

Tabriz's historic mansion preserves legacy of Iran's Constitutional Revolution

Iranica Desk

Walking through the old streets and historic quarters of Tabriz can feel like stepping back into the past. Among the city's historic buildings are landmarks that preserve more than stone and brick; they bear witness to pivotal moments in Iran's history. The Constitution House of Tabriz is one such landmark, keeping alive the memory of a defining period in the country's modern history.

Located near Tabriz's historic bazaar, the Constitution House, also known as the Kuzeh Kanani House, is a Qajar-era mansion closely associated with Iran's Constitutional Revolution. During the movement, it became a gathering place for several prominent constitutionalists. Today, the building serves as a museum dedicated to the revolution and Tabriz's role in the struggle for constitutional government, according to IRNA. The house stands in an area that has long been one of the city's principal economic and social centers. Its proximity to the historic bazaar and the Jaame Mosque of Tabriz places it within a wider network of landmarks reflecting the city's commercial, religious and political life. Visitors can explore the house while also experiencing the historic urban fabric surrounding it.

The mansion was built around 1868, during the second half of the Qajar period, and belonged to Haji Mehdi Kuzeh Kanani, a prominent merchant in Tabriz. Its historical significance grew during the Constitutional Revolution, when Kuzeh Kanani made the house available to constitutionalists. It subsequently became a venue for meetings and discussions about the political changes sweeping the country.

In Tabriz, the Constitutional Revolution was more than a political movement; it also transformed social life across the city. The bazaar, civic as-

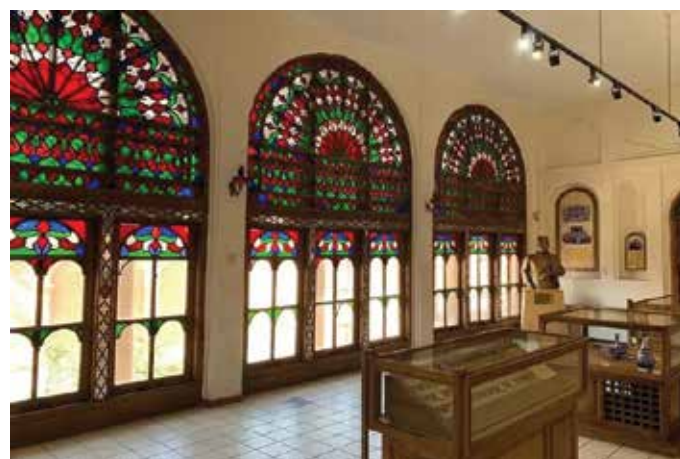


sociations, mosques and the homes of influential merchants all became important spaces for political activity. The Kuzeh Kanani House was part of this environment, hosting gatherings where supporters of the movement exchanged views, consulted one another and discussed developments.

Following the bombardment of Iran's parliament by order of Mohammad Ali Shah Qajar in 1908, the country entered a new phase of political turmoil. Tabriz emerged as a major center of resistance by constitutionalists. During this period, Kuzeh Kanani's house was used for meetings and other activities associated with the movement.

The building's historical importance led to its registration on Iran's National Heritage List in 1975. It was subsequently protected and restored, and in 1996, it was converted into the Constitution Museum. Documents, photographs and other historical objects relating to the Constitutional Revolution are now displayed there. A private residence that once hosted political activists has thus become a public space where later generations can learn about a pivotal chapter in Iran's history.

The Constitution House is also notable for its architecture. Built on a plot of approximately 1,300 square meters, the



two-story mansion is attributed to Vali, an architect from Tabriz. Its use of brick, stone and mud-brick reflects the construction methods associated with residential buildings of the Qajar period. The arrangement of its rooms and their relationship with the courtyard are characteristic features of traditional urban houses in Tabriz.

One of the first features to catch visitors' attention is the building's Orsi windows, fitted with colored glass. These traditional wooden windows were valued both for their decorative appeal and for their role in filtering daylight and connecting interior spaces with the outdoors. As sunlight passes through the colored panes, it casts changing patterns of light across the interior, highlighting the interplay



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tution House retains a courtyard with garden plots and a pool, offering visitors a glimpse into the domestic life of urban Tabriz during the Qajar period. The courtyard also establishes a direct connection between the interior rooms and the outdoors. Rooms and verandas are arranged around this central space, illustrating how traditional house design combined practical needs with architectural considerations.

The Constitution House is closely associated with figures who played important roles in the Constitutional Revolution in Tabriz. Among the best-known are Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan, whose names became synonymous with the constitutionalists' resistance in the city. Other figures mentioned in historical accounts associated with the house include Saqeh al-Eslam Tabrizi and Haji Mirza Aqa Farshi.

Yet the significance of the house extends beyond its association with prominent individuals. It recalls a period when sections of Iranian society debated constitutional government, parliamentary representation, the rule of law and limits on royal authority. For visitors unfamiliar with the details of the revolution, the museum provides an accessible introduction to these debates and the people who shaped them.

The building's political history did not end with the Constitutional Revolution. During the political upheavals in Iranian Azarbaijan in 1945 and 1946, the house reportedly served once again as a venue for political meetings. Some historical accounts describe it as a gathering place for leaders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party during that period.

These successive chapters illustrate how the mansion became associated with different phases of Tabriz's political and social history. Its significance, therefore, lies not only in its architectural features but also in the events and gatherings connected with its past.

Today, the Constitution Museum displays documents, photographs and memorabilia related to the Constitutional Revolution. The exhibits introduce visitors to prominent figures of the period and provide historical material that helps place the movement in context. By presenting these objects within the historic building itself, the museum connects documentary evidence with the setting in which political discussions once took place.

Sculptures of Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan, along with historical cannons displayed in the grounds, further evoke the struggles associated with the revolution. Together with the archival material and architectural features, these exhibits offer visitors a tangible link to the events that helped shape Iran's modern political history.

For Tabriz, the Constitution House is both an architectural landmark and a repository of collective memory. Its rooms, windows and courtyard reflect the domestic architecture of the Qajar era, while its historical associations recall a period of political mobilization and debate. Preserving the mansion allows these different dimensions of the city's heritage to remain accessible to future generations.

Reading Room

Book documents ten centuries of medical history in Semnan

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Medicine is more than the treatment of illness; it is also an integral part of a society's history. In Semnan, generations of physicians have contributed to public health, leaving a legacy that The History of Medicine and Physicians in Semnan seeks to preserve.

The book chronicles ten centuries of medical practice in the Iranian city, documenting the lives of more than 100 physicians and tracing the development of healthcare facilities across different historical periods, according to IRNA.

From early forms of treatment carried out with limited resources to the establishment of hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and specialized medical services, healthcare has long been intertwined with everyday life.

Physicians, too, have played a role beyond treating individual patients, becoming part of the social and cultural history of the communities they served. Much of Semnan's medical history has remained scattered across written records, personal recollections and surviving documents. Without systematic efforts to collect and preserve these accounts, significant parts of this heritage risk being lost.

The book brings together the biographies of more than 100 physicians who lived and worked from the 10th century to the 1980s. It also examines the history of eight hospitals, from the Qajar era to the present day, as well as 16 clinics and eight pharmacies.

The research extended beyond written sources, drawing on the memories and firsthand ac-

counts of people familiar with the city's medical past.

Mohammad (Amir) Azizoddin, one of the book's authors, said the scarcity of written records, the deaths of several physicians and difficulties contacting doctors who had emigrated, as well as their families, posed major challenges for the research. These obstacles, he said, underscored the importance of oral history and interviews with people familiar with the subject.

According to Azizoddin, the researchers conducted approximately 150 hours of oral-history interviews with 70 people. They also consulted more than 150 pages of historical documents, over 100 photographs and 80 books and articles.

The book additionally records the names of more than 1,050 healthcare professionals, in-

cluding general practitioners, specialists and subspecialists, dentists, pharmacists, laboratory professionals, nurses and midwives.

Abdoljavad Rahimpour, a veteran figure in Iran's dentistry sector, described the publication as a valuable contribution to preserving Semnan's medical and scientific heritage for future generations.

He emphasized that collecting historical documents, written sources and oral accounts is essential to reconstructing the history of medicine. Preserving such works, he added, also helps safeguard a region's cultural identity while highlighting the contributions of physicians and other healthcare professionals across generations.

Saeed Dehghanlou, director-general of Semnan Prov-

ince's public libraries, also highlighted the role of libraries in promoting a culture of reading and connecting research publications with the wider public. He praised the authors for documenting an important part of the province's scientific and social history and stressed the need to support writers and valuable cultural works. Published in Semnan by Abrokh Publications, The History of Medicine and Physicians in Semnan was written by Mohammad (Amir) Azizoddin and Hamidreza Nazari (Hekmat), with an introduction by Shahrokh Mousavi and editing by Majid Kasaei.

The 359-page illustrated volume includes photographs and tables and is the fifth instalment in the Contemporary History of Semnan Province series.

