vaughan, Report of a Journey through Persia (1890), p. 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Vaughan, Memorandum, p. 3.

³⁰ In the mid-nineteenth century, Karaka observed that 'property newly purchased [by Zoroastrians] was liable to be taxed for the benefit of the "mullas" to the extent of a fifth of its value'. Karaka, *History*, vol. 1, 78. Around the same time, the prominent Russian Orientalist and Iranologist, Zhukovskii, corroborated that the clergy skimmed 20 per cent from Zoroastrians when they inherited, bought, or sold property. V. A. Zhukovskii, 'О Положеніи Гевровъ въ Персіи' [On the position of Gabrs in Persia], *Журналъ Министерства Народнаго Просвѣщенія* 237 (1885), pp. 77–94, p. 87. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Victor Zatspine for helping with the translation of the latter. In 1888, Vaughan pointed out that: 'Whenever a Parsi purchases landed property he has to pay for it twenty per cent more than the estimated value.' Vaughan, Memorandum, p. 2. In 1892, Curzon also attested that when Zoroastrians 'purchase property, a higher price is exacted from them than from Mohammedans; they are forced to conceal their means, and to restrict their commercial operations for fear of exciting hostile attack; while in the streets they are constantly liable to insult and personal affront.' G. N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 2 (London, 1892), p. 241. In 1907, this was also confirmed by Baggaley. He wrote that, when a 'Parsee buys a piece of land from a Moslem he has to pay the "Khums" [khams], i.e. 20% to the Mullas of the actual price paid to the seller.' Baggaley cited in P. Oberling, 'The role of religious minorities in the Persian Revolution, 1906–1912', *Journal of Asian History* 12.1 (1978), pp. 1–29, p. 17.

Yet, from the 1860s through to the early 1900s, Zoroastrians increasingly controlled a large share of the import and export trade of Yazd.³¹ Interestingly, the British statesman, traveller, and writer George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925), who had studied the country for three years, argued that the Zoroastrians of Yazd ‘occupy a position here not unlike that of the Chinese *compradors* and agents in the Treaty Ports of Japan, the bulk of the foreign trade passing through their hands, and a good deal of the home industry being likewise under their direction’.³² In 1893, British Consul J. R. Preece claimed that Yazd harboured 250 merchants with a capital of 2 million toman (£500,000), that is, merely £2,000 per merchant. Yazd was the supply centre of tea and Manchester piece goods for Bukhara and Central Asia due to the closing of the Afghan route. In Yazd, henna from Bam and sugar from Russia, and later Mauritius, were processed and distributed throughout the country. Interestingly, Yazd was also home to 15 sugar refineries.³³

In 1896, reports commissioned by the English Foreign Office and German Ministry of the Interior indicated that in 1894/95, about half of the merchandise imported into Persia was introduced by British subjects who paid a toll of 5 per cent. Local merchants paid a tariff of 2 per cent. The population of the entire province numbered 80,000 but it had not increased in the previous two years as lawlessness and extortion occurred on a daily basis in the wake of weak governance, insecurity, and the impotence of the administration. The main obstacle to trade was ascribed to the deficient and unregulated transport facilities. Merchants were dependent on the camel drivers who came and went as they pleased. In recent years, an increasing number of petty merchants had embezzled money through buying commodities on credit and subsequently suspending payment. It had therefore become difficult even for honest merchants to get credit from the Europeans. The lack of legislation regarding bankruptcy was to the utmost disadvantage of businesses. However, by mid-1895, conditions had improved once again.³⁴

At the turn of the century, Major Percy Molesworth Sykes (1847–1945) observed that ‘Yezd still keeps seven hundred looms busy weaving all sorts of silk...Apart from its silk looms Yezd possesses almost a monopoly of the henna trade...There is also a considerable export of cotton, almonds, and pistachio nuts’.³⁵ In the first years of the twentieth century, the portfolio of exports and imports increased further. As the English painter, explorer, writer, and anthropologist, Arnold Henry Savage Landor (1865–1924), who travelled through Persia on horseback, declared: ‘If Yezd is, for its size, now the most enterprising trading centre of Persia, it is mostly due to the Guebres living there...The Bombay Society has done much to raise the Zoroastrians of Persia to their present comparatively advanced state, but trade and commerce also have to a great extent contributed to their present eminence.’³⁶

³¹ NA: FO 60/539: H. B. Vaughan, 19.6.1889, pp. 13–14 and 9.7.1889, pp. 1–5; NA: FO 60/539: J. E. Gordon: Appointment of Mr. Ardeshir Mihrban as British Agent at Yezd, 30.6.1892, pp. 52–53; Bleibtreu, *Persien*, p. 201; Landor, *Across Coveted Lands*, p. 398.

³² Curzon, *Persia*, vol. 2, pp. 241–242.

³³ M. J. Fisher, ‘Zoroastrian Iran between Myth and Praxis’, (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1973), p. 116.

³⁴ Sir Mortimer Durand to the Marquis of Salisbury, in Foreign Office. 1896. Annual Series. No. 1662. Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance. Persia. Report for the Year 1894–95 on the Trade of Ispahan and Yezd (London, 1896); *Deutsches Handels-Archiv. Zeitschrift für Handel und Gewerbe. Herausgegeben im Reichsamt des Innern. Zweiter Theil: Berichte über das In- und Ausland* (Berlin, 1896), pp. 224–227.

³⁵ Major P. M. Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia or Eight Years in Iran* (London, 1902), pp. 423–424.

³⁶ The exports mainly consisted of almonds and nuts, tobacco, opium (to China), colouring matters, walnut wood, silk, wool, cotton, carpets, felts, skins, assafoetida, shoes, copper pots, country loaf-sugar, and sweetmeats. Imports included spices, cotton goods, yarn, prints, copper sheeting, tin slabs, Indian tea, broadcloth, jewellery, arms, cutlery, watches, earthenware, glass and enamel wares, iron, loaf-sugar, and powdered sugar. Landor, *Across Coveted Lands*, pp. 382–385, 398, 405.

The socio-economic and legal improvement of the conditions of Zoroastrians also seem to have somewhat stimulated its population growth. By the mid-nineteenth century, Yazd and the surrounding villages had about 1,000 Zoroastrian houses or families, amounting to a population of *circa* 6,658 souls.³⁷ By the late 1880s, Lieutenant Vaughan claimed that Yazd had between 65,000 and 100,000 inhabitants (including Taft and the suburbs). He estimated the Zoroastrian population at 6,737. Still, the vast majority of Zoroastrians, that is, 5,784, were agriculturalists. Only the tradesmen (704) and priests (249) lived in Mahalla. Furthermore, he counted 28 Zoroastrians who were born in Bombay but resided in Yazd and 914 Zoroastrian residents in Bombay. Vaughan also mentioned that Yazd had 900 Jews—probably an underestimation—as other accounts estimated as many as 2,000.³⁸ In 1891, there were about 6,908 Zoroastrians in Yazd.³⁹ By the early twentieth century, there had been a moderate increase in their numbers to 7,500 souls.⁴⁰ Thus, this development accounted for a modest surge of almost 850 people within a period of 50 years.⁴¹

In the following, we touch upon a few details that are known about the Persian Zoroastrian Mollā Arbāb Mehrabān Rostam. Then, we trace the lives of his sons, the wealthy merchants and bankers Ardeshir Mehrabān Irani and his elder brother Keikhosrow; examine the catastrophic Great Famine (1870–72); and discuss the role that the house of Mehrabān played in supporting their Persian co-religionists. Next, we scrutinise the murder of Rashid Mehrabān in 1874, and inspect Ardeshir's encounter with Edward Browne in the late 1880s. Lastly, we study his activities as an agent of the New Oriental Bank. We intend to demonstrate that prominent members of the Mehrabān family were quintessential intermediaries throughout the interim period of Persia's transition from a pre-capitalist to a budding capitalist mode of production. In the course of this interlude, bridging the mid- to late nineteenth century, the house of Mehrabān turned into an influential hub, becoming a forerunner for later generations of affluent Iranian Zoroastrian entrepreneurs and leaders. Ardeshir incarnated the gradual advance of an Iranian bourgeoisie in the urban centres of Persia, especially Yazd. As we will explore in some detail, the commercial and financial success of the Mehrabāns between the 1860s and 1890s needs to be viewed in light of the family's relations with the Parsis of India, some of its members' education, socio-economic connections, business enterprises and property in Bombay, their charitable endeavours, the family's political leverage in

³⁷ Karaka, *History*, vol. 1, p. 55.

³⁸ Vaughan, Memorandum, p. 2 and Appendix. According to Isaac Luria, the headmaster of the Alliance Israélite school in Baghdad, there were 1,500 Jews in Yazd in 1872. In 1879, Houtum-Schindler mentioned that there were 1,200 Jews in Yazd, out of whom 1,000 lived in extreme poverty, whereas Menant and Malcom estimated that the population of Yazd amounted to 70,000 or 80,000 inhabitants, including 2,000 Jews, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century respectively. Yerousushalmi, *The Jews*, pp. 67, 82, 125, 202; General A. Houtum-Schindler, 'Reisen im südlichen Persien 1879', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* 16 (1881), pp. 307–366, p. 320; D. Menant, *Les Parsis*, translated in part by R. A. Vakil (London, 1902 [1898]), p. 51; Malcolm, *Five Years*, p. 44.

³⁹ Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, p. 13; Menant, *Les Parsis*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Report on the Trade of Ispahan and Yezd for the Year 1906 by Mr. Consul-general Barnham, in Annual Series. No. 3923. Diplomatic and Consular Reports. Persia. Report for the Year 1906 of the Trade of Ispahan and Yezd (London, 1907), p. 575 (18).

⁴¹ To what degree the population increase was related to a higher birth rate or immigration is not clear. But we know that a number of Parsis had moved to Persia and were living in Yazd from the 1850s, adding up to almost three dozen Parsi merchants by the 1880s. Moreover, the Zoroastrians' legal situation improved in the wake of the activities of the Parsis as well as the goodwill of Nasser ed-Din Shah, prime ministers Amir Kabir and Mirzā Hossein Khān Sepahsālār, and, to some degree, the governor of Yazd, Prince Imad ud-Dawla. But the amelioration of medical and sanitary conditions in Persia from the second half of the nineteenth century is also likely to have stimulated overall population growth, including the increase of Persia's Zoroastrian communities.

both Persia and India, its banking activities, and the Mehrabāns' role as British *compradors* and agents of Indo-Persian trade.

Mollā Arbāb Mehrabān Rostam

Prior to the ascendancy of the Zoroastrian merchant magnates of the Jahāniān family and Arbāb Jamshid Jamshidiān, the house of Mehrabān appears to have been the wealthiest Zoroastrian merchant family of mid-nineteenth century Persia. Not much is known about the house of Mehrabān. The life of Mollā Arbāb Mehrabān Rostam or Rostam 'Meh' is almost veiled in obscurity and little information is available on the female side of the family. We know, however, that he was a member of the Zoroastrian *anjuman* (society) of Yazd and a well-respected member of that community.⁴² According to the historian Fereyduṅ Ādamiyat, since the Zoroastrians were not treated well in Yazd, Mollā Rostam complained to Prime Minister Amir Kabir (1807–1852) about the injustices imposed upon the Zoroastrians by the governor of that city. As a result, Amir Kabir sent a letter to the governor, demanding that the belongings that had been seized from the Zoroastrian community be given back to them and that, instead of being mistreated, Zoroastrians should be able to live a peaceful life and continue to pursue their businesses.⁴³

Rostam may have had up to seven sons. Some of them, namely Khosrow, Godarz, Rashid, Keikhosrow, and Ardeshir, became wealthy merchants and bankers.⁴⁴ It is also worth mentioning that at the age of 11, the prominent entrepreneur and future eminent statesman Arbāb Jamshid was reportedly sent to Borujerd, along with one of his father's friends, to work and take up his apprenticeship at the local trade centre owned by Arbāb Rostam.⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, Rostam's sons were among the first Persian Zoroastrians of the nineteenth century to have profited from the philanthropic activities of their Parsi co-religionists. When Hataria landed in Yazd in 1854, Mollā Rostam was his neighbour. In the same year, Hataria founded the *panchayat* (*anjuman*) of Yazd. Around that time, Rostam was said to have been arrested due to some unspecified financial issues. Hataria paid a ransom to have him set free and also seems to have helped him to secure the funds that Rostam kept in Boroujerd and Soltanabad. In a letter that Hataria wrote to the Zoroastrian *anjuman* of Yazd—in which he complained about the lack of concern which Persian Zoroastrians supposedly exhibited towards their children's education—he stated that he had asked Rostam to send his children to Bombay so that they could conduct trade and study the sciences. But Rostam did not heed his advice. It was only after his father's death that Keikhosrow went to Tehran, where Hataria encouraged him to travel to Bombay and provided him with some letters of recommendation to influential Indians. In due course, he followed Hataria's advice and, together with his brothers—it is not clear which brother(s) apart from Ardeshir—went to study in Bombay. As a result, they became 'successful and famous' (*ba esm-o rasm*).⁴⁶

⁴² Amini, *Asnādi*, p. 25; K. Namiraniān, *Zartoshtiān-e Irān Pas az Eslām ta Konoun* (Tehran, 2008/1387), p. 206.

⁴³ F. Ādamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Irān* (Tehran, 1983), pp. 456–456. Prime Minister Amir Kabir (r. 1848–1851) tried to prevent the emigration of Zoroastrians and intended to bring back many who had already left for India. To achieve this, he sent Mīrzā Hossein Khān Sepahsālār on a mission to Bombay to convince those who had departed the country to come back. He seems to have persuaded seven families who had left for Bombay to return to Persia. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, pp. 578–579; J. R. Hinnells, M. Boyce and S. Shahrokh, 'Charitable Foundations', *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2011 [1991]), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/charitable-foundations-mpers#pt2> (accessed 25 November 2022)

⁴⁵ Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, p. 433.

⁴⁶ Amini, *Asnādi*, p. 25; Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, pp. 399–400; J. Oshidari, *Tarikh-e Pahlavi va Zartoshtiān-e Irān* (Tehran, 1976/2535) (*shāhanshāhi*), p. 267. Interestingly, the 'Zoroastrian *anjumans* [societies]

A sketch of the lives of Ardeshir Mehrabān Irani and his brother Keikhosrow

Ardeshir's elder brother Keikhosrow was born in Yazd sometime between the late 1830s and mid-1840s, probably around 1845. According to Rashid Shahmardān, he lost his father when he was 12 years old. He left for Bombay at the age of 15 with his uncle. The trip took about three months. Upon arrival, he went to school and after a few years of study and learning Persian and Gujarati, he started a trading business. Over the course of a three-year period, he became one of the best-known Persian merchants of his time.⁴⁷ Around 1857–1858, he married a woman called Gohar from the Izadyār family. Shortly after their marriage, however, she died giving birth to their son Esfandiār. His wife's sudden death had such a devastating effect on him that Keikhosrow reportedly handed over the business to his younger brother Ardeshir, left for the Himalaya mountains, and became a hermit. Around the same time, another brother by the name of Khosrow, who was a trader in Bandar Abbas, passed away at a young age, leaving behind a widow by the name of Firuzeh. His elder brother Arbāb Rostam travelled to the Himalayas and convinced Keikhosrow to return with him to Persia and marry Firuzeh. After marrying, Keikhosrow returned to Bombay and resumed his commercial activities.⁴⁸ Apart from charities, which constituted the house of Mehrabān's entrance into philanthropic activities, Keikhosrow is said to have given more than Rs 35,000 to the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund to build schools and to educate the Zoroastrians in Persia.⁴⁹

We lack data about the early life of Ardeshir Mehrabān. The only information at our disposal is that he was born around 1848 and, like his brother, came from the Zoroastrian stronghold of Yazd. As he testified in 1891, 'I had resided at Yazd by about twelve consecutive years and know the place, the people, their beliefs, its commerce, their sentiments, customs and rites.' Ardeshir emigrated to Bombay when he was 12 years old where he was educated and passed the matriculation examination of Bombay university in 1866, only five years after its first matriculation examination had been conducted. He then studied at Elphinstone College—about a decade after this Western-oriented institution of higher learning had been officially inaugurated. He stayed there for about a year and left 'owing

have a longer history than other *anjomans* in Iran, dating from as early as the mid-19th century with the arrival in Yazd of Manekji Limji Hataria'. M. Kasheff, 'Anjoman-e Zartostīān', *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2011 [1985]), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anjoman-e-zartostian> (accessed 25 November 2022). Boyce points out that in the 1850s, Hataria promoted the conversion of traditional Zoroastrian councils of elders in Yazd and Kerman into elected *anjumans*, 'each with a secretary and written minutes'. M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London/Boston, 1979), p. 218. See also S. Stiles, 'Early Zoroastrian conversions to the Bahá'í faith in Yazd, Iran', in *From Iran East and West. Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, vol. 2, (eds) J. R. Cole and M. Momen (Los Angeles, 1984), pp. 67–94.

⁴⁷ Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay (MSA): Political Department, Persia, Vol. 1, No. 204 (1875), Certificate, Bombay Castle, 1 February 1869; Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, pp. 433, 576. Some of the dates provided by Shahmardān are inaccurate and inconsistent with other available sources. Accordingly, he assumes that Keikhosrow was born around 1828–1829. But Keikhosrow himself told the British colonial administration in Bombay that he was born around 1838. If Shahmardān was right that Keikhosrow's father died when he was 12, it would have been more likely that he was born in the mid-1840s since his father could not have met Hataria prior to 1854, the date of the latter's arrival in Persia. Alternatively, if 1838 was the correct date of birth, Keikhosrow must have been older than 12 when his father died.

⁴⁸ Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, p. 578.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 576, 578. At Keikhosrow's behest, Yazd's Zoroastrians donated Rs 14,250 to finance the building of schools. He also built and paid the expenses of the Keikhosrow School and deposited Rs 5,000 in his own name and Rs 2,500 on Khosrow Mehrabān's behalf to be entrusted to the Parsi Amelioration Fund. *Ibid.*, p. 555. Pavri confirms that in 1890 Keikhosrow spent Rs 10,000 to build a school by the name of Dabirestan-e-Keikhosrowi in Yazd and also donated Rs 5,000 for its maintenance. It became one of the most reputable schools in Yazd, with about 200 students. *Ibid.*, p. 579; J. Pavri, 'Arbab Rustam Bahman Guiv, (1888–1980)', <http://www.zoroastrian.org.uk/vohuman/Article/Rustam%20Guiv.htm> (accessed 25 November 2022).

to ill health', as he recounted in 1891 when he was 43. After Persian, his second language was Gujarati. Altogether, he resided in India for about 20 years. He had 'a large stake in the country' and the 'greater part' of his business was conducted in Bombay where he became a wealthy landowner. Both Ardeshir and Keikhosrow were naturalised by the Government of Bombay.⁵⁰ Indeed, on 27 January 1869, Keikhosrow Mehrabān 'Irani' and Ardeshir Mehrabān 'Irani', 'Native[s] of Persia and Inhabitant[s] of Bombay' had requested certificates of naturalisation to obtain the privileges of British subjects. It was stated that both brothers were merchants who carried out trade with Persia and other countries, and had resided in Bombay since 1861, adding that they intended to reside there permanently. On 1 February 1869, formal certification that 'all the rights, privileges and capacities of Naturalization' under the Act XXX of 1852 were granted to the two brothers.⁵¹ Soon after this event, the Great Famine of 1870–1872 shook Iran and, together with Godarz, the brothers established the Persian Famine Relief Fund. At some point in the 1870s or 1880s, Ardeshir relocated to Yazd. There, he stayed till March 1890, when he returned to Bombay again. By the late 1890s or early 1900s, however, he seems to have resettled in his birthplace of Yazd once and for all.⁵²

Significantly, the Mehrabān family was widely engaged in charities, rebuilding fire temples, and constructing schools. Ardeshir, for example, 'a philanthropic Zoroastrian', as he was styled by his contemporary Abraham Jackson, built a *dakhmeh* (tower of silence) in Allahabad (10 miles from Yazd) 'in memory of a rich childless merchant, Khosru-i Mihrban-i Rustam'.⁵³ It has also been pointed out that, in Yazd, Jamshid and Rashid Mehrabān,

...built a new fire temple in the priests' quarter, and Kay Qosrow founded a school beside it...Godarz built a water tank (*āb-anbār*) on the way from Yazd to the Zoroastrian mountain shrine of Pīr-e Sabz, and a pavilion at the shrine itself to shelter pilgrims. The family owned land in the village of Allāhābād (Ēlābād) and there Rostam built the fire temple, Kay Qosrow the *daḡma*, and Godarz the school and water tank, the latter with access for Muslim as well as Zoroastrian villagers... Godarz also gave the ground in Yazd for Christian missionaries to build a hospital. This range of benefactions broadly represents those made by other Zoroastrians of means from then on. They were mostly originally for the benefit of their own community but often came (as in the case of schools, hospitals, etc.) to serve others outside it also, and in traditional fashion charity was also at times extended to the poor and distressed without distinction.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ MSA: Political Department, Persia, Vol. 1, No. 204 (1875), Certificate, Bombay Castle, 1 February 1869; *Ibid.*, 12 February 1869; *Ibid.*, 13 February 1869; NA: FO 60/539: Ardeshir Mehrabān, Bombay Castle, 22.9.1891, pp. 46–47. According to Pavri, Ardeshir was married to Dowlat and had four sons, Bahman, Jamshid, Fereydun, and Rashid, and two daughters, Gulchehr and Morvarid. Pavri, 'Arbab Rustam'.

⁵¹ MSA: Political Department, Persia, Vol. 1, No. 204 (1875), Certificate, Bombay Castle, 1 February 1869; *Ibid.*, 12 February 1869; *Ibid.*, 13 February 1869. For the specificities of the Naturalization Act XXX of 1852, see R. Clarke (ed.), *Digest, Or Consolidated Arrangement, of the Regulations and Acts of the Bengal Government from 1793 to 1854* (London, 1855), pp. 10–12.

⁵² NA: FO 60/539: Ardeshir Mehrabān, Bombay Castle, 22.9.1891, pp. 46–47; Landor, *Across Coveted Lands*, p. 404.

⁵³ Jackson was a professor of Indo-Iranian languages at Columbia University who travelled through Persia during the early twentieth century. Curiously enough, Jackson alleged that Ardeshir was Rostam's adopted son. A. V. W. Jackson, *Persia Past and Present: A Book of Travel and Research* (London, 1906), p. 397.

⁵⁴ Hinnells et al., 'Charitable Foundations'. Shahmardān also notes that Keikhosrow and his brother Arbāb Rostam built an *āb-anbār* in Asrabad (around Yazd) to facilitate access to a water supply. They also built another one in the middle of the desert, six kilometres from Allahabad, named after their murdered brother Rashid Mehr (abān). Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtian*, p. 579. A number of contemporary European travellers confirmed that a caravanserai and its property, including a house that adjoined it, was donated by Godarz Mehrabān and had been

The Great Famine of 1870–1872

As will be shown below, Godarz, Keikhosrow, and Ardeshir Mehrabān, along with their Parsi co-religionists, eminent Jews, and others, played a crucial role in providing relief and helping poor Persians, especially Zoroastrians and Jews, to move to Bombay during the Great Famine of 1870–1872. But before delving into their activities, it would be expedient to give a summary of the devastating events in Yazd.

In 1870, a *London Daily News* correspondent from Shiraz asserted that when the famine began, the governors of Yezd ‘each distributed large sums of money among the poor of his district’.⁵⁵ On 30 April 1871, a correspondent from Tabriz writing to a Turkish journal recounted that in Shiraz, Kerman, and Yazd, all those in the most desperate need were forced to eat grass and roots, while ‘pestilence follows hard on the footsteps of famine’ and ‘half of the population of Persia is becoming rapidly depopulated’.⁵⁶ The *Church Missionary Intelligencer* reported that between February and May of 1871, the ‘streets of Ispahan, Yazd and most of the towns of the east and south of Persia, were lined with the dying and the dead’.⁵⁷ Moreover, the ‘king’s son-in-law, who was the Governor of Yezd ... told the writer that in Yezd (a city of less than 50,000 inhabitants), 20,000 had died of starvation’.⁵⁸ The *Bombay Gazette* reported that on 24 May 1871 Nasser ed-Din Shah removed the governor of Yazd as the latter ‘had entered into a combination with the grain dealers so as to be able to sell every article of provision at an exorbitant price’. The new governor ‘ordered numerous grain shops to be opened, and the result was that the sufferings of the poor Persians and others have been greatly relieved’. The price of grain, which previously amounted to 9 qirān (a qirān was equal to a shilling), was reduced to 3 qirān.⁵⁹

In this context, it added that a sum of Rs 800 was sent from Bombay by ‘Messrs. Mehrban and Co.’ and received by their brother Keikhosrow at Yezd. The latter ‘at once purchased about 800 maunds of wheat, and distributed the same among his suffering countrymen’.⁶⁰ In fact, Parsi communities in Surat, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Kannur transmitted considerable sums to their Persian co-religionists through the Mehrabān family’s Famine Relief Fund.⁶¹ Interestingly enough, around the same time, in one of his letters, the first representative of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society, the Parsi Maneckji Limji Hataria, singled out the philanthropy of the Parsi entrepreneur Dinshaw Maneckji Petit, co-founder of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society (1854), suggesting that:

turned into a well-equipped hospital by Dr White of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles*, pp. 423–424; Jackson, *Persia*, p. 377; C. C. Rice, *Mary Bird in Persia* (London, 1916), p. 133. Interestingly, Fisher notes that, before donating the caravanserai and house to the CMS, Godarz refused to sell them to the Tobacco Regie. Fisher, ‘Zoroastrian Iran’, p. 436. In 1900, the CMS in Yazd treated 35,600 patients, ‘some of whom even came from Baluchistan and Afghanistan to seek treatment’. W. Floor, ‘Hospitals in Safavid and Qajar Iran: An enquiry into their number, growth and importance’, in *Hospitals in Iran and India, 1500–1950s*, (ed.) F. Speziale (Leiden, 2012), pp. 37–116, p. 101.

⁵⁵ *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1871*, vol. 11 (New York, 1872), pp. 625–626.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

⁵⁷ *The Church Missionary Intelligencer. A Monthly Journal of Missionary Information*, vol. VII (London, 1871), p. 328.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁵⁹ *Allen’s Indian Mail and Official Gazette*, 1 August 1871, p. 731.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ S. Patel, ‘The Great Persian Famine of 1871, Parsi refugees and the making of Irani identity in Bombay’, in *Bombay Before Mumbai: Essays in Honour of Jim Masselos*, (eds) P. Kidambi, M. Kamat and R. Dwyer (New York, 2019), pp. 57–76, p. 71.

In Yezd twelve Zoroastrians were dying daily for want of food, yet only one benevolent Parsee gentleman, Mr. Nusservanjee Maneckjee Petit, had...sent 300 rupees in 1866, and 1,700 rupees on the 10th of January, 1870, through the managing committee, and again 200 rupees by telegraph on the 14th of March, 1871. No other contribution...had been received and corn distributed among the Zoroastrians at Yezd had been taken from them by the Mohammedans.⁶²

As Simin Patel has recently pointed out, however, by July 1871, the trading house of 'Messrs Godrez Mehrban & Co.' acted as the secretaries and main coordinators of the Persian Famine Relief Fund in Bombay. They had received over Rs 10,000 in subscriptions from various Parsi settlements. By dint of British political agents, military personnel in Muscat and Bushehr, and well-known Parsis and Zoroastrians in Persia, 'the funds and food provisions were distributed among famine-affected Zoroastrians in thirty-three villages and the major centers of Yazd, Kerman and Tehran'. Moreover, they organised the passage of Persian Zoroastrian famine refugees from Bandar Abbas via Karachi to Bombay. The first group of 29 refugees arrived in Bombay on 6 June 1871.⁶³ Hence, it was not merely Parsi funds, but also Persian Zoroastrian contributions and their logistical efforts that were crucial in bringing about famine relief. In effect, the mercantile firm of the Mehrabān family and its Famine Relief Fund was operated by Godarz and his brother Ardeshir, while two other siblings, Keikhosrow and Khosrow Mehrabān, were located at Yazd and Bandar Abbas respectively. They made possible the passage of the famine refugees to Bombay. As Patel brings out, the Mehrabāns

...had a five-month headway in the collection of subscriptions. Operating as a team, the two brothers executed their responsibilities briskly and coherently. They kept the *Bombay Gazette* and the *Times of India* updated with the figures of their latest collections as well as let the newspapers serve as the first port to which readers could send donations, which were then forwarded to their custody.⁶⁴

She adds that the Mehrabāns' programme had 'a scope and substance that was lacking in the operations of the other relief funds'.⁶⁵ It is worth mentioning that a refugee in Bombay by the name of Sheriar Behram told a reporter: 'I cannot sufficiently extol the labours of Messrs Godrez Mehrban & Co., and Mr. Khosroo Eranee, for I am convinced that but for them we all would have been lost.'⁶⁶ According to David Yeroushalmi, the Persian Famine Relief Fund and various Jewish congregations and communal organisations in Europe and beyond jointly collected and distributed about £19,000. He continues: 'Considering that during the years 1871–2 the exchange rate for 1 pound sterling stood at 2 to 2.4 tumans (i.e. 20 to 24 krans), the total amount of the donations amounted to approximately 42,000 tumans (420,000 krans).' This sum accounted for £1 (or 20–24 qirān) per capita. He further argues that:

Given the fact that in the hard-hit communities of Shiraz, Yazd, Isfahan and Kashan during the winter of 1871–spring of 1872, an average family of 5–6 members needed 3

⁶² *The American Annual Cyclopaedia*, vol. 11, p. 625.

⁶³ Patel, 'The Great Persian Famine', pp. 57, 66–67.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67. Interestingly, on 3 June 1871, 'two significant contributions were made: the Victoria Theatrical Company held a special performance of the play Bezun and Munizeh, donating the profits of the event (Rs 425), to the Fund; and at the meeting of the Lodge Rising Star of Western India No. 342 S.C., it was resolved to contribute Rs 300 from the charity fund of the Lodge towards famine relief'. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

krans per day (i.e., 90 krans per month) in order to live on dry barley bread only, the amount of 20–24 krans per person (or 110–132 krans per average family), provided by the Famine Relief Fund, appear to have sufficed for a little more than one month of bread supplies for an average starving family.⁶⁷

At that time, a number of cases of cannibalism were also reported by some newspapers. In mid-April 1871, it was reported that a 'Mogul weaver' residing in Yazd had killed a 14-year-old boy and 'cut up the body for food'. When the boy's legs were found in the house of the 'Mogul', he was arrested and executed.⁶⁸ Less than two months later, it was reported that about 50 children had been killed and eaten by the 'starving Mohammedans of Yazd'.⁶⁹ Another account attested that: 'I have had occasion to see a letter written by a well-known and trustworthy person at Yezd to his relative, a sheikh al Islam (a chief judge), in which more than seventy cases of cannibalism were vouched for! This statement has been corroborated by different people who had left Yezd on account of the famine, and whom I asked for information.'⁷⁰ However, the *Illustrated London News* also clarified that rumours about parents eating their own children were a myth.⁷¹

In the meantime, the *Times of India* reported that in early December 1871, it was not food that Yazd lacked, but water. Moreover, the 'agriculturalists are powerless, traders have no occupation, and money is scarce'. The situation was exacerbated by severe weather. Letters from Bandar Abbas, written in early January 1872, contained 'distressing accounts of the state of Zoroastrians (about 500) who have been residing there for the last two months. Fifty have died from exhaustion and disease; the rest will be forwarded to Bombay as soon as the requisite permission from the Persian Governor is obtained.'⁷² In the same month, the *Journal officiel de la République* reported that in Yazd, 4,000 people died and 10,000 had emigrated.⁷³ According to one contemporary observer, Yazd, which depended on grain imports, 'suffered perhaps more terribly than any other part of the country' during the winter of 1872.⁷⁴ Although

...peasants generally had enough, the artizans and day labourers, who form a larger part of the population here than elsewhere, suffered terribly...the great land-owners, who are also the great corn-dealers, instigated by love of filthy lucre, or perhaps, as they declared themselves, by fear of a third year of famine, held for a rise, utterly indifferent to the sufferings around them.⁷⁵

Thus, the population of Isfahan, Yazd, and Mashhad 'was diminished by a third at least, though not all these died, numbers having emigrated west and south'.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, by

⁶⁷ Yerosushalmi, *The Jews*, p. 331.

⁶⁸ *Allen's Indian Mail and Official Gazette from British & Foreign India, China, & All Parts of the East* (London, 23 May 1871) p. 492. It is unclear what the ascribed identity of 'Mogul' means in this context, but one can speculate that it was an allusion to an Indian Muslim.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1871, p. 555.

⁷⁰ *The Friend. Religious and Literary Journal*, vol. 46 (Philadelphia, 1873), p. 69.

⁷¹ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 1681, vol. 59, 2 December 1871, p. 518.

⁷² *Allen's Indian Mail and Official Gazette from British & Foreign India, China, & All Parts of the East* (London, 16 January 1872), p. 58.

⁷³ *Journal officiel de la République*, 10 January 1872.

⁷⁴ Major O. B. St. John, 'Narrative of a Journey through Baluchistan and Southern Persia, 1872', in *Eastern Persia: An Account of the Journeys of the Persian Boundary Commission, 1870–71–72*, vol. 1, (ed.) Major-General Sir F. J. Goldsmid (London, 1876), p. 94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

February 1872, the Jewish community of Yazd diminished from an estimated population of 1,000 inhabitants (reported in 1868) to about 600.⁷⁷ In 1874, Haji Ismail, the son of a Shirazi merchant who had been living in Yazd since 1855, recounted that when Yazd was confronted with scarcity in the autumn of 1869, one-third of the population fled the city. Of those who remained, half were in dire straits. From October 1870, five people were dying of hunger every day, and by the spring of 1871, the death rate had escalated to 130 souls per day and even this situation was about to deteriorate.⁷⁸

As to the reasons for the severity of the Great Famine in Yazd, it has been argued that: 'A few years ago, the profits of the opium trade having attracted the attention of the Persians, almost all available or suitable ground in Yezd, Isphahan, and elsewhere was utilized for the cultivation of opium, to the exclusion of all cereals and other produce.' In addition, the 'attempts of the natives to enrich themselves by cultivation and growth of a profitable article of trade and their neglect to provide for the necessaries of life, combined with drought and other circumstances, resulted in the famine of 1871–72'. Consequently, the 'costly experience then gained has made the Persians more careful and provident, and they are now using a limited space for the cultivation of opium'.⁷⁹

In 1880, Edward Stack spent a number of months in Persia and claimed that in the 1866 census, the large village of Taft (south-west of Yazd) had a population 11,745 inhabitants. In a second census taken in 1874 (that is, about two years after the famine), however, Taft's population had decreased to 3,353.⁸⁰ When the British explorer, geographer, and colonel of the British Indian Army Charles Metcalfe MacGregor (1840–1887) visited Taft in 1875, he noted that it was 'said once to have had over 1.500 houses, but since the famine there are not more than 1.000 residences occupied. Of these, 200 belong to Guebres'.⁸¹ By 1880, the population of Taft reportedly amounted to just 5,000 people.⁸²

The murder of Rashid Mehrabān in 1874

In 1874, a year after the dismissal of the reformist Qajar Prime Minister Mirzā Hossein Khān Sepahsālār—who had befriended Maneckji Limji Hataria when he was on a mission to India and was widely popular among the Zoroastrian communities of Iran—Rashid Mehrabān was murdered in the bazaar of his hometown of Yazd.⁸³ This event caused some stir and caught the attention of a number of Britons and Parsis in the service of

⁷⁷ Yerosushalmi, *The Jews*, p. 327. The prominent Jewish leader and philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), through his leadership on the Board of Deputies of British Jews, was able to transfer funds to Persia and Yazd with the help of the wealthy Jewish philanthropist Reuben David Sassoon. *Ibid.*, pp. 324–333. See also *London Committee of Deputies of the British Jews*, Session 5637–40–1877–80 (London, 1880), pp. 38–39.

⁷⁸ M. G. Majd, *A Victorian Holocaust: Iran in the Great Famine of 1869–1873* (London, 2018), p. 46.

⁷⁹ Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, Session 8 February–15 August 1876. *Commercial Reports*, No. 2. *Reports from her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce, & Co, of their Consular Districts, Part I* (London, 1876), p. 65.

⁸⁰ Stack, *Six Months*, p. 278.

⁸¹ MacGregor, *Narrative*, vol. 1, pp. 64–65.

⁸² Stack, *Six Months*, p. 278. According to Seyf, this would have accounted for 'an annual rate of increase of about 7 per cent (compound) for 1874–1880. Such a high rate of population growth can only be explained by regional mobility, i.e. some of the people who left the town of Taft during the famine years had perhaps returned when it was over. This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that in a census taken in the town of Nain (north-west of Taft) in 1872–73, the total population was 8,000 souls but in 1880–81 it had only 5,000.' A. Seyf, 'Iran and the Great Famine, 1870–72', *Middle Eastern Studies* 46.2 (2010), pp. 289–306, pp. 297–298.

⁸³ MSA: Political Department, Persia, Vol. 1, No. 204 (1875), Letter to W. J. Thomson (British envoy and plenipotentiary in Persia), Bombay, 15 January 1875, fol. 21. When his mission ended, Sepahsālār returned to Persia and was on the same ship as Hataria. Shahmardān, *Tarikh-e Zartoshtiān*, p. 623; Oshidari, *Tarikh-e Pahlavi va Zartoshtiān-e Irān*, p. 231.

the British Empire. Indeed, the murder was extensively commented and speculated upon for over three decades. After Hataria heard about this incident, he sent letters to government officials in Persia, urging them to take some action.⁸⁴ In 1875, MacGregor wrote that:

The chief man who appeared, or rather the principal man who could speak Hindustani, bore the historic name of Kai Kaoos. He, was the brother of one Rasheed, who not long before was shot down in the streets of Yuzd in cold blood, it is said at the instigation of the Mooshtaheeds [*mojtahed*, a specialist in Islamic shari'a]. He had just come from Bombay, in search of what would seem, in Persia, an eminently unattainable thing, justice; but...he seems pretty determined, and is protected from open assault by his certificate.⁸⁵

In the most detailed existing account to date, the nineteenth-century Parsi magistrate and historian, Dossabhoj Framjee Karaka, reported on the murder and shed further light on the insecurities that sometimes haunted Zoroastrian merchants. He also alluded to the fact that high-ranking personalities of Muslim origin could oftentimes escape punishment. He recounted the episode as follows:

Even so recently as 1874 an act of the most flagrant injustice occurred. A respectable and wealthy Zoroastrian merchant, named Rashid Meherban, was shot and killed in the public bazaar of Yezd by one Rujub Ali, a Mahomedan. After committing the brutal deed the murderer escaped through the assistance afforded him by the sympathising crowd. The authorities made no effort whatever to trace the culprit and bring him to justice. Owing, however, to the exertions of the murdered man's relatives who were resident in Bombay, and who spared neither pains nor money to trace the murderer, the criminal was at last discovered in Bushire. The authorities at Shiraz were applied to for the purpose of executing justice, and the governor of that city ordered the accused to be sent for trial to Yezd. There, however, nothing was done to bring the offender before a tribunal. Meanwhile Rashid Meherban's relatives sent from Bombay several telegrams and memorials to the ministers of the Shah, as well as to the Shah himself, pressing for justice. These sustained efforts led to the authorities at Teheran giving orders to the Governor of Shiraz to send the criminal to the capital. These orders were of course obeyed, and the accused was given in charge of the mounted police to be taken to that city. The culprit again made his escape through the connivance of the guard while at Goam [Qom], and took refuge in a holy place called Imamzada Hazrati Masuma. According to the law of Islam, no person, however great his offence, can be arrested in a sanctuary, and the murderer remained there for a long period. It is stated that he has since been pardoned on the recommendation of the 'Mousted,' [*mojtahed*] the highest religious lawgiver, who declared that, as the Zoroastrian acted in violation of the law of Islam, a true believer committed no offence in slaying him! Thus the villain, who ought long ago to have forfeited his life, is still at large...⁸⁶

From this we may conclude, with a degree of certainty, that even the persistent engagement of Rashid's family to attain justice and their appeal to the Shah were in vain after the murderer eventually took sanctuary. Notably, Lieutenant Henry Bathurst Vaughan

⁸⁴ Shahmardān, *Tarikh-e Zartoshtiān*, p. 400.

⁸⁵ MacGregor, *Narrative*, vol. 1, pp. 78–79. It is not clear whether the Mehrabān brothers had another sibling by the name of Key Kāvus or whether McGregor is misspelling Keikhosrow.

⁸⁶ Karaka, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 66–67.

argued that about '14 years ago the Ulemas of Islam together with a band of Muhammadan merchants instigated a wretch to murder the late Rashid Mehrban, a wealthy and influential Parsi. This crime was perpetrated in the light of day and in the public bazar.' However, while Karaka blamed a single person (Rujub Ali) for the murder and mentioned the assistance he received from a 'sympathizing crowd' as well as the help he was offered by the authorities and *ulama*, and MacGregor laid the blame on the '*mojtaheds*', Vaughan principally accused the *ulama* who supposedly committed the murder in conjunction with 'a band of Muhammedan merchants'. Concurrently, Vaughan corroborated that the murderer fled to the sanctuary (*bast*) of Qom 'where he now lives'.⁸⁷ Significantly, in 1875, Keikhosrow and Ardeshir themselves explained how they perceived the slaughter of their brother and gave a different account of the potential perpetrators. They made it clear that they believed in a conspiracy led by a key anti-Zoroastrian cleric who capitalised on the envy that Rashid had apparently evoked among certain Muslims and, thus, instigated two accomplices to carry out the murder:

The deceased owing to his high position amongst his coreligionists and the extensive trade which he carried on had become an object of envy and hatred on the part of certain Mahomedans...he was deprived of life in the prime of youth in cold blood in broad day light without cause or provocation in the Bazaar of Yezd by two Mahomedan Ruffians said to be of the name of Bager Subialli and Rajab Kalla Kona through the instigation of one Mahomedan high priest named Mirza Mahomed Juckee Mooshtahed [*mojtahed*] who has throughout the last many years exhibited the greatest hostility towards the followers of the ancient faith of Zoroaster. The murderers have escaped and they are still at large and it further appears that the Governor of Yezd through fear of the said priest has been wanting in courage to bring the criminals to justice. The loss of this dear brother is bemoaned besides by us by his widowed wife, fatherless children and aged mother, and the additional inflictions which this sad event has brought on us is the complication of his extensive business and the consequent loss to our trade which both had intimate connection.⁸⁸

In short, the two brothers petitioned Ronald Ferguson Thomson, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Persia (1872–1879), 'to afford redress for bringing the murderers and their accomplice to justice so that the few poor and helpless Zoroastrians... may hereafter remain secure in peace'.⁸⁹ However, the British administration responded that, on returning to Persia, the Mehrabān brothers would 'cease to be entitled to British protection'. Furthermore, the document made it clear that Rashid did not appear to be a British subject and the fact that Keikhosrow and Ardeshir were naturalised, did not 'make the murder a matter of any concern to the British Government'.⁹⁰ This assertion

⁸⁷ Vaughan, Memorandum, p. 2.

⁸⁸ MSA: Political Department, Persia, Vol. 1, No. 204 (1875), Letter by Kaikhushroo Meherban Irani and Ardaseer Meherban Iranee to W. J. Thomson (British envoy and plenipotentiary in Persia), Bombay, 15 January 1875, fol. 21–22. Edward Browne confirmed that 'Ardashir's own brother Rashid was murdered by fanatical Musulmāns as he was walking through the bazaars, and I saw the tablet put up to his memory in one of the fire-temples of Yezd.' E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London, 1893), p. 371. On 22 March 1907, H. Baggaley, the British vice-consul in Yazd, conjectured that Rashid was shot dead 'simply for riding through the bazaars'. Baggaley cited in Oberling, 'The role of religious minorities', p. 17.

⁸⁹ MSA: Political Department, Persia, Vol. 1, No. 204 (1875), Letter by Kaikhushroo Meherban Irani and Ardaseer Meherban Iranee to W. J. Thomson (British envoy and plenipotentiary in Persia), Bombay, 15 January 1875, fol. 21–22.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1876.

demonstrates that diplomatic apprehensions were much more important for the British colonial administration. Any intervention on their part would be interpreted as direct interference in the affairs of Iran by the Russians and Iranian Russophiles. The latter were vying for more concessions from the Qajar Court while Nasser ed-Din Shah did not wish to appear to be an Anglophile. It is important to note that at that moment, the Shah was under much pressure from the clergy who had succeeded in making him oust Prime Minister Mirzā Hossein Khān Sepahsālār and bring to a halt his reformist measures aimed at the modernisation of the country.

To summarise, it seems that before the rise of Ardeshir Mehrabān, the accumulated wealth of his family had already caught the attention of some segments of the Muslim majority within Iranian society. This led to hostilities and endangered their social position. Thus, notwithstanding the improvement of the conditions of Persia's Zoroastrians between the mid-1850s and 1880s, it hardly comes as a surprise that Keikhosrow and Ardeshir later moved their headquarters to Bombay as it was a more secure place given their status as British subjects and the relatively large community of Parsis compared to Persia's Zoroastrians.⁹¹ Furthermore, the Parsis of Gujarat and Maharashtra had moved from occupations such as major brokers, traders, and moneylenders during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—especially as a result of their close collaboration with Europeans, most notably the English East India Company—to become leading real estate owners of Bombay, foremost capitalists, industrialists, bureaucrats, and modernisers of India by the mid-nineteenth century.⁹²

Edward Browne's encounter with Ardeshir Mehrabān

Unfortunately, little information could be obtained on the life and deeds of the Mehrabān family from the late 1870s to late 1880s. Nonetheless, we know that Ardeshir seems to have been a generous and hospitable merchant, especially vis-à-vis Britons of high rank, wealth, and merit. To give a few examples, it was through Ardeshir's help that the surgeon of the Bombay Army, Professor of Materia Medica at Grant College, Bombay, and member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, William Dymock, 'obtained the first box of specimens [of plants and drugs] collected in the neighborhood of Yazd'.⁹³ Lieutenant Vaughan and A. H. S. Landor are other cases in point. The former lodged in Ardeshir's garden house twice (in 1888 and 1890/1891), while the latter obtained 'much of the valuable information here given about the Yazd Parsees' from Ardeshir.⁹⁴ Edward G. Browne (1862–1926), however, gives the most detailed account of the life, social relations, and views of Ardeshir, observed during his three-week sojourn in Yazd in 1887.

Browne came from a wealthy family. He followed the exigencies of his father and became a doctor. But at the age of 15, he became fascinated by West Asia and began

⁹¹ The 1864 census of Bombay counted 49,201 Parsis (6.03 per cent of the total Bombay population). According to the general census of 1891, the number of Parsis in India amounted to 89,904: 47,498 Parsis lived in Bombay, 12,757 in Surat, and the rest in Broach, Thana, Karachi, and so on. Karaka, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 92–93; D. Menant, 'Zoroastrians and the Parsis', *The North American Review* 172.530 (1901), pp. 132–147, p. 146; *Das Ausland. Ueberschau der neuesten Forschungen auf dem Gebiet der Natur-, Erd- und Völkerkunde*, vol. 38 (Tübingen, 1865), p. 794; C. E. Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities: Conjoint Communities in the Making of the World-Economy 1570–1940* (London, 1996), p. 89.

⁹² For the economic rise and commercial activities of the Parsis in South, West, and East Asia as well as eastern Africa, see N. Mohajer and K. Yazdani, 'The Socio-Economic Ascendancy of the Parsis in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century', (forthcoming).

⁹³ W. Dymock, *The Vegetable Materia Medica of Western India* (Bombay, 1885), p. 317.

⁹⁴ Vaughan, 'Journeys', p. 28; Landor, *Across Coveted Lands*, vol. 1, p. 405.

learning Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. In 1887, he spent a year in Persia.⁹⁵ Accompanied by his ‘Zoroastrian friends’, he visited the garden of Ardeshir, situated at the ‘southern limit’ of the city. He found his host and ‘the old fire-priest’ (Dastur Tirandāz) awaiting him, and received from both of them a ‘most cordial welcome’.⁹⁶ In his seminal book *A Year Amongst the Persians*, Browne indicated that he accepted Ardeshir’s offer to stay in his garden house. He described him as follows: ‘He was a tall, slender, handsome man, of about forty-five or fifty years of age, light-complexioned, black-bearded, and clad in the yellow garments of the Zoroastrians; and he spoke English...fluently and well.’⁹⁷ Browne was of the opinion that Ardeshir was ‘the leading Zoroastrian merchant at Yazd’.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, his office was situated on the ground floor.⁹⁹ Indeed, the missionary Napier Malcolm, who spent five consecutive years in Yazd between 1898 and 1903, noted that, ‘the houses of both the Parsis and the Jews, with the surrounding walls, had to be built so low that the top could be reached by a Mussulman with his hand extended; they might, however, dig down below the level of the road’. He added that upper rooms were also forbidden.¹⁰⁰

At the house of Ardeshir’s brother, Godarż—the latter has been described as a wealthy Zoroastrian merchant by a number of contemporary European travellers in Persia—Browne met the chief priest of the Zoroastrians, Dastur Tirandāz, who seems to have been a close friend of Ardeshir and someone with whom he frequently socialised.¹⁰¹ Tirandāz appears to have enjoyed good relations with the governor of Yazd, Prince Imad ud-Dawla, ‘from whom he was continually bringing messages of goodwill to me’.¹⁰² This was most likely also to the benefit of Ardeshir in terms obtaining security, conducting business transactions, and safeguarding property rights. In contrast to Tirandāz, however, Ardeshir gave the impression of rejecting superstitious beliefs:

Ardashir, who had seen the world and imbibed latitudinarian ideas, affected to regard this performance with a good-natured contempt, which he extended to many of the Dastur’s cherished convictions. One day, for instance, mention was made of *ghuls* [giants] and other supernatural beings. ‘Tush,’ said Ardashir, ‘there are no such things.’ ‘No such things!’ exclaimed the Dastur, ‘why, I have seen one myself.’ ‘No, no,’ rejoined Ardashir, ‘you saw a man or a mule or some other animal

⁹⁵ In 1888, he became a university lecturer in Persian at Cambridge and from 1902 until his death, Professor of Arabic. Browne published a great number of works, including 55 major publications, mostly on Persian history. Among others, these examine the literary history of Persia, Babism/Bahaism, the Constitutional movement, etc. and include a number of editions and translations of major Persian and other Oriental writings. G. M. Wickens, J. Cole and K. Ekbal, ‘Browne, Edward Granville’, *Encyclopædia Iranica* (1989), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/browne-edward-granville> (last accessed 25 November 2022)

⁹⁶ Browne, *A Year*, p. 368. Dastur Tirandāz is said to have stayed in Bombay for a few years where he studied and published a Persian translation of the Avesta. In 1892, Tirandāz, the then agent of the Bombay Society, also founded the *Anjuman-e Nasseri* of Yazd. He is further credited with having brought a facsimile of Bundahishn from Persia to India, published in Bombay in 1908. Amini, *Asnādi*, p. 26; Oshidari, *Tarikh-e Pahlavi va Zartoshtiān-e Irān*, p. 283; E. T. D. Anklesaria (ed.), *The Bundahishn, being a Facsimile of the TD Manuscript, No. 2 brought from Persia by Dastur Tirandāz...* (Bombay, 1908).

⁹⁷ Browne, *A Year*, p. 364.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 340, 364. According to the late nineteenth-century historian Menant, Ardeshir was the ‘lay chief’ of Yazd. Menant, *Les Parsis*, p. 53.

⁹⁹ Browne, *A Year*, p. 387.

¹⁰⁰ Malcolm, *Five Years*, p. 46. Jackson also noted that the ‘comparative scarcity of upper stories on the houses in the Gabar quarter [of Yazd] is still noticeable’. Jackson, *Persia*, p. 374.

¹⁰¹ Browne, *A Year*, pp. 375, 363–364; Jackson, *Persia*, p. 377; Rice, *Mary Bird*, p. 133.

¹⁰² Browne, *A Year*, p. 382.

in the gloaming, and, deceived by the half-light, the solitude, or your own fears, supposed it to be a *ghul*.¹⁰³

In this context, Browne informs us about Ardashir's invitations to Muslim and Babi acquaintances, and provides details of his social relations as well drinking and eating habits:

I had ample opportunity of learning how to drink wine 'according to the rite of Zoroaster,' for almost every afternoon Ardashir, accompanied either by Dastur Tirandaz, or by his brother Gudarz, or by his manager Bahman, or by other Zoroastrians, used to come to the garden and sit by the little stream, which for a few hours only (for water is bought for a price in Yazd) refreshed the drooping flowers. Then, unless Muhammadan or Babi visitors chanced to be present, wine and 'arak were brought forth by old Jamshid, the gardener, or his little son Khusraw; fresh young cucumbers, and other relishes, such as the Persian wine-drinker loves, were produced; and the brass drinking-cups were drained again and again to the memories of the dead and the healths of the living.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, Browne found his 'Zoroastrian friends very tolerant and liberal in their views. Ardashir was never tired of repeating that in one of their prayers they invoked the help of "the good men of the seven regions" (*khuban-i-haft kishvar*), i.e. of the whole world; and that they did not regard faith in their religion as essential to salvation.'¹⁰⁵ Apart from that, Ardashir seems to have drawn Browne's attention to the Dari language and taught him a number of Dari words.¹⁰⁶ Browne observed that:

This Dari dialect is only used by the guebres amongst themselves, and all of them, so far as I know, speak Persian as well. When they speak their own dialect, even a Yazdi Musulman cannot understand what they are saying, or can only understand it very imperfectly. It is for this reason that the Zoroastrians cherish their Dari, and are somewhat unwilling to teach it to a stranger. I once remarked to Ardashir what a pity it was that they did not commit it to writing. He replied that there had at one time been some talk of translating the *Gulistan* into Dari, but that they had decided that it was inexpedient to facilitate the acquisition of their idiom to non-Zoroastrians.¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, Browne also refers to Ardashir and Dastur Tirandāz's shared predilection for the *Dasātir*, attributed to Āzar Kayvān, and gives an account of Ardashir's religious beliefs:

The old priest, Dastur Tir-andaz, who at first seemed to regard me with some suspicion, was quite won over by finding that I was acquainted with the spurious 'heavenly books' known as the *Dashatir*, about the genuineness of which neither he nor Ardashir appeared to entertain the slightest doubt...I managed to get Ardashir to talk of his religion and its ordinances, and especially of the *kusti* or sacred cord which the Zoroastrians wear...Ardashir also spoke of the duty incumbent on them

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

¹⁰⁶ For a list of Dari words that Browne picked up in Yazd, see *ibid.*, p. 389.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

of keeping pure the four elements, adding that they did not smoke tobacco out of respect for fire...the three weeks that I spent at Yezd.¹⁰⁸

Browne's vivid portrayal suggests that Ardeshir embraced both traditional and modern characteristics and qualities. He was not only an ingrained offspring of mid-nineteenth century Yazd, but simultaneously constituted a principal exponent of the nascent Iranian bourgeoisie. To this effect, he was a prototypical *in-between* figure in two respects: on the one hand, he exemplified Persia's delicate pathway towards an emergent capitalist mode of production; on the other, his views and trajectory were closely affected by his early formative years, social relations, experiences, and roughly 20 years' residence in the city of Bombay.

Back in Bombay

Some years after Edward G. Browne's visit to Yazd and his acquaintance with the Mehrabān family, a Bombay guidebook printed in 1889 indicated that Ardeshir was a merchant and commission agent living at 22 Church Gate, Fort.¹⁰⁹ In the meanwhile, his brother seems to have annoyed a number of Parsis with his plans to construct a stable in their neighbourhood. In two letters, dated 1 March and 23 December 1889, Mr Dinshaw Cowasjee Pochkhanawalla, Nanabhoy Maneckjee Gazder, and 53 others complained about the erection of a stable by Keikhosrow in the vicinity of their properties situated in Karelwady, Thakurdwar Lane (Merwanjee Framjee Panday Street, 1b). They asked for the street in question to be taken over by the municipality as Keikhosrow, in their opinion, was encroaching on land that did not belong to him. Their main concern was that the 'building coming in such close proximity to the houses on the other, that is northern side of the lane (such lane being 15 feet wide only), as to be objectionable to those houses on sanitary grounds'. Furthermore, they were concerned that the stable could catch fire as hay would be stored there, the chances of which would be heightened by 'the unfortunate habit of the people to throw about lighted beedies [Indian type of cigarette]'.¹¹⁰

In the same year, the British Colonel Edward Ross wrote that he 'met Mr. Ardeshir some years ago, and I believe that he is a respectable man of fairly good family and some education'.¹¹¹ Lieutenant Vaughan corroborated that:

Ardeshir is a man of unusual ability: he has taken a degree at an Indian College, and having resided many years in India, is a naturalized British subject (...) and speaks English fluently. He has great influence among his own community and has friends among the leading Mahomedan merchants, who are tolerant as regards other creeds.¹¹²

Vaughan continued that not only '[n]early all the foreign traffic of Yezd' but also of

...Bombay and other important places is in the hands of a few well-known Parsis of Yezd, such as Ardeshir Mehrban, his brothers and a number of others. So much so

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 369–370.

¹⁰⁹ J. M. Maclean, *Guide to Bombay, Historical, Statistical and Descriptive*, 14th edn (Bombay, 1889), p. 108. This date is earlier than the one provided by Ardeshir himself. See above.

¹¹⁰ Bombay Municipal Department, *Record of Proceedings of the Municipal Corporation and the Standing Committee, 1889–90. Vol. XIII, Part I: Proceedings of the Corporation; Part II: Proceedings of the Standing Committee* (Bombay, 1890), pp. 9–10, 299–300.

¹¹¹ NA: FO 60/539: 9.7.1889, pp. 1–5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, H. B. Vaughan, 19.6.1889, pp. 13–14.

indeed that the Muhammadan traders are in a great measure obliged to entrust the management of their business to the Parsis, both in buying and selling, as well as in exporting and importing. They also purchase bills of exchange on places to and from Yezd, and also on foreign countries from the Parsis.¹¹³

In January 1890, a British source depicted Ardeshir Mehrabān as ‘the leading Parsi merchant’ of his time.¹¹⁴ Similarly, in 1892, Lord Curzon described him as the ‘leading merchant’ of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd and ‘a man of high repute’.¹¹⁵ In effect, the bulk of the foreign trade of Yazd and a considerable portion of the trade of Bombay, Kerman, Shiraz, and other cities was under the control of Zoroastrian merchants such as Ardeshir Mehrabān, his brothers, and others. As already indicated, these merchants even entered into trade relations with Yazdi Muslims who felt compelled to consign a considerable amount of the management of their business into the hands of their Zoroastrian counterparts. In any event, the Mehrabān family continued its commercial activities and also purchased bills of exchange which suggests that they were active in the business of moneylending.¹¹⁶ Browne, for example, drew 30 toman (nearly £10) in cash for his travelling expenses and obtained a check on Ardeshir for the balance still remaining to his credit (147.5 toman or about £45).¹¹⁷ In a revealing letter written by Ardeshir Mehrabān himself, we learn about his financial activities and his considerable property holdings in both Persia and India. Most notably, he attested that he was a landowner in Bombay and Poona, owning landed property to the value of about Rs 75,000. At Yezd, his birthplace, he managed ‘the business of Agency for the present’. There, he possessed landed property to the value of about Rs 60,000.¹¹⁸

Ardeshir Mehrabān acting as agent of the New Oriental Bank

The specific role and significance of Ardeshir’s position in the New Oriental Bank as well as his function as an interlocutor for Indian (not just Parsi) merchants is still shrouded in obscurity. However, as Lieutenant Vaughan pointed out:

Formerly a small company of Hindu or Multani¹¹⁹ traders used to reside in Yezd. They had no protection, and the Moslems used every means and pretext to ruin them, and in this they succeeded...The merchants of Peshawar who are British subjects, want to export indigo and China green tea to Meshed and Bokhara, but are afraid to do so as freely as they would, and are obliged to betake themselves to

¹¹³ Vaughan, Memorandum, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ NA: FO 60/539: Horace Walpole, 23.1.1890, p. 21.

¹¹⁵ Curzon, *Persia*, vol. 2, p. 241.

¹¹⁶ Vaughan, Memorandum, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Browne, *A Year*, p. 340.

¹¹⁸ NA: FO 60/539: Ardeshir Mehraban, Bombay Castle, 22.9.1891, pp. 46–47.

¹¹⁹ Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh trading communities from Gujarat and Punjab had long been active in Persia, especially since Safavid times. According to Levi, ‘F. A. Kotov recorded the presence of a Multani diaspora community in Isfahan, and in 1637 Adam Olearius reported that this community consisted of some 12,000 merchants...In the 1660s, Jean Chardin reported that the total number of “Multani Indians” in Safavid territory exceeded 20,000...The importance of the Multani merchants in supplying Persian markets with Indian textiles is underlined by Raphaël du Mans’ collective identification of them as *bazzaze* (‘cloth merchant’) in his late 17th-century account...Considering that a significant proportion of the many thousands of “Multani” merchants in Safavid Persia were Khatris, it is probable that many, if not most, of the Sikh merchant families that established communities in Persia during the 19th and 20th centuries had antecedents who were fully engaged in the same commercial activities as Hindu Multanis.’ S. C. Levi, ‘India xiii. Indo-Iranian Commercial Relations’, *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2014 [2004]). <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/india-xiii-indo-iranian-commercial-relations> (last accessed 25 November 2022).

the Parsis. Ardeshir Mehrban of Yezd, who is commission agent for a company of these merchants, says that if a British Agent were stationed here, the Peshawar merchants would venture to do business on a much more extensive scale, either by themselves or through the Parsis; and as a result...their business would spread to almost all the important places of Persia...The need of banking corporations was formerly strongly felt. That necessity is now in some degree lessened owing to the establishment of the new Oriental Bank Corporation, Limited, at Teheran, who possess an agent at Yezd, Ardeshir Mehrban.¹²⁰

As the aforementioned quote suggests, Ardeshir was an agent of the New Oriental Bank. Lord Curzon gave the following account of this bank:

...in 1888, the New Oriental Bank Corporation decided to include Persia within the sphere of its Asiatic operations, and opened Oriental branches or established agencies in Teheran, Meshed, Tabriz, Resht, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Bushire. As a trading company, dealing in a branch of commerce open to all, it required no special concession from the Persian Government. Renting a palatial building occupying one entire side of the Meidan-i-Tupkhaneh in the capital, after only a year's existence it already, at the time of my visit, did a considerable business both there and in the provinces. The Persians were beginning to understand the meaning of a deposit account and the value of a fixed and certain interest upon their savings. The bank paid two and a half per cent, on current accounts, four per cent, on those running for six months, and six per cent, on yearly deposits. It had already lowered the rate of interest on loans to twelve per cent., and was reported to have lent money to the Shah at from six to eight per cent. The Oriental Bank had also introduced and familiarised the natives with a form of paper money, in the shape of cashier's orders, for sums from five *krans* upward, payable to the bearer, which enjoyed a considerable circulation in the capital. After an existence of two years, the Persian branch of the Corporation was bought out for a substantial sum by the new Imperial Bank of Persia, which, entering upon the scene under the most favourable auspices, and with a wider ambition, rendered competition even less desirable to others than to itself. The Imperial Bank now reigns supreme.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Vaughan, Memorandum, pp. 4–5. As Dobbin points out: 'The Bank of Western India, established in 1842 as a joint British-Parsi initiative and renamed the Oriental Bank in 1845, had at one time three-eighths of its share capital in the hands of [the Parsi] Dadabhai Pestanji Wadia.' Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, p. 90. The Oriental Bank Corporation had 'a paid-up capital of £1.5 million. In 1845 its head office was relocated to London...The charter was revised on 30 August 1851, when the bank was renamed the Oriental Bank Corporation. By 1860 it was one of the largest and most important British-owned overseas banks with assets of over £12.6 million and 14 branches including Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Yokohama, Mauritius, Sydney and two branches in Ceylon (Sri Lanka)...The Oriental Bank was in decline by the early 1880s, due in part to a contraction of business, and partly due to the discovery of defalcations estimated at around £29,000 at its Mauritius offices. The bank failed in 1884, largely due to misjudgment of silver price movements and the lock up of funds in Ceylonese coffee plantations and Mauritian sugar estates. The business was reconstituted under new legislation as a limited liability company, the New Oriental Banking Company Ltd., but this too failed in 1892.' Quoted from the Oriental Bank Corporation, <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/bc488aca-8091-32b7-8e36-cf9b7299ee68> (accessed 25 November 2022). See also J. McGuire, 'The Rise and Fall of the Oriental Bank in the Nineteenth Century: A Product of the Transformations that Occurred in the World Economy or the Result of its Own Mismanagement', Paper presented to the 15th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (Canberra, 29 June–2 July 2004).

¹²¹ G. N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 1 (London, 1892), p. 474. In 1889, after Nasser ed-Din Shah granted an exclusive bank concession to Julius Reuter, 'the New Oriental Bank closed its operations and sold its assets for 20,000 pounds sterling to the resulting Imperial Bank of Persia (Bank Melli Iran, 1958, p. 55)...Although

We may speculate that Ardeshir realised the increasing significance that banking would have in the future. In fact, this was one of the earliest instances where Zoroastrians and Persian subjects in general entered the modern banking system, even before the Zoroastrian trading house of Jahāniān—founded in Yazd in 1890—started carrying out modern banking operations.¹²² In any case, Vaughan further reported that after the governor of Yazd was recalled in 1889, and the city was without a ruler, Ardeshir was afraid of the ensuing chaos, and worried that money might be looted or extorted. Thus, Vaughan ‘stayed with him, as he said that, while an Englishman was his guest he would be safe. He did not actually state this, but I gathered it from his clerks.’¹²³ We do not know exactly what he was afraid of, as there is no concrete indication in the document in question. But generally speaking, whenever a governor passed away or was recalled to Tehran by the Shah, a period of uncertainty and disarray would upset the old order of things and threaten the status quo. Under these circumstances, it was particularly important for indigenous dignitaries to boast about enjoying the support of a foreign government and having protectorates. It is telling that, according to the then Conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and foreign affairs specialist, the Marquess of Salisbury, in 1889, Ardeshir

...made indirect overtures to this Legation in order to obtain for himself the appointment of British Agent. From enquiries which I made here, he appears to be a very respectable merchant, who knows English very well, and holds a good financial position in the Eyes of the Branch of the new Oriental Bank Corporation lately established at Tehran.¹²⁴

As a matter of fact, Ardeshir was very eager to be appointed British Agent in Yazd, even without obtaining remuneration. There were several reasons for this. In his account, Edward Browne pointed out that, of ‘the English, towards whom they look as their natural protectors, the Persian Zoroastrians have a very high opinion (...) they believed that the British flag would protect their community even in times of the gravest danger’.¹²⁵ Ardeshir was not dependent on a British salary; however, being a British agent would not only have increased the security of both minorities and people of means, but also would have facilitated and provided new commercial opportunities. Nevertheless, as the British were not willing to spend money on the position they offered and expected Ardeshir to work without remuneration, he initially declined the offer.¹²⁶ In a letter that Ardeshir wrote on 22 September 1891, however, we learn that he had been working as a British agent for 15 months without any compensation and that he was even ‘willing to render my services free to the British Government’.¹²⁷ Thus, it seems that ultimately he agreed to work without payment. Ardeshir emphasised that his personal interests as well

all indications show that the New Oriental Bank was successful in Iran, that bank did not enjoy a favorable reputation in London. Despite the fact that in 1887 the bank’s world-wide profits were 31,730 pounds sterling with equity capital of approximately 500,000 pounds sterling and paid 6 shillings dividends on 5.00 pounds sterling book value shares (*Times*, 16 June 1888, p. 8), it “suspended payment” in 1892 and was liquidated in 1893 (Barkers Almanac, 1974, pp. 611–31). Quoted in P. Basseer, P. Clawson and W. Floor, ‘Banking’, *Encyclopædia Iranica* (1988), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/banking-in-iran> (accessed 25 November 2022).

¹²² Issawi, *An Economic History*, p. 46.

¹²³ NA: FO 60/539, 9.7.1889; H. B. Vaughan, 19.6.1889, pp. 13–14.

¹²⁴ NA: FO 60/539: 9.7.1889, pp. 1–5.

¹²⁵ Browne, *A Year*, p. 381.

¹²⁶ NA: FO 60/539: Marquess of Salisbury, Tehran 7.3.1892, p. 38 and J. C. Lascelles, Tehran 1.3.1892, p. 42.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Ardeshir Mehraban, Bombay Castle, 22.9.1891, pp. 46–47. Ardeshir added that, ‘regarding my appointment as British Agent of Yezd...I have received no official intimation of my appointment in such a capacity though I have been managing the business of the Agency for more than 15 months...in the event of my being officially appointed I will always endeavor to serve the British Government to the best of my power, and will

as those of his Zoroastrian community ‘accord with the interest of the British Government, to whose enlightened and beneficial rule we owe so much, as a flourishing community in the present day that it would be impossible for me to otherwise then render every loyal assistance that may be within my power’.¹²⁸ In mid-1892, authorisation was finally given to offer Ardeshir the appointment of unpaid Consular Agent.¹²⁹ But eventually, his nomination was revoked since some authorities were afraid that his selection would enrage and alienate the Muslim majority of the city. As General Gordon, one of those prudent authorities, pointed out, Zoroastrians were compelled

...to seek protection by payment. The well to do Gabers [Zoroastrians] as humble supplicants are a source of permanent profit for the Governor, the priest and their people and these would fight hard to retain this easy source of income...Considering the existing status of the Parsees at Yezd I think that it would be inexpedient & impolite to appoint a Parsee as British Agent there.¹³⁰

In other words, a Muslim proxy was eventually recommended to act as unpaid British agent at the expense of Ardeshir Mehrabān:

General Gordon has shown that the appointment of a Parsee gentleman as British Agent at Yezd would be politically inexpedient and commercially disadvantageous, His Lordship [Earl of Kimberley] accepts his suggestion that Mahomedan gentlemen should be selected for nomination as unpaid British Agents at Yezd and Kirman.¹³¹

More data are needed to determine what this episode reveals about British relations with Ardeshir and the wider Persian Zoroastrian community. But apparently, at this juncture, the British were of the opinion that it would be more prudent, convenient, and beneficial in fostering delicate British interests in Persia to appoint a Muslim agent and abstain from increased Zoroastrian involvement.

Conclusion

Regarding the late nineteenth and early twentieth century careers of the members of the Mehrabān family, little information could be obtained. We know that Godarz passed away sometime between 1898 and 1903.¹³² It also remains unclear when and where Ardeshir’s life came to an end. Nonetheless, we know that he did not die before 1902. A. H. S. Landor provides evidence of this. Landor not only claimed that the ‘most prominent members of the Yezd community, especially the sons of Meh[r]eban Rustam, have been the pioneers of trade between Yezd and India’,¹³³ he also mentioned that the Zoroastrians of Yazd had a ‘national assembly’ called the Anjuman-e-Nasseri and that Ardeshir was its president. He continued that:

The Association has an elected body of twenty-eight members, all honorary, the most venerable and intelligent of the community, and its aims are to advocate the social

look to the interest of all British subjects of whatever need, who may be brought into relation with me, with the utmost impartiality.’

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Sir F. Lascales, 9.5.1892, p. 49.

¹³⁰ NA: FO 60/539: J. E. Gordon: Appointment of Mr. Ardeshir Mihrban as British Agent at Yezd, 30.6.1892, pp. 52–53.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Horace Walpole, 30.9.1892, p. 65.

¹³² Malcolm, *Five Years*, p. 261; Rice, *Mary Bird*, p. 133.

¹³³ Landor, *Across Coveted Lands*, p. 404.

rights of the Zoroastrians as a race, to settle disputes arising between the individuals of the community, to defend helpless Parsees against Moslem wantonness, and to improve their condition generally.¹³⁴

According to Shahmardān, Ardeshir's brother Keikhosrow was killed in a tramway accident in Bombay in 1905–1906 (1275 yazdgerdi).¹³⁵

In a nutshell, the leading Zoroastrian merchants of Yazd stood at the crossroads of incipient socio-economic transformations. The house of Mehrabān, that is, Rostam's sons and especially Ardeshir, were transitional figures par excellence. Their Parsi benefactors had already embarked upon a similar, but much more spectacular, climb over 100 years earlier. Not unlike some of his affluent Parsi co-religionists, Ardeshir personified the gradual emergence of an Iranian bourgeoisie straddling the urban centres of nineteenth-century Persia and India, notably Yazd and Bombay. In the wake of their role as British *compradors*, intermediaries of Indo-Persian trade, bankers, wealthy property owners, philanthropists, and leaders of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd, the Mehrabāns became precursors for later Zoroastrian magnates and statesmen such as the house of Jahāniān, Arbāb Jamshid, and Arbāb Keikhosrow Shāhrokh. On that score, the activities of the Mehrabān family marked a milestone in Iranian Zoroastrian-Indian Parsi as well as Iranian Zoroastrian-British Indian relations. Indeed, an amalgam of five interlocked factors help to understand the ascent of the house of Mehrabān: 1) the *longue durée* socio-economic prosperity in Yazd; 2) the existing Zoroastrian activities of that city in the first half of the nineteenth century; 3) the house of Mehrabān's role as successful entrepreneurs and British collaborators, including their function as agents of Indo-Persian trade, bankers, landowners, charity donors, and leaders of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd; 4) the vital support of the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Society from the mid-1850s and the ever-increasing support of the Persian state from the late 1840s through to the early 1890s, resulting in the limited improvement of the legal conditions of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd; as well as 5) the rising significance of global trade at the crossroads of Persia's protracted development towards an evolving capitalist mode of production. Nonetheless, the expansion of the house of Mehrabān was bounded by recurrent political instability, socio-economic impediments, and intermittent British support. This development was mirrored in Iran's passage, by the mid-nineteenth century, from slowly dissolving pre-capitalist socio-economic structures into an incipient capitalist—though admittedly fragile and susceptible—mode of production until the late nineteenth century.

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¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

¹³⁵ Shahmardān, *Tārikh-e Zartoshtiān*, p. 579.

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