



The Role of the Foroughi Family in Disseminating and Promoting French Culture in Contemporary Iran

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Extended Abstract

The Foroughi family, specifically the children and grandchildren of Mohammad Mehdi Arbab, has had a lasting influence in the scientific and political arenas. However, this article focuses solely on their role in spreading French culture in contemporary Iran. The first member of the family to play such a role was Mirza Mohammad Hossein Foroughi, nicknamed Zakā' al-Mulk. Under the supervision of Etemad al-Saltanah, who had studied in France, he was indirectly influenced by French culture to the point that he began learning French seriously at the age of forty. He considered the French language "the key to the new sciences." In addition to Etemad al-Saltanah, Mirza Malkom Khan, who had studied in France, also influenced Foroughi's personality. With the ascension of Muzaffar al-Din Shah in 1906 (1324), intellectuals like Foroughi realized that the political atmosphere in the country had improved somewhat after the half-century reign of Nasser al-Din Shah, creating an opportunity for the dissemination of new ideas and the expansion of knowledge. Consequently, they began establishing educational and cultural institutions.

In the history of contemporary Iran, various dynasties have played a role in governance. Most of these ruling families were involved primarily in politics, with only a few contributing to knowledge and culture alongside political influence. The Foroughi family is one of the most renowned ruling families in Iran, having played a significant role in the political, scientific, and cultural arenas for many decades, from the Naseri period to the era of Mohammad Reza Shah. The peak of this family's political and cultural influence occurred from the end of the Naseri period to the end of Reza Shah's reign.

Various studies have been published about the Foroughi family in the form of books and articles. Some of these works are more or less based on their personal contributions. Until the unpublished works of this family of writers and politicians are made available, previous research can be reviewed, supplemented, and expanded to gain a more complete understanding of the lives and times of the Foroughis. In recent years, several volumes of Mohammad Ali Foroughi's diaries and private notes have been published through the efforts of Iraj Afshar, shedding new light on his life and that of his family. However, no independent work has been done on the role of the Foroughi family in the



dissemination and expansion of French culture in Iran. This article is primarily based on the recently published memoirs, notes, and letters of Mohammad Ali Foroughi. If these works had not been published, it would not have been possible to write this essay. Yet, many of Foroughi's works and notes remain unpublished. Their publication will provide a foundation for reviewing and completing such studies.

Understanding the cultural history of contemporary Iran depends on studying the lives, works, and roles of influential writers and political families such as the Foroughis. The late Iraj Afshar's role in introducing and publishing the works of Mohammad Ali Foroughi, particularly in highlighting the Foroughi family's influence on Iran's political and cultural development, is unparalleled and enduring. The Foroughi family has maintained a distinguished and lasting position in the fields of culture, knowledge, and politics from the Naseri era to the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. By publishing Tarbiat Newspaper for a decade, Zakā' al-Mulk Foroughi greatly influenced the foundation of the Constitutional Movement. Through this newspaper, the names and works of notable French thinkers, intellectuals, and writers were introduced to Iranians for the first time. Foroughi's children, Mohammad Ali and Abolhassan, also significantly impacted the promotion of new knowledge and culture. Mohammad Ali created lasting works, including *The Journey of Wisdom in Europe*, which were influenced by the ideas of French philosophers. Abolhassan played an effective role in the formation of modern education in Iran by establishing the Central Teachers' College (1918). At this institution, alongside Iranian teachers, French educators also taught. The children of Mohammad Ali Foroughi, especially Mohsen Foroughi, made a substantial contribution to the dissemination and promotion of French culture in Iran. The Foroughi family, deeply attached to Iran, did not dismiss the country's backwardness due to its ignorance of modern science and civilization but sought to overcome it in the pursuit of progress. Finding France to be the cradle of modern science and civilization, they became deeply committed to spreading French culture in Iran through various means. According to Changiz Pahlevan, Mohammad Hossein Foroughi and his two sons, Mohammad Ali and Abolhassan, especially Mohammad Ali, influenced the thinking of many Iranian youth during a pivotal historical period, and any realistic cultural study should be based on their works, rather than on our prejudices. The Foroughis left a lasting impact on society and the intellectual elite of their time, to the extent that Minoui writes: "...our entire period of study and upbringing was intertwined with the Foroughis' writings and the name of the Foroughi family." This essay seeks to explain the issue of Iran's backwardness from the perspective of the Foroughi family and examines and analyzes their contributions to the dissemination of French culture, aiming to achieve progress and modernization in Iran.

Keywords: Foroughi Family, Mohammad Hassan Foroughi, Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Mohsen Foroughi, French Culture.



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