

Correction: Throughout this article, `Abbas Shayan, *Tārikh-i Daw-hizār-sāla-yi Sārī*, (which appears in the published article) has been corrected to: Husain Islami, *Tārikh-i Daw-hizār-sāla-yi Sārī*

The Baha'is and the Constitutional Revolution: The Case of Sari, Mazandaran, 1906–1913

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Accounts of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran have tended to ignore the role of the Baha'is in that event. This paper looks at the case of Sari, capital of Mazandaran province, where the Baha'is of the city played a major part in initiating the move towards Constitutionalism and in educating people about the reforms envisaged and about the modern world. They also led the way in carrying out some of these reforms. In particular, the Baha'is established the first modern schools in the town. In this process, they were opposed by the Muslim `ulama in the town, who equated Constitutionalism and the Baha'i Faith, and persecuted the Baha'is of the town relentlessly for both reasons, leading eventually to the killing of five of the leading Baha'is of Sari in 1913. A brief account is also given of the attitude of the Baha'i leader `Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921) towards the Constitutional Movement and the role of the Baha'is in it. This paper follows the events of the seven years 1906–13 in Sari and describes seven swings of the pendulum of power in the town alternating between the Baha'is and Constitutionalists on the one hand and the `ulama and the royalist forces supporting Muhammad `Ali Shah on the other. It points out that the neglect of the Baha'i aspect of these events by historians has led to a failure to account adequately for some of the events of these years.

The events of the Constitutional Revolution have now been extensively researched and analyzed. The events of this period in the northern province of Mazandaran, bordering the Caspian Sea, have also been chronicled, for example in the second volume of Mahjuri's *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*¹ and Islami's *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala-yi Sari*,² and analyzed, for example in the last chapter of Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics and Economics in Mazandaran, Iran, 1848–1914*.³ It is the contention of this paper, however, that previous authors have neglected the Baha'i dimension of these events and without this dimension, a full understanding of this period is not possible. Indeed, some facts such as the election of Hajji Shaykh al-Ra'is (1264/1848–1918) who had no connections with Mazandaran as the delegate for that province to the second *Majlis* (parliament) in 1909 remain inexplicable

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¹ Isma`il Mahjuri, *Tārikh-i Māzandarān*, vol. 2 (Sari, 1966), 230–283. The author was a resident of Sari and had access to oral sources of information as well as archival ones.

² Husain Islami, *Tārikh-i Daw-hizār-sāla-yi Sārī* (Qa'imshahr, 1993), 351–361, 366–378. This source follows Mahjuri closely for this period, but often gives some additional details or explanations.

³ Mohammad Ali Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics and Economics in Māzandarān, Iran, 1848–1914* (London, 2003), 159–210.

unless one takes into account the Baha'i dimension. This paper will seek to unravel some of these issues in relation to the town of Sari in particular.

During the movement for reform in Iran at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the accusations hurled against the reformers by their enemies was that they were “Babis”. As early as 1861, the Faramushkhana set up by Mirza Malkam Khan was accused of being a rallying point for the Babis.⁴ In the 1890s, we find that Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (“al-Afghani”) was considered by many to be a “Babi” and even to be the head of the Babis.⁵ And throughout the period of the Constitutional Revolution we find anti-Constitutionalists such as Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri in his *Lavāyih* (a series of printed pamphlets distributed throughout Tehran) accusing the reformers of being Babis,⁶ while the troops besieging the Constitutionalists in Tabriz in 1909 were urged on in their efforts by the assertion that they were performing a religiously meritorious service by killing the “Babis” in that city (the Baha'is were known as “Babis” by the general population of Iran at this time).⁷ Given that the “Babis” were considered enemies of Islam and rebels against the Qajar regime, this was a serious accusation and one that was damaging to the reformers personally and to the reform movement.

In general this accusation was false in that most of the reformers were not “Babis” but there were two grounds on which the accusation was at least partly true.

First, although the figureheads of the Constitutional Movement such as Sayyid `Abdallah Bihbihani and Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i were strict Muslims, many of those most active in agitating and manipulating affairs behind the scenes were Azali Babis.⁸

Second, the Baha'i community in Iran were enacting an ambitious social program including establishing modern schools, the advancement of the social role of women and the election of local representative councils—all of which were also part of the program of the Constitutionalists and reformers. The role of the Baha'i community in the Constitutional Revolution has been little

⁴ Arthur Comte de Gobineau, *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris, 1957), 273–274.

⁵ See for example the dispatch in May 1896 of Henry Longworth, the British Consul at Trabizond, in Moojan Momen, *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford, 1981), 362–363 (see other examples of this, p. 362n.). Asadabadi was in fact opposed to the Baha'is, probably because he perceived them as causing a division in the Islamic world and also because of his close association with Azali Babis; see Baha'u'llah's comment on Asadabadi and his activities in Lawh-i Dunya, in *Majmū`a-iy az Alwāh-i Jamāl-i Aqdas-i Abhā kih ba`d az Kitāb-i Aqdas nāzil shuda* (Lagenhain, 1980), 54–55.

⁶ Mangol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909* (New York, 1991), 186–187.

⁷ Albert Wratistlaw, *A Consul in the East* (London, 1924), 246, cited in Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, 368; see also Ibrahim Safa'i, *Rahbarān-i Mashrūta*, 2 vols., 2nd ed., Tehran, 1983) 1:393n; Ahmad Kasravi, *Tārīkh-i Mashrūta-yi Īrān*, 4th ed. (Tehran, n.d.), 628, 681.

⁸ Bayat clearly demonstrates this throughout her book *Iran's First Revolution*, although she does cloud matters a little by frequently referring to these individuals by the designation “religious dissidents” rather than Azalis. There were, however, no Azalis active in Sari.

studied as yet⁹ and there have been no studies of individual Baha'i communities. The events in Sari, the capital of Mazandaran province, which are the subject of this paper are interesting in that here we have a case where the accusation of the Constitutionalists being "Babis" had a much more solid basis in that the leading Constitutionalists in the city were Baha'is.

The Baha'i Community of Sari

The question of who was a Baha'i at this time and the range of Baha'i identities that existed is one on which a great deal could be said but in fact little research has been done. This paper is, in one way, an empirical contribution to this question but there is not the space to analyze this question extensively here. Most Baha'is did not of course openly identify themselves as such since that would have meant almost certain death. Suffice it to say that the evidence for being a core member of the Baha'i community includes such factors as being asserted to have been a Baha'i in histories written by Baha'i and Muslim authors, membership of the Baha'i local elected council (local spiritual assembly), having descendants who are Baha'is and who assert that their ancestor was a Baha'i, and being in correspondence with or visiting the Baha'i leader 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921).

In contrast to the nearby town of Barfurush (now Babul), where there was a strong Babi community, established by Mulla Muhammad 'Ali 'Quddus' in the 1840s, which then went on to form the foundation of a Baha'i community, there was no Babi community in Sari and the leading mujtahid of the city at the time of the Bab, Mirza Muhammad Taqi Sarawi, was much opposed to the new religion. The Baha'i community in Sari only gradually developed during the last half of the nineteenth century. Probably the first Baha'i in the town was Shaykh Hadi Afrapuli (d. 1316/1898), a cleric who had been a fellow student of Mulla 'Ali Jan Mahfuruzaki (executed 1883). When news of Mahfuruzaki's conversion to the Baha'i Faith spread to Sari in the 1870s, Afrapuli volunteered to go to Mahfuruzak (a village 10 kilometres south-west of Sari) and put his friend straight. This trip resulted instead in Afrapuli's conversion. Among other prominent early Baha'i citizens of the town were Ghulam-Husayn Khan Shapur Muqtadir al-Sultan Kirmani, a government official;

⁹ Juan Cole has studied the role of Shaykh al-Ra'is (see later in this paper) and Janet Afary has looked at the role of Tayira Khanum in *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York, 1996) 197-9. See also Moojan Momen, "The Baha'is of Iran: the Constitutional Movement and the Creation of an 'Enemy Within'," paper presented at the conference "The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906– 1911", held at University of Oxford, 30 July–2 August 2006, and Kavian Milani, "Baha'i Discourses on the Constitutional Revolution," in *Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies*, eds., Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena Fazel (London, 2008) pp. 141–155. The most detailed study of the Baha'is in the period of the Constitutional Revolution is Mina Yazdani, *Awdā`-yi ijtimā`i-yi Īrān dar `ahd-i Qājār az khilāf-i āthār-i mubāraka-yi Bahā'ī* (Hamilton, Ont., 2003), esp. 255–316.

Karbala'i Yusuf Kirmani, a darvish who had the name Haqq-Mutlaq, and Shahzada Hakim, a physician.¹⁰

When Mirza Ibrahim Nuri Saham al-Dawla arrived as deputy governor in Sari in 1883 with orders from Kamran Mirza Na'ib al-Saltana, the governor, to clear the province of Baha'is and in particular to arrest Mulla `Ali Jan Mahfuruzaki, he asked Aqa Vali, the kalantar (mayor) of Sari, for a list of Baha'is. The latter gave him a long list of Baha'is both in the town and in the surrounding area. One of the government officials, Mirza Mahdi Karpardaz, was, however, a covert Baha'i and saw this list. He insisted that the kalantar had only made such a long list in order to increase his own importance and that it was worthless. Eventually the governor tore up the list.¹¹

During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, a number of prominent citizens of Sari became Baha'is. The spread of the Baha'i faith was greatly assisted by the arrival in the town of Mirza Hasan-i Va`iz, a preacher from Qazvin. The latter used to quote occasionally from passages of the writings of Baha'u'llah in his sermons and recitals of the sufferings of the Imams. If anyone's interest was sparked by this and they came up afterwards and asked him about these passages, he would speak to them for a while and if they seemed promising, he would start to tell them about the Baha'i faith.¹² Another person who played an important role in spreading the Baha'i faith was Mirza `Inayatullah of `Aliyabad (later Shahi, now Qa'imshahr), who occupied a senior position in the court of Muzaffar ud-Din Mirza at Tabriz.¹³

Among the prominent people of the area to become a Baha'i was Lutf-`Ali Khan Kulbadi (d. 1352/1933) who held the titles Salar Mukarram, Salar Muhtasham, Muhtasham Nizam and Sardar Jalil (referred to henceforward as Sardar Jalil although he only held this title towards the end of this period). He belonged to the leading family of landowners and notables in Kulbad (or Gulbad, now named Galugah), the most eastern district of Mazandaran, but lived most of the time in Sari. After the death of his uncle Rida-Quli Khan, Lutf-`Ali Khan inherited his rank of Mir-Panjih (major general) and command over the army in eastern Mazandaran. By the beginning of the twentieth century, he was the wealthiest and most powerful figure in eastern Mazandaran as well as the largest landowner.¹⁴ Lutf-`Ali Khan became a Baha'i through Mirza `Inayatullah `Aliyabadi and prospered despite being quite open about his beliefs.

The following story is instructive in that it depicts the tightrope on which such individuals walked as Baha'is and the strategies they employed to avoid trouble. In about 1883, finding themselves powerless against Sardar Jalil, some of the local

¹⁰ Asadullah Fadil Mazandarani, *Asrār al-Āthār*, 5 vols. (Tehran, 1967–72), 4: 97–98; idem, *Tārīkh-i Zuhūr al-Haqq*, vol. 8, pt. 1 (2 parts, Tehran, 1974–75), 818.

¹¹ `Azizullah Sulaymani, *Masābīh-i Hidāyat*, 9 vols. (Tehran, 1947–76), 4: 516.

¹² Asadullah Fadil Mazandarani, *Tārīkh-i Zuhūr al-Haqq*, vol. 6 (copy of mss. in private hands), 545–549; vol. 8, pt. 1: 615–618; Sulaymani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 2: 118–123.

¹³ Mazandarani, *Zuhūr al-Haqq*, 6: 987–989.

¹⁴ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 268–269; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 101, 138–139.

ulama sent a complaint to Kamran Mirza Na'ib al-Saltana, the governor of Mazandaran, that he was spreading the Baha'i faith and had assembled a group of armed men ready to arise against the government. Sardar Jalil was summoned to Tehran. "We hear you have established a religious circle (*hawza*) and the Shah is very angry with you," Na'ib al-Saltana said to him. Sardar Jalil, feigning ignorance and stupidity and playing on the alternative meaning of the sound of the word, replied, "I have only one pool (*hawd*.) in the new house that I have built and if the Shah commands it, I will have it filled in." Na'ib al-Saltana pressed him with a few further questions but, in the end, laughed and allowed him to return to his home with a cloak of honor.¹⁵ Sardar Jalil purchased some of those villages in Mazandaran that had large numbers of Baha'is in them, such as Ivil and Mahfuruzak, so that the Baha'is could live there without fear of harassment and persecution from their landlord, as happened elsewhere.

Another powerful figure of the area to become a Baha'i was Qasim Khan Huzhabr Khaqan `Abd al-Maliki Zaghmarzi (later Huzhabr al-Dawla, by which name he will be referred to in the rest of this paper), a chief of the `Abd al-Maliki tribe and a military commander of its troops.¹⁶ He was described as "a very dignified good-tempered young man. His mind is enlightened and he always reads scholarly books and novels translated from the French."¹⁷

There is less certainty about the Baha'i identity of a third figure, Mirza `Ali Khan Salar Fatih (Sardar Fatih) Kujuri, a man who had risen from humble origins to a position of power in Sari as the agent of Nasr al-Saltana Tunukabuni (Sipahdar). According to one source, he was a Baha'i,¹⁸ but an elderly member of the Sari Baha'i community does not remember him being mentioned as a Baha'i.¹⁹ It seems likely that he was a Baha'i or closely associated with the Baha'is in Sari in the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution but that when he went to Tehran in 1911, he ceased to associate with the Baha'is, since there is no record of his being active as a Baha'i there.

It was largely because of the protection of such figures that the Baha'i faith was able to spread rapidly in Sari in the decades preceding the Constitutional Revolution. Many individuals who were conscious of the need for social reform and moral regeneration were attracted by its teachings. Among these was Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas (1287/1870–1343/1924), a member of a prominent local landowning family of sayyids, who was studying at a religious college when he was converted to the Baha'i Faith by Mirza Hasan-i Va`iz Qazvini. Word of Muqaddas's conversion spread and, when his father died, a cleric named Mirza Muhammad `Ali Fadil, wanted to take Muqaddas's inheritance away from him.

¹⁵ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6:988–989; vol. 8, pt. 2: 808–9.

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 8, pt. 2: 810, 818; Mazandarani, *Asrar al-Athar*, 4:98.

¹⁷ Mirza Siraj al-Din in *Safarnama-yi Tuhaf-i Bukhara*, quoted in Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 154; a similar description is given in Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:282

¹⁸ Shaqayiq Iqani, "Tarikhcha-yi Madaris-i Baha'i dar Mazandaran," unpublished paper, 2001, 22–23.

¹⁹ Telephone interview with Badi`ullah Imani, 23 June 2006, confirmed by e-mail 29 June 2006.

Muqaddas went to Tehran and succeeded in having his rights confirmed there. After this Muqaddas's influence throughout the city increased. He had considerable land under cultivation and lived on a large plot of land on the outskirts of the town.²⁰ He converted his former fellow student, Mirza Muhammad Hamza-yi Pishnamaz.

The Baha'i community in the town came to include prominent merchants such as Mirza Muhammad Isma'il Amin al-Tujjar Isfahani, Mirza Muhammad `Ali Mushir al-Tujjar Tabrizi (who was a son-in-law of Mirza `Inayatullah `Aliyabadi) and Hajji Muhsin Kashmiri. Also converted were Aqa Mahmud Sa`atsaz (1280/ 1863–1912), who was engaged in journalism and had been a darugha (police chief) in the town, and the bazaar trader Aqa Mirza Habib Kharazifurush Isfahani. There were also two physicians who became Baha'is, Aqa Lutf-`Ali Khan Majd al-Atibba', who became a Baha'i in 1303/1885 and had extensive property in Arata Bur Khayl, and Mirza `Ali Akbar Hafiz al-Sihha (d. c.1313/1895), who was in charge of public health and also had property in Arata. The latter's four sons later took the surname of Dustdar and the eldest of them Ihsanullah Khan (1884–c.1944), studied at the Baha'i-run Tarbiyat School and then at the St Louis School in Tehran and later taught French at the schools in Sari (hence the reference to him as “Monsieur” Ihsanullah Khan in the list below).²¹ Majd al-Atibba's interest in reform is demonstrated by his membership of the Mazandaran branch of the Jami`-yi Adamiyyat (established c.1903), an organization that was inspired by Mirza Malkam Khan's writings on reform and that promoted the modernization of Iran.²²

As part of their movement towards community development and social progress, the Baha'i community in Iran began to switch in the opening years of the twentieth century from a more traditional system of community leadership, by elders and former clerics, to elected councils, called local spiritual assemblies (*mahfil-i ruhani*), to administer its affairs in each locality. In Sari, Sardar Jalil was elected the chairman of this assembly and Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas its secretary.²³

The Constitutional Revolution in Sari

When the Constitutional Revolution first began to gather momentum in late 1906, the clerics of Sari led by Shaykh Ghulam `Ali Mujtahid, an opponent of the Constitution, set up a political society (*anjuman*), called the Anjuman-i

²⁰ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, vol. 8, pt. 2: 809–812.

²¹ For details of these individuals see Mazandarani, *Asrar*, 4:97–98; Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, vol. 8, pt. 1: 117–118; vol. 8, pt. 2: 801–808, 818; *Star of the West* 3/1 (21 March 1912) -Persian section, 5; Muhammad `Ali Faizi, *Hayat-i Hadrat-i `Abdu'l-Baha* (Langenhain, 1986), 175–180; `Abdu'l-Husayn Avara (Ayati), *al-Kawakib al-Durriya*, 3 vols. in 2 (Cairo, 1923), 2: 166–167; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 294n.

²² Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 283n131.

²³ Iqani, “Tarikhcha-yi Madaris,” 23; Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, vol. 8, pt. 2: 808, 810.

Sa`adat. Another cleric Shaykh `Ali Bihruzi was its secretary (*mu`avin*) and it was headquartered in a room adjoining the Imamzada Yahya shrine. A large number of the members of the guilds (*asnaf*) of the bazaar enrolled in this *anjuman* and its numbers reached 1,000.²⁴ However bickering and rivalries emerged among the clerics of Sari and they were unable to agree on whom to send as delegates to the national parliament. The city had always traditionally been the seat of government in Mazandaran, but when it was unable to decide on its delegates, the people of Barfurush were quick to set up the provincial council in their town and to elect deputies and send them to the *Majlis* as the deputies for Mazandaran. Thus when the deputies from Sari eventually arrived in Tehran in the summer of 1907, the *Majlis* rejected them.²⁵ It appears that the *Anjuman-i Sa`adat* eventually dissolved as a result of these rivalries and the bickering among the clerics of Sari.²⁶

Not surprisingly there was a hostile reaction in Sari towards these proceedings that had resulted in the humiliation of the town. Those in the city who wanted to press forward with the reforms of the Constitutional Movement and were suspicious of the reactionary tendencies of the *`ulama* formed an *anjuman* called the *Anjuman-i Haqiqat* to oppose the *Anjuman-i Sa`adat*. The above-mentioned Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas was its founder and its main members are listed as: “Mirza `Ali Khan Salar Fatih Kujuri, Monsieur Ihsanullah Khan, Qasim Khan Huzhabr Khaqan `Abd al-Maliki Zaghmarzi, Abu'l-Qasim Khan Sa`id Hudur of `Aliyabad (Shahi [now Qa'imshahr]), Muhammad `Ali Mushir al-Tujjar Tabrizi, Mirza Isma`il Amin [al-Tujjar] Isfahani, Mirza Habibullah Kharazi [-furush] Isfahani, Mahmud Sa`atsaz, I`timad al-Khaqan Kasimi, Lutf-`Ali Majd [al-Atibba'], Habibullah Sang, Habibullah Vaqifi, `Abdullah Fakhim Tihrani a qualified physician, Haji Mirza Mahmud Nili, Mirza Hasan Salimi, Mirza Ahmad Aram and others.”²⁷ This list is interesting in that it demonstrates well the coming together in the Constitutionalist movement of the socio-economic interests of certain groups: the mercantile and trade classes (who were harmed by the corrupt and arbitrary nature of the Qajar regime), the newly emerging modern professionals (teachers, physicians and journalists who were beginning to create a middle class in Iran and who needed a new socio-political order in which to do this), and individuals such as Salar Fatih who had worked their way up from humble beginnings (and were only too pleased to see the end of the *ancien régime*, which had oppressed them and their families). Of greater interest to the subject of this paper however is that of the seventeen persons named in this list as the founder and main

²⁴ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:230; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 351–352; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 163.

²⁵ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:230; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 163–164, 167.

²⁶ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:230; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 163–164. See also Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 145–148 regarding the rivalries among the *`ulama*.

²⁷ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:230; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 352–353; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 163.

members of the *anjuman*, ten are known to have been Baha'is and the status of the other seven is not known.²⁸

Furthermore, we find that it is the first eight of the above list who are mentioned repeatedly in the description of this seven year period (1906–13) by Mahjuri and who may therefore be regarded as the most active among the Constitutionalist in Sari (the remaining nine are scarcely mentioned again). Of this eight, seven were Baha'is.²⁹ This would confirm the argument advanced elsewhere³⁰ that through a coming together of various factors (socio-economic interests and intellectual analyses of the problems of Iran), the same groups of people who were active in pushing forward the Constitutionalist agenda were also becoming Baha'is in large numbers at this time. No other pro-Constitutionalist *anjumans* (societies) are named in Sari in this period.

The Anjuman-i Haqiqat under the leadership of Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas made strenuous efforts to educate the people of Sari about democracy and the nature of the reforms that were sweeping the country. This *anjuman* also established social institutions to push forward its agenda. It was headquartered in the Bagh-i Shah, which it developed as a park area in the town with flower beds, lighting and benches, where both men and women would promenade (in other words, it was modeled on the European park). In this park, there was a restaurant and a European-style café, where pro-constitutionalist newspapers could be read and women were allowed to be customers. It also set up a screen in the park so that films could be shown.³¹ The Baha'is in the *anjuman* put their effort in particular into the opening of schools at which children could be educated according to modern curricula (as distinct from the traditional *maktab* primary school). This started with a boys' school, opened in September 1906 in Bagh-i Shah, by Sardar Jalil (who although not listed as a member of the *anjuman* was a Baha'i and was, as will become clear, part of the pro-reform alliance in the town) called the Salariyya School (at this time Sardar Jalil held the title Salar Mukarram, hence the name of the school). He paid for all of the capital expenses of the school and also gave 50 tumans per month so as to allow 40 poor pupils to be among the 70 pupils (Baha'is and Muslims) admitted.³²

²⁸ The evidence for these nine individuals being Baha'is has been given above; the information for the remaining person, Mirza Hasan Salimi, was given in a telephone interview with Badi'ullah Imani, 23 June 2006, confirmed by e-mail 29 June 2006. The latter being 87 years old and a life-long Baha'i of Sari knew most of these individuals as a child in Sari and was able to confirm the Baha'i identity of the other individuals, except as indicated above. The seven whose status is not known are Abu'l-Qasim Khan Sa'id Hudur, I'timad al-Khaqan Kasimi and the last six of the list, except Mirza Hasan Salimi.

²⁹ Only Sa'id Hudur is not known to have been a Baha'i.

³⁰ See Momen, "The Baha'is of Iran".

³¹ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:231–232; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 355–356; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 164.

³² Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:231–233n, quoting the newspaper *Majd al-Islam*. Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 353; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 158.

These developments, and in particular the setting up of the school, triggered opposition in the town among the clerics, led by Shaykh Ghulam `Ali Mujtahid and some Qajar princes (Sari is said to have contained many more clerics and Qajar princes than other towns³³). They declared all Constitutionalists in Sari to be infidel Babis and Baha'is and the Constitution itself to be a work of kufr (impiety). They opposed the restaurant, cinema and school.³⁴ As a result, the Anjuman-i Haqiqat took on an increasingly anti-clerical tone.³⁴

As Kazembeyki has shown, far from the governor being the supreme authority in the province, “by the time of the Constitutional Revolution (1905), the local clergy had become the local powers in the urban areas of Mazandaran, while military commanders and tribal chiefs were local powers in rural areas.”³⁶ Thus another aspect of this conflict between the anti-constitutionalist clerical class in Sari and pro-Constitutionalist Baha'i landowners and tribal leaders such as Sardar Jalil and Huzhabr al-Dawla may have been rivalry over whether it should be the urban or rural local powers that predominated in that part of Mazandaran. In the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution, some, at least, of the Muslim landowners sided with the Constitutionalists and Baha'is (Habibullah Khan Surtij Hizarjaribi Ashja` al-Mulk assisted the re-establishment of the Baha'i-run school after its destruction at the hands of a mob in 1908, see below, by allowing the use of the buildings of a madrasa of which he was the trustee³⁷), but later, as will be demonstrated, most (including Ashja` al-Mulk) decided that their class interests lay with the anti-Constitutionalists. Ismail Khan Bavand Savadku'i Amir Mu'ayyad, another large landowner, had a long-standing rivalry with Sardar Jalil and opposed the Constitution throughout.³⁸

Thus was begun a struggle that was to continue for seven years (1906–13) between the progressive and reformist elements in the town (led by Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas, Sardar Jalil and the Baha'is) and the anti-Constitutionalist elements (led by Shaykh Ghulam `Ali and the `ulama, some Qajar princes and some landowners and military leaders such as Amir Mu'ayyad). During these seven years, there were to be seven swings of power first to one side and then to the other, beginning with the first swing towards the Constitutionalists and Baha'is in 1906 with the victory of the Constitutionalist movement nationally and the granting of the Constitution.

³³ Salar Fatih quoted in Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:232; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 355. See also comment by Zill al-Sultan that the town contained more than 200 Qajar princes in the 1860s (*Tarikh-i Mas`udi*, cited in Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 233n130) and by Mirza Siraj al-Din that there were many mullas in the town (*Safarnama-yi Tuhaf-i Bukhara*, quoted in Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 144).

³⁴ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:232–233 (quoting Salar Fatih); Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 171.

³⁵ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:230; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 164.

³⁶ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 148.

³⁷ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:232n; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 354.

³⁸ Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 354–355.

Hardly had the victory of the Constitutionalists been gained, however, than a reaction set in. Within less than a year of the opening of the Salariyya School, it closed down. According to a Baha'i source, this was because of the opposition of the anti-Constitutionalist elements in the town and the fact that the founder of the school was a Baha'i.³⁹ Mahjuri states, however, that the closure was because Sardar Jalil declined to continue to support the school financially.⁴⁰ Support for the Baha'i account comes from an independent source that confirms that in the propaganda against the school, Sardar Jalil was accused of being a Baha'i.⁴¹ It may be that such intense pressure was brought to bear on Sardar Jalil that he considered it prudent to allow the school to close. The students of the school then appealed to the Anjuman-i Haqiqat and so Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas set up a new school, called the Haqiqat School in 1907 in another building in the Bagh-i Shah, defraying any budget shortfall of the school personally.⁴²

Another symptom of this struggle between the two sides in Sari was the competition between the Constitutionalist Baha'i Huzhabr al-Dawla and his anti-Constitutionalist uncle `Askar Khan `Izam al-Mulk for control of the `Abd al-Maliki tribe and its military detachment (the `Abd al-Malikis were a tribe originally from southwest Iran who were resettled in the village of Zaghmarz, northeast of Sari, in 1858, in order to protect the borders of Iran from Turkoman raiders and so their detachment of 500 cavalry was an important part of the Mazandaran armed forces).⁴³

The Baha'i Position on Political Involvement

The Baha'i leader `Abdu'l-Baha had supported modernization and reform in Iran since the 1870s when he wrote a book, *Risala-yi Madaniyya*, in which he urged democracy well before most secular Iranian reformers were calling for it. The Baha'is themselves had led the way with many of the social reforms being advocated by the Constitutionalists. In the opening years of the twentieth century, the Baha'is switched from a system of traditional leadership by notables and former clerics to elected councils in each local Baha'i community (the first elected council in Tehran was established in 1315/1897, but most were established in the first decade of the twentieth century). They had instituted modern schools and had advanced the social role of women

³⁹ Iqani, "Tarikhcha-yi Madaris," 23.

⁴⁰ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:232n; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 353–354.

⁴¹ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 171, citing Fortescue, *Military Report* and Sadr al-Ashraf, *Khatirat*.

⁴² Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:232n; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 353–354.

⁴³ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:282; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 180, 187, 188–189; on the `Abd al-Malikis, see Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Il-hā Chādur-nishīn va Tawāyif-i `Ashāyirī-yi Īrān*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1368/1987), 2:1078–1079 and Ludwig Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran, vol. 1: Tehran and Northwestern Iran* (Graz, 1976), 5–6.

in their communities.⁴⁴ Although `Abdu'l-Baha had instructed the Baha'is not to take part in open defiance of the government (and they did not participate in the street demonstrations and the taking of sanctuary in the British Legation in Tehran in the summer of 1906⁴⁵), they did broadly support the Constitutionalist cause.⁴⁶ Thus, as noted above, in Sari, the Baha'is led in setting up the Anjuman-i Haqiqat to support the reforms.

During the whole of 1906, when the nation had been united in its demands for change, `Abdu'l-Baha was supportive of this movement. After the Constitution had been granted and the *Majlis* (Parliament) established however, and with the accession to the throne of Muhammad `Ali Shah and his opposition to the Constitution, the national consensus began to fracture and factionalism set in. In about February 1907, `Abdu'l-Baha was becoming worried about the direction that the political process was taking and issued instructions that the Baha'is should refrain from taking part in the process. His reasons for this are discussed elsewhere.⁴⁷ It is not known when this instruction reached Sari but it certainly posed a problem for the Sari Baha'is. They were so closely identified with the Constitutionalist movement that they could not easily separate themselves from this in the eyes of the general public. Indeed, so closely was the Constitutionalist movement identified with the Baha'i faith that the very fact that they continued to be Baha'is was sufficient grounds for the public to identify them as Constitutionalists. The majority of the Baha'is took the course of ceasing political activity but continuing with elements of the reform process such as support for modern schools. Some of the Baha'is such as Sardar Jalil and Huzhabr al-Dawla, however, continued to play an active social and political role in the events that

⁴⁴ On Baha'i-run schools, see Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i Schools in Iran" in Brookshaw and Fazel, *Baha'is of Iran*, pp. 94–121. On women, see Moojan Momen, "The Role of Women in the Iranian Baha'i Community during the Qajar Period" in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. Robert M. Gleave (London, 2005), 346–369 and Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, "Instructive encouragement: tablets of Baha'u'llah and `Abdu'l-Baha to Baha'i women in Iran and India" in Brookshaw and Fazel, *Baha'is of Iran*, pp. 49–93.

⁴⁵ This is what `Abdu'l-Baha states (*Makatib-i `Abdu'l-Baha*, vol. 4 (Tehran, 1964), 179) and there is no record of any Baha'i participating, even Shaykh al-Ra'is who was the most politically active (Safa'i, *Rahbaran-i Mashruta*, 1: 582).

⁴⁶ There were a few Baha'is who, because they were members of the Qajar family or landowners, opposed the Constitution but there is no evidence that these were more than a handful and none of them were in Sari. The only notable Baha'i supporter of the royalist cause was the Qajar prince Muhammad Husayn Mirza Mu'ayyad al-Saltana (later Mu'ayyad al-Dawla), who became head of the royal cabinet under Muhammad `Ali Shah; Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 832; Sulaymani, *Masabih Hidayat*, 2: 266–71. Another Baha'i Mahdi Khan Vazir Humayun (Qa'im-Maqam) Ghaffari is reported at first to have opposed the Constitution (*Avara, al-Kawakib al-Durriya*, 2: 181) but this seems to have been before he became a Baha'i. Other Baha'is such as the brothers `Azizullah and Valiyullah Varqa were closely associated with Muhammad `Ali Shah's court but they had positioned themselves there on `Abdu'l-Baha's instructions so that they could act as intermediaries for `Abdu'l-Baha's communications with the Shah. This matter however requires further research. The situation in Shiraz (in the south), for example, was complex.

⁴⁷ Moojan Momen, "The Baha'is of Iran."

unfolded. It is not clear whether they were deliberately disobeying `Abdu'l-Baha, whether they had not learned of `Abdu'l-Baha's instructions⁴⁸ or whether they were, by virtue of their prominent position and their command of military forces, merely unable to extricate themselves from the political process.

Similarly, a few of the Baha'is seem to have continued to play a part in the Baha'i community but also to have continued some limited political involvement. Aqa Mahmud Sa'atsaz and Mirza Habibullah Kharazifurush, for example, are described as Baha'is and also as having been members of the Democrat Party after 1909.⁴⁹ At least one Baha'i, however, Ihsanullah Khan (Dustdar), separated himself from the Baha'i community and threw himself actively into the political process. He moved at first to Tehran where he was politically active after 1909 among the more extreme elements of the reform movement (Kumitih-yi Mujazat which had goals and activities that were radically opposed to Baha'i principles) and then he moved to Gilan province where he became a leading figure in the Jangali Revolt, 1918–21.⁵⁰ No Baha'is in Sari are recorded as being opposed to the Constitutional Movement.

The Minor Autocracy in Sari

As opposition to the Constitution grew throughout the country orchestrated by Muhammad `Ali Shah and Shaykh Fad. lullah Nuri in Tehran, the anti-Constitutionalist `ulama of Sari, led by Shaykh Ghulam `Ali Mujtahid, Shaykh Muhammad `Ali Sultan al-Dhakirin and Shaykh Muhammad, formed a new anjuman in May 1908, the Anjuman-i Islamiyya, specifically to oppose the Anjuman-i Haqiqat. They declared the members of their *anjuman* to be the only true Muslims and everyone else to be either “irreligious, Babi, Baha'i or infidel (kafir)”.⁵¹ All of the major clerics in Sari were against the Constitution.

⁴⁸ Avara maintains that the Sari Baha'is had not been informed of `Abdu'l-Baha's prohibition of involvement in politics, but he admits that his information is incomplete (Avara, *al-Kawakib al-Durriya* 2: 166–167). Avara's statement seems to be contradicted by Mazandarani's assertion that Mushir al-Tujjar was not involved in political activity by 1911 (*Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 803).

⁴⁹ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 805–806, 813. Mazandarani in fact contradicts himself calling Aqa Mahmud first an ardent Baha'i (Baha'i-yi mushta'il, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 805–806) and later when he records his becoming a member of the Democratic Party, he calls him merely a sympathizer (*muhibb*) with the Baha'i faith (*Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 813).

⁵⁰ No satisfactory biography of Ihsanullah Khan Dustdar has been written, but see Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2:294n. and Kavus Rustamnizhad, “Khulasih-yi Zindigi-namih-yi Ihsanullah KhanDustdar,” *Gāh Rūzānih-hā-yi Dirūz va Imrūz*, 3 (Spring 1377/1999): 37–44, viewed at http://rouzaneha.org/GahRouzaneh/151-200/153_Ehsanolah.pdf on 25 January 2007. On the Jangali revolt, see Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920–21: Birth of the Trauma* (Pittsburgh, 1995); for Dustdar's involvement, see the index in this book under “Doustdar”; for Dustdar's continuing Baha'i sympathies, see 512n68.

⁵¹ Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 355–356; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 232–233; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 171–172.

Among the minor clerics, however, the above-mentioned Shaykh `Ali Bihruzi was in fact the son of Shaykh Hadi Afrapuli, the first Baha'i of Sari and, during these events, Bihruzi himself became a Baha'i, left the clergy and became a teacher in the Baha'i-run schools in Sari;⁵² Sayyid Mirza `Ali `Imadi Pahna-Kala'i (d.1929) was another cleric who supported the Constitution and later became a member of parliament and an important cleric—he was not however one of the major clerics in Sari at this time.

With Muhammad `Ali Shah's coup in June 1908 and the dispersal of the *Majlis* (the beginning of the period called the Minor Autocracy, *Istibdad-i Saghir*), the pendulum swung toward the anti-Constitutionalist elements throughout Iran. The anti-Constitutionalist and anti-Baha'i cleric, Shaykh Fad.lullah Nuri from his residence in Tehran, intensified his activities, directing the `ulama of Mazandaran to issue *fatwas* against the Constitution and the Baha'is.⁵³ In Sari, those who were opposed to the Baha'is and to the Constitution, such as Shaykh Ghulam `Ali, were encouraged and redoubled their efforts. All those who supported the Constitution were harried and accused of being “Babis,”⁵⁴ while prominent Baha'is who had been strong supporters of the Constitution such as Salar Fatih were forced to leave the city and go into hiding.⁵⁵ Sardar Jalil was even arrested briefly in early 1909 when he went to Tehran.⁵⁶ The anti-Constitutionalist head of the `Abd al-Maliki tribe, `Askar Khan, gained the upper hand against the pro-Constitutionalist Baha'i Huzhabr al-Dawlih.⁵⁷

The major victim of this resurgence of anti-Constitutional forces was the Baha'i-run Haqiqat School. A mob of 1,000 instigated by the Anjuman Islamiyya, descended upon the school, expelled the pupils and destroyed the furniture, forcing the school's closure.⁵⁸ It was probably also at this time that the garden and residence of Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas was looted twice by a mob who considered the “Sayyid-i Babi” a supporter of the Constitution.⁵⁹

The Reestablishment of the Constitution

The third swing of the pendulum in Sari occurred with the success of the Constitutionalist forces in taking Tehran and deposing Muhammad `Ali Shah in July 1909. The balance of power in Sari was restored in favor of the Constitutionals and the Baha'i notables such as Sardar Jalil and Huzhabr al-Dawla. The latter was

⁵² Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 232n.; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 354.

⁵³ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 170, 175; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 239.

⁵⁴ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 174.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 174–175. He then joined Sipahdar Tunukabuni in the march on Tehran to overthrow Muhammad `Ali Shah.

⁵⁶ Haj Aqa Muhammad `Alaqaband Yazdi, “Tarikh-i Mashrutiyyat,” Iranian National Baha'i Archives, photocopy series (manuscript in Afnan Library), vol. 2, 231–232.

⁵⁷ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 176.

⁵⁸ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 232n; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 354;

⁵⁹ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 811.

appointed chief of the `Abd al-Maliki tribe and its military force in place of his anti-Constitutionalist uncle `Izam al-Mulk.⁶⁰ The Haqiqat School was reopened (Sayyid Mirza `Ali `Imadi, see above, assisted in this).⁶¹ By the beginning of 1911, power throughout much of Mazandaran lay in the hands of Baha'is and Baha'i sympathizers, with Sipahdar Tunukabuni in the west of the province and Sardar Jalil and Huzhabr al-Dawla in the east, being the most influential power-brokers in the province.⁶²

It is in the context of this Baha'i domination of the province that we can understand what would otherwise seem an inexplicable episode—the election of Hajji Abu'l-Hasan Mirza Shaykh al-Ra'is (1264/1848–1918) as the member of parliament for Mazandaran to the second *Majlis*, which was established after the fall of Muhammad `Ali Shah. We have seen above that there was rivalry between Barfurush and Sari for political pre-eminence and Barfurush had won initially in having its delegates represent Mazandaran in the first *Majlis*. Thus when the second *Majlis* was established in 1909, the people of Sari were determined not to be left behind and immediately set up the provincial council in their town. Barfurush objected but Tehran eventually decided in favor of Sari and two delegates from Mazandaran were elected to go to the second *Majlis*.⁶³

One of the two delegates elected from Sari to represent Mazandaran at the *Majlis* was Shaykh al-Ra'is, a pro-Constitutionalist Qajar prince who had been born in Tabriz, raised in Mashhad and was a resident of Tehran; in other words a prince who had no substantial connections with Mazandaran. This puzzling nomination only becomes understandable when one realizes that Shaykh al-Ra'is was a Baha'i. It appears he had been raised as a Baha'i by his mother, who was a secret convert. Although he had trained as a Shi'i cleric, later he reverted to his Baha'i upbringing. Shaykh al-Ra'is visited `Abdu'l-Baha twice and had on several occasions been expelled from towns such as Mashhad and Shiraz for being a Baha'i. He was active in the reform movement from the 1890s onwards and had evidently chosen to ignore `Abdu'l-Baha's instructions to abstain from political involvement.⁶⁴ The choice of a person such as Shaykh al-Ra'is with

⁶⁰ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 187.

⁶¹ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 232n; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 354; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 182, 294n185.

⁶² Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 187; on the evidence for Tunukabuni being a covert Baha'i, see Momen, "The Baha'is of Iran."

⁶³ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 182–184.

⁶⁴ For Baha'i-authored biographies of Shaykh al-Ra'is see Sulaymani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 7:419–447, Muhammad Afnan, "Abu'l-Hasan Mirza Shaykh al-Ra'is," *Andalib* 16, no. 63 (Summer 1997): 39–46, 52. See also Juan Cole, "Autobiography and Silence: The Early Career of Shaykh al-Ra'is Qajar", in *Iran im 19. Jahrhundert und die Entstehung der Baha'i Religion*, eds. Cristoph Bürgel and Isabel Schayani (Hildesheim, 1998), 91–126; Juan Cole, "The Provincial Politics of Heresy and Reform in Qajar Iran: Shaykh al-Rais in Shiraz, 1895–1902," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22, nos. 1&2 (2002): 119–129. The only historian to try to give an explanation of why Shaykh al-Ra'is was appointed is Mahjuri (*Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 275n.) who points out that Shaykh al-Ra'is's brother was stationed in Sari as postmaster. But this brother was an anti-Constitutionalist and as an outsider had little influence in the town.

no Mazandaran connections as the delegate for Sari to the provincial council, held in Sari, and subsequently as the provincial council's delegate to the national parliament, can only have been because of his Baha'i connections and the influence of such persons as Sardar Jalil, Huzhabr al-Dawla and Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas.

The Return of the Deposed Shah

The restoration of the Constitution in 1909 was not, however, to be the last swing of the pendulum of power in Sari. In July 1911, the deposed shah, Muhammad `Ali Mirza, arrived in Astarabad (now Gorgan) in the northern province of the same name with covert Russian support in an attempt to regain his throne. Immediately, most of the notables, landowners and tribal leaders of Mazandaran, including `Izam al-Mulk, Ashja` al-Mulk and Amir Mu'ayyad, rallied to Muhammad `Ali Mirza. Shaykh Ghulam `Ali Mujtahid and most of the other clerics of Sari also rallied to the deposed shah's support. Ashja` al-Mulk was appointed by Muhammad `Ali Mirza to be governor of Mazandaran and `Izam al-Mulk commander of the army. Among the four or five notables who refused to support Muhammad `Ali Mirza and had their property looted were the three Baha'i notables, Huzhabr al-Dawla and Sardar Jalil, who fled to Tunukabun along the Caspian coast, and Salar Fatih who was in Tehran.⁶⁵

All of the important Constitutionalist and reformers in Mazandaran similarly fled or went into hiding. The other prominent Baha'is of Sari did not go into hiding however because most of them had left off political activity four years previously at `Abdu'l-Baha's instruction therefore they did not feel that they were in danger⁶⁶—a decision that was to have tragic consequences. The Baha'i-run Haqiqat School in Sari was closed. On 8 August 1911, Muhammad `Ali Mirza entered Sari.

During the late summer of 1911, the former shah's forces were defeated on several occasions and Barfurush and Sari were recaptured by the nationalist government forces under Salar Fatih. Shaykh Ghulam `Ali Mujtahid, the leading anti-Constitutionalist cleric, and Habibullah Mirza, the anti-Constitutionalist brother of Shaykh al-Ra'is, were both executed on 12 September 1911.⁶⁷ But on 30 October, the nationalist forces suffered a severe setback outside Astarabad and Muhammad `Ali Mirza regained control of much of Mazandaran. The government was in crisis, being in a showdown with the Russian government over Morgan Shuster, the American financial controller brought in by Iran to stabilize the government finances, and so was slow to react to this set-back. Order in the cities of Mazandaran deteriorated and control of these towns fell into the hands of

⁶⁵ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 174–175, 188–189; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 277; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 366–367.

⁶⁶ See for example the comment about Mushir al-Tujjar in Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 803.

⁶⁷ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 274, 276n; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 367–371; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 190.

ruffians and gang-leaders who gave nominal support to Muhammad `Ali Mirza but in fact used the opportunity to loot and despoil everyone.⁶⁸

The local clerics who were opposed to the Baha'is urged Muhammad `Ali Mirza to take action against the supporters of the Constitution in Mazandaran. They showed a photograph to the former shah of those whom they asserted were supporters of the Constitution in Sari. This was probably either a group photograph of the Baha'is of Sari or more likely an early photograph of the Anjuman-i Haqiqat, with its majority of Baha'i members. Muhammad `Ali Mirza sent `Ali Qalich, who was a wrestler and a thug from the Caucasus, to Sari to join forces with a gang leader named Muhammad Hajj `Abbas, charged with crushing all support for the Constitution in Sari. Qalich brought with him arms and put a large number of the ruffians and criminal element in Sari into Caucasian uniform (the implication of this being that people would assume them to be under Russian protection). These gang-leaders and ruffians joined forces with the anti-Constitutionalist, anti-Baha'i clerics of Sari.⁶⁹

On the night of 2 January 1912, a mob took to the streets of Sari to finish off all support for the Constitution. All of the main supporters of the Constitution had already fled and so, with the encouragement of the local clerics, it was the Baha'is who were identified as the targets for the mob. Na'ib Husayn Sham`saz showed the mob the way to the house of one Baha'i Aqa Mahmud Sa`atsaz with whom Na'ib Husayn had a longstanding feud. The wall of his house was scaled, his door opened and the mob looted his house. They dragged him to a ruined bath-house where they tortured him and then strangled him with a rope, afterwards throwing his body into a pit. They looted his house and during the course of this, according to one account, they beat his daughter, Sakina, so much that she also died. Then they attacked the house in which another Baha'i Mirza Muhammad Isma`il Amin al-Tujjar Isfahani was lodging. Aqa Sayyid Zaman, who owned the house, came out to protest and they attacked him. Seeing that the latter was in mortal danger, Amin al-Tujjar emerged from the house. He was taken away, tortured and then shot dead.

The next Baha'i to die that night in Sari was Mirza Muhammad `Ali Mushir al-Tujjar Tabrizi who was the son of Mulla Muhammad Kitabfurush who was from Ma`muri near Nishapur and had moved to Tabriz. Mushir al-Tujjar lived with his wife Bahiyya Khanum, the daughter of Mirza `Inayatullah `Aliyabadi, and their three children as well as his wife's mother, sister and nephew. On this night of 2 January 1912, the wall of his house was scaled and the mob ransacked and looted the house until the occupants had nothing left but the night clothes they were standing in. Mushir al-Tujjar himself was beaten severely and dragged off to the garden of Mirza `Askari Sadr al-`Ulama. There he was shot

⁶⁸ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 188–191.

⁶⁹ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 277; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 191–192; Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 813; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 374.

dead and his body thrown into the town moat, where it remained until late the next day since no-one dared to risk the wrath of the mob by retrieving it.

Either on the same day or a few days later, Hajji Muhsin Kashmiri, who was living in the Hajj Shaykh `Ali Caravanserai was dragged out of his room and shot to death. Another Baha'i, Aqa Mirza Habib Kharazi-furush Isfahani, who had fled the town but been captured in Qadi-Kala by Karbala'i Muslim Huzhabr-i Divan and returned, was handed over to `Ali Qalich who used him as target practice for his men, aiming first at the legs and then the abdomen and finally killing him.⁷⁰

Other Baha'is such as Aqa Lutf-`Ali Majd al-Atibba' succeeded in remaining hidden, while Hafiz al-Sihha was at one point surrounded by a mob and would have been killed if he had not been rescued by a local notable.⁷⁰ There were thus five Baha'is killed in Sari at this time (six if Sakina the daughter of Aqa Mahmud be included); at least four of these had been leading members of the Anjuman-i Haqiqat; Kashmiri's membership of Anjuman-i Haqiqat is uncertain but he had certainly been a prominent Constitutionalist.⁷² Two prominent Baha'is were killed in the nearby villages of Mahfuruzak and Bur-khayl by the same mob a few days later.⁷³ The following week on 12 January 1912 in Barfurush, the house of another Baha'i, Mir Muhammad `Ali Mu`in al-Tujjar, one of the most important merchants of Barfurush, who had, like the Baha'is killed in Sari, been one of the leading pro-Constitutionalist activists, was attacked at night and both he and his wife were killed.⁷³

Muhammad `Ali, the deposed shah, was finally defeated shortly after this in March 1912, although it was a further month before the government managed to reassert its authority in Mazandaran. This was the fifth swing of the pendulum, this time towards the Constitutionlists and Baha'is. The Baha'i notables Sardar Jalil and Huzhabr al-Dawlih were able to return to Sari and regain their positions of influence and power. Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas now set up a new school on his own property called the Ta'id School. A Yazd Baha'i, Shaykh Zayn al-`Abidin Abrari who was teaching at the Baha'i-run school in Barfurush, was brought in

⁷⁰ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 277–279; Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/1: 117–118, 8/2: 801–806, 814; *Star of the West* 3/1 (21 March 1912) -Persian section, 5; Faizi, *Hayat-i Hadrat-i `Abdu'l-Baha*, 175–180; Avara, *al-Kawakib al-Durriya*, 2: 166–167; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 375–376; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 191–192. See comments by `Abdu'l-Baha concerning the involvement of the partisans of Muhammad `Ali Shah in these killings in *Makātib-i `Abdul-Bahā*, vol. 5 (Tehran, 1975), 176; and in `Abd al-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari, *Mā'ida-yi Asamānī*, 9 vols. (Tehran, 1964–72) 5: 176, 198–199. Only Mahjuri mentions the killing of Sakina. There is some disagreement in the sources as to whether the murder of Kashmiri took place on this night, a few days later or a month earlier.

⁷¹ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 279; Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 814.

⁷² Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 184.

⁷³ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 806–808; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 278.

⁷⁴ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/2: 808; *Star of the West* 3/1 (21 March 1912) -Persian section, 5; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 192; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 255, 258; the latter source describes him as one of the two leading Constitutionlists of Barfurush (2: 255).

as headmaster and most, but not all, of the teachers, were Baha'is. It had the six primary classes and the pupils were a mixture of Baha'is and Muslims. A girls' school was established in parallel with the boys' school and Nayyira Abrari, the wife of Zayn al-'Abidin, ran that school.⁷⁵

The Campaign of Salar al-Dawla

There was again a further set-back for the government and the Constitutionals when Prince Salar al-Dawla, a brother of the former shah, landed in Astarabad in November 1912 under Russian protection and his forces occupied Sari in May 1913, despite resistance led by Ihsanullah Khan Dustdar. Sardar Jalil was forced to seek Russian protection, which must have been irksome to one who had supported the Constitutionals throughout. The Baha'i Ta'id School was closed. Salar al-Dawla's forces were, however, defeated a month later and he retired to Baku. The government was then able to restore its authority throughout Mazandaran.⁷⁶

This then was the seventh and last swing of the pendulum in this seven-year period with the result that the Constitutionals and Baha'is emerged once more. Sardar Jalil was able to restore his prestige and come out of Russian protection (he confirmed this by openly opposing the Russians over an inheritance dispute shortly afterwards⁷⁷). At about this time, in July 1913, there was a further clash between the two factions of the 'Abd al-Maliki tribe and the reactionary 'Izam al-Mulk was killed in this clash, resulting in the triumph of Huzhabr al-Dawla, although he had to withdraw to Tehran until 1915 because of Russian anger at the death of his uncle whom they had supported.⁷⁸

The Baha'i community returned to some degree of security and prosperity. It is not clear when exactly the Baha'i Ta'id School was re-opened but it was probably immediately after the defeat of Salar al-Dawla and certainly before 1919. Sardar Jalil and Sayyid Husayn Muqaddas again put their efforts into building up the school and Shaykh Zayn al-'Abidin Abrari was again the headmaster.⁷⁹

In the years after 1913, there was continuing opposition to the Baha'is from the 'ulama of Sari but the protection of Sardar Jalil and Huzhabr al-Dawla minimized the impact of this. Thus for example the clerics of Sari arranged one year that, during the 'Ashura commemorations of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, as the mourners went around the streets of the town in procession beating themselves with clubs, they should attack the houses of the Baha'is. The Baha'is came out onto the streets of their quarter to defend themselves and Sardar Jalil

⁷⁵ Iqani, "Tarikhcha-yi Madaris," 23–25, 32.

⁷⁶ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 195–196; Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 280; Islami, *Tarikh-i Daw-hizar-sala*, 374–375.

⁷⁷ Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 83.

⁷⁸ Mahjuri, *Tarikh-i Mazandaran*, 2: 282–283; Kazembeyki, *Society, Politics*, 197.

⁷⁹ For more on the Baha'i-run schools, see Iqani, "Tarikhcha-yi Madaris".

sent his cavalry into the town and the threatened attack was averted.⁸⁰ When `Alaviyya Khanum, the leading Baha'i of Mahfuruzak,⁸¹ died in 1921 and the enemies of the Baha'is were making it difficult to carry out the funeral, Sardar Jalil arrived and used his influence to enable the funeral to take place. When `Abdu'l-Baha died in 1921, Sardar Jalil held three days of mourning ceremonies for him which many of the notables of Mazandaran attended and at which the above-mentioned Sayyid Mirza `Ali `Imadi, who was a cleric and a member of parliament, gave a moving address.⁸²

Conclusion

This paper has focused on a small part of the overall picture of what was happening during the Constitutional Revolution in order to demonstrate the consequences of neglecting the Baha'i dimension. The events in Sari during the period 1906 to 1913 have been recorded and analyzed in the accounts of this period by historians, such as Isma`il Mahjuri and Mohammad Ali Kazembeyki, but unless these accounts are connected up with the Baha'i accounts of that period, the analyses of this period are defective. Thus, for example, when most of the landowners and tribal leaders in Mazandaran sided with the royalist and anti-constitutionalist forces, the fact that Sardar Jalil, Huzhabr al-Dawla and Salar Fatih came out on the side of the Constitutionalists can be far more easily explained by their adherence to the Baha'i faith than any other explanation. Similarly, the election of Hajji Shaykh al-Ra'is as the delegate for Mazandaran would be inexplicable without understanding the Baha'i dimension. By being blind to this Baha'i dimension, the accounts of Sari during this period by Iranian and Western scholars are incomplete.

It should also be noted that this blindness is not one way. Indeed as Peter Smith has commented "While most studies of modern Iranian history and society consistently marginalize the importance of the Babis and Baha'is . . . , Baha'i historians have a tendency to confine themselves to rather inward-looking and contextless biographical studies."⁸³ The Baha'i historians cited in this paper, even Fadil Mazandarani whose work is impressive by the standards of the 1940s when he was writing it, have equally neglected in their accounts the social and political dimension of the Baha'i community of Sari during the Constitutional Revolution.

⁸⁰ Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8/1: 435.

⁸¹ On `Alaviyya Khanum, see Momen, "Role of Women," 356–357.

⁸² Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 989, 8/2: 817–818. On `Imadi, see `Abbas Shayan, *Mazandaran: Sharh-i Hal-i Rijal-i Mu`asir* (Tehran, 1938), 53

⁸³ Review of *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. Robert Gleave, in *Baha'i Studies Review* 13 (2005), 133. A similar double blindness is noted by Hourii Berberian with respect to Armenians and Iranians in "Traversing Boundaries and Selves: Iranian-Armenian Identities during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 2 (2005): 279.

This tendency is not of course confined to accounts of Mazandaran; most Iranian historians have almost completely neglected the Baha'i community of Iran in their analyses of nineteenth and twentieth century Iran, except when there is an opportunity to attack the Baha'is, while some Iranian writers have even used scholarship as a cover for anti-Baha'i polemic.⁸⁴ As a consequence of this neglect in the Persian sources, Western scholars have also tended to ignore the Baha'i community in their works.⁸⁵ This neglect has serious consequences for scholarship,⁸⁶ especially when dealing with the period of the Constitutional Revolution when the Baha'i community was at the forefront of introducing ideas and was setting the pace in social reforms, such as the introduction of participatory democracy, the setting up of modern schools, and the advancement of the social role of women. Baha'i ideas were influencing society, at least that element of society that was interested in reform and progress, and unless one is alert to this, the picture that one obtains is distorted or incomplete.

Another interesting factor that this study has demonstrated is the wide range of degrees of involvement of the Sari Baha'is in the Constitutional Movement (particularly after `Abdu'l-Baha's prohibition on involvement became known) and consequently the existence of a range of differing Baha'i identities.

⁸⁴ Prior to the Islamic Revolution, the main purveyors of anti-Baha'i polemic posing as scholarship were such individuals as Khan-Malik Sasaki (*Dast-i Panhān-i Siyāsāt-i Ingilīs dar Irān*, Tehran, 1952) and Isma'il Ra'in (*Huqūq-bigīrān-i Ingilīs dar Irān*, Tehran, 1967 and *Inshī'āb-i Bahā'īyyat pas az marg-i Shawqī Rabbānī*, Tehran, 1978). After the Revolution, some writers have continued this line, among them `Abdullah Shahbazi (see his "Justār-hā'ī az Tārīkh-i Bahā'ī-garī dar Irān," *Tārīkh-i Mu`āsir Irān* 7, no. 27 (2003): 7–52). The matter of anti-Baha'i propaganda in Iran in the twentieth century is beginning to be investigated; see Rida Afshari, "Naqd-i huqūq-i bashar-i Bahā'īyān dar Jumhūrī-yi Islāmī," *Iranname* 19, nos. 1–2 (2001): 151–164, translated as "The discourse and practice of human rights violations of Iranian Baha'is in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in Brookshaw and Fazel, *The Baha'is of Iran*, pp. 232–77; Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Bahā'ī-sitīzī va Islām-garā'ī dar Irān," *Iran-Nama*, *ibid.*: 79–124, translated as "Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran" in Brookshaw and Fazel, *Baha'is of Iran*, pp. 184–99; H.E. Chehabi, "Anatomy of Prejudice: Reflections on Secular Anti-Baha'ism in Iran" in Brookshaw and Fazel, *Baha'is of Iran*, pp. 200–31.

⁸⁵ A good example of this is Frances Bostock and Geoffrey Jones, *Planning and Power in Iran: Ebtehaj and Economic Development under the Shah* (London, 1989). In the opening chapter, the authors attempt to answer the question: "Where did Ebtehaj get the ideas and outlook which differentiated him so starkly from most of his Iranian contemporaries?" (p. 11). Their conclusion is that one of the most important influences on Abu'l-Hasan Ibtihaj's "views and character" was the moral uprightness and independence of mind of his father Mirza Ibrahim Ibtihaj al-Mulk (p. 11). And yet, nowhere in this opening chapter (pp. 11–24) where this matter is discussed (nor indeed anywhere else in the book) is it mentioned that Ibtihaj al-Mulk was an active and committed Baha'i. Indeed during a persecution of the Baha'is that broke out in Rasht in 1903, he had been temporarily expelled from the town as one of the leading and well-known Baha'is (see dispatch of the British consul Churchill, 19 May 1903, FO 248 792, in Momen, *Babi and Baha'i Religions*, 376). Nor is it mentioned that Abu'l-Hasan Ibtihaj himself had been brought up as a Baha'i and had attended the Baha'i-run Tarbiyat School in Tehran, although he was not a Baha'i in his adult years.

⁸⁶ See discussion of this point in Ismael Velasco, "Academic Irrelevance or Disciplinary Blind-Spot? Middle Eastern Studies and the Baha'i Faith Today," *MESA Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2001), 188–200. Available at <http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/Bulletin/35-2/35-2Velasco.htm> (viewed 26 January 2007).

There has thus far not been any studies of the role of individual Baha'i communities in the Constitutional Revolution and so it is impossible to know whether the events recorded in this paper are typical of the rest of Iran or not. Perhaps the fact that none of the town's major clerics supported the Constitutional Revolution created a special situation which enabled the Baha'is to participate in a way that they were prevented from doing elsewhere. The brief mention made above to the murder of Mu`in al-Tujjar in Barfurush (where there were pro-Constitutionalists among the major clerics) hints, in any case, at the possibility that what happened in Sari was not atypical. Indeed, the accepted view that the clerical class were the leading lights of the Constitutional Movement is itself in need of reassessment.⁸⁷

This paper opens up many questions regarding the nature and range of Baha'i identities, the debate that was going on within the Baha'i community, the public perception of the Baha'i community, the contribution made by Baha'i teachings to the public discussion of reform, and the alliances made between the Baha'is and other pro-Constitutionalist groups. These are all subjects for further research.

⁸⁷ In many small towns, such as Astarabad, Zanjan, Arak (Sultanabad) and Sari, the leading clerics were against the Constitution, and in the larger towns, such as Tehran and Tabriz, there was usually a faction of the cleric class who were opposed. Thus the orthodoxy that the clerical class were the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution, first established by E.G. Browne (in *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*, Cambridge, 1910) and subsequently confirmed by Hamid Algar (in *Religion and State in Iran 1795–1906*, Berkeley, 1969) has hidden the role of other groups and needs to be re-examined on a town-by-town basis. Bayat (*Iran's First Revolution*), Afary (*The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*) and others have already studied other leading groups in the Constitutional Revolution. I am grateful to Peter Smith and Sen McGlinn for their comments on this paper.