



ETṬELĀ'ĀT

ETṬELĀ'ĀT (lit.information, knowledge), the oldest running Tehran afternoon daily newspaper and the oldest running Persian daily in the world. It was first published on 19 Tīr 1305 Š./10 July 1926 ([Plate I](#)) as the organ of Markaz-e Eṭṭelā'āt-e Īrān, the first Persian news agency, founded in Asad 1302 Š./August 1923 by five young Persian journalists. The person chiefly responsible for the management of the small agency was 'Abbās Mas'ūdī (b. Tehran, 1280 Š./1901, d. 28 Ḳordād 1353 Š./18 June 1974), who had acquired relevant skills and experience while working as typesetter at Rowšanā'ī printing house and later as reporter for the newspaper *Setāra-ye Īrān*. It was a successful venture as numerous Tehran dailies became its customers. The license for the publication of a newspaper called *Eṭṭelā'āt* was first issued in 1304 Š./1925 in the name of 'Alī-Akbar Salīmī, another member of the founding group, but this paper was never printed. The following year, Mas'ūdī, although not yet old enough to be legally eligible to publish a newspaper, managed to obtain the necessary license and the first issue of *Eṭṭelā'āt* was published in the form of a two-page news sheet. The second issue, which appeared a month later on 19 Mordād 1305 Š./10 August 1926, did not carry any affiliation to the news agency but displayed a logo that has been carried ever since in all *Eṭṭelā'āt* publications (F. Mas'ūdī, p. 36).

Eṭṭelā'āt's rapid rise to popularity and power started in the second year of its publication when, in addition to purely political news and events, it began printing pictures of prominent people and carrying stories interesting to the public ('A. Mas'ūdī, p. 19). It was at this time, too, that the newspaper



established a full staff of writers.

Mas'ūdī's regular reports on the Kuzestān trip of Reżā Shāh (Ābān 1307 Š./October 1928) enhanced his popularity in the royal court and his fame with the public. A year later, it was banned for ten days beginning 28 Ābān 1308 Š./19 November 1929 for its criticism of the judiciary. It did not, however, cause any serious damage to the paper's popularity. On the contrary, Majles deputies rose to Mas'ūdī's and his newspaper's support despite the royal court's domination over the parliament. In June of 1934 Mas'ūdī was part of the Shah's entourage on his official visit to Turkey. In the first parliamentary elections following the trip, Mas'ūdī was elected to the Tenth Majles from Tehran (inaugurated 15 Kordād 1314 Š./5 June 1935). Since then *Eṭṭelā'āt* came to be known as a semi-official newspaper.

During World War II when the Allied forces invaded Persia from north and south (3 Šahrīvar 1320 Š./25 August 1941), Mas'ūdī, still a member of the Majles, published an editorial with the knowledge and support of the prime minister, condemning the invasion (Şadīq, III, pp. 27-31). The editorial ("Ta'attor-e mardom," *Eṭṭelā'āt*, 19 Šahrīvar 1320 Š./10 September 1941) caused a hostile reaction in American and European media, which attributed it to Reżā Shah's instructions. The British and Soviet ambassadors protested to the Persian government (Tabarrā'īān, p. 125), and Reżā Shah, in the last days of his reign, issued orders for the suppression of the paper. The next issue, 25 Šahrīvar/16 September, carried the news of Reżā Shah's abdication. The relative freedom that *Eṭṭelā'āt* enjoyed under the heavy-handed rule of Reżā Shah led to the suspicion that the newspaper was affiliated with the government. Some went so far as to charge that both *Eṭṭelā'āt* and its French daily *Journal de Teheran* were on the payroll of Nazi Germany during the war (Ṭabarī, pp. 54, 101).

During the years 1320-32 Š./1941-53, extremist political ideas pervaded Persian public opinion and daily newspapers were drawn into these controversies. *Eṭṭelā'āt* came under fire because of its vigorous defense of the Pahlavi regime ('A. Mas'ūdī, pp. 211-12), and attacks by newspapers, both left and right, undermined public trust in the daily. Despite these relentless criticisms, *Eṭṭelā'āt* was expanding mainly because of its strong news organization and the general public's habit of going to it for news. Its major rival, the daily afternoon newspaper *Kayhān*, which started publication in May 1941, was not yet strong enough to challenge the firmly-based *Eṭṭelā'āt*. To counter the attacks on *Eṭṭelā'āt* and its publisher, *Maš'al* (owned by Ja'far Şā'edī, a



prominent *Eṭṭelā'āt* editor), an apparently independent new daily, came into being (21 November 1942-24 February 1943).

In the month of Āḍar 1321 Š./December 1942, the discord between the shah and the prime minister Aḥmad Qṛawām (Qṛawām-al-Salṭana) reached its climax and the editorial of *Eṭṭelā'āt* of 16 Āḍar/7 December was a severe criticism of the prime minister. Such harsh attacks were not consistent with the general mild style of the paper (Şadr Hāšemī, p. 205). The next day a riot broke out in Tehran in protest against Qṛawām's administration. It was rumored that Mas'ūdī had provoked the riot but that students had neutralized the plot hatched by him and the royal court. The riot led to violence in which Mas'ūdī was wounded. The following day the prime minister declared martial law and banned all newspapers. The ban lasted forty-three days; *Eṭṭelā'āt* resumed publication on 30 Dey 1321/20 January 1943. The riot also led to the arrest of Mas'ūdī's two brothers and a number of *Eṭṭelā'āt* executives, while Mas'ūdī himself was spared because of parliamentary immunity. Public opinion, however, denounced him and legal authorities brought serious charges against him (Şadr Hāšemī, pp. 203-7; Gorūh-e Jāmī, pp. 171-72). This riot tarnished the reputation of Mas'ūdī and his *Eṭṭelā'āt* establishment, and enabled leftist groups, particularly the Communist Tudeh (Tūda) Party, to launch a campaign to discredit Mas'ūdī and his newspaper. The climax came on 9 Esfand 1324 Š./28 February 1946 when the *Eṭṭelā'āt* building was set on fire and the newspaper had to be printed elsewhere with fewer pages.

In Mehr 1929 Š./September 1950 *Eṭṭelā'āt* celebrated its 25th anniversary and published a book called *Eṭṭelā'āt dar yak rob'-e qarn* (*Eṭṭelā'āt* in a quarter of a century), in which Mas'ūdī defended himself and his organization against adverse criticism. During the days of Moḥammad Moşaddeq's administration, *Eṭṭelā'āt* tried its best to be an impartial provider of news avoiding all political controversies. It was not published on 28 and 29 Mordād 1332 Š./19 and 20 August 1953 (see COUP D'ETAT OF 1332 Š./1953), but on the following day it appeared with banners calling the coup a national uprising (*qīām-e mellī*).

Following the fall of the Moşaddeq administration, *Eṭṭelā'āt* adopted a very conservative stand, judging that its interests lay in discreet movement along the lines followed by various administrations coming into power, thus turning into a quasi-official newspaper (Barzīn, 1344, p. 28; idem, 1354, p. 52; Gorūh-e Jāmī, p. 26). This conservative policy allowed it to continue smoothly until the Revolution of 1357 Š./1978-79. At the same time the unfavorable view of important anti-government elements toward *Eṭṭelā'āt* coupled with



innovations by the rival newspaper, *Kayhān*, led to the increase of the latter's might and influence in society. Meanwhile, however, the political influence of *Eṭṭelā'āt* was also rising. Mas'ūdī was the vice-president of the Senate for nearly eleven years and had been assigned important foreign missions to Arab states, and he and his paper played an important role in trying to create favorable public opinion for the independence of Bahrain (F. Mas'ūdī, pp. 254-59).

Mas'ūdī, the founder of the new journalism in Persia and teacher of hundreds of professional journalists, died in his office on 28 Kordād 1353 Š./18 June 1974. Three years earlier he had passed the command on to his son, Farhād Mas'ūdī. The publication permit of *Eṭṭelā'āt* was registered in Farhād's name on 30 Mordād 1353 Š./21 August 1974.

The years following the 1953 coup d'état were years of progress and prosperity for *Eṭṭelā'āt* when its network of reporters and correspondents spread far and wide, technical improvements were made, and distribution became more efficient. *Eṭṭelā'āt* and its rival, *Kayhān*, were the two giants of Persian journalism reaching almost every part of the country (Barzīn, 1354, p. 51). During these years *Eṭṭelā'āt* had a number of high-caliber editors-in-chief of whom Tūraj Farāzmand, Aḥmad Banī Aḥmad, and Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kordbača were best known.

After the Revolution of 1978-79. General grievances and unrest reached its climax in 1978 and the Persian press, particularly *Eṭṭelā'āt* and *Kayhān*, came face to face with a new, tense situation. The majority of the press turned to support the protests, which eventually led to the general press strike of 18 Mehr 1357 Š./10 October 1978. Thus both *Eṭṭelā'āt* and *Kayhān*, after fifty-one and thirty-seven years of publication respectively, did not put out an issue. The second strike was in protest against the martial law enacted by General Azhārī's government and lasted for sixty-two days. The first page banner of the *Eṭṭelā'āt* of 26 Day 1357 Š./16 January 1980 read "shah left" (*šāh raft*) in the largest type ever. All this time Farhād Mas'ūdī was in charge of *Eṭṭelā'āt* foundation, and, due to the rapid unfolding of events, the paper issued two or three editions a day. On 22 Mordād 1358 Š./13 August 1979 the names of Farhād Mas'ūdī and the founder 'Abbās Mas'ūdī were permanently removed from the paper. On 15 Šahrīvar 1358 Š./9 September 1979 the foundation was confiscated by the government and transferred to the Mostaž'afān Foundation (Bonyād-e mostaž'afān, q.v., now Bonyād-e 'Alawī). Ḥojjat-al-Eslām Sayyed Maḥmūd Do'ā'ī, a cleric, became the new director of the foundation and the



purge of employees, writers, and reporters that had began a year earlier intensified. Under Do‘ā‘ī, the paper continued to enjoy a high print run, following a moderate policy compared to that of *Kayhān*.

Technical aspects. The first issue of *Eṭṭelā‘āt* was printed in Rowšanā‘ī printing house in two five-column pages measuring 26×37.50 cm and selling for four *šāhīs*. Its print run is not known. The second issue was printed in Bosfor printing house in 500 copies. By the end of its first year, the print run had reached 700 (F. Mas‘ūdī, p. 42). At that time the newspaper *Īrān*, the oldest and most important newspaper in Persia, had a print run of about 1500.

During the second year of its foundation, since Tīr 1306 Š./June-July 1927, the paper was printed in Sīrūs printing house in four pages. Its premier issue had a picture of Rezā Shah, the first picture carried by the paper. It had a simple format: an editorial, local news, the proceedings of the Majles, and foreign news translated from the releases of foreign news agencies. Starting with the third issue, some advertisements were also included.

In the seventh year of its existence, Mehr 1311 Š./7 October 1932, the newspaper bought its own small press and began issuing in six pages as of 1 Esfand 1312 Š./20 February 1933. The *Eṭṭelā‘āt* printing press became a corporation and imported, for the first time in Persia, a rotative printer; from Tīr 1314 Š./22 July 1935, the daily was issued in eight five-column pages measuring 48×55 cm, priced at 30 dinars. The increase in pages was to accomodate more coverage of local news and other materials.

The most important result of these rapid technical advances was the issuance of seven editions a week instead of six (from 1 Ordībehešt 1315 Š./21 April 1936). After that the paper was at times printed in ten pages and had, when important issues were involved, a four-page extra edition distributed the following morning. Later (9 Mehr 1317 Š./1 October 1938) the extra edition was eliminated and the newspaper appeared in twelve pages selling for 50 dinars. In that year *Eṭṭelā‘āt* had a print run of 11,500 and sixty-two employees (Şadr Hāšemī, p. 207).

It was during the final years of World War II that, due to the efforts of its agencies across the country, *Eṭṭelā‘āt* became the paper to read in every part of Persia. The shortage of paper caused by the war, however, forced it (as of 30 Tīr 1320 Š./21 July 1941) to be printed in four seven-column pages in small types. Some five months later, the paper was issued six times a week instead of



the usual seven, and the price of a single issue rose to 75 dinars. L. P. Elwell-Sutton (p. 72) estimated *Eṭṭelā'āt*'s print run during the years 1941-47 to have been about 40,000 to 50,000. At that time, its rival *Kayhān* had a circulation of only 20,000.

After the 1953 coup d'état, *Eṭṭelā'āt* exerted widespread efforts to improve its production and expand its agencies. New periodicals were conceived and issued, and its daily issue rose to 16 and 24 pages as the increase in people's purchasing power created more advertising revenue. In Tīr 1348 Š./June-July 1969, concurrent with the foundation's 44th anniversary, *Eṭṭelā'āt* began operating its four color rotative printer and two months later the daily was offered in 24 nine-column pages measuring 42 x 59 centimeters. Later its impressive new office building was ready for occupation and its newly imported heliogravure equipment set up for operation. The print run had reached 70,000, but *Kayhān* commanded a circulation of 120,000. This gap between the two major afternoon newspapers continued to hold until both papers were confiscated by the revolutionary government; in 1353/1974 *Kayhān*'s print run was 30 percent higher (Barzīn, 1344, p. 8; idem, 1354, p. 46). After the takeover, *Eṭṭelā'āt* was reduced to 16 pages due to the decrease in advertising revenue, which at its peak covered 65 percent of the paper's space (Barzīn, 1354, p. 62).

Affiliated journals. Newspapers and magazines officially affiliated with *Eṭṭelā'āt* include: *Journal de Teheran*, the first regularly issued French language daily in Persia, from 24 Esfand 1314 Š./15 March 1936 until its takeover by the new regime; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e haftagī*, a weekly magazine from 1 Farvardīn 1320 Š./21 March 1941, still running; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e mähāna*, a monthly cultural, literary, and scientific magazine, from Farvardīn 1327 Š./March 1948 to Farvardīn 1338 Š./March 1959, the last two issues being called *Māh-nāma-ye Eṭṭelā'āt*; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e hawā'ī*, a special edition for Persians living abroad, from 26 Kordād 1327 Š./16 June 1948 until its takeover by the new regime; it was bilingual (Persian-English) until 30 September 1951; *Tehran Journal*, an English daily from 31 Ordībehešt 1333 Š./21 May 1954, published as *Tehran Times* after the Revolution of 1978-79; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e bānovān*, magazine for women and girls, from Farvardīn 1335 Š./21 March 1956 until 29 Farvardīn 1358 Š./18 April 1979; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e doḡtarān o pesarān*, magazine for children and teenagers, from 28 Esfand 1335 Š./19 March 1956 until the Revolution; it changed its name eight times, the most famous of which was *Eṭṭelā'āt-e kūdakān*; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e javānān*, magazine for the youth, from 20 Āḡar 1337 Š./11 December 1958, re-



named *Javānān-e emrūz* on 9 Mordād 1338 Š./31 July 1959, still being published; *al-Aḳā*, Arabic news and cultural magazine, from 9 Mehr 1339 Š./1 October 1960 until February 1979; *Donyā-ye varzeš*, sports magazine, from 14 Šahrivar 1349 Š./5 September 1970, still running; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e 'elmī*, scientific magazine, from 2 Ābān 1346 Š./24 October 1967 as a supplement to *Eṭṭelā'āt*, from 15 Ābān 1365 Š./6 November 1986 as an independent journal, and still running; *Eṭṭelā'āt-e sīāsī wa eqtešādī*, magazine covering political and economic news and analysis, from Farvardīn 1365 Š./March 1986 as a supplement to *Eṭṭelā'āt* and from 19 Mehr 1365 Š./11 October 1986 as an independent journal, still being published; *Adabestān*, a cultural monthly from Day 1368 Š./December 1989. *Eṭṭelā'āt-e bayn-al-melālī*, a bilingual daily distributed mainly in England and the United States since 26 Ordibehešt 1373 Š./16 May 1993.

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