



ĀZĀDĪSTĀN

ĀZĀDĪSTĀN (ĀZĀDĪESTĀN), the title of a Persian educational magazine which came out at Tabrīz in Jawzā, 1299/June-August, 1920.

The magazine was in fact the mouthpiece of Shaikh Moḥammad Kīābānī's rebel government in the educational-cultural field. Kīābānī seized power in Tabrīz in April 1920 and controlled the provincial government of Azarbaijan until his defeat and death in September of that year. The first issue of the magazine was brought out on 15 Jawzā 1299/5 June 1920, one month after the historic province had been renamed "Āzādīstān" (Land of freedom) by Kīābānī and his followers as a gesture of protest against the giving of the name "Azarbaijan" to the part of Caucasia centered on Bākū.

The magazine was printed under the supervision of the poet and writer Moḥammad Taqī Raf'at (b. at Tabrīz 1890-91, d. at Qezel Dīzaj September 1920). After completing his studies at Istanbul, Raf'at had served as a teacher at Trebizond and then at Tabrīz. From the start of the revolt he worked closely with Kīābānī. Through articles and poems in *Tajaddod* (Regeneration), the newspaper which Kīābānī published at Tabrīz from April 1917 to August 1920, Raf'at and other like-minded writers had attempted to initiate a reform of Persian literature and had engaged in controversy with the Tehran periodical *Dāneškada*. For *Āzādīstān*, Raf'at wrote under both his own name and a pseudonym, "Femina." Shortly after the sanguinary crushing of the revolt and killing of its leader Kīābānī, he committed suicide at a village near Tabrīz when little more than thirty years old.



Āzādīstān has a special importance in the history of modern Persian literature. It not only sought to give its readers new educational and social insights, but also contributed to the modernization of Persian prose and, above all, to the transformation of the language, content, and form of Persian poetry. The poems of Taqī Raʿfat and the poetess Šams Kasmāʿī which appeared in *Āzādīstān* are the earliest examples of modernist Persian verse.

Beneath the title on the cover were printed the words “a magazine devoted to the regeneration of literature.” In the first issue of *Āzādīstān*, Taqī Raʿfat emphasized this point with calls for “sincerity and boldness of innovation” and for a “literary revolution.” The nature of the desirable innovations became a matter of dispute between *Āzādīstān* and the periodical *Kāva* (published at Berlin). For various reasons, particularly semantic imprecision and overuse of words borrowed from modern Ottoman Turkish, as well as resistance by conservative elements, the literary reform efforts of *Tajaddod* and *Āzādīstān* made no impact at the time. Nevertheless credit is due to these two publications for their pioneering attempt to find new forms and styles of expression.

Āzādīstān was meant to come out once a fortnight, but in the circumstances this was impossible. The first issue bears the date 15 Jawzā 1299/15 June 1920. Some authorities, following Šadr-Hāšemī, place its start on 15 Saraṯān, which is a month too late. Altogether three issues of *Āzādīstān* came out in the course of three months. The fourth issue, dated 21 Sonbola 1299/12 September 1920, was in the press at the time of the suppression of Kīābānī’s revolt, but some passages from it are quoted in Y. Āryanpūr’s *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*.

Āzādīstān consisted of fourteen two-column pages measuring 30.5 x 23 cm. Contrary to M. M. Tarbiat’s statement (*Dānešmandān*, p. 405), it was not lithographed but printed. No illustrations and no advertisements were carried. The price per copy was 30 *šāhīs*. Annual subscription rates of 18 *qerāns* in Tabrīz, 20 in other Iranian cities, and 25 abroad were announced.

Incomplete sets of *Āzādīstān* are preserved in the National Library of Tabrīz and the Central Library of Tehran University.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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M. Şadr-Hāšemī, *Tārīk-ejarā'ed wa majallāt-e Īrān*, Isfahan, 1327 Š./1948-1332 Š./1953, no. 111.

M. M. Tarbīat, *Dāneşmandān-e Āḍarbāijān*, Tehran, 1314 Š./1935, p. 405.

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