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**Analysis of the Reasons for the Failure of the Gilan villagers' Movement in the Political and Social Developments of the Constitutional Era**

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**ABSTRACT**

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The peasant movement in Gilan during the Constitutional Era was rooted in the region's geographical structure, land tenure system, and social awakening in the years leading up to the transformations of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, especially in Gilan. Gilan's prosperous agriculture and economy drew significant attention from governments during the Safavid and Qajar dynasties. However, instead of improving the livelihood of rural communities, the dominance of landlords over peasants and the government's heavy taxation contributed to their increasing poverty and deprivation. Moreover, Russia's political influence in Gilan and the activities of merchants under Russian protection attracted Russian capitalists to the region. Consequently, Gilan became the only province in Iran that repeatedly witnessed significant peasant movements against landlords and the government. The establishment of parliamentary governance and the declaration of the constitutional system failed to liberate peasants from the oppressive feudal system. Nonetheless, the social awakening of that era led to increased awareness of their rights among peasants. After losing hope in the effectiveness of their protests, peasants initiated numerous movements aimed at improving conditions and abolishing the feudal system along with its related customs. This article seeks to answer the following questions: What were the factors leading to the failure of Gilan's peasant movements during the Constitutional Era? And how did the National Consultative Assembly respond to the demands of Gilan's peasants? The findings of the research indicate that the primary cause of repeated uprisings in Gilan was the harsh living conditions imposed on peasants by landlords.

**Keywords:** Economy, Gilan, Constitutionalism, Villagers.

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## **Introduction**

The political structure of Gilan, like other regions in Iran, was based on a feudal landlord-peasant system, wherein rulers exploited every possible means to exert economic pressure on the people. In addition to local and regional rulers, the Qajar dynasty also paid special attention to the province, viewing it as a valuable source of both economic and human resources. Consequently, Gilan's governors were obliged to send substantial tax revenues to the Qajar court. The burden of these heavy taxes ultimately fell upon the shoulders of Gilan's peasants.

Governors appointed to Gilan by the central government were typically affiliated with Qajar royalty, nobility, or high-ranking officials, and were primarily focused on preserving the interests of the Qajar monarchy. Upon arriving in the province, these appointed rulers often collaborated with local elites and landlords in the exploitation and plunder of the peasantry, sparing no effort in doing so. This situation led to widespread public dissatisfaction across Gilan.

Another major factor behind Gilan's difficulties during the Qajar period was the absolute dominance of Russian influence in the province. Following Iran's defeat in its northern territories, the Russians began to operate independently in Gilan, subjecting the local population to additional hardships. All of these elements played a significant role in the participation of Gilan's peasants in the Constitutional Revolution and in their uprisings against landlords and landowners during that era.

Despite the peasants' active participation in the revolution, they failed to achieve tangible benefits, as the establishment of the National Consultative Assembly and the advent of constitutional government did not lead to any substantial reforms in the land ownership system. This was largely due to the fact that the majority of post-revolutionary governments and parliamentary representatives were themselves drawn from landlord backgrounds and therefore resisted any fundamental changes. In some instances, members of parliament actively defended landowners' interests against the peasants, and in certain cases, even called for the suppression of peasant uprisings in Gilan.

Thus, Gilan's rural population took part in every political and social movement in the hope of transforming their economic and social conditions. Their prominent role in the Jangal Movement was a clear indication of their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

## **Materials & Method**

This study adopts a historical method and follows a descriptive-analytical approach. Historical data are categorized based on archival reports and

documents, and analyzed in accordance with the research indicators and variables.

### **Discussion**

The political structure of Gilan, like other geographical regions of Iran, was based on a landlord-peasant system. The rulers used every tool to exert economic pressure on the people. In addition to local and native rulers, the Qajar dynasty also had a special view towards the land of Gilan and paid particular attention to its economic and human resources. Therefore, the rulers of Gilan had to send substantial taxes to the Qajar court. The burden of paying these heavy taxes fell on the people and peasants of Gilan. Consequently, the governors sent to Gilan by the central government were typically affiliated with the Qajar kings, princes, or courtiers, who were primarily concerned with preserving the interests of the Qajar monarch. After establishing themselves in the region, this group, in collaboration with local rulers and khans, spared no effort in plundering and exploiting the peasants. This situation led to the spread of public discontent in Gilan.

Another factor contributing to Gilan's problems during the Qajar era was the unquestionable dominance of Russia in the region. After Iran's defeat, the Russians acted independently in the northern provinces and imposed additional pressure on the people. The combination of these factors played a major role in the participation of Gilani peasants in the Constitutional Revolution movement and their uprising against landlords and landowners during the Constitutional era.

Despite the peasants' participation in the revolution, the villagers did not gain any benefits because after the establishment of the National Consultative Assembly and the rise of constitutional governance, the governments and parliamentary representatives elected after the Constitution, due to their landlord origins, prevented fundamental changes in the landownership system. In some cases, members of parliament defended the rights of landowners against the peasants, and even parliament, in certain instances, ordered the suppression of the Gilani peasants' uprisings. As a result, the Gilani peasants, by participating in every political and social movement, sought to change their social and economic conditions and improve their livelihoods, as evidenced by their prominent presence in the Jungle Movement, which was a sign of their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

### **Results and Conclusion**

The findings of this research indicate that peasant struggles in Gilan during the Qajar era—particularly during the Constitutional period—were far more widespread, and in some cases more violent, than in other Iranian provinces. At the outset of the Constitutional Revolution, peasants believed that

constitutionalism sought to abolish unjust land ownership laws and put an end to their exploitation. Consequently, they actively supported the movement. However, once the revolutionary fervor had subsided, they came to realize that the parliament and government were primarily concerned with stabilizing the situation in favor of landlords and aristocrats.

In pursuit of their goals, Gilan's peasants launched widespread revolts against the feudal landlord system and parliamentary laws. During these uprisings, they received support from radical revolutionary figures and local associations—particularly the Abbasi Society—as well as radical newspapers such as Kheyr al-Kalam and Nasim-e-Shomal. In many instances, the peasants physically attacked landlords, expelled them from villages, and forced some landowners to flee their estates to save their lives.

As the revolts expanded and the demands of the peasantry for systemic change grew louder, the parliament, while simultaneously ordering the suppression of the uprisings, took limited steps to address their concerns. However, the dominance of conservative forces within both the parliament and the government led to the effective endorsement of the feudal system. This resulted in the violent suppression of the uprisings and the denial of the peasants' right to protest against their landlords.

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