NOTES FROM THE FIELD

TEHRAN’S UNMINED ARCHIVE OF KURDISH JEWRY:
A FIELD REPORT

by

Mustafa Dehqan

This brief article offers an overview of the various Kurdo-Jewish records preserved in Tehran in the Iranian Parliament Records archives. The documents reflect the perspectives of Jews and non-Jews alike and were originally reported by Kurdish officials of the Jewish colonies in Iranian Kurdistan,¹ by Jewish senators of the National Parliament of Iran, as well as by Kurdish peasants of Kurdistan. Most of the documents are in Persian, with the exception of perhaps nine in French stemming from Westernized Jewish circles.²

The purpose of the present contribution is not to offer a review of previous scholarship on Kurdish Jews. For this the reader may consult a number of recent valuable contributions.³ Rather, the aim here is simply to describe the outlines of a

1. Most of the Jews in Iranian Kurdistan lived in isolated towns, such as Qesr, Bicar of Gerus, Sine, Kirmaṣan, Seqiz, and tiny groups of Mukri Kurdistan. The fundamental work on the history of all Iranian Jews, including the Kurds, is still the three-volume Persian work by Ḥabīb Levy, ʿṬārīḵ-i Yahūd-i Īrān (Tehran: Librairie Y. Beroukhim et fils, 1955–60; repr., Beverly Hills: Iranian Jewish Cultural Organization of California, 1984). Though indispensable, it is in need of much revision.


recently discovered collection of Persian records related to modern Kurdo-Jewish history that have not yet been consulted by earlier researchers.\textsuperscript{4}

Included in this archive are hundreds of records that differ dramatically from or richly augment previously published material. Each document has its own personality and its own individual character, colored by the particular perspective of the individual who produced the record in a particular time and place. We learn, among other things, about the extent of bribery, extortion by government officials, and insecurity along the roads, all of which threatened the activities of Jewish merchants, as well as the journeys of pilgrims. Other sources, not always stemming from Jewish circles, allude to the tendency of some mercantile Jewish families to make marriage liaisons with Muslims of comparable social class. This provides fascinating and important insights into the existence and operation of family networks within and across the Muslim and Jewish communities. Numerous allusions suggest that the members of prominent families experienced varying degrees of persecution and oppression at the hands of Sunni Kurds. Other documents, on the strength of incidental references, suggest the variety of Jewish connections to the power structure in Tehran. Furthermore, we may notice many details concerning the character and disposition of the various Muslim Kurdish officials with whom Jews interacted. Finally, despite a nearly complete lack of explicit reference to the political frontiers of Iran, the collection’s materials concerning the geographic distribution of Jews, especially their dispersion into neighboring states, affords a better understanding of the Kurdish-speaking communities and the Jews in Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan.

\textbf{THE LIST OF RECORDS}

The list of documents indicates the kinds of sources that are preserved in the collection. I present them with brief descriptions and notes. The collection contains approximately 400 pages, measures $21 \times 14$ inches (29\times 21 centimeters). Sometimes the records can be found in more than one file and in more than one format (manuscript, type, or print). The appendix offers photographic reproductions of some of the materials.\textsuperscript{5} Herewith is the list:

1. April 1911, Doc. 17/14/131. Letter from a Jewish woman who converted to Islam, married a Muslim in 1905, and sought to inherit the properties of her paternal Jewish uncle.

4. A Persian librarian mentioned to me the existence of a “very few French documents” that relate to the more Westernized Jewish Kurds, but I have not had the opportunity to look at them or to record their titles.

5. No part of this collection is reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, photocopying or recording, including any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Iranian Parliament Records. I have attempted to include some documents of the Jewish Kurds that have not been treated by earlier scholars, and I have incorporated some basic bibliographical notes. However, because of the sensitivity of the Kurdish-Jewish theme in Iran, I can claim neither completeness nor consistency in these matters.
2. July 1911, Doc. 17/15/42. Reply of the Persian government, with various brief notes.
3. September 1924, Doc. 114/17/5. Telegram from Mr. Şaliş to the Persian Parliament regarding his situation in Kurdistan.
5. February 1927, Doc. 74/6/40. Letter from the Jewish Association of Seqiz to the Iranian Parliament regarding fire damage.
11. December 1928, Doc. 74/6/52. Reply of the Iranian government, with an annex containing observations and comments on the Jewish Association of Kirmāşan.
12. February 1930, Doc. 13/131/9765. Telegram from Mr. Yaʿqūb Ibrāhīm of Qesar to the Iranian Parliament regarding his complaint against Muslim Kurds.
13. September 1930, Doc. 13/131/9757. Telegram from Mr. Yaʿqūb Ibrāhīm of Qesar to the Iranian Parliament regarding his complaint against Muslim Kurds.
15. April 1931, Doc. 12/31/1434. Telegram from the Jewish Association of Kirmāşan to the Iranian Parliament regarding some complaints about the situation of the Jews.
17. May 1934, Doc. 149/53. Memorandum by the secretary of state for the Jewish Kurds.

6. Note that Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, etc., are sometimes referred to by their Jewish equivalents, Afrāyim/Abrohom, Moḥi, etc.
7. Kirmān is situated in southern Iran.
Mustafa Dehghan

20. October 1935, Doc. 14/8/33. Telegram from Mr. ‘Alī Kūrdī Ībrāhīm Miṣrī to the Iranian Parliament regarding his banishment and the helplessness of his family.
21. November 1935, Doc. 14/8/46. Letter from Mr. Ishāq Zargarān to the Iranian Parliament complaining of banishment from Qesr to Kāšān.8
23. October 1938, Doc. 98/61. Memorandum by the secretary of state for the Jewish groups in Kurdistan.
24. June 1940, Doc. 98/82. Memorandum by the secretary of state for the Jewish merchants of Seqiz.
26. August 1941, Doc. 17/14/2. Letter from the Jewish School of Ilyās (Kurdistan) to the Iranian Parliament.9
27. December 1941, Doc. 17/14/1. Letter from Dr. Luqmān, representative of the Jews, to the Iranian Parliament regarding the situation of the Jews in Kurdistan.10

Mustafa Dehghan
Karadj, Iran

8. Kāšān is a central city of Iran.
9. This Persian record has not been available to me. Moreover, there is, to my knowledge, no “Ilyās” school in Kurdistan. The reference is probably to the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools in Kurdistan. On the establishment of the Alliance schools in Kurdistan and Persia, see especially the material in Faryar Nikbakht, “As with Moses in Egypt: Alliance Israélite Universelle Schools in Iran,” in Sarshar, Esther’s Children, 199–212.
10. The reference is to Ayūb Luqmān Nehūrāy, the active representative of the Jews in the Iranian Parliament or Majlis (1909–43) and one of the founders of Zionism in Iran. Cf. Shirin D. Daghighian, “Political Life: Jewish Iranian Intellectuals in Twentieth Century Iran,” in Sarshar, Esther’s Children, 261–73.
APPENDIX

No. 74/6/52, page 1
احمد ولاه قادریان
بدری، شعبان ۱۳۰۹
سیروان

در این اعضا در پیاده‌بردن بی‌بندادی وزارت‌دارمرد و جلسات مورد عقیده و کار در آن عرض می‌گردد.

لیست‌نویسی از راهنما و آموزش داده شده و در این مورد می‌توان به شرح مربوطه رسید.

مقدمه مربوط به سایر موارد و نحوه راهنمایی و آموزش در اینجا می‌توان به شرح مربوطه رسید.

در اینجا می‌توان به شرح مربوطه رسید.
Telegramme

N° 48

Carragano à Alliance Téhéran

...demandez à Allah de vous protéger et de vous aider...
جان ماهریم ول انسن شریک (بی‌تفریح از ابراز خیالی ما به‌کار رفته است)
و از میان خیالان و حساب ها از دست می‌رود. آیا می‌توانیم بگوییم
که هر کسی بااردی و حسابی در می‌گذرد؟

احزام و جواز باشد نویسنده تعیین‌شده.

نقش‌ها می‌توانند در مورد نام‌ها ابتدا خط و خلاص از جان نار
لازم نباشد و به نوبه خود کاتب می‌گویند. این رنج‌ها
زمان دم از بانک‌ها و سایر کارهای ورودی می‌باشد.

بتو روستای صحرایی در دو اثری در این مورد است همچنین در بر
تهرانی، همچنین در پرستاری و در دادگاه به‌عنوان در کتابش توضیح

تهرانیان خودکاری کردانی کردی جاری

تهرانیان خودکاری کردانی کردی جاری
Tehran’s Unmined Archive Kurdish Jewry

No. 13/131/9757, page 1

[Image of a document with text in Persian]

327