



GOL-ĀQĀ

GOL-ĀQĀ, a weekly satirical magazine founded by Kayumart Šāberi which first began publication on 23 October 1990. The circulation of *Gol-āqā* soon reached over “100,000 copies a week; a remarkable success” (Geraldine Brooks, “Hot New Satirical Magazine Reflects a New Glasnost: Judge Blood Not Amused,” *The Wall Street Journal* October 1, 1991, p. A1). The name “Gol-āqā” was first used as a pen name by Šāberi in his highly popular regular satirical column for the daily newspaper *Eṭṭelā’āt* (q.v.) from January 1985 to October 1990. A number of comical characters appear regularly in *Gol-āqā*, including Šāgolām, Ġazanfar, Mamšādeq, Kamina (Mamšādeq’s wife), and Gol-nesā, the most important and popular of them being Šāgolām. In August 1991 a monthly magazine with a similar name, *Gol-āqā-ye mähāna*, was also begun. In March 1996, this monthly magazine was reorganized and given a new direction, becoming the first satirical magazine in Persia to cover satire from a literary point of view. A series of yearbooks (*sāl-nāmas*) have also been published by *Gol-āqā* since 1993.

Gol-āqā began its publication in a new era in postrevolutionary Persia marked by a quick succession of important events: the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini a year later in June of 1989, and, shortly afterwards, the election of the powerful speaker of the Majles, ‘Ali-Akbar Hāšemi Rafsanjāni, as president. These events set the stage for the emergence of a new centrist and more moderate faction in the Islamic Republic. *Gol-āqā* was conceived and published at this juncture with moral and financial support from the establishment as an outlet to vent and defuse the discontent



created by the excesses of the revolution and the war. It began its publication with the help of the veterans of the highly popular satirical weekly *Tawfiq* which was closed down in the early 1970s because of its critical stance towards the previous regime. *Gol-āqā*'s appearance, its format and cover and back pages, and the organization of the various sections are all closely copied from *Tawfiq*. A number of *Gol-āqā*'s editors had served as *Tawfiq*'s associate editors, including Şāberi, Mortaẓa Farajiān, and Huşang Me'mārzāda. They were joined by several well known satirists and caricaturists from *Tawfiq*, including Abu'l-Qāsem Ḥālat, 'Omrān Şalāḥi, Abu Torāb Jali, Moḥammad 'Arabāni, Manučeḥr Eḥterāmī, Moḥammad Purṭāni, Moḥammad-'Ali Guyā, and Maḥmud Givi.

Only the non-clerical members of the political elite are picked out by *Gol-āqā* for its satirical observations and can become the butt of its humor and comical sketches. It refrains from criticizing the main political issues, limiting its acerbic comments to everyday difficulties of the people. Since the mid-1990s, with the rising popularity of journals associated with the reformist movement, and the appearance of political satirists prepared to challenge the above-mentioned unwritten rules, *Gol-āqā*'s circulation has decreased sharply.