



EGYPT XI. PERSIAN JOURNALISM IN EGYPT

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A number of Persian journals were published in Egypt. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the economic and commercial importance of Egypt increased and the country attracted a number of Iranian merchants and craftsmen who settled with their families in Cairo or Alexandria. They were mostly educated and had spent some time in Turkey and Caucasus and had traveled to Egypt at the time when the aspirations for the rule of law and civil liberties had become widespread among the Iranian elite and intellectuals. Moreover, Egypt had one of the most open political atmospheres milieu in the Middle East (“Taqriḏ”; Şadr Hāşemi, IV, p. 143), and, besides, there was no bone of contention between the two countries. The fact that there was no freedom of speech or of the press in Iran led some Iranians in Egypt in the closing years of the 19th and the opening years of the 20th century to embark on publishing journals that would exercise social and political influence well beyond their community in Egypt and would be instrumental in the general enlightenment of the public opinion inside Iran. Once Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda, a leading liberal political leader, went to Egypt with the intention of establishing a Persian newspaper there, but he left after staying for six months



due to illness (Taqizāda, p. 44).

Journals. The publication of non-state newspapers in Egypt started in 1857. The Iranian community there, following the Lebanese, the Syrian, the Turkish and the Jewish communities, took advantage of this opportunity and in the years between 1892 and 1959, published eight newspapers and journals. Unlike the Persian journals published in countries neighboring Persia, they never faced any judicial or political problems from the authorities.

The first Persian journal in Egypt was *Hekmat*, which was published in Cairo for nineteen years from 28 Šafar 1310 to 1 Jomādā II 1329 (20 September 1892-30 May 1911). It was also the first Persian newspaper to be published in an Arab country. *Hekmat* was founded and managed by Za'im-al-Dawla Ra'is-al-Hokamā' Mirzā Moḥammad-Mahdi Tabrizi (d. 1914), who was a physician by profession, and was supported by the Iranian consul in Cairo (see the report of Mirzā Reżā Ḥakim, Banān-al-Molk, 29 Šafar 1310/21 September 1892, in *Daftar-e moṭāla'āt*, p. 148). It advocated the use of modern scientific knowledge in Persia and, despite being published in an Arab country, tried not to use Arabic terms. Moḥammad-Mahdi Tabrizi was popular among the Iranian community in Egypt; he even supported the emergence of rival journals (*Čhehranemā* 2/3, 10 Ramażān 1323/13 December 1905; *Hekmat*, no. 852, 10 Jomādā I, 1323/13 August, 1905; *Kamāl*, no.1, 10 Rabi' II 1323/13 July 1905).

The second Persian journal in Egypt was the weekly paper *Torayyā*, which was published in Cairo from 14 Jomādā II 1316 until 10 Rajab 1316 (31 October 1898-3 November 1900) under the joint editorship of 'Ali- Moḥammad Khan Šaybāni Kāšāni and Faraj-Allāh Ḥosayni Kāšāni. Before the end of the second year, a dispute developed between the two and Šaybāni left the journal to publish the weekly *Parvareš*. The first issue came out on 10 Šafar 1318/8 June 1900, but the death of its editor in November 1902 (Ša'bān 1320) led to its closure. The latest issue mentioned by Moḥammad Šadr Hāšemi was dated 4 Du'l-ḥejja 1318/25 Mach 1901 (Šadr Hāšemi, II, nos. 337, 413, pp. 57-64, 151-55; *Dawlatābādi*, I, pp. 200-1; Browne, pp. 66-67).

Three years after the closure of *Parvareš*, another paper *Čhehranemā* started its publication once every ten days at Alexandria on 15 Moḥarram 1322/2 April 1904 (Browne, pp. 72-73). Twenty-six issues had been published at Alexandria when, due to the burning down of its printing house and the shortage of up-to-date facilities in Alexandria, the paper's offices were transferred to Cairo (Šadr



Hāšemi, II, pp. 194-95). In all, *Čehranemā* was published for fifty-six years (including the years it came out at Alexandria). The paper was founded by the businessman Mirzā ‘Abd-al-Moḥammad Mo’addeb-al-Solṭān Irāni (b. Isfahan 1250 S./1871-2; d. Cairo, 5 Abān 1304 Š./27 October 1925), who also served as its chief editor.

The fourth Persian paper in Egypt was *Kamāl*, a journal brought out every ten days by Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Kamāl, a schoolmaster from Tabriz, who had previously published a paper of the same title in Tabriz (1899-1902). He left Tabriz for Egypt after the printing offices of *Kamāl* and the school he was running were ransacked by the rioting mob (Kasravi, I, p. 42). In Cairo, *Kamāl* was published between Jomādā I and Ramažān 1323 (July-October 1905). During this period, three Persian papers were published in Cairo.

Once *Ḥekmat* ceased publication, *Čehranemā* became the sole Persian paper in Egypt and remained so until January 1924, when a Persian literary journal, the monthly *Rastāqiz*, started its publication. *Rastāqiz* was founded by ‘Abd-Allāh Rāzi Hamadāni, a scholar and lawyer by profession, but, in June 1926, after having published only eighteen issues, he had to change the name of the paper to *Sudmand*. Once again in January 1929, the paper’s name was changed, this time to, *‘Ašr-e Pahlavi* with some modifications in the contents of its articles, but it published only six issues until the September of that year (Šadr Hāšemi, II, pp. 319-20, III, pp. 47-48). From then on, *Čehranemā* once again became the only Persian journal in Egypt, and from March 1938, it became a magazine until it finally ceased publication in February 1959. This date marks the end of independent Persian journalism in Egypt. From 1935, Manučehr Mo’addebzāda, the son of the founder of the paper, who was also a professor at the American University in Cairo, published the paper.

The Persian papers published in Egypt never experienced any serious troubles with the Iranian authorities, except when political considerations caused their distribution in Iran to be briefly banned. *Parvareš* was banned for a brief period in 1900, because it had made a comparison between the grand vizier ‘Ali-Ašgar Khan Amin-al-Solṭān (*Atābak-e A’zam*) and his political nemesis *Mirzā ‘Ali Khan Amin-al-Dawla*. The confiscation of *Čehranemā* issues at the border in 1904 was a part of the general policy of the then grand vizier, ‘*Abd-al-Majid Mirzā ‘Ayn-al-Dawla*, concerning the press, whether domestic or foreign-based. The ban was soon removed, however, when Mirzā Ḥasan Rošdiya intervened on behalf of the paper (Šadr Hāšemi, I, pp. 14-15; *Čehranemā* 1, no. 14, 15 Ramažān 1322/2 December 1904). Twenty years later,



Rastākiz too was banned because of the numerous complaints against it by the religious authorities (Bayāt and Kuhestāni-nežad, ed., I, pp. 555-56, II, pp. 227-28; “Ektār,” *Sudmand*, no.1, Tir 1305 Š./June-July, 1926, quoted. in Šadr Hāšemi, III, p. 48).

Journalists. Za‘im-al-Dawla Moḥammad-Mahdi Tabrizi, the editor of *Ḥekmat* (b. Tabriz, 1253/1837, d. Tehran, 4 Moḥarram, 1333/22 November 1914), was a physician by profession, but he was also an author and wrote poetry. He received his higher education in Istanbul, and it is not clear why he decided to move to Egypt. He was the only Iranian journalist to write for Arab journals. He wrote mostly for the paper *al-Helāl*. Previous to setting up his own paper, he had collaborated with the Persian paper *Aktar*, which was published in Istanbul. According to Mahdi Bāmdad, he is the author of a book on Bahā’i faith in Arabic, called *Meftāḥ bāb al-abwāb* (Qazvini, p. 6).

Za‘im-al-Dawla had a reputation as an experienced journalist, but he did not have as much work experience as ‘Ali-Moḥammad Khan Šaybāni, the major force behind the paper *Torayyā*. Šaybāni had, prior to leaving Persia, worked under *Dokā’-al-Molk Moḥammad-‘Ali Foruḡi* in the Ministry of Publications (Wezārat-e enṭebā‘āt), where he had acquired some knowledge of journalism and the way the local papers were run (Dawlātābādi, I, pp. 200-1; *Torayyā*, no. 51, 10 Jomādā II, 1317/15 October 1899). Sayyed Faraj-Allāh Ḥosayni Kāšāni (d. Kāšān, 1328/1910), the manager of *Torayyā*, and Mo‘addeb-al-Solṭān, the founder of *Čehranemā*, were both merchants by profession but became increasingly interested in journalism and concentrated more on the latter throughout their lives.

Not much is known about the editor of *Kamāl*, Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Kamāl (d. Tabriz, ca. 1330/1912). All that is known about him is that he studied in Tabriz and Istanbul and was one of the intellectual elite of Azarbaijan (Ārianpur, I, p. 248). He set up a school and a paper both under the name of *Kamāl* in Tabriz (1899-902). After the anti-Western riots in that city in 1902, he left Tabriz and established a school in Baku, then went to Egypt and published a paper and finally came back to Tabriz and, from 1910, served as the editor of a paper Tabriz (Bowne, p. 60; Šadr Hāšemi, II, pp. 99-100).

All that is known about Manučehr Mo‘addebzāda, who edited first the paper and then the magazine *Čehranemā* after his father, is that he had a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and that he taught at the American University of Cairo. ‘Abd-Allāh Rāzi (b. Hamadān, 1273 Š./1894, d. Tehran, ?) received a bachelors



degree from the University of Paris and, upon his return to Tehran, edited a magazine called *Sudmand* (1309 S./1930). According to Parviz Adkā'i (pp. 388-89), he translated a few plays from French and also authored a number of books on the history of Persia (Mošār, I, cols. 653, 739, 754, II, p. 2875).

The Persian journals got most of their news and reports from the non-Persian papers published in Egypt, but they also used material from papers published inside Persia. Sometimes they published articles written by Iranians living outside Egypt. The rest were all penned by the respective editor himself. *Parvareš* was an exception in this regard, since the brothers of 'Ali-Moḥammad Khan Šaybāni collaborated with him (*Parvareš*, no. 19, 5 Rajab, 1318).

Contents. *Ḥekmat*, *Torayyā*, and *Čehranemā* carried mostly news and also published a variety of articles on political and social issues. *Čehranemā* was an illustrated paper carrying news reports as well as articles. All of the Persian papers published in Egypt had clear nationalistic and reformist orientation. Among them, *Ḥekmat* represented the former and *Torayyā* and *Parvareš* the latter, which was the main reason for their great popularity in Iran (Moḥiṭ Tabāṭabā'i, p. 90; Kasravi, I, pp. 41-42; Browne, pp. 66-67, 58-59; Dawlatābādi, I, pp. 200-1; Bahār, III, p. 401; Ārianpur, I, pp. 251-52; Reżwāni, p. 320; *Nedā-ye waṭan*, no. 29, Ša'bān 1327/November 1908). *Čehranemā*, except for the period during the Constitutional Revolution, was a conservative journal. *Kamāl* never went beyond generalities and the journals edited by 'Abd-Allāh Rāzi dealt with cultural issues and wrote mostly about the glories of ancient Persian and the religion of Zoroaster. Politically, these journals strongly supported Sardār-e Sepah and continued so after he was crowned Reżā Shah. *Torayyā*, once the two partners separated, became conservative and as it found little support for its views abroad, transferred its office first to Tehran and then to Kāšān.

The three journals, *Ḥekmat*, *Torayyā* and *Čehranemā* followed the developments not only in the Iranian community but also those in Egypt in general. *Ḥekmat* in particular paid attention to cultural developments in Egypt and published contemporary Arab poetry as well as Persian translations of works by Egyptian authors. For instance, the relative proportional distribution of the contents of *Torayyā*: were news and reports about Persia (27 percent), news and reports about Egypt (3.5 percent), developments in the rest of the world (24 percent), social and economic articles (15.5 percent), the section called "what is worth knowing" (*dānestanihā*; 18 percent), literary section and advertisements (12 percent). It should be also noted that, unlike the Persian papers published in the India, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Istanbul, and Iraq,



those published in Egypt did not have any readers among the local Arab population.

Technical and Administrative issues. *Ḥekmat* was initially printed at Maṭba‘a al-jāme‘a printing house, but later it set up its own printing facilities. *Torayyā* was printed at an Arabicprinting office known as al-‘Oṭmāniya. It is not clear where the two papers, *Parvareš* and *Kamāl* were printed, but the latter may have been printed at *Ḥekmat*’s printing facilities. *Čehranemā*, during the years that it was published in Alexandria, used the Šerkat al-makārem printing office, which partly belonged to the editor of the paper. In Cairo, *Čehranemā* had its own printing facilities. Later, when it came out as a magazine, it was apparently printed at a modern, well-equipped printing office, whose name has not been recorded. The three journals published by ‘Abd-Allāh Rāzi were printed at the al-Ša‘bprinting house.

A major problem of the Persian journals in Egypt was that, unlike the countries neighboring Iran, a Persian typesetter could not be found there, an issue that the papers have often referred to (e.g., see *Ḥekmat* 7, no. 246, 1 Šafar 1316/20 June 1898). The Persian papers in Egypt would use illustrations quite freely, and, unlike their counterparts in India, Turkey and Iraq, had available to them up-to-date technology. We have no information concerning the print run of these papers, but the existence of several complete sets of them (except for *Kamāl*, *Rastākiz*, *Sudmand*, and *‘Ašr-e Pahlavi*) in various collections indicates that they enjoyed a fairly long range of circulation.

In view of the conditions in which these papers were published and circulated, they hardly could have been cost-effective. *Ḥekamat*, for example, received regular subsidies from the Persian government in 1901 (Kasravi, I, p. 41; Šadr Hāšemi, II, p. 229), while, *Čehranemā*, had to depend on financial contributions throughout its life (“Nāmahā-ye ruz-nāmanegārān,”pp. 752-53; Bayāt and Kuhestāni-nežād, I, pp. 427-31; Salāmi and Rustā‘i, III, pp. 376-77).

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