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## Kashan Chamber of Commerce and its Role in the Economic 1343 SH): - and Urban Transformations of the Region (1334 A Study Based on Documents

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### Extended Abstract

#### Abstract

This study examines the role and function of Kashan Chamber of Commerce in the economic and social transformations of this city during years from 1334 to 1343 SH (1955 - 1964). The main objective is to elucidate the position of this institution in regulating commercial and industrial activities, pursuing the demands of economic actors, and participating in resolving the economic and urban issues of Kashan within the context of economic developments in Iran during the 1330s and early 1340s (1950s and early 1960s)—a period of almost stabilization and growth in economy. The key hypothesis is that during this period, Chamber, in addition to organizing commercial affairs, acted as an intermediary between economic actors and governmental institutions and was effective in pursuing economic issues and the development of urban infrastructure. The article is organized into three sections: first, it examines the economic and social contexts of Iran and the economic position of Kashan; second, the history of the formation of the Council of Merchants' Representatives (Majles-e Vokalaye Tojjar) and the Kashan Chamber of Commerce is studied; and third, an analysis of the activities of this institution based on existing documents is conducted.

#### Materials and Methods

This study was conducted through a historical approach and based on the analysis of documentary evidence. The principal sources used in this research consisted of the archival records of Kashan Chamber of Commerce, including administrative correspondence, minutes of meetings, reports, and letters related to the economic and commercial activities of the city during 1334 - 1343 SH. In addition to these documents, library sources, historical studies, and scholarly works concerning the economic and social history of Iran in the Pahlavi II era were also consulted. The method of investigation is descriptive-analytical, and the activities of the Chamber of Commerce were examined within the broader context of the economic and administrative developments of the country. Furthermore, through comparison between documentary data and historical sources, the position of Kashan Chamber of Commerce in pursuing economic demands, organizing commercial affairs, and interacting with governmental institutions was evaluated.

### **Results**

The data extracted from the documents indicated that the activities of Kashan Chamber of Commerce were concentrated in four principal areas. First, in the field of infrastructure, the documents pointed to continuous efforts aimed to establish branches of Melli Bank and Bazargani Bank, to introduce automatic telephone services, and to improve the road connections joining Kashan with Tehran and Isfahan. Second, in the sphere of local industries, the records revealed practical measures undertaken by Chamber to supervise the quality of wool and dyes used in the carpet-weaving industry and to support textile factories against the influx of foreign goods. Third, in the area of urban and social services, Chamber's correspondence reflected its participation in addressing the problems related to water scarcity, in improving sanitary conditions, and in pursuing the establishment of industrial vocational schools. Fourth, in the domain of administrative relations, the documents demonstrated the role of Chamber in moderating the tax burdens imposed on merchants and in mediating commercial disputes. Taken together, these findings confirmed that during this period Chamber functioned as a focal point for the articulation of regional economic demands, while the surviving correspondence with the Ministry of Commerce and the municipality illustrated the extent of involvement this institution had in the executive affairs of the city.

### **Conclusion**

The study of the documents of Kashan Chamber of Commerce during 1334 to 1343 SH has shown that after its reopening this institution was able—within the framework of the economic and administrative structures of the Pahlavi II period—to become one of the most important channels for presenting economic demands and pursuing the commercial and urban issues of the region. The analysis of administrative correspondence, meeting minutes, and existing reports have shown that during this period Kashan Chamber of Commerce played a role beyond that of a merely professional institution and in practice acted as an intermediary link between local economic actors and governmental agencies. The existing documents have indicated that a significant part of the Chamber's activities was devoted to pursuing the infrastructural and developmental issues of the city—including efforts to establish bank branches, to launch automatic telephone services, to improve the region's transportation routes, to address agricultural problems, and to support the establishment of educational and technical centers. These measures have demonstrated that Kashan Chamber of Commerce was aware of the connection between economic development and the availability of communication, financial, and educational infrastructures. Thus, within its capabilities, it sought to provide the necessary conditions for improving the city's economic situation. In the field of production and trade, the Chamber's documents have also presented a relatively precise picture of the concerns of Kashan's economic actors during this period. Particular attention to the carpet weaving and textile industries, as among the principal pillars of the regional economy, have been clearly evident in the Chamber's correspondence and decisions. Efforts to improve the quality of raw materials, to prevent the use of inferior dyes, to pursue the establishment of guild associations related to carpet weaving, and to warn against the threats arising from the introduction of machine-made products all indicate the Chamber's attempts to preserve the position

of Kashan's traditional products in domestic and foreign markets. Alongside these activities, addressing the tax problems of merchants and shopkeepers was another area of concern for this institution; thus, the Chamber sought to defend the economic interests of its members under economic stagnation during the 1330s. On the other hand, the documents have illustrated that in practice Kashan Chamber of Commerce adopted a strategy based on interaction and cooperation with governmental and administrative institutions. By avoiding direct involvement in political conflicts, the institution attempted to pursue the economic and urban demands of the region through correspondence, negotiation, and achievement of the support of local and national authorities—an approach that can be understood within the framework of Iran's political and administrative conditions during the 1330s and early 1340s. Overall, the documents of Kashan Chamber of Commerce show that during the first decade of its activity, after reopening, this institution played a considerable role in reflecting the economic and social issues of the city and pursuing them at the administrative level. In addition to clarifying the record of the activities of a local economic institution, these documents have provided a picture of the structure of Kashan's urban economy, the concerns of the economic actors, and the manner of their interaction with the government during the Pahlavi II era. Therefore, this study and the analysis of these documents can contribute to a more precise understanding of the economic history of cities and the role of local institutions in the processes of economic development in contemporary Iran.

**Keywords:** Kashan chamber of commerce, Iranian economy during the second Pahlavi era, economic institutions, industry and trade in Kashan, economic history of Iran