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***The Position of Superstition and Anti-Superstition in Iran's
Political Thought with an Emphasis on the Qajar Era***

Mohammad Reza Dehshiri¹
Fariba Masoudi²
Mahmoud Ketabi³
Ali Akbar Amini⁴

Abstract

During Qajar era, superstition and anti-superstition have had great impact on Iran's political thought. Superstitious context as an irrational process and major obstacle to the growth of political thought in Iran, exhorted the society towards subjectivist and reductionist approach. Rational intellectuals, on the other hand, endeavored to erode superstitious trends for pushing the society towards rationality and development. This article with a qualitative historical and analytical methodology and through collecting the library data tries to answer the question that "how superstitious culture had influenced the political thought of Iran during the Qajar period?" The hypothesis of the research is that the culture of superstition and irrationality through subjectivism and reductionism influenced the political thought of Iran during Qajar era, which in its turn led to the "intellectual despotism" and consequently to the "political tyranny". Based on the Giddens conception of the interaction between structure and agency, the article concludes that the contextual factors notably the superstitious culture led to the despotic mindset of Iranian rulers during Qajar period.

Keywords: Political Thought, Superstition, rationality, development, Qajar era, Iran.

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- 1 . Professor of Political Science, School of International Relations, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author) mohammadreza_dehshiri@yahoo.com
 - 2 . PhD in Political Science, Islamic Azad University of Shahreza, Isfahan, Iran masoudi2220@yahoo.com
 - 3 . Associate Professor Islamic Azad University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran mketabi840@yahoo.com
 - 4 . Assistant Professor Islamic Azad University of Central Tehran, Tehran, Iran ali.amini@iauctb.ac.ir

Introduction

Superstition and anti-superstition, constituted major trends in the history of political thought during the Qajar period. Superstitions were so prevalent in the Iranian society that the Qajar kings such as Naser al-Din Shah, Muzaffar al-Din Shah and Mohammed Ali Shah were largely captured by superstitions. Instead of resorting to wisdom, thought and science, they went through a variety of superstitions to solve political and social problems. Meanwhile, there has been a kind of covert superstition among some Iranian political elites who were fascinated by the approval and encouragement of the ordinary people. In the social context, superstitious thinking, coming from cultural poverty, constituted major obstacle to political thought of Iran due to its reductionist approach.

On the contrary, rational intellectuals have always sought to overthrow this superstitious flow, because they considered it as one of the factors involved in the degeneration and collapse of the Persian society. They believed that superstitious thoughts erode the sapience, intellection and development, and the dominance of mythical thoughts on rational thought leads to the emergence of insipience and vulgar thoughts. Scholars, who fought against superstitions, believed that the import of superstition into the political arena leads to its substitution to wisdom and science, which itself was thought breeding.

Anti-superstitious thinkers believed that superstitious culture had an undesirable implication on political thought in Iran, whereas a rationalist approach would improve political thought and pave the way for political and economic development of Iran.

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The hypothesis of the research is that the culture of superstition and irrationality through subjectivism and reductionism influenced the political thought of Iran during Qajar era, which in its turn led to the "intellectual despotism" and consequently to the "political tyranny". Based on the Giddens conception of the interaction between structure

and agency, the article concludes that the contextual factors notably the superstitious culture led to the despotic mindset of Iranian rulers during Qajar period.

The works in the field of superstition during Qajar period are mostly dedicated to explaining the political culture of that time, and especially the prevalence of superstition among the Qajar kings.

Sheikh ol-Eslami (1989) in his books "Portrait of Ahmad Shah" and in his article (2006) entitled "Particularities of Mohammad Ali Shah" explains extensively the connection between superstition and political decision-making process during the Qajar period. He examines the impact of superstition on the decision-making system from the viewpoint of policy-making, neglecting its social and political impact on the process of Iran's underdevelopment.

Vikor (2006) in his book entitled "Between God and the Sultan: A History of Islamic Law" explains that the confrontation between religion and law was the reason for the gap between law and its implementation in Islamic societies like Iran. This cleavage becomes bigger if the religion is misinterpreted with superstitious ideas. In this context, the rational approach towards religion can reform the cultural and social structures and facilitate the role of public and governmental actors in the cultural and political system.

Sariol-Ghalem (2010) in his book entitled "The Political Culture of Iran" believes that the rationality is the basis for political and economic development. It is the product of the persuasion by political elites which takes place in a complex and rational society based on competitive culture in the economic and political context. On the contrary, in a society deprived of developmental approach, the superstition resurges. Therefore, development would be realized upon the socialization of rational norms in the society and the constructive role of influential elites.

Bashiriyeh (2008) in his book entitled "the obstacles towards the political development in Iran" believes that the fragmentation between social and political culture in Iran hinders the development in the country. This cleavage would boost the way for irrational behavior of government and superstitious culture of people.

Yu (2017) in his book entitled "The Role of Political Culture in Iranian Political Development" explains the major cultural impediments to political development in Iran and focusing on the historical attitudes of Persian society, considers that attitudes of elites and cultural particularities of people were the key elements in slowing down the process of development in Iran.

Mohebi (2014) in her book entitled "The formation of civil society in modern Iran: public intellectuals and the state" focuses on the role of reformist intellectuals as agents of change in Iranian society. She posits that these intellectuals were especially effective due to their role in presenting new ideas to a wider constituency. She believes that the dynamics of cultural system determines the direction of political development in Iran. Therefore, in order to eliminate superstitious culture in Iran, different reformist intellectuals should reinforce the role of civil society in order to rationalize Iran's socio-political context.

Rahnama (2011) in his book "Superstitions as Ideology in Iranian Politics: From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad", emphasizes that religious superstitions are based on economic, social and political context of Iranian society especially in the Qajar era, which has led to social degeneration, without addressing how superstition has affected Iran's political thought during the Qajar period.

The research literature review demonstrates that the available sources are more narrative and less analytical about the relationship between superstition and political thought in Iran during Qajar period. Therefore, the present article attempts to analyze how superstition has influenced Iran's political thought taking into consideration social and political underdevelopment as a context during the Qajar period.

We try in the present article to elaborate, in the first section, the conceptual framework. In the second section, the impact of superstition on the political thought of Iranian politicians of the Qajar period would be scrutinized on, and in third section, the impact of anti- superstition on political thought in Iran, during the Qajar period would be explained.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is the social theory of

Anthony Giddens which can establish a significant connection between development and rationality (Mestrovic, 1998). In his idea, structure is interrelated with functions, actions and agents. The social structure in which the context of rationality or superstition is developed would be based on political and public culture which plays a vital role in social life (Giddens, 1984) as well as on a rational account of actions based on a sense of routine and tendency for having self security (Craib, 1992). Therefore, 'action' or 'agency' as a continuous flow of conduct (regular series of acts) would interplay with the structure of society (Giddens, 1979). In this perspective, the rational comprehensive model argues that the decisions or actions can be based whether on logic, scientific reasoning and rational assumptions or emotions and superstitions (Sandercock, 1998; Allmendinger, 2002; Faludi, 1978, p.179). Therefore, the impact of rationality or superstition on the process of political thought during Qajar era would be elaborated based on contextual factors of the Iranian society which were in close relationship with the political and cultural agents or elites who were putting emphasis on the qualitative and perceptual dimensions of superstition and rationality.

Therefore, based on Giddens's theory, the social context or structure is as important as governmental actors and elites' role for the growth of superstitious or anti-superstitious culture. In fact, superstition is in contradiction with wisdom and rationality. Wisdom reinforces the power of deep thinking and understanding the realities and opposes the superstition in the way of understanding and the method of perception. Rationality which is based on cause and effect analysis as well as on cost and benefit calculation requires the involvement of rulers and intellectuals for disseminating the deep thinking about social events and interactions, whereas superstition avoids deep analysis of realities, and exhorts society towards simplistic and emotional ideas. (Salehi Amiri, 2015, pp.11-19)

Based on the research conceptual framework, the elites should endorse their respective responsibility to eradicate superstitious culture in order to pave the way for flourishing the wisdom in society. The best way to combat superstitious culture is to increase public awareness and insights through disseminating critical thinking, as one of the requirements of the growth of rationality in all layers of society. The

appropriate way to combat the superstition is to deploy general effort for exhorting the society towards rational approach in scrutinizing on ideas and analyzing events, explaining natural and metaphysical phenomena as well as interpreting their inter-relationship. In this conjuncture, the development is in close correlation with rationality and in contradiction with superstitious culture. In order to orient the society towards the development, the reform should take place in the social structures as well as in the elite and people perceptions so that the critical thinking would substitute the superstitious beliefs and ideas. Therefore, rational interpretation of religious teachings, by anti-superstitious intellectuals and rational-minded elites would pave the way for social and political development. (Enayat, 1979; Kermani, 1983) On the contrary, the political and social backwardness is rooted in superstition, falsification and irrationality of people and elites (Najmabadi, 1997, p.45) as well as in the absence of government of law, whose combination with the superstitious culture would impede the development (Kermani, 1983). Therefore, the sum of interaction between social structure/contextual factors and the actors/agency based on their tendency towards rationality or superstition would determine society's developmental or under-developmental direction.

The Impact of Propensity towards Superstition on the Political Thought of the Iranian Politicians during the Qajar Era

In this section, firstly the impact of propensity towards superstition on thought of politicians of the Qajar era is discussed and then its effect on the ordinary people in Qajar era would be examined.

Propensity towards Superstition among Political Figures of Qajar Era:

The most important impact of propensity towards superstition on the political thought of Iran can be seen as a reductionist approach to the analysis of domestic and foreign policy issues, which is considered as a major obstacle to understanding the way ahead of politicians of Qajar era. According to Dariush Shayegan, superstitions can be considered as "mental idols" that prevent political understanding (Shayegan, 2002).

The Qajar period can be considered as an era full of superstitions and superstitious beliefs. The Qajar era, especially the relatively long era of

Nasseri reign, suffers from propensity towards superstition. During the Qajar period, the kings had a number of special astronomers with whom he was consulting in his works. These astronomers also had to attend at the time of birth and predicted the fortune of the newborn (Dieulafoy, 2011, p.108).

The Qajar kings were allocating particular value to astronomers in such a way that the astronomers had a high position in the court of Qajar kings, in a way that sometimes they could establish a wed with Qajar king and marry his daughter, like Marriage of lady Shah Jahan known as Khan Bibi, Fath Ali Shah's daughter with Mirza Abdolbaqi Gilanni. Astronomers at the Qajar court, in addition to setting the exact time of the New Year and announcing it at the ceremony of the Nowruz in the presence of king based on the ancient custom, also were setting the time of accession of the new king to the throne. In addition to the efforts of the Qajar kings to start their monarchy at the auspicious and blessed hour, due to the noblesse of this period, with full observance of the rules of astronomy, they observed the blessed times that were appointed by astronomers when entering or leaving the city, or at the time of meeting with the ambassadors (Sepehr, 1998, p.550). The Qajar kings' belief in the science of astronomy was in the way that they were accustomed to use astronomers' opinion in political events during their reign, and based many of their actions on it.

Agha Mohammad khan Qajar, to whom Reza Gholi khan Hedayat referred as a person who was aware of the science of geomancy and Astronomy, was the first person of this dynasty who paid special attention to the auspicious time of his return to the city. "On the fifteenth day, king [Agha Mohammad Khan] was supposed to enter Tehran and for some time he stayed in Firoozkooh, with two days delay, because it was not an auspicious time", Olivier quoted about believing in auspicious and inauspicious times. (Olivier, 1992, p.91) Among the famous astrologers of that era, according to Mu'min al-Dawlah, we can mention "Malahagh hakim", who was the leader of the astrologers and witches of the Jewish neighborhood, to "Pirbabajado", "Mirza jam Bazan" and "Haji Kermani"(Mo'men al-Dawlah, 2001, p.62).

Also According to Pierre Amedé jaubert, Fath-ali Shah (described by Bontems as a person interested in astrology) and his companions' trip to Soltanieh countryside and his meeting with king, all took place at the time appointed by the astronomers of the court (Jaubert, 1968, p.358). According to his memoirs of trip to Iran, De Kotzebue¹ mentioned that: "Since the great ambassador had given me obligingly the epithet of astronomer, the minister (Mirza Abdul Wahhab, Minister of Fath Ali Shah) who was keen on astronomy and mathematics, personally invited me. Iranian people believe in astronomical prediction, I also thought about using this [matter] to increase the credibility and reputation of the embassy and after giving his opinion to the Minister about the benedicts of time and the conformity of the stars on the friendship of two nations, the minister also stated that our astrologists believe that for the time being celestial bodies foretell a blissful fortune (De Kotzebue, 1986, p.235)."[Astronomers] had set a special day to accept the ambassador, and it took some time for Fath Ali Salah to reach Sultaniyeh and we were waiting for twenty days," as one of the ambassadors of Western countries wrote in his memoirs (De Kotzebue, 1986, p.230). Reza-Golikhani Hedayat mentioned the consultation of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar with his astronomer Mirza Mohammad Hussein Isfahani during the uprising of the khans² of Khorasan against the Prince Mohammad-Vali Mirza in 1850. According to him, because of the astronomer's opinion, according to the way the stars were located, the Kings of khorasan were in power for 17 years and if anyone wanted to overthrow them after this period, he could wait so that 17 years would be passed. Therefore, Shah sent Abbas Mirza to Khorasan to suppress them after 17 years (Hedayat, 2001).

Fraser quoting Sir John McNeil, who himself quoted Hassan-Ali Mirza's utterance, the governor of Khorasan, that before Abbas Mirza's death he predicted the month of his decease, saying that king would not be alive until 1871 (Fraser, 2005, pp.209-210).

In addition to Fath Ali Shah, his son Abbas Mirza and his son Mohammad Mirza also pursued this superstitious approach during their travels to various regions. Behavior of crown Prince Mohammad Mirza remained unchanged even during his reign and after the death of Fath Ali

1. One of the travelers who visited Iran during Qajar period

2. The title of Feudal in Iran

Shah until the arrival of auspicious time, he spent a week in Negarestan garden outside of Tehran, and after that, he ascended to the throne.

After the accession of Mohammad Shah to power, his well-known minister, Hajji MirzaAghasi also played a major role in promoting superstitions in political thought of Iran. A person, who according to sources, was taught supernatural sciences about conjuration and enchantment by MollaAbdolsamad Hamedani and by knowing these sciences, he made predictions whether about himself, the Qajar kings and princes or in connection with the political-military events of governance at the era of Mohammad Shah. According to some sources, he predicted Abbas Mirza and Fath Ali Shah death, long time before their decease, by revealing these things to Mohammad Mirza who was his teacher; he made himself a bountiful person in his eyes. These things caused the relationship between Hajji MirzaAghasi and Mohammad Shah in the course that he became prime minister, which had predicted it himself (Etemad-Al-Saltaneh 1978:184; Jahangir-MirzaQajar, 2005, p.76).

Nasser-al-Din Shah, after Mohammad Shah, was also a very superstitious man; he had a particular astronomer in his system of governance, to whom he was consulting before taking any action and asking him about auspicious and inauspicious days. Not only did he consult with his astronomer, but also he consulted with one of his women's beloved who supposedly was overfilled with the love of God. (Vaghaye Etefaghie newspaper 1888, No.252, p.5) Nasser-al-Din Shah Qajar, was a person who believed in superstition for arranging his trips to some countries or returning from them (E'tezad-Al-Saltaneh, 1861, No. 11915).

Nasser-al-Din Shah did not do any serious or important issue unless he had asked his astronomer to bead bids¹ regarding the auspicious times before doing it, and since the first advisor of the Shah was an astronomer, so it could be said that the great part of the destiny of country was determined by astronomers (Saran, 1984, p.72).

1. A kind of religious fortune-telling in which you bid beads while praying to predict the fortune or misfortune

During the 50-years reign of Nasser-al-Din Shah (from 13 September 1848 to 30th April 1896), especially during the 50th anniversary of his reign or after his death, many sources of this period talked about the astronomers' prediction on the way of his kingdom's decline. Mokhber-Al-Dowleh explains the predictions of the Qajar prince Mohammad Vali Mirza's, who was familiar with science about conjuration. According to him, reign of Naseri had some dreadful happenings and eras after 50 years and in case of the risk being resolved, it will continue for thirty years; the prince that QajarShah praised his predictions in other matters too, and if his predictions came true he would give him a reward. Therefore, the king was listening to the predictions, and he was convinced of their correctness. Doust-Ali-khan Moayer-Al-Mamalek quotes Tajid-Al-Dawlah, the king's wife talking about his delight in passing through the dreadful happenings and eras of his reign that Mohammad ValiMirzaJafar had predicted in the first year of his reign (Ettehadieh and Sa'davandian, 1982, pp.60-61).

In the case of the next king of the Qajar dynasty, Mozaffar al-Din Shah, the available literature suggests that, in addition to believing in superstition, he has been strictly bound to them. His arrival in Tehran after the death of Nassir al-Din Shah was made at the well-appointed time of the astronomers. In the case of the succeeding king of the Qajar dynasty, Mozaffar al-Din Shah, the available writings suggest that, in addition to believing in such a thing, he was strictly bound to them. His arrival in Tehran after the death of Nassir al-Din Shah was done at the auspicious time determined by the astronomers (Afzal-Al-Molk, 1983, p.17).

Eugene Aubin narrates that "Abdul-maghfurNajm al-Dawlah" (the astronomer of the court in that time) published calendars every year, in which he provided information on historical events, days and months with astrological content. This person was mandated to find the appropriate time for starting new celebration according to stars, after the death of Muzaffar al-Din Shah for the coronation of Mohammad-Ali Shah (Aubin, 2012, p.155).

It is mentioned about the coronation of Mohammad Ali Shah in the book "The Moon of the Fourteenth Night" as follows: "At that time, the astronomer consulted with the heavens and whispered by stars to choose

an auspicious time for coronation, but Mohammad Ali Mirza, who later became a king as Mohammad Ali Shah, did not want to wait and the astronomer inevitably, despite the inappropriate condition of the stars, choose and recommended an inauspicious time" (Lorey and Sladen, 1910, p.103).

In sum, kings and rulers of the country were severely constrained to the superstitious thoughts. Certainly, this procedure has had a profound impact on the society, pushing it towards subjectivism and degeneration.

Propensity towards Superstition in Ordinary People during the Qajar Era

Since during the Qajar period there were a few literate people. Mostly Iranian ordinary people, at that time, were captured by superstitions. This situation created and developed certain beliefs among the Iranian people in the Qajar era. An example was the popular belief in the fact that the horses whose feet were auspicious were ominous, or number thirteen was considered to be inauspicious. Even those who were exempt from business, refused to mention thirteen, and after the number twelve instead of thirteen they were using the word "ziyade¹" and then they were citing the next number. Generally, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness of three things were considered as important: house, horse and wife. Regarding wife and horse they used the terms *khoshghadam* (lucky) and *badghadam* (unlucky). According to Polak, some of the king's wives were forced to leave the court because they were inauspicious (Polak, n.d., p.156).

Ali-qoli-mirza E'tezad-al-Saltaneh, in his book *Falak-Al-Saadeh*, repeats the words of Etemad-al-Saltanah with more moderation. Although he did not deny the beliefs of aristocrats in astronomy, he believes that they used it only in times of emergency, such as dismissal from their office, and, on the contrary, introduces the ordinary men, women, and stupid people as main believers of astronomy (E'tezad-al-Saltaneh, 1861).

A little awareness of astronomy and knowing a few astronomical terms and perception of printed calendars of every year was enough to be

1. It is a word used instead of the unlucky number 13

visited by the people, and this constant and persistent visiting was so beneficial- financially- that had turned into a source of wealth and fortune for Iranian astronomers during the Qajar period. As James Morier stated, almost every Iranian city had its own astronomer (Morier, 2007, vol. 2, pp.73-74).

Referring to the calendar to determine the auspicious time to sew and wear clothes, shoes and even new socks, going to the bathroom and visiting, traveling, setting the time to take the trousseau, and the day of marriage, all indicate that the ordinary people of the Qajar period also used the science of astronomy on a large scale in their everyday lives (Khansari, 1963, p.12).

The social and cultural conditions of this period were in a way that these superstitions were accepted by the community. Therefore, the political elites who did not have the capability to administer the country misused the superstitious culture to govern.

Impact of Combatting Superstitions on Political Thought of Iran during the Qajar Era

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to fight against superstitions in the Qajar era was the critical rationality of some prime ministers, thinkers and elites of this period.

The Role of Political and Religious Elites in Combating Superstitious Culture

Among the prime ministers, there were only a few who wisely wanted the development of the Iranian community by rationality, like Gaem Magham Farahani, Amir Kabir and Sepahsalar, who were expecting the rationalism of the Iranian society. However, because of the suppression and tyranny of the Qajar kings, their era did not last long. For example, insipient people killed MirzaTaghi Khan Amir Kabir. Then Hajji MirzaAghasi, the sixth chancellor of that era, was a mendicant man who was a very devious and wicked person and promoted superstition for the sake of himself to gain the position of chancellor (Mahmoud, 1988, p.511). From 1835 to 1848 (the year of the death of Mohammad Shah), he was in charge of the Iranian Chancellery for 13 years (Gholi, 1998, p.62).

Of course, during the Qajar period, there were religious writers and thinkers who were protesting against the state of superstitions and were struggling to reform the beliefs of the court and the people. Writers such as Sheikh Hadi Najmabadi (1871-1941), Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asad Abadi (1875-1934), Allameh Naeeni, Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabaei, etc. played a major role in reinforcing the critical rationality.

Sheikh Hadi Najmabadi was a critic Mujtahid¹ and provider of the awakening of Iranians. Through social interaction with various groups of people, he was advising them, to avoid superstitions and blind imitation. He believed that superstition, fear of criticism, and bad habits were considered to be human diseases. Therefore, wisdom is the most important prophet that guides man to the right path (Ha'eri, 1981, p.91). He severely criticized Nasser al-Din Shah and his senior government staff. With these criticisms, he aimed to fight by the help of religion against the oppression and superstitious beliefs and to exhort his country to some social and political modernization (Ha'eri, 1981, pp.93-96).

The central concept in Sheikh Hadi's religious thought was the rule of intellect and wisdom, emphasis on rational understanding and the rejection of bias and imitation in religion to seek the truth. The only criterion for the correctness of rules of piety is nothing but reason, which God has entrusted in the nature of humanity in order to distinguish God's path from inaccuracy (Najm-Abadi, 1999, pp.105-106). Therefore, the Sheikh was highly rational. He recognized the wisdom as the first prophet, which God has placed in man. He qualified the wisdom as the Prophet who separated the path of God from the path of Satan (Najm-Abadi, 1999, p.109). He considered ornamentation of religious beliefs and superstitious arguments as unacceptable and believed in the rationality of divine knowledge (Tabatabaei, 2014, p.181).

Other writer and thinker of this period was Seyyed Jamaluddin AsadAbadi. The importance of Seyyed Jammal's work was in his tireless struggles against all despotic governments in the Middle East. He was also considered as one of the critics and inveterate fighters against the Nasser-al-din Shah regime (Enayat, 1979, p.56). He was the first person that discussed, at the end of the nineteenth century, the "purification of

1 . A person who guide people about divine rules

Islam from superstition", "the necessity of acquaintance with new scientific and technological advances for Muslims," and "unity of Muslims". He believed that superstitions are like a fake glamour that prevail the society, leading to the self-deprecation of the people against colonialism. He relied on the Islamic self-esteem for fighting against superstition (The collection of the Martyr Motahari, 2010, vol. 24, p.153).

In the *Orvat-Al-Vosgha* newspaper, published in Paris, he was emphasizing on "eradication of superstition from Islam", "Condemnation of blindly traditionalism and mere imitation" and "Adoption of the new science and technology in the Islamic world." (Ha'eri, 1981, p.59).

The Role of Iranian Journalists and Intellectuals in Combating Superstitious Culture

The Iranian journalist played their effective role in awakening Iranian people and rationalizing public opinion. In this connection, the rational and developmental outcomes of the publication of *Orvatol-Vothgha* by Seyyed Jamal-od Dine Assadabadi since 1883, that of *Ghanoon* by Mirza Malkam Khan Nazem-od-Douleh since 1889, that of *Shahsavān* by Mirza Abdol-Rahman Talebof since 1888, the monthly magazine of *Hekmat* by Mirza Mahi Khan Tabrizi since 1891, *Habl-ol-matine* by Seyed Jalal-od Dine Hosseini Kashani (*Moayedol Eslām*) since 1893, as well as weekly magazine of *Soraya* under the joint supervision of Mirza Ali Mohammad Khan Kashani and Seyed Farajollah Hosseini since 1897 should be taken into consideration prior to the constitutional revolution (Ghasemi, 2006, pp.54-59).

Furthermore, the role of journals such as *Toloue*, *Kamal*, *Adab*, *Omid*, *Majlesse Melliye Tabriz*, *Al-Jenab*, *Eslamiyeh* and *Nourouz* in disseminating rationality and developmental approach in political and social arena in Iran should be regarded as constructive one (Jabbarlooye & Shabestari, 2004).

During the period 1906 - 1909, the chief editors of around 90 Persian journals were trying to awaken the Iranian society from the political ignorance, such as Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Tabatabaee & Adibol-Mamalek Farahani (*Newspaper of Majles*), *Majdol-eslam* Kermani (*Nedaye Vatan*), Reza Modirool-Mamalek Harandi Esfahani (*Tamadon*),

Morteza Gholi Khan Moayedol-Mamalek (Sobhe Sadegh), Mirza Seyed Hassan Kashani (Hablol-Matine), Mirza Jahangir Khan Shirazi & Ali Akbar Dekhoda (Sour Esrafil), Mohammad Taghi Bahar (Khorasan), & Seyed Mohammad Reza Mosavate Shirazi (Mosavat) (Parvin, 2000).

In fact, in the era of constitutional movement, there were three intellectual currents in Iran which were against superstitious culture: firstly secular intellectuals such as Mirza Fath-Ali Akhoundzadeh, Taghizadeh & Mirza Agha Khan Kermani; secondly reformist and Protestantist intellectuals such as Abdol-Rahim Talebof; and thirdly realist and modernist intellectuals such as Mirza Malkom Khan Nazem-ol Douleh & Mirza Youssef Mostashar-od-douleh (Khalkhali & Pouzesh, 2016: 92-117). They were trying to establish semi-modernist reforms in the Iranian political and social culture and to transform the traditional structures into modern ones (Ajoudani, 2003, pp.40-41).

Mirza Fath-Ali Akhoundzadeh believed that the bigotry and ignorance were the main obstacles towards the development of the country. Therefore, the dogmatic and superstitious perception of religion should be changed (Zaker Esfahani, 2000, p.336). He believed that underdevelopment is rooted in the opportunistic approach of rulers in the political system who misused the ignorance of ordinary people for consolidating their power. (Adamiyat, 1956, p.148) In his viewpoint, even the ethics is based on wisdom. Therefore, the context of intellectual and mental evolution should be prepared through education and knowledge sharing, in order to pave the way for national progress (Adamiyat, 1970, pp.117-119).

Mirza Agha Khan Kermani was for the rationalization of culture and elimination of superstition for boosting the development of Iranian society (Kasravi, 2006: 136-138).

Abdol-Rahim Talebof believed that science and freedom are the two factors of civilian progress of each society (Talebof, 1978, pp.84-187). The main obstacle is the ignorance as the origin of superstitious culture (Mirani, 1979, p.98).

Mirza Malkam Khan Nazem-od-douleh was insisting on law and legacy as the main factors of social progress. He was for the modernization from above (Adamiyat, 1961, p.52).

Mirza Yousef Khan Mostashar-od-douleh who wrote a dissertation entitled "one word" (i.e. Law), believed that for the elimination of superstitious culture, the society should endorse the superiority of legacy as the main factor of progress and negate the misinterpretation of religion (Kermani, 1983, pp.170-172).

From 1909 to 1921, the Iranian intellectuals were insisting on the necessity of the rationalization of structures and actors. For instance, Mohammad Taghi Bahar believed that the reason for Iran's underdevelopment after constitutional movement was their non-consideration of science, rationality and modernity (Akbari Beiragh, 2000, p.142). In this context, Ahmad Kasravi was thinking of modernization of Iran based on humanism, public awareness, internal awakening and negation of imitation (Kasravi, 1977, pp.41-42). He believed that development requires the rationalization of society and its modern identification before the rationality of its rulers (Golmohmadi, 2001, p.219).

Furthermore, some intellectuals by disseminating their anti-superstitious ideas in journals such as *Iran-e Nou* in Tehran, *Shafagh* in Tabriz and *Nou-Bahar* in Khorasan during Ahmad Shah Period played an important role in promoting anti-superstitious culture in Iran (Sariolghalam, 2019, pp.112-124).

Conclusion

It can be understood that Non-academic, insipient, emotional and populist approach, caused the propensity of political thought, during the Qajar period towards superstition, led to extremism, populism and superficial approach, prevented intellectual growth and scientific approach and impeded the discourse of development and rationality.

In addition, the superstitious culture, by holding the political rationality back, reproduced the political tyranny of the Qajar period, the lack of political development, and the refusal of critical political thinking. The congruency between the "superstitious culture" and the "lack of rationality" during the Qajar period caused "intellectual tyranny," followed by "political tyranny." In other words, the superstitious culture and the reductionist approach led to the reproduction of political despotism and these two reinforced and reproduced each other.

In the Qajar era, the superstitious beliefs in the personal life of individuals became outspread in the "collective culture". In the "political decisions" of this era, superstition and fighting against rationalism were visible. So it can be said that the superstitious culture strengthened the process of underdevelopment in the Qajar era.

Thus, the superstition, as a destructive element of reason, science and religion, accompanied by the spread of magic and witchcraft, which were rooted in fight against rationality and escaping from science, led to the orientation of society towards absence of science, irrationality, ignorance, and unawareness. The superstitious culture, through eroding intellect and opposing to science, led to lack of consciousness, illiteracy, law-breaking and political tyranny. "Superstition", "superstitious culture" and "superstitious thought" led to "the incorrect understanding of the relation of cause and effect in scientific, social and political events. Such a superstitious thought in the context of law-breaking and political despotism provided an opportunity for denying critical rationalism and impeding political development in Iran during the Qajar period.

The prevalence of superstition has influenced the rulers and elites approach towards the development. Their perceptual and imaginary understanding of previous events caused their stereotypes and mental patterns to impede true understanding of social and political realities. In addition, the reduction of mind to a partial part of reality or to supernatural superstition and its generalization to the totality of social changes led to a one-dimensional approach, or a tunnel approach in the political thought of the Iranian society. The propensity towards superstitions also caused "the self-confirmation bias" in the Iranian political thought. This cognitive error was because that the minds were more in pursuit of the security of their previous knowledge rather than the search for and understanding of reality.

In contrast, elites and thinkers fighting against superstition, such as Sheikh Hadi Najmabadi, Seyyed Jamaledin Asadabadi, Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba'i, Akhundzadeh, Kermani and Taghizadeh during the Qajar period had come to the conclusion that superstition constitutes "psychological and individual" and "collective, cultural and social" derivations, leading to the consolidation of the political tyranny of the

Qajar dynasty. So these thinkers and writers along with some patriotic politicians started to criticize the prevalence of non-scientific, anti-rational, emotional and populist approaches as major factors of propensity towards superstition, due to the prevalence of social lumpenism and reductionist perception and the increase of people's ignorance and illusion as barriers to intellectual understanding and political development in Iranian society.

Scrutinizing on the political culture of Iran and its impact on political and social thought during Qadjar period, we notice the destructive effect of superstition on the rationality and development. In fact, the superstition tries to transform the "thought", as the intellectual product of persuasion, wisdom, awareness and deep thinking into "idea" as the product of habits and instincts, which lead to simplistic calculation as well as dogmatic and populist approaches. In the superstitious context, the superficial understanding of modern thought by the intellectuals, the non-congruence and non-interaction between intellectuals and people, the lack of inter-subjectivity in the perception of modern concepts, such as development, among people, intellectuals and political elites as well as the exploitation and misuse of public ignorance and illiteracy by opportunist governmental elites for reinforcing the pillars of their political power have prepared the grounds for superstitious culture as the main factor of underdevelopment during Qajar era.

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