


# LETTER TO EDITOR

## Namazi Behbudistan

### Dear Editor,

Endowment (*Waqf*) has been one of the good traditions of Iranians throughout the history. Building a special place or arable land, the benefactor (*Waqef*) spends its income on charity and public benefit, which is called Endowment. Evidence shows that Iranians paid special attention to this good deed from ancient times. During the Achaemenid period, property and assets were dedicated to fire temples. The Achaemenids were greatly influenced by the Babylonian civilization in social and economic issues, and this tradition was common among the Babylonians.<sup>1</sup> In the later periods, the tradition of *waqf* also continued. In the Sassanid period, *waqf* became more popular due to the close connection of the Sassanid government with the religious system and kings and nobles who cared about *waqf*. Khosrow Parviz was one of the Sassanid kings who dedicated a lot of property to fire temples and built many fire temples.<sup>2</sup> Most importantly, in the religious and legal book of the Zo-

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1- Gershevitch, 2006: 459.

2- Christensen, 1988: 514.

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roastrians during the Sassanid period, *Matikan Hezar Dades-tan*, there is some information about endowment.<sup>3</sup>

After Islam, the tradition of *waqf* continued its material and spiritual life. Little is known about the *waqf* during the Umayyad period, but it seems that this tradition still existed and was common. There is more information available from the Abbasid caliphate. The Abbasids paid special attention to *waqf*, and judges were in charge of *waqf* affairs. We know that the Abbasids were greatly influenced by Iranian culture. Hence, it can be said that their attention to *waqf* originated from Iranian culture.

One of the important issues about endowment is the type of endowment. The main difference between endowment in the ancient period and that in the Islamic period lies in the method of endowment and the type of endowment. The available evidence and documents tell us that most of the endowments in ancient times were related to the place of the fire temple and the religious system, and less attention was paid to the construction of public places for the people or, as the saying goes, public benefits. Kings and nobles devoted most of their property to fire temples. In the Islamic period, special attention was paid to the construction of schools, water reservoirs, baths, mosques, libraries and even clinics for public use as endowments.

One of the first independent Iranian dynasties during the Abbasid caliphate that paid special attention to the tradition of *waqf* was Al-Buwayh dynasty and especially Amir Azd al-Dawla Dailami. Valuable information has been obtained from the political, social and cultural behaviors of Amir Azd al-Dawla Dailami. In the period of Al-Buwayh, endowments were under the supervision of the judiciary and judges. It is probable that the Buwayhids learned this method of administering the endowment from the Abbasids because the Abbasids also entrusted the endowments and its administration to the judiciary<sup>4</sup>. The important and interesting thing about endowments in the Al-Buwayh period was that the emirs of this dynasty paid attention to the construction of the hospital and its endowment for the treatment of patients. In fact, it can be said that they were the first Iranian rulers who performed the treatment as an endowment. According to Ibn Athir al-Buwayh, they used the position of judge of Maristan to run the hospital. The most famous medical endowments during

3- Tafazoli, 1997: 287.

4- Mez, 1983: 261.



the Al-Buwayh period were the construction of two hospitals in Baghdad and Shiraz by Amir Azed al-Dawla Dailami, which became known as Azodi Hospitals.<sup>5, 6</sup> During his trip to Shiraz, Moghaddasi saw Azodi Hospital and mentioned it as a good and great place.<sup>7</sup> The writings of historians, geographers, and tourists, three centuries later, tell us that the Azodi Hospital in Shiraz continued its material and spiritual life until the Mongol invasion although it never flourished in the same order during the Al-Buwayh period. Ibn Balkhi, Zarkub and even Ibn Battuta mentioned this as Dar al-Shifa.<sup>8-10</sup>

The tradition of endowments and endowments of places such as clinics and hospitals continued in later periods, as it still fortunately continues.

Shiraz is known as one of the most important cultural centers in Iran. The tradition of endowment for social and cultural affairs in this city has a very long history so much so that it can be claimed that the number of endowments with social function in Shiraz is distinctive. During the Qajar period, like other periods of Iranian history, Shiraz witnessed the dedication of numerous and various places to serve the people. There is a lot of information about the Qajar period in Shiraz and this has made researchers more familiar with the good tradition of endowment in the cultural city of Shiraz. One of the medical places in Shiraz which became a public endowment is Behbudistan Namazi.

Out of the famous families of Shiraz, the Namazi were very famous in foreign trade. According to Mirza Hassan Fasaee, the most famous Shirazi businessman in India and Mumbai was one of the nobles of Shah Maidan neighborhood from the Namazi merchants. One of the most famous people of this family is Haji Mohammad Hashem Khan Tajer Namazi Shirazi.<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Hashem's brother was Haj Mohammad Ali, whose sons Agha Mohammad Hassan and Agha Mohammad Hussein played a major role in the construction of the most famous mosque in Mumbai known as the Mongol Mosque. This mosque is still one of the endowments of Namazi family in Mumbai.<sup>12</sup>

Haj Mohammad Hassan Namazi (Figure 1), exported Iranian products from Iranian ports, through sea voyages, to Hong Kong, Basra and Mumbai. During the World War I and the occupation of Bushehr by British forces, owing to the strict regulations imposed on the export and import of merchant

- 5- Faqihi, 1994: 149.
- 6- Elgood, 2007: 186.
- 7- Moghaddasi, 1982: 642.
- 8- Ibn Balkhi, 2006: 322.
- 9- Zarkoob Shirazi, 2011: 73.
- 10- Ibn Batutah, 1997: 274.
- 11- Hosseini Fasaee, 1999: 1133.
- 12- Anonymous, 2011: 35.



ships, the people of Shiraz, Bushehr and Tangestan were at risk of famine. History testifies that Haj Mohammad Hassan Namazi, through love and patriotism, repeatedly sent rice, barley, wheat and cereals to the ports of Iran, especially Bushehr, through the ports of China and Burma, leading to some interference in British's policy. The British played many a trick on him and in the end he lost half of his wealth and in 1926 (1305 SH), he returned to Shiraz forever and probably died around 1931 (1310 SH)<sup>13</sup>.

13- Roknzadeh Adamiyat, 1959: 9-404.

14- Roknzadeh Adamiyat, 1959: 409.



*Figure 1. Haj Mohammad Hassan Namazi<sup>14</sup>*

One year before his permanent residency in Shiraz, on 28 Azar, 1925 (1304 SH), he dedicated a place for taking care of patients in the area of the current South Qaani Street and named that place Behbazistan Namazi. In the past and in the mentioned neighborhood, there were not enough and complete facilities to provide health care services to patients, especially women. The benefactor, at the beginning of the endowment letter, stated that the main intention of the endowment was to serve the general public, as well as pregnant women and orphans and again on page 4, it was mentioned that doctors who were skilled in the midwifery should be asked to work here.

In the documents left from the administrative organization of the Pahlavi period, we frequently come across reports under the title of Namazi Hospital. However, with regards to



the year 1955 (1334 SH) marking the establishment and operation of Namazi Hospital, it is understood that the reports were, in fact, about Namazi Behbazistan, and not Namazi Hospital.

In the next issue, the endowment letter of Namazi Behbudistan will be introduced.

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